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Strategies for Employees to Effect Change to Improve Performance of Public Organizations

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Ibrahim Nasamu

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Walden University
August 2022

Abstract

Strategies for Employees to Effect Change to Improve Performance of Public Organizations

by

Ibrahim Nasamu

MBA, University of Wales, 2008

BSc, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Seventy percent of organizations fail in their organizational change initiatives because of failure to involve employees in the change process. Some managers lack the strategies to implement change initiatives successfully. Using Kotter's eight-step change model as the conceptual framework, this qualitative single case study was conducted to explore public sector managers' strategies to include employees in implementing organizational change. Semistructured interviews were used to identify the strategies public sector managers use to include employees in implementing organizational change. Interviews were conducted with eight participants who met the inclusion criteria for this study. Data analysis included methodological triangulation and Yin's 5 steps of organizing the data. The five resulting principal themes were (a) effective communication, (b) creating and sustaining employee engagement, (c) leadership style effect, (d) developing training programs and processes, and (e) strengthening organizational culture. The findings indicate that managers should focus on how well their subordinates understand the overarching goals of the vision and the mission of change initiatives. These findings have potential implications for positive social change that include catalyzing employees to have a healthier attitude at work, having a better sense of work–life balance, and having pride in belonging. Understanding the contribution of an engaging workforce may enable organizations to improve performance and profits by catalyzing monetary and nonmonetary contributions to benefit citizens.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to God for blessing me with the strength and wisdom to see the benefits of completing this study and my dear mother, Hauwa G. Nasamu, who kept me inspired to keep writing.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my wife, Atebirehmen Ibrahim-Nasamu, whose never-ending support and encouragement always pushed me to be more. I would like to also thank my entire doctoral committee for their endless support, guidance, and encouragement throughout this process. To my Chair, Dr. Allen “Ace” Endres, my second committee member, Dr. Edgar Jordan, and my URR committee member, Dr. Judy Blando. I want you all to know that I appreciate your patience and all you have done to help me through this academic journey.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Involving employees as change recipients is fundamental to every organizational change process (Oreg et al., 2018). According to Boyd et al. (2018), tailoring change to align with the intended context is significant for organizational success. Improving organizational performance is also critical to every organization. Across the literature, corporate performance has been associated with the effectiveness of change implementation (Boyd et al., 2018). Owing to the importance of change in organizational performance and the recommended involvement of change recipients in every change process, change managers should adopt viable strategies to involve employees in a change process (Boyd et al., 2018). In this study, I explored the strategies that public sector managers use to include employees in effecting organizational change.

Background of the Problem

Managers are responsible for planning, implementing, and leading change initiatives; however, some managers lack the strategies to successfully implement change initiatives (Niess & Duhamel, 2018). Aside from the lack of managers to successfully implement change, resistance to change is also widely identified as a significant contributor to organizational failure (Amarantou et al., 2018). Amarantou et al. documented that involving change recipients such as the employees in the change process is an effective strategy to address resistance to change. Involving employees in the change process is a widely recommended strategy to successfully implement change. Limited research exists that discusses the assessment of managers' strategies to include employees in the change process, especially in Nigeria's public sector. The findings from this research will assist managers in public sector organizations develop a deeper awareness of strategies to involve employees to affect organizational change.

Problem Statement

Failure to involve employees in a change process can result in lower work engagement as dissatisfied employees may distance themselves from the organization's success (Thomas et al., 2019, p. 15). Seventy percent of organizations fail in their organizational change initiatives, resulting in resistance to change from stakeholders (Candido & Santos, 2019, p. 2; Gonzalez-Porras et al., 2021). The general business problem is that some managers fail to develop and implement effective organizational change processes. The specific business problem is that some public sector managers lack strategies to include employees in implementing organizational change.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that public sector managers use to include employees in implementing organizational change. The target population consisted of eight managers within a single public sector organization in Nigeria with a minimum of 10 years of managerial experience in implementing successful change initiatives. Implications for positive social change include enhancing services to communities.

Nature of the Study

I adopted the qualitative research method. The use of the qualitative method allows a researcher to gain insight into a specific phenomenon and conduct a broad exploration of a topic to gain better knowledge to improve an issue (Yin, 2018).

Researchers use qualitative methods to address the social aspect of research and explore problems through an in-depth exploration of a subject (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Quantitative researchers use standardized or structured questionnaires to collect data and use a range of statistical techniques to examine variables' characteristics and the relationships among variables (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The quantitative method was not ideal for this study because the purpose was not to test hypotheses or examine variables' characteristics, relationships, or groups' differences. To provide a broader perspective and overcome the limitations of single methods of inquiry, researchers use mixed methods to collect and analyze data and information, combine findings, and draw inferences using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The mixed-methods approach was not appropriate because statistical testing was not necessary to achieve the purpose of this study.

The three types of qualitative research design I considered for the study were phenomenological, ethnological, and case study. Researchers use the phenomenological design to explore participants' perceptions of experiencing a phenomenon (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). The phenomenological design is more suitable for studies involving intense human experiences, according to Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., and because my study is about strategies, not intense personal experiences, a phenomenological design was not appropriate. Researchers conduct ethnographic studies to explore shared cultures and patterns of behavior or attitudes characterizing a culture (Bass & Milosevic, 2018). Because I was not exploring the culture of my research participants, an ethnographic design was not appropriate. I used a qualitative single case study design to study the uniqueness of the phenomenon in a particular organization of interest. A single case study design provides a researcher with a deeper understanding of the explored subject. In contrast, multiple case study designs require replication of research in more than one organization (Yin, 2018), which was not the intent of this study. For my study, a qualitative single case study was appropriate to gain an extensive and in-depth understanding of strategies public sector managers use to include employees in effecting organizational change within a particular public service organization of interest.

Research Question

One primary research question guided this study: What strategies do public sector managers use to include employees in the implementation of organizational change?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to include employees in mitigating the change process's impact on effecting organizational change?
2. What were any barriers to implementing these strategies to affect organizational change?
3. How did you address obstacles when implementing these strategies in effecting the change?
4. How did you assess the effectiveness of these strategies to include employees in effecting organizational change?
5. How did the employees respond to your different strategies?
6. What additional information can you share with me regarding the strategies your organization uses to include employees in effecting organizational change?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I used is Kotter's eight-step change model. Kotter's model is one of the most renowned models of change management. The model was originally published in *Harvard Business Review* in 1995 and later as the bestselling book *Leading Change* in 1996. According to Kotter, successful change implementation involves eight phases: (a) establishing a sense of urgency, (b) forming a powerful guiding coalition, (c) creating a vision, (d) communicating the vision, (e) empowering others to act on the vision, (f) planning for and creating short-term wins, (g) consolidating performance and producing still more change, and (h) institutionalizing new approaches.

The first four steps of Kotter's eight-step change theory are related to creating the right climate for change. Steps 5 and 6 link the change to the organization. Steps 7 and 8 address the implementation and perpetuation of the change. Kotter's model offers a phase-driven strategic approach and a systematic framework that can help leaders design, deploy, initiate, and integrate strategies to implement organizational change initiatives successfully. Kotter's conceptual framework aligned with the purpose of this study because the implementation of successful change initiatives is at the core of organizational change. The process detailed by Kotter provided an adequate lens through which to identify and explore the organization's successful change strategies that involve employees. The Kotter change model was used to understand the changes required during the data analysis.

Operational Definitions

Change implementation: The execution of a change management plan intended to create organizational change (Grawitch & Ballard, 2016).

Change initiative: A project designed to improve operational performance within an organization (Naslund & Norrman, 2019).

Change management: The set of processes, tools, and practices used to manage the people side of a change. Change management is the final element of realizing change effectively (Al-Alawi et al., 2019).

Democratic or participative leadership style: A leadership style in which the leader engages employees through strategic awareness, involvement in goal-setting processes, and integration in discussions of company performance (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018).

Macro factors: Determinants describing an organization concerning its economic, demographic, environmental, and spatial aspects (Tomal, 2019).

Sense of urgency: The zeal to act fast within budget, specification, and timeline when handling a project that impacts citizens, politics, urban planning, urban climate change, and other areas of management (Lenzholzer et al., 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions in research are ideas a researcher assumes to be true without further investigation (Wilson, 2017). Assumptions of the study shape the research (Cypress, 2017). Researchers must identify and address potential assumptions to avoid distortions and any form of misrepresentation (Armstrong & Kepler, 2018). The first assumption for this study was that all participants would answer questions honestly. My second assumption was that participants' responses to the interview questions would be sufficient to answer the central research question.

Limitations are shortcomings of the research not within a researcher's control that could affect the outcome of the study (Lingard, 2015). A limitation could be the short time limit of this study. The inclusion of limitations in a study allows for further research (Reddy & Bhadauria, 2019). Because there are no correct or incorrect perspectives of the phenomenon, participants may not be able to interpret and communicate their experiences effectively. Finally, participants may not be objective in their responses to the research questions, introducing bias.

Delimitations reduce or narrow the scope of studies as researchers use interview questions to which interviewees have the knowledge and experience to provide appropriate responses (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The first delimitation was that only public sector managers participated in this study. The second delimitation was that only managers with 10 years or more managerial experience in a particular public sector organization in Nigeria participated in this study.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

From a business perspective, findings from this study may provide valuable strategies for managers in public sector organizations. Successful implementation of strategic change initiatives may reduce inefficiencies (Lyu et al., 2017). The results may also be used to help mitigate unsuccessful organizational change initiative costs. As a contribution to public sector practice, managers may use the findings of this study to develop plans on how to build on identified strategies to guide public sector organizations through a planned change. Managers may use the findings to understand change management implementation strategies, when to embrace change, when to engage employees, and how to develop change strategies to bolster performance.

Implications for Social Change

Successful implementation of organizational change initiatives may contribute to societal well-being (Stephan et al., 2016). According to Stephan et al., an improved success rate of organizational change initiatives could provide opportunities for increased employment, increased incomes, and improved local economies. The findings could stimulate human resources managers, supervisors, and managers to improve their organizations' change implementation strategies, leading to more stable employment of citizens and improvement to local economies through increased tax revenues.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review is a relevant component of research that a researcher uses to explore relevant topics. The process adopted in selecting the literature should represent the current knowledge associated with the topics (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Palmatier et al. (2018) suggested that a quality literature review must have both depth and rigor; the review needs to demonstrate an appropriate strategy for selecting articles and capturing data and insights and offer something beyond a recitation of previous research. Palmatier et al. concluded that a quality literature review needs to be replicable; the method must be described such that an external reader could replicate the study and reach similar findings.

The qualitative single case study was intended to explore the strategies that public sector managers use to involve employees in effecting organizational change. In the literature review, researchers establish the need for additional studies to further identify effective strategies managers could use to involve employees in organizational change. Kotter's theory of change was adopted as the conceptual framework for analyzing the strategies affecting change management practices for this study. According to Kotter (1996), change is a social process by which managers can guide employees through an eight-step method of creating a sense of urgency, building a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the vision, empowering employees into action, generating short wins, consolidating the change, producing more change, and anchoring the approach into the culture. This model helped me understand the processes involved in managers' strategies to involve employees in change management.

The literature review starts with a description of the literature search strategy, including the keywords used and the databases explored. The composite conceptual framework for the study is discussed. Other supporting and contrasting theories relating to the purpose of the study are also reviewed. I present an in-depth discussion on understanding organizational change, resistance to organizational change, perceptions of organizational change, and the role of leadership in the organizational change process. The effects of the organizational change process on employees and the strategies for effecting organizational change are also discussed. The literature review concludes with a transition summarizing the issues discussed and a link to Section 3 of the study.

I used several databases from Walden University's library to search for literature. These databases include Sage Journals Online, Academic Search Complete/Premier, Business Source Complete/Premier, Emerald Management Journals, ABI /INFORM Complete, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, and EBSCO. The keywords used in the search included *change, change management, organizational change processes, change management models, employee engagement models, organizational dynamics, employee behavior*, and *employee involvement.* Table 1 is a summary of the sources and ages of the sources for the literature review. Of the 183 sources, 149 (81.4%) were published within the last 5 years; 34 (18.6%) sources were older than 5 years. Among the 149 sources less than 5 years old, 97.3% were peer-reviewed journal articles, and 2.7% were books. In all, 93.4% of the sources were peer-reviewed journals, and 6.6% were books (see Table 1).

Table 1

Frequency of the Study Sources

Sources	Published within 5 years	Older than 5 years	Total	%
Peer-reviewed journals	145	26	171	93.4
Books	4	8	12	6.6
Total (%)	149 (81.4)	34 (18.6)	183	100

Reviewing the information gathered from the literature review enabled me to identify the related key issues and to explore these issues to understand practical solutions that could lead to positive outcomes. The literature review included a synthesis of literature related to the different change models and their implementation and that addressed organizational change initiatives for developing change strategies and potential barriers to strategy implementation.

Kotter's Change Model

The conceptual framework I used for this study was Kotter's (1996) eight-step change model. The process detailed by Kotter's change model provides an adequate lens for understanding the strategies public sector managers use to include employees in effecting organizational change. Kotter's change model is one of the most renowned models of change management. The model was originally published in *Harvard Business Review* (1995), and later in the bestselling book *Leading Change* (1996). The assumption in Kotter's model is that a successful change of any magnitude goes through all eight steps, usually in sequence (Pollack & Pollack, 2015). Kotter expressed that skipping steps creates the illusion of speed and does not produce a satisfying result. According to Baloh et al. (2017), implementing change without complying sequentially with the eight-step approach outlined by Kotter increases the risk of failure.

The fulcrum of Kotter's model rests on the idea that the primary goal of organizational change is to make fundamental changes in how business is conducted and to help cope with a new and more challenging market environment (Kotter, 1996). According to Kotter, the primary function of management is to provide order and consistency by planning, organizing, staffing, controlling, and decision making (Hughes, 2016). Kotter's central argument is that most organizational change efforts are not successful but that attempts could be improved by following an eight-step model for change management based on eight faults Kotter consistently found in unsuccessful change initiatives.

Kotter’s dynamic eight stages model can be organized into three phases. The first phase is creating a climate for change and includes establishing a sense of urgency, creating a guiding coalition, and developing a vision and strategy. The second phase is engaging and enabling the organization and includes communicating the vision, empowering action, and creating short-term wins. The final phase is implementing and sustaining the change and includes consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter, 1996). The eight stages are discussed hereafter.

Establishing a Sense of Urgency

Kotter’s (1996) model prescribes that top management is responsible for creating a sense of urgency and motivating all relevant stakeholders (van den Heuvel et al., 2016). A greater sense of urgency may lead to more successful change implementation. However, most companies are unable to successfully implement change because the leaders cannot create a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996). Van den Heuvel et al. identified communication, creating short and long-term goals, teamwork, and measuring success as the elements required to promote urgency. A discussion of the importance of change and the possible negative impact of no change is recommended to foresee successful change opportunities (Kotter, 1996).

Creating a Guiding Coalition

Van den Heuvel et al. (2016) concluded that for change management to be implemented successfully, there needs to be a coalition that includes senior executives, management, and employees who will be instrumental in executing the change. The coalition, composed of both top management and employees, has the power to shepherd changes and become part of a volunteer network, including all levels of the traditional hierarchy who drive change (Kotter, 1996; van den Heuvel et al., 2016). The coalition must be comprised of people who are committed to the change and who can transfer this commitment to others. The specific size of the coalition is dependent on the size of the organization, and the organization must continue to grow; otherwise, the change efforts will stop flowing, causing an unsuccessful organizational change implementation (Kotter, 1996).

Developing a Vision and Strategy

Kotter (1996) concluded the principal causes of change initiative failures are vague objectives and failure to plan and implement contingency plans. A simple and compelling vision is needed to inspire individuals. Leaders are required to create a vision the organization can align and identify with to guide the change (Kotter, 1996). Also, leaders are expected to create realistic and attainable goals that turn vision into reality (van den Heuvel et al., 2016). Managers should influence the coalition team to be focused, imaginative, and communicative (Kotter, 1996). Managers also need to keep the vision simple to ensure proper communication and understanding. The coalition must develop and support the implementation of a coherent and consistent vision and model that members of the organization can use to drive projects for improving the organization's performance.

Communicating the Vision

Implementing a change in an organization requires employee buy-in, and this can only be achieved by successful and clear communication and by involving people (Kotter, 1996). Maintaining communication among all levels of an organization during a change implementation is essential (Heckelman, 2017). The use of each available channel of communication and the revamping of those focused on unessential information becomes fundamental. Managers should use every form of communication, such as emails, meetings, or newsletters. Leaders also should lead by example to demonstrate the needed behaviors, as communication involves deeds as well as words, and role modeling is a way of communicating the vision (Kotter, 1996; van den Heuvel et al., 2016).

Empowering Broad-Based Action

Managers are expected to remove or mitigate any obstacles to implementing change while encouraging innovation (Kotter, 1996). Employees should not encounter barriers preventing them from conveying their thoughts in the form of complaints or recommendations (van den Heuvel et al., 2016). Employees' ability to express their thoughts will provide top management with the opportunity to identify and remove any change implementation obstacles (Kotter, 1996).

Generating Short-Term Wins

Generating short-term wins is about sharing evidence of successes to motivate (Heckelman, 2017). Change initiatives require significant time to achieve real transformation by an organization. Leaders of the organization promoting change should define short- and long-term objectives to promote buy-in and change and to reward success. Short-term wins help to ensure a sense of urgency that strategy and vision are not lost, while at the same time motivating employees by allowing them to see the progress (Kotter, 1996). By creating short-term wins, management and employees can build on their success and avoid losing momentum (Kotter, 1996; van den Heuvel et al., 2016). Creating relevant metrics is critical for success measurement so that the coalition can see the achievement of established goals and outcomes. Communicating small successes is important in the change management process (Kotter, 1996). The enhancement of successful outcomes by implementing metrics and reporting successful change results is helpful to leaders.

Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change

Consolidating gains and producing more change is also regarded as never letting up and involves maintaining momentum and urgency. Leaders should build on success, improve morale, and remove obstacles (Heckelman, 2017). Vision and strategy should be ingrained in the company's culture (Kotter, 1996). Every successful phase during change implementation should be viewed as an opportunity to build on the momentum and optimize the right actions and initiatives (van den Heuvel et al., 2016). This step is necessary so that people do not revert to attitudes and behaviors common before the change (Kotter, 1996).

Incorporating Change Into the Culture

For perpetuating change into the culture, managers should focus on embedding changes into organizational culture and practice (Heckelman, 2017). Culture influences how employees take risks, manage change, and solve problems (Mouhamadou et al., 2017). Managers should communicate the benefits of the change and support evidence (van den Heuvel et al., 2016). Managers should ensure that individuals are not only committed to new change initiatives but also are rooted in the culture (Kotter, 1996). Managers need to reinforce changes by stressing the connections between organizational success and new programs or work behaviors.

Understanding Organizational Change

The successful management of organizational change is necessary for all organizations to survive and succeed in today's highly competitive and turbulent business environment (Heckmann et al., 2016). Busse and Doganer (2018) conceptualized organizational change as a catalyst for enhancing organizational performance. Organizational change influences employees' performance in both positive and negative ways. As employee performance influences the effectiveness of an organization, the need to ensure compliance has become a tool for progress.

Busse and Doganer (2018) opined that organizational change arising from scandals and corruption does not last because the changes are driven by a reactive response. In the context of developing supporting attitudes for effecting a proposed organizational change, Adda et al. (2019) stated that employees might make a breakthrough by implementing new work behaviors. The study showed that employees' perceptions of organizational change differ slightly based on the level of change proposed by Lewin. Ericsson (2020) explored how the construction of time might be biased by managerial leaders’ opportunities to the enactment specific institutionalized ideas anchored in different theoretical epochs to comply with culturally embedded and mediated managerial virtues like being fast and vigorous. To cope successfully with change, managers need to be aware of the vulnerable milestones along the change management process. These milestones are associated with external or internal factors or both (Arghode et al., 2020; Wenzel & Koch, 2018). Samah (2020) revealed that organizational support, attitudes toward change, subjective norms, and social influences all have a significant direct effect on acceptance to change. Lin et al. (2020) addressed how organizational change affects the process of organizational innovation based on a new construct of routines or to find out the coexistence of both hindering and promoting effects from routines and their differentiated effects paths.

Cusick (2018) concluded that organizational change reflects a set of behaviors that organizational members voluntarily undertake and transcends the requirements of the formal transactional exchanges of the workplace. At the individual level, these behaviors are positively related to the outcomes of participation (Smollan & Morrison, 2019), organizational capacity, acceptance to change (Grimolizzi-Jensen, 2017), and global competitiveness (Aluko & Odularu, 2019).

Organizational change behaviors are central to the performance and effectiveness of organizations, as they form a primary objective in organizational change (Dobrovic & Timkova, 2017). According to Dobrovic and Timkova, when change is planned carefully through communication and commitment, managers can expect it to be successful. The process of change is going through some phases, one of which is pure planning. In the process of change, the problem seems to be an inefficient planning process or no planning. This finding resonates with the works of Guidetti et al. (2018) and Appelbaum et al. (2017), which explained that communication at the time of change, leadership, employee involvement, and the feeling of adherence to the firm are factors that will positively impact on an organizational change.

To produce effective institutional or cultural change, one should begin by identifying the stakeholders. For instance, mid-level managers must understand that in leading transformations, they need to create a sense of urgency, build powerful guiding coalitions, and develop visions (Hughes, 2016). Wentworth et al. (2018) made a case for using Kotter’s change model in embarking on and changing a university’s system for students’ evaluation of teaching. This change involved a shift in both instrument and technology and involved dozens of stakeholders in a complex and changing environment. The authors carried out interviews with top faculty members to ascertain their preparedness for change. At the same time, the simultaneous bottom-up and top-down approach created an environment where sustainable change was possible. This first step of institutional change was successfully achieved by encouraging the application of knowledge to create a sense of urgency, which was followed by creating a powerful coalition made up of various faculties in the institution (Wentworth et al., 2018).

Resistance to Organizational Change

Jain et al. (2018) explained that resistance to change is perceived as needing to adapt a person's views or conduct in certain areas, often at the suggestion or requirement of an authority figure, with the person seeming unable or unwilling to do so. It was inferred that reducing resistance to change includes giving voice and paying attention to grief work, building capacity for change, communicating decisions on time, and not underestimating the emotional impact on the people involved in the change processes. Additionally, completing the preliminary step of assessing the organization's current reality is necessary to change implementation and catalyze events leading to change.

Preconditions for effective change management can be categorized into two areas: macro and micro. Macro factors include leadership, resources, and the surrounding infrastructure. Micro factors include employee empowerment, enablement, and supportive organizational processes such as quality assurance. Employee resistance is a product of many macro and micro factors. Rahaman et al. (2020) inferred that employee change commitment mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and dysfunctional resistance. Employees' perception of change information not only moderates the relationship between change commitment and dysfunctional resistance but, more importantly, also the indirect effect between ethical leadership and dysfunctional resistance through change commitment (Rahaman et al., 2020).

Jain et al. (2018) provided a pragmatic pathway to reducing resistance to change. First, create a common goal for employees and allow the employees to work on the same project. Second, increase the participation of employees to make decisions about various aspects of the process. Thakur and Srivastava (2017) suggested that managers initiate open communications while honoring existing practices of the organization. To reduce resistance, training is required, which explains why adapting to change is difficult for employees in organizations.

In a subsequent study, Zhang (2019) posited that employee pressure and employee resistance are caused by organizational change. Zhang used Jingyi Network Co. Limited as a case study for understanding the nature of resistance to change by employees. Zhang identified organizational structure change, organizational personnel change, organizational technology change, and organizational culture change as categories when dealing with change management. Zhang concluded that organizational members would resist change at the introduction of new technologies or any structural change because they are afraid of uncertainty, failure, and collective interests that are uncoordinated in the change processes.

Zhang (2019) identified four ways by which resistance to change may be displayed by employees. First, employees may become inactive and not add to the objectives of the firm. Second, there may be an increase in the difficulty of business management. Third, there may be a hindrance to the formulation of corporate policies. Last, the environment may become unconducive to integrating technologies and resources. Thakur and Srivastava (2018) reflected how readiness to change reduces the impact of resistance to change during organizational change. Allaovi and Benmoussa (2020) revealed that individual, organization, and group factors have a positive impact on employees' attitudes toward change with lean but individual factors are more important than other factors. Srivastava and Agrawal (2020) found out that resistance to change is an antecedent to the turnover intention which often represents employee's voluntary turnover in the future. Liu et al. (2021) investigated how the uncertainty of gaining legitimacy from organizational change can result in resistance to change through the mediating variable of organizational readiness for change.

As with the work of Jain et al. (2018), Zhang (2019) provided four ways to deal with resistance to change. First, the company must implement an educational communication negotiation for employees. Second, organizational leaders must encourage employees to participate in organizational change actively. Third, manipulation may be used in a subtle manner such that employees can see the benefits of change. Last, enforcement measures may be used to coerce or enforce change, especially if the change is necessary. Zhang's attempt to explain the nature of resistance to change in Jingyi Network Co. Limited resulted in the conclusion that employee pressure is an important factor caused by organizational change and can lead to change resistance.

Van Marrewijk (2018) suggested a framework used to understand organizational change objectives is required in the process of organizational change and resistance. The argument postulated by the authors is that planned change is a multiauthored process—one in which middle managers can simultaneously be supporters of change as well as resisters to the implementation of changes. The research adopted the following methods for gathering information: participant observation, observation, semistructured interviews, and informal talks with 30 participants. In the analysis of the research, an intriguing phenomenon that emerged from this study was the resistance of middle managers to bottom-up innovations proposed by the workgroups (participants).

Van Marrewijk (2018) used Lewin's three-step model to explain how middle managers can align with organizational change. Burnes (2019) described the importance of unfreezing the old or temporary organization by creating the need for change. During the change, all agents must see the change process as a multilevel change. Refreezing is an important stage in the change management process to enable the continuous development of new practices. Van Marrewijk's attempt to link Lewin's change model with change resistance aligns with the proposition that understanding organizational change objectives and change work are necessary for the process of organizational change and resistance.

The readiness to change is a significant aspect of any successful implementation of organizational change. Matthysen and Harris (2018) suggested that work engagement for employees must ensure that employees are dedicated as well as committed to the goals of organizations to gain organizational success. Results from this quantitative study indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between readiness to change and work engagement if the organizational change processes are well defined. In ensuring high levels of work engagement from employees, management should provide work conditions of high levels of readiness to change from employees. Also, several factors influence an acceptance to change, such as the process of change (quality of communication, support provided by supervisors, the attitude of top management), the climate of change (trust in leadership), and readiness to change (emotional readiness and cognitive readiness).

In the work of Aninkan (2018), change is imminent in any organizational life cycle and is an integral aspect of nature. Resistance is an important aspect of change (Aninkan, 2018). Aninkan described the relationship between change management and addressing resistance to change as mutually inclusive outcomes. Aninkan demonstrated that for any successful organizational change to occur, it must have benefited from the inspiration and commitment of both organizational leadership and corporate citizenship. First, participation and communication in any change process help to improve employee trust and decrease resistance to change. Second, two out of three change initiatives fail because of the inability to manage change effectively. Handling change is a significant determinant of organizational success, which reveals that change is imminent and forms an inseparable aspect of nature. Individuals embracing a proposed organizational change depend on a cost-benefit analysis of the personal implications of the content and the process of change leading to the emergence of attitudes (Cai et al., 2018; Jabbarian & Chegini, 2017). Employees' attitudes are an important element to consider during the implementation of change because negative attitudes relate to resistance to change. The relationships between employee adaptability (pre-change and outcomes during change) correspond to Lewin's unfreezing period (Van Den Heuvel et al., 2016).

Perceptions of Organizational Change

The discussions on organizational change have taken several dimensions, with some researchers acknowledging that employees should be carried along throughout the process. Few researchers have sought to understand how human resource (HR) professionals and practitioners view organizational change. In a research paper by Baran et al. (2019), human resource (HR) practitioners view organizational change and their roles to reshape these perceptions as a foundation for seeing the opportunities and challenges. Baran et al. concluded that HR practitioners have failed to consider the roles and perceptions of employees in an organizational change process. Gover et al., (2016) combined the perspectives of both researchers and individuals' views on the culture of change. Employees have mixed feelings regarding the extent to which they support or refute existing research on organizational culture change.

Aharonon et al. (2018) asserted that organizational change should be implemented in a top-down hierarchical manner. Aharonon et al. used a case for organizational change among midlevel clinical staff in a hospital to demonstrate how success is often tied to the employees involved, including their awareness of the change, personal engagement, and taking ownership of it. The perspective of the employees in initiating, and managing change is important in achieving success in the change process to manage employees' concerns and alleviate negative expectations. Findings revealed that some clinical staff expressed apprehension and held negative expectations regarding the organizational change. Inadequate staffing in a change management environment is also a concern to manage the change process effectively (Baran et al., 2019). Baran et al. concluded that employees viewed their role in organizational change as limited, which led to apprehension.

Dhir and Shukla (2019) provided a synthesis of change management views in their research. Dhir and Shukla explored the role of employees' perceptions about the organizational image and the link with the investment of employees' energies into their work roles, resulting in employee engagement. Using cross-sectional data and a quantitative research method, data were collected from 701 managers in India holding various positions. Employers must be aware of creating a positive image and environment for the organization where the employees can engage in their jobs and contribute meaningfully to the organization (Dhir & Shukla, 2019).

Thomas et al. (2019) highlighted a common reality that has eluded most research, which is the continuous attempt by researchers to ignore the role of employees in the change process, opting to blame them when the change fails. According to the authors, managers may consider the involvement of employees only during the implementation stage by way of announcements and directives after some top-level meetings where employees are not involved or represented. This research was conducted in Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company , a top governmental organization in Zimbabwe that has undergone over five major organizational changes between 2009 and 2016. While the authors used the following change models: Lewin's three-step change model, McKinsey's 7S model, Kotter's eight-step change model, and the ADKAR model, they found that employees are rarely involved in the change process as managers continue to develop strategies that do not consider the opinions and views of employees. Researchers have shown that employees can have the same perception of organizational changes even though their organization is at different stages of Lewin's change model.

Adda et al. (2019) noted no differences in perceptions of employees regarding organizational change despite experiencing different levels of change. Adda et al. explored the perceptions of employees toward the implementation of organizational change and leadership in two leading banks (PT Bank, Negara Indonesia, and PT Bank, Syariah Mandiri) in Indonesia. Employees viewed the leaders' behavior in managing organizational change influenced both the policy and decision making as the most important element in achieving organizational goals and if not well managed, will lead to resistance.

The findings of Adda et al. (2019) are similar to that of Alannah and Simon (2017). Alannah and Simon found that when employees reflect on an assessment of the harm that is yet to occur, employees become stressed and apprehensive which could lead to resistance to change. Alannah and Simon studied employees of a manufacturing organization in the Philippines with a sample size of 273 participants. The two main reasons why employees have a poor perception of change are past experiences during an organizational change and cynicism about change, where employees have been exposed to a system where changes have been unsuccessful (Alannah & Simon, 2017).

Drawing on insights from the change experience research, the purpose of this paper was to examine the influence of managers' experiences, as change recipients, on organizational change implemented by the managers (Ozawa, 2019). According to Ozawa, managers' successful experience to implement large changes decreases the possibility of a large change in the future. The extant change experience studies have examined the influence of the results of previous change on further change and concluded that prior change does not necessarily affect the results or success of a future change. Managers' experiences as change recipients were found to be a significant determinant of organizational change. The amount of change these managers experience is positively associated with the magnitude of organizational change that they implement, which is why past change experiences in each organization positively moderate this relationship.

Role of Leadership in the Organizational Change Process

Sparr (2018) evaluated that both leaders and followers experience paradoxical tensions, to which both parties react differently. While organizational leaders are anxious to get the change implemented on time, employees form an attitude of resistance to change by reacting defensively, thereby resulting in an organizational crisis. According to the author, leaders' sense-giving about paradoxes to followers is based on their sense-making processes. Stimulating followers to engage in paradoxical sense-making is seen as a crucial boundary for followers' fairness evaluations which impacts their subsequent reactions to paradoxical tensions (Sparr, 2018). It is important to understand the interplay between destructive leadership and organizational change. The study used the management theory model to understand employees' reactions to paradoxical tensions in organizational change through the role of leadership traits.

Duru et al. (2017) studied the influence of leadership style on organizational productivity during an organizational change. The authors made a case for the Nigeria National Hospital, which is facing frequent organizational changes due to technological breakthroughs. The study has important implications for the management of the health sector in various organizations. One such implication is that leaders play a strategic role as communicators, innovators, and change agents. The results of the study may encourage investment in management practices, particularly management control, and demonstrate the importance of ensuring that indigenous small-scale operators are socially responsible and ethical in operation.

Using a case study approach, Levene and Higgs (2018) explored leadership styles and strategic change implementation within a Russian context. The nature and impact of leadership in the context of change in Russian organizations were explored using a case-study design that employed the use of 20 interviews with top managers. The authors found that beyond understanding the concept of organizational change, leadership style can significantly impact the success or failure of an organizational change. Levene and Higgs's study may contribute to the emerging literature on change leadership by responding to the calls for more empirical work to support the predominantly conceptual and theory-free literature in the field. One finding in Levene and Higgs's research is that the general applicability of transformational leadership in any organizational change increases the success rate of that change project.

When synthesizing the view of Duru et al. (2019) and Levene and Higgs (2018), one point to note is the existence of empirical evidence of the value of a relational style to ensure effective change implementation. Leadership skills are exceptionally essential in the success of change within the organization (Hassan, 2019). Hassan's adoption of Kotter's eight-step change model followed other researchers' patterns of examining change through the lens of theory. This research mentioned Lewin's three-stage change model, where a leader's intuition and ability to take precautions are fundamental in inspiring confidence. As change must go through the stages of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, Hassan reviewed several leadership styles ranging from democratic leadership, strategic leadership, authoritarian leadership, laissez-faire leadership, servant leadership, transactional leadership, consultative/participative leadership, transformational leadership, and bureaucratic leadership. Levene and Higgs found that leadership styles are enablers and promoters of the change management processes. For example, the author asserted that the leadership style in organizational change management is useful in understanding how a leadership style can positively or negatively affect a change project (Hassan, 2019).

In the mining industry, integration has been identified as the way forward as more mining companies are introducing and implementing the international standard organization standards. Miletic (2019) appraised the proactive role of management in the practice of permanent and universal modeling of an organization – one that is charged with the responsibility of managing change in the mining industry. The findings from Miletic's studies revealed the original methodology of multicriteria analysis advantages of the mining companies in an attempt to show how changes can be managed, analyzing the five most significant advantages, which are teamwork, knowledge management, staff competence, equipment, and implementation of the integrated management system.

Glaser (2017) underscored the importance of design performances as a catalyst for understanding how organizations intentionally change routines. The researcher provided a theoretical framework explaining how organizations use design performances to change routines by studying the actions associated with the design of an artifact intended to change a routine. Regarding leader behavior, change seems to create a context that is particularly conducive to destructive leader behavior due to a lack of checks and balances, and the ambiguity that often characterizes change. Neves and Schyns (2018) examined how leadership behavior can dampen the benefits of organizational change, thereby affecting employees' behavior. For example, Neves and Schyns found that changes in followers' tasks might come across as arbitrary without a full understanding of the new needs of the organization. Leaders must demonstrate the need to understand how their leadership style influences change and followers.

Hurdubei and Profirous (2019) believed that if an organization chooses the path of change as a means of getting to the desired state, management must consider the impact of such changes on the employees and how it will reinforce their behavior. Hurdubei and Profirous's study, which was used to survey 217 employees, comprising 65% of the employees responded that their manager gives feedback on performance and advice regarding how to improve regardless of performance rating. Other success factors for successful change identified were leadership support and buy-in and willingness to share responsibility (Hurdubei & Profirous, 2019).

Choi et al. (2019) stated that organizational change is mostly driven by a quest to attain the desired future. Attribution to constructive intentionality diminishes undesirable implementation behavior among employees, such as avoiding or ignoring innovation. organizational changes that are not adequately communicated but led by competent leaders that have organizational commitment may still lead to resistance and reinforce negative employee behavior. Yang et al. (2018) emphasized the recognition of the importance of individual-level factors, including the leadership approach in understanding organizational change by focusing on the micro-level dynamics of various psychological and behavioral factors. Either way, leaders have an important role to play in an organizational change process. For example, the role of leaders in organizational change was discussed in several articles (Hussain et al., 2018).

Coban et al. (2019) conducted research to identify the relationship between the strategic leadership levels of top managers working at the Ministry of National Education and their organizational change management capacity. Organizational citizenship levels of organizational commitment of the employees in an organization can reveal the opinions of the employees which have consequences for organizational change. Coban et al. stated that the research aimed to manifest the relationship of strategical leadership behavior of top managers at Ministry of National Education, thereby suggesting that the research audience are managers who are seeking to explore the relationships between strategic leadership and organizational change which have implications for employees' behavior.

In many organizations, change and dynamics are the framework and responsibility of the leadership, regardless of the approach to implementation. Engel et al. (2017) examined organizational change within the healthcare sector to expand the understanding of middle managers' influence in organizations by looking at their activities through the lens of two complementary conceptual frameworks. Engel et al. acknowledged that middle managers perform an important role in executing changes in hospitals by serving as a bridge between senior leaders and frontline staff. When comparing middle-manager behaviors in both high and low change sites, the activities and interactions described differed between the groups. Middle managers can use strategies identified in their analyses to guide and improve their effectiveness in implementing new practices (Rosebaum et al., 2017). Rosebaum et al. concluded that there is a need to focus on substantial aspects of planning organizational change. According to the authors, these include formal reflection for change agents and change recipients, development of trust and confidence in the organization before the precise change, and the sequencing of events from a planning perspective.

Effects of Organizational Change on Employees

The outcomes of an organizational change can have a lasting effect on employees (Jones et al., 2018). Change is a continuous process for most managers, as business dynamism is always changing. Consequently, leadership development, organizational change, and change management have become top priorities for many HR development practitioners. Organizational visions are rarely accepted by employees in their current work assignments, and this explains why most change processes fail (Jones et al., 2018). Using a democratic or participative leadership style does not immediately guarantee success because employees require time to examine the new change as introduced. Although the authors attempted to answer two key questions on determining the reality of change program failure compared to the 70% failure rate rhetoric and presenting the most frequently used leadership styles in times of change, it appeared that only the second question was answered. Jones et al. gave a review on what could be responsible for a 70% failure rate rhetoric in organizational change. Employee participation in the implementation of planning or involvement in a pilot program will help to increase commitment and deepen organizational knowledge, which can help in change acceptance (Jones et al., 2018).

Bickerich et al., (2018) explained how middle management deals with organizational change as they are always caught in between top management's decision to change and executing the change projects they were never involved in. Employees' anticipations and expectations are negatively affected when they are not carried along in the change processes. During the pre-coaching phase, the executives spoke about their needs and expectations during a change as well as the benefits of coaching to meet their goals, which motivated the choice to engage in coaching. During coaching, their expectations for coaching focused on reactions arising from the change and the need to engage in leadership behavior (Bickerich et al., 2018). A lack of understanding, anger, anxiety, and operational performance losses—both at the individual and the corporate level—are among the effects of an organizational change (Busse et al., 2018). The authors (Bickerich et al., 2019) adopted Kotter's eight steps change management model in explaining how to tailor the model to organizational change and shed more light on compliance codes and their effects on employee acceptance and performance.

Hellman et al. (2019) mentioned that organizational members could expect to enjoy the benefits of organizational change when they contribute to the change. Employee participation gives employees the experiences of empowerment and collective efficacy, which in turn helps to improve their overall working conditions. Hellman et al. adopted the Stamina theory, which supports the model that aims to concretize systematic work environment management. This is qualitative research with semi-structured, focus-group interviews, including 45 employees from six workgroups. Also, 18 focus group interviews were conducted for two years. Results from the interviews revealed that shifting focus from an individual to an organizational perspective of work illustrates how communication and increased understanding can change over time with a more in-depth focus on the operations of the organization. The findings further revealed how the employees shifted their view of the work situation from an individual perspective to an organizational perspective, pointing back to the rationale that employee participation can positively impact a change process.

Aharonon et al. (2018) appraised organizational change among mid-level clinical staff in a hospital to demonstrate how success is often tied to the actors involved, including their awareness of the change, personal engagement, and ownership of it. The study argued that it is important to understand prospectively how actors are involved in making sense of organizational change, potentially assuaging concerns, and alleviating negative expectations.

This study was part of a larger project exploring how frequent hospital redevelopment and the change influence the organization and staff involved where; the authors sought to empirically explore the experiences and understanding of staff in the early stages of a hospital organizational change and the strategies they use. Findings show that some clinical staff expressed apprehension and held negative expectations regarding the organizational change. There were also concerns about inadequate staffing and the potential for collaboration breakdown due to the new layout of workspaces, pointing back to the argument that an organizational change can have detrimental effects if not well managed.

In the study by Thomas et al. (2019), success hinges on the ability to envision, plan, and execute change. Thomas et al. used the following change models: Lewin's three-step change model, McKinsey 7s model, Kotter's eight-step change model, and the ADKAR model. The conceptual framework encompassed culture, leadership, employee involvement, employee commitment, and communication, which are essential for effective and successful change. The interviews were carried out on eight supervisory staff who were mandated to execute organizational change despite not being carried along. According to the supervisory staff (managers), proper planning, coordination and communication enhance the extent to which change is successfully implemented. These two studies demonstrated how organizational change could affect employees psychologically and mentally. Thomas et al.'s study focused on Zimbabwe's Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company, a top governmental organization in Zimbabwe that has undergone over five major organizational changes between 2009 and 2016, and strategies such as communication and engagement were suggested as strategies.

Strategies for Effective Organizational Change Management

Cusick (2018) provided a rationale for the role of communication as an effective strategy for organizational change management. Results from Cusick's research showed that while much of the change plan focused on communications, it was balanced out with technical planning and the definition of leadership roles. Some employees interviewed in the research stated that they did get support from human resources and communications specialists who were only introduced to the project in support functions. Cusick explored how to use Kotter’s 8-step process to establish a division-wide IT operations team under a unified chief information officer leadership. There were strong connections between Steps 1 through 7 of Kotter’s change model. As with previous studies, the challenge has always been the eighth step of the model, which is anchoring new approaches in an organization.

Eriksson and Fundin (2018) appraised the relevance of communication as the tool used by leadership for effective strategic implementation. Concerning U.S health care, Mouhamadou et al. (2017) asserted that transformational leadership and communication are strategies for managing change. Unsuccessful change initiatives can have long-lasting negative effects on the employee if the right leadership style is not adopted in the organization. Management transparency and communication are very critical to the beginning of change initiatives (Allaovi & Benmoussa, 2020; Phaneuf et al., 2019).

In another qualitative research by Kral and Kralova (2019), organizational change is an apparent indicator and clear evidence of discrete organizational change. Change management precedes the change in the organizational structure which includes the ability to initiate change and rationalize the change of organizational structure (Kral & Kralova, 2019). The leading component of the change originates from the terms of approach, and communication is an important factor. An organization could respond to environmental changes by changing its strategy, and communication strategies. These findings demonstrate the important role of communication in organizational change as evident in all the four organizations in the research by Kral and Kralova. There were varying degrees of change acceptance across the sampled organizations, but the importance of communication remained constant (Kral & Kralova, 2019).

A similarity between the works of Cusick (2018) and Kral and Kralova (2019) is that both works acknowledged the importance of communication and that only continuous, frequent, and reciprocal communication can allow companies to achieve positive outcomes of organizational change. Smollan and Morrison (2019) acknowledged that a well-planned and highly participative program of change management will lead to positive perceptions of aesthetic design, open communication, collegiality, egalitarianism, and inclusiveness. Smollan and Morrison compared the different employee perceptions of the success of an organizational change by conducting 25 interviews in a New Zealand law firm that 6 months earlier had moved to new premises. Smollan and Morrison demonstrated that the roles of communication and culture—in particular, collegiality and egalitarianism—were salient factors in a complex web of causes and consequences in this context of change. Employee response to any transition to open-plan offices can be hostile and resisting. Firms can guard against such negative reactions by involving all members in the change process and developing and sustaining an organizational culture that places a strong value on communication, collegiality, and inclusiveness.

Lauzikas and Miliute (2019) concluded that communication efficiency and effectiveness among employees of the Lithuanian civil service organizations was an effective strategy for managing change. In a similar change effectiveness study, Kellogg (2019) examined how managers bring about micro-level institutional change in a professional setting where employees are involved in challenging and specialized activities. Kellogg identified factors affecting organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) for employees to include performance evaluations, managers' rewards, and employee withdrawal, which is why organizational leaders must be proactive in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of OCB. Kellogg identified organizational change among employees of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Force to explain how OCB works within an organization. Duru et al. (2017) explored the use of transformational and collaborative leadership styles during an organizational change. Duru et al. studied the reactions of midlevel staff toward leadership during organizational change and the various types of leadership styles. Organizational change management is important because, at the most rudimentary level, it involves some degree of loss, such as loss of stability, expertise, and understanding among staff in the organization.

Supporting and Contrasting Change Models

Lewin's Change Model

Lewin's change model as an alternative conceptual framework is considered for this study. Lewin (1945) posited that leaders required a robust understanding of addressing change dynamics. Lewin's change model can be traced to 1951 when the focus was on a planned change that related to group decisions, implementation, and social change. Lewin's model is a popular approach and is one of the foundation models for understanding organizational change (Hussain et al., 2018). Lewin's model was considered as being potentially applicable to the study because the model is used to understand how leaders could modify policies, develop initiatives for change implementation, and execute the change initiatives.

Lewin (1951), a physicist and social scientist, explained organizational change using the analogy of changing the shape of a block of ice. Lewin's model reflects a series of three steps that constitute the change process: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. Lewin's three-step process influenced change management research over many decades (Eriksson & Fundin, 2018). The model includes creating the motivation to change, moving through the change process by promoting effective communication, empowering people to embrace new ways of working, and reaching a sense of stability (Huarng & Mas-Tur, 2016).

Unfreezing. The first stage of Lewin's model involves preparing the organization to embrace the change as a necessity through breaking down the existing status quo and challenging currently defined beliefs and values. Unfreezing is the state of unleashing the current system or procedure as an urgent concern (Lewin, 1951). Lewin compared status in organizations to a block of ice that needs defrosting to function in another state; otherwise, organizations will resist change. Lewin's notion of unfreezing suggests that inertial forces must be overcome to introduce a period of fluidity and change (Jones & Van de Ven, 2016). Clear reasons for change include dealing with organizational behavior regarding thinking, processes, and structures (Jones & Van de Ven, 2016).

Changing. The second step of Lewin's model involves people resolving their uncertainty and starting to believe and act in ways that support the new direction with proactive participation as people need time to understand the changes and feel connected.

Once a block of ice is defrosted, it will begin to flow, move, or transition (Lewin, 1951). Changing is the state of moving forward from the old system into the new system, and it requires the processes in transition (Jalagat, 2016). Change causes uncertainty and fear as employees adapt to new ways of operating (Militaru & Zanfir, 2016). According to Lewin, a new change is the beginning of organizational change into a new level of equilibrium. Employees begin to move into a new state of being while connecting with the managers through a change of tasks and structures (Appelbaum et al., 2017).

Refreezing. The third phase of Lewin's model indicates that the changes take shape and that employees feel confident and comfortable with the new ways of working. New behaviors and processes are formalized to make sure the changes are incorporated into everyday business operations (Burnes, 2004). The key objective is to stabilize the group and to institutionalize new behaviors through policies as a new culture to avoid regressing to the old ones (Lewin, 1951). The new behaviors should match the new environment brought about by the change. The refreezing stage is about consolidating the successful change made in the organization and ensuring there is no digressing from the newly attained stage of organizational advancement (Issah & Zimmerman, 2016).

Van den Heuvel et al. (2016) affirmed Lewin's model as a guideline, which can help to predict and resolve individual resistance to change. The authors contended that leaders who are aware of the three stages can better manage change and improve their success when implementing organizational change initiatives. Lewin's theory stipulated that individuals and groups of individuals are influenced by restraining forces that counter negative driving forces aimed at keeping the status quo and positive driving forces that push in the direction that causes change to happen; this tension between the driving and restraining maintains equilibrium (Appelbaum et al., 2017). This equilibrium allows for smooth changes within an organization to take place.

McKinsey 7S Change Model

McKinsey's 7S framework was developed by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman (1982), two consultants working at the McKinsey and Company consulting firm. Peters and Waterman designed the model as a tool for monitoring change while employed by McKinsey. They combined three hard and four soft change elements. The hard areas consist of the system, strategy, and structure. In contrast, the soft system areas include skills, style, staff, and shared values, which generally are difficult to manage but are considered the foundations of the organization and are a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Jalagat, 2016). McKinsey's model suggests that a successful transformation depends on the ability of leaders to tell a compelling story, model the desired behavioral changes, and reinforce employees for getting in line (Kaiser, 2018). The model encourages interdependency of the elements for managing a successful implementation of change from a shared values perspective.

Strategy. This element refers to a plan that is developed to achieve sustained competitive advantage that is also aligned with the six other elements of McKinsey's 7S model (Peters & Waterman, 1982). This parameter is also a sound strategy, usually a long-term strategy that is reinforced by a strong mission, vision, and values. The key in the 7S model is to consider if the strategy is aligned with the other elements.

Structure. This element considers the organizational chart of the company concerning the departments with the corresponding responsibilities and accountabilities of the workforce, and the hierarchy. Most organizations use formal channels of communication (Kirschenboim, 2018). The argument is that the organizational structure must be designed in such a way that information is not choked (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

System. This is a hard area that refers to the processes and procedures that the company possesses that reflect the daily activities and how the decisions are made. The central idea here is that internal processes and procedures should facilitate good communication and understanding how effective the processes are in maintaining the correct flow is imperative (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Skills. This element represents dominating attributes, competencies, or capabilities that the organization is best at. In times of organizational changes, the question of what skills are required to reinforce a new strategy or structure is addressed. Communication can flow smoothly if the staff possesses the right skills (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Staff. This element is concerned with the number and profiles of the employees needed by an organization, and how they can be recruited, trained, motivated, and rewarded (Gokdeniz et al., 2017). People are considered to be a pool of resources to be nurtured, developed, guarded, and allocated (Kirschenboim, 2018). The staff element can facilitate effective communication, and value needs to be attached to communication skills during both recruitment and selection.

Style. This element relates to the ways and means the top management uses to promote a culture of open communication, and the impact on the performance of the entire organization. The style aspect relates to how leadership styles influence the performance of the whole organization (Jalagat, 2016). Style is an essential element of effective strategy implementation (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Shared Values. This soft area reflects the organizations' belief systems and attitudes, and the norms serve as a guide to employees' behaviors (Jalagat, 2016). Gokdeniz et al. (2017) consider this element central to the model. According to Peters and Waterman (1982), the shared values area is the foundation of any firm.

The ADKAR Change Model

The ADKAR model is one of the most commonly known and used change models developed in the form of a book by Jeff Hiatt in 2006 (Das, 2019). The model consists of five elements that define the basic building blocks for successful change. Essentially, it is an acronym that spells out the five stages of change: Awareness of the need for change; Desire to support and participate in the change; Knowledge of how to change; Ability to implement required skills and behaviors; and Reinforcement to sustain the change (Wong et al., 2019). According to Hiatt (2006), the ADKAR model structure is meant to be used as an individual change management model. It represents the essential elements of the change of a single person or group (Al-Alawi et al., 2019). Its main focus is on the personal perception and implementation of the change (Das, 2019).

1. Awareness of the need for change: This represents a person's or organization's understanding of the nature of the change, why the change is being made, and the

risk associated with not changing. Awareness also includes information about the internal and external drivers creating the need for change (Hiatt, 2006).

2. Desire to support and participate in the change: This involves the willingness to support and engage in a change. It is influenced by the nature of the change and individuals' situations, as well as intrinsic motivators (Hiatt, 2006).
3. Knowledge of how to change: This implies the training and education necessary to know how to change. It includes information about behaviors, processes, systems, and skills needed to implement a change (Hiatt, 2006).
4. Ability to launch the required skills and behaviors: This represents the implementation of the change. It is about turning knowledge into action (Hiatt, 2006).
5. Reinforcement to ascertain the change: This implies the internal and external factors that sustain a change. It could include recognition and rewards tied to the change execution. Internal reinforcement could be a person's internal satisfaction with their achievement or other personal benefits (Hiatt, 2006).

The ADKAR model is a description of successful change at the individual level and outlines the goals or outcomes of successful change. The success or failure of organizational change depends on the unique contributions of the people involved (Hiatt, 2006). The model is based on the premise that organizations do not change; it is the people within organizations who change. It provides a goal-oriented framework to help managers convey the change's objectives before the process is initiated (Das, 2019). A model is a tool for planning change management activities, diagnosing gaps, developing corrective action, and supporting managers and team leaders (Hiatt, 2006). Using the ADKAR change model allows various goals to be met, and for change management teams to focus on steps, outcomes, and results that can be sustained and implemented, which overall satisfaction is an important factor of the ADKAR model.

Conceptual Framework Analysis and Rationale for Selecting Kotter's Model

For this study, I considered four conceptual frameworks: Kotter's eight-step plan, Lewin's three-step change model, McKinsey's 7S model by Peters and Waterman, and the ADKAR plan. Each model begins with the past or current state and ends with a current or future state. Lewin's three steps, Kotter's eight-stage process, the McKinsey 7S model, and the ADKAR plan, are also all similar when viewed as processes. Kotter (1996) suggested an eight-stage process for managing change. While Kotter did not relate those stages to Lewin's (1951) model, it is possible to align these two theories in a comparative model. Lewin wrote about the sociology of change at the individual behavioral level. By aligning Lewin's phases with Kotter's eight stages, the parallels between their concepts become evident, while adding the sociological insight to Lewin.

The work of academics and practitioners serving organizations overlapped. Kotter, for example, developed his theory as a consultant with over 100 companies while working as a professor at Harvard University (Hughes, 2016). On the other hand, Peter and Waterman, like many practitioners who worked for a consulting company that delivered change management services to organizations, are frequently cited by scholars such as Burke (2018). Lewin (1951) worked exclusively on social dynamics and rooted his theory in cultural and behavioral change. Nevertheless, there has been some criticism of all these theories. For instance, Nystrom et al. (2013) suggested that most of the widely accepted theories of change were similar and seemed either incomplete or oversimplified. Burke (2018) noted that most theories and principles had a tendency to oversimplify actual change and overlooked the ambiguity and complexity of effecting behavioral or cultural change. Burke suggested that change is rooted in psychological and behavioral theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Because of the failure to address behavioral and psychological dynamics, Burke believed that the change theories submitted by others were incomplete. according to Burke, Kotter's model presented a logical, sequential approach for organizational change, stressing change as a procedural activity; but did not emphasize behavioral aspects.

Each of Kotter's steps takes a similar approach for engaging personnel in that particular step, and each step is intended to effect behavioral change as part of the organizational change. Kotter's model is not without limitations. Although there is significant support in the contextual dimensions, there is debate on the sequencing of the eight steps and on whether change factors are continuous or simultaneous. Sometimes, some steps are skipped, yet good results are achieved (Baloh et al., 2017). The ADKAR model was used for many reasons, such as allowing the management to separate the change process into parts, pinpointing where change is failing, and addressing that impact point. Hiatt (2006) shows that problems with the people and the dimension of change are the most commonly cited reasons for project failures. By focusing on processes instead of people, ADKAR fails to consider a change to be a complex phenomenon that incorporates the interdependence of multiple variables.

McKinsey's 7S model sets various factors all working together to assess how a company can manage change. However, a quantifiable metric system is missing to measure the success capability of this change management tool (Gokdeniz et al., 2017). It is easy to understand the model, but it is challenging to apply it because of common misunderstandings of what well-aligned elements should be like. McKinsey's 7S model is used to acknowledge the structures needing attention as static or continuous elements of an organization. The change is mapped as a sequential process. Peters and Waterman (1982) considered the processes unique in every case and did not believe that a generalized process model was possible. They developed a unique process each time they engaged with a new client, suggesting that each effort is unique and it would be impossible to define a process before starting work with a client. The strengths of McKinsey's 7S model are (a) the description of organizational variables that convey obvious importance, (b) the recognition of the importance of the interrelationships among all seven variables, and (c) the application of its generic form in an effortless manner. The limitations of the model are the lack of variables addressing external factors and performance-related issues. This flaw seems to be driven by its origin, which is the practice as opposed to theory (Kaiser, 2018).

Kurt Lewin has been regarded as the pioneer of planned change (Bakari et al., 2017). Lewin's work dominated the theory and practice of change management for years. The model's approach to change attracted major criticism as many have argued that his approach was too simplistic and mechanistic for a world where organizational change is a continuous and open-ended process (Burke, 2018). Lewin's three-step model, though, is considered to be the basis for multiple change frameworks, it has been criticized for its linearity and inability to incorporate leader-follower relationship dynamics. Also, the focus of Lewin's model was on levels of group performance, not organizational change; the model did not consider the multiple sequences, timing, pacing, rhythm, and polyphonic components of change; and did not discuss the influential role of the change agent (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015).

Cummings et al. (2016) opined that contrary to what academic writers think, change as a three-step model, which has been widely regarded as foundational work in change management literature, was not proposed and developed by Lewin. Despite this assertion, the use of Lewin's theory is alive and continues to be utilized in a variety of applications by both academics and practitioners. Empirical findings show the continuing relevance of Lewin's work in the way it is being linked to and used alongside newer change tools and techniques, such as collaborative inquiry, authentic leadership, and motivational interviewing. Lewin's participative approach to behavioral change, which unites theory and practice, is still a valid and useful mechanism for promoting change (Endrejat et al., 2017).

Burke (2018) appraised three aspects of change to be equally addressed for an organizational change initiative implementation to succeed. The first factor is the process, the second is the framework, and the third is behavioral change. The process lays out the stepwise approach from a start to a future end state. The framework defines the scope of the organizational structure within which the change occurs. The social element addresses organizational acceptance and behavior change. Over time, change management scholars have developed newer models for managing change. Different authors assigned different weights or priorities to each, but at some level, they recognized a need to address the three elements in an organizational change initiative (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015).

In summary, each theory addresses a part of what would be a comprehensive model while either vaguely referring to the other parts or not addressing them at all. The application of most of the process models falls in three types of widely accepted approaches to change, namely: planned, emergent, and contingency. Kotter's model has an adequate conceptual framework to support, explain, and inform my research. Despite the popularity and feasible application of other models of change, Kotter's model of change offers a practical perspective on implementing organizational change initiatives. After exploring and identifying the conceptual framework for this study, I focused on six areas related to the organizational change management process and its impacts on employees. They include: (a) understanding organizational change; (b) resistance to organizational change; (c) perceptions of organizational change; (d) the roles of leadership in the organizational change process; (e) effects of organizational change on employees; and (f) strategies for effective organizational change management.

Transition

In Section 1, I provided the foundation for this study. I presented the background of the problem, the problem and purpose statement, and the research and interview questions. Kotter's model of change was proposed as the conceptual framework for this study. I also discussed alternative concepts or models that could have been applicable to explore the strategies managers use to successfully involve employees in effecting organizational changes. The key terms used in the study were defined, and the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the research were presented. Then, the study's potential significance and potential for effecting general beneficial social change were presented. A review of the professional and academic literature was included in this section, which I concluded with a summary of the study's organization.

In Section 2 of this study, I include the purpose statement, review my role as the researcher, and I add a description and justification of the participants, an overview of the research method and design, population and sampling method, and assurances demonstrating that the study was conducted ethically. I also explain the data collection instrument, data collection technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, and processes for assuring and demonstrating the study's reliability and validity. Section 3 includes the research study findings, with applications to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes a restatement of the purpose statement and a description of the role of the researcher, participants, and research methodology and design. The section also contains information about the population and sampling method, ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, and data organization techniques. I conclude this section with a discussion of data analysis, reliability, and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that public sector managers use to include employees in the implementation of organizational change. The target population consisted of eight managers within a single public sector organization in Nigeria with a minimum of 10 years of managerial experience in implementing successful change initiatives that include employees. An implication for positive social change is the enhancement of public sector managers’ capacity to provide critical services to members of the communities in their organizations’ service areas.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, researchers are the main instruments for collecting data because they initiate and conduct the study (Saxena, 2017). Researchers also make key decisions regarding the research question, the composition of the sample, and the selection of participants; researchers are also the source of ideas for the study (Teusner, 2016). I served as the primary collection instrument in data collection.

My primary source of data were open-ended interviews with eight participants who are managers in the chosen organization. Supportive data were collected via the company's website and physical documentation of policies and procedures. The 1979 Belmont Report provides a summary of the ethical principles mandated by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects for Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). The Belmont Report defines the boundaries for assessing the risk–benefit criteria used to decide the appropriateness of the research. The Belmont Report also defines the ethical principles for selecting participants for research as well as the definition of what constitutes informed consent for behavioral research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I selected participants and sought their consent following and within the boundaries of the Belmont Report. I made known the ethical guidelines and policies that governed this study to all participants via an informed consent letter before starting the interviews. I abided by the ethical principles of the Belmont Report in this research.

The nature of qualitative research makes it easy for researcher bias to occur as a researcher's experience can influence research validity and reliability (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016). To minimize personal bias, I used an interview protocol with a preestablished standardized process to interview each participant. The interview protocol included the rationale for interviews, an introduction, and open-ended questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). An interview protocol serves as a guide for researchers when conducting interviews with research participants (Besley et al., 2016). Yin (2018) recommended interviewing at least three participants to achieve data saturation. I interviewed eight participants. I used predetermined criteria to select participants and to ensure that participants were chosen based on their ability to provide rich interpretations of the phenomenon.

Methodological triangulation is used by researchers to demonstrate complementarity or the coming together of data from different sources to enhance the validity of the case study findings (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Without conducting triangulation, a researcher risks drawing misleading and inaccurate conclusions from the interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I conducted methodological triangulation by collecting multiple types of data via several data sources within the organization, such as the website and archival documentation of change planning evidence to support the data collected from the open-ended interview questions.

Participants

Participants sharing their experiences provide information that is not discoverable by any other means of collecting data (Bager, 2015). Qualitative researchers usually deal with a specific set of participants who are knowledgeable about the research topic (Sarma, 2015). The participants in this qualitative single case study were eight public sector managers in an organization located in Nigeria. According to Yin (2018), the researcher in a case study should select participants with relevant knowledge and experience in the research topic. The targeted participants were executive managers of a public sector organization who have successfully implemented organizational change strategies.

I used a purposive sampling technique to select the participants in this study. Cleary et al. (2014) recommended that selection criteria for study participants should be based on the ability of each participant to provide rich information in support of the research question and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. My experience as a former public servant provided me with network opportunities and an understanding of how the system functions and operates. I made contact via email requesting a meeting to discuss the purpose of the study. I also made contact via telephone to ensure the email was received and to provide any clarification if necessary. I developed a rapport with research participants to draw candid answers to the interview questions. I also established a working relationship with my research participants by calling and explaining the objectives of the research.

Protecting the identity of participants is a prime concern for researchers (Yin, 2018). I addressed participants' concerns by assuring them of the confidentiality of their information, and I adhered to the ethical standards outlined in the Belmont Report. I also explained the fundamentals and purpose of this study to each participant.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Researchers conduct studies to gain general and specific knowledge of phenomena (Razali et al., 2016). The three types of research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2018). Researchers use qualitative methodology to collect data and interpret the study results about the participants' experiences (Yin, 2018). Using qualitative methodology might improve the analysis of data and the validation of findings compared to other methodologies (Yin, 2018). Using qualitative methodology promotes the understanding of a phenomenon and gives voices to the participants (Welch et al., 2017). Petty et al. (2012) noted that participants' responses are captured in their words to express their personal views and perceived associations under qualitative methodology. I used the qualitative research method to explore the experiential views of the participants. In qualitative research, researchers gather data by asking open-ended questions during interviews and analyzing the data (Trotter, 2012). Asking open-ended questions allows researchers the opportunity to capture the views and experiences of the participants. The qualitative method was appropriate for my study to gain an extensive and in-depth understanding of public sector organization participants in Nigeria who have successfully implemented organizational change strategies.

A quantitative method is approach to explain phenomena using numerical data analyzed via mathematical methods (Yilmaz, 2018). Quantitative methods include closed-ended questions to assist researchers in obtaining a generalized pattern of responses by participants (Yilmaz, 2018). Quantitative researchers answer questions by using numbers as data for statistical analysis (Fetters, 2016). Because I was neither testing a hypothesis nor analyzing statistical data, the quantitative method was not suitable for my study. The mixed-methods approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to Fetters, the advantages of the mixed-methods approach include qualitative data for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and quantitative data for statistical analysis and detailed assessment of responses. A mixed-methods approach was not appropriate for this study because I did not need to integrate the participants' meanings, beliefs, and experiences with numerical data to achieve the purpose of my study.

Research Design

For this study**,** the three types of research design I considered to answer my research questions were case study, phenomenological, and ethnological designs. The case study design is used to investigate a real-life phenomenon in depth (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Researchers use case study design to explore issues or happenings to understand the how and why of those issues or happenings (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). After careful review, I decided the case study design was appropriate to assist in gaining more understanding of my research topic. Yin (2018) highlighted that researchers use case study research for a robust inquiry into a complex phenomenon within its real-world context. Researchers can explore issues and proffer solutions with a case study design.

Case study researchers use a single-case study design or a multiple-case study. Using a single-case study design enables researchers to have in-depth knowledge and gain a detailed understanding of a phenomenon, but a multiple-case study design helps researchers gain a broader understanding by analyzing data across different situations (Mukhija, 2010). Yin (2018) stated that a single case design is usually the most appropriate approach when the research is exploratory. For this study, I used an exploratory single case study design to study the uniqueness of the phenomenon in a particular organization. A single case study was an appropriate approach to exploring a phenomenon in which there are no right answers, but the intention is to provide a rich description of the phenomenon in its extraordinary setting (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

I used open-ended interview questions to gather data from participants to capture the experiences each participant has of the phenomenon in a single organization, which justifies the use of a single case study design. A multiple case study design is most appropriate when a researcher intends to explore the generality of the results by identifying and replicating themes in more than one case (Yin, 2018). Unlike a multiple case study design, a single case study allows a researcher to focus on the unique factors that contribute to a single organization (Yin, 2018). A multiple case study design was not appropriate for this study because the purpose was not to compare but rather to explore the phenomenon in a single setting.

The phenomenological design is appropriate for the study of existence. Here a researcher examines the meaning of the lived experiences of the individuals regarding a phenomenon (Hailemariam et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). Because this study’s purpose was to explore strategies public sector managers use to include employees in effecting organizational change, the phenomenological design was not appropriate for my study. Researchers conduct ethnographic studies to explore the culture of participants and develop a clearer understanding of an event or issue (Thomson et al., 2017). Thomson et al. added that the process promotes the understanding of the group’s belief systems, languages, and behaviors. I did not explore the cultures and belief systems of my research participants because that was not the focus of this study. After a review of the different research designs, I decided a single case study was appropriate to answer my research question.

Ensuring data saturation is important in qualitative research (Constantinou et al., 2017). Palinkas et al. (2015) indicated that a researcher must determine the number of interviews needed to reach the point of data saturation. Saturation does not require a large sample; however, it must include valid and accurate data (Yin, 2018). Data saturation is the point at which a researcher retrieves enough information to create themes and when no new themes, sources, or information emerges from the data (Saunders et al., 2018). According to Yin, using one to 10 participants provides enough participation to obtain data saturation. I interviewed eight participants. To ensure data saturation, I analyzed data from all interviews, company documents, and publicly available literature.

Population and Sampling

Participants are central to a study and should have similar experiences, show a willingness to participate, and be afforded the ability to speak freely (Yin, 2018). Participants in a study can provide useful insights into a research topic that other methods fail to discover (Yin, 2018). The population of the study consisted of eight managers within a single public sector organization in Nigeria who have successfully implemented organizational change strategies. This number of participants was sufficient because, according to Yin, using one to 10 participants provide enough data to obtain saturation.

I used purposeful sampling to recruit the participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) noted the importance of availability and willingness to participate and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. I used the purposeful sampling method called *criterion sampling* to select participants from managers in a public sector organization in Nigeria who have implemented organizational changes successfully. The criterion sampling method allows for the identification and selection of participants for the study based on predetermined criteria of importance (Palinkas et al., 2015). Palinkas et al. stated that purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative studies where participants who have a wide knowledge of the phenomenon of interest can be readily identified, particularly in cases where resources are limited to conduct the study and where potential participants with a rich source of information regarding the phenomenon are known. Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this case study because it allowed me to conduct an in-depth study of successful organizational change strategies. Purposeful sampling allowed me to concentrate on people with information to assist with my study.

Ethical Research

Ethical research in qualitative studies requires the researcher to consider the process for voluntary participation of participants and how the privacy and dignity of the participants will be protected (Bromley et al., 2015). The Belmont Report of 1979 requires the researcher to ensure that focus is placed on the well-being of the participants throughout the study (Bromley et al., 2015). I adhered to the ethical standards contained in the Belmont Report by (a) ensuring respect for participants, (b) disclosing the benefits and disadvantages of conducting the research, and (c) maintaining fairness in dealing with the participants. Before conducting this research, I performed a thorough review of Walden University's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) application process to ensure that all the IRB criteria are met before submitting for approval (11-29-21-1003464).

According to Lee et al., (2018), embracing transparency and data privacy establishes trust and encourages participants' engagement. A researcher should provide full disclosure to participants, including the purpose of the study, inclusion requirements, and nature of the research (Dranseika et al., 2017). I obtained explicit consent from participants regarding their willingness and availability to participate in the study. The consent form contained (a) the research and interview questions, (b) the purpose of the study, (c) a statement highlighting the recording process of the interview, and (d) a statement on the need to use secondary data to support the study, and (e) a statement on the confidentiality of the data to be collected. I offered participants an opportunity to ask questions before signing the consent form. The distribution of the consent form took place via email. Participants had the opportunity to withdraw from a study at any time by providing either verbal or written notice (Yin, 2018). Participants wishing to withdraw from my study were able to do so at any time before, during, or after the interview by informing me via my phone number or email of their unwillingness to continue with the study. I will keep copies of the consent forms and derivative records and electronically stored data for 5 years before shredding the derivative records and deleting the electronic data. There was no planned compensation to the participants for being part of the study.

Nevertheless, the study provided a platform for them to share their experiences with the change process in their organization.

Protecting the privacy of study participants is a significant principle of research ethics (Dranseika et al., 2017). The coding of participants' names and responses assisted in the maintenance of the confidentiality of participants' personal and business information (Yin, 2018). As a researcher, I was aware of the rights and confidentiality of all participants. I did not disclose the identities of the participants under any circumstances. I will store all recordings, notes, names of participants, and identification of the partnering organizations on a thumb drive in a lockbox for 5 years based on Walden's IRB recommendations.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. The researcher as an instrument in qualitative studies is opportune to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that can only be achieved through interactions with the participants (Leung, 2015). Selecting the most appropriate approach to data collection in qualitative research is critical to the content analysis's credibility (Elo et al., 2014). As the primary instrument for the proposed study, it was my responsibility to gather data effectively and objectively from all available sources to reinforce the research process' credibility and an understanding of the phenomenon studied

Researchers use case study research design to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its life context, especially when the boundary between the context and the phenomenon is unclear (Xiao & Smith, 2006). In interviews, the participants are allowed to freely share their experiences in response to research questions asked by the interviewer (Elmir et al., 2011). I used interviews to collect data from eight managers in a public sector organization on strategies used to effectively implement and perpetuate employees' participation and support for organizational change. Interviews allow researchers to ask and suggest clarifications on the how and why of key events and generate insights from the perspectives of the participants (Yin, 2018).

Data Collection Technique

To address the specific business problem of this study, which is the lack of strategies to include employees to implement organizational change, I identified a public organization in Nigeria that has implemented change management successfully and obtain permission by identifying the company's representative for signing an approved letter of cooperation (see Appendix C). I approached the head of human resources of the identified public organization with the inclusion criteria for interviewing eight of the organization's managers within a single public sector organization in Nigeria who have successfully implemented organizational change strategies. After obtaining approval from the institutional review board (IRB approval number 11-29-21-1003464), I sent eight invitation letters (see Appendix B). All eight participants responded and were identified as study participants. No incentive was offered or given to participants so as not to influence their responses or willingness to participate in the research.

Upon the acceptance to participate in the interview, I obtained each participant's consent and scheduled an interview through ZOOM meeting. I scheduled semistructured interviews at a preferred time for the participants from their offices as stipulated by the interview protocol (see Appendix A). All interviews were done taking into consideration COVID-19 protocols for safety. These included using an aerated space for adequate ventilation, nose masks for both the participants and me, avoiding handshakes, using hand sanitizers before and after the interview, and a seating arrangement providing a minimum of 2 meters between us.

The application of semistructured interviews provides flexibility to the research method and supplies available descriptive data (Yin, 2018). The process of semistructured interviews with open-ended questions has the potential advantage of enabling researchers to develop a rapport with participants (Quinney et al., 2016). Using semistructured interviews also provides an opportunity to obtain rich interaction, view the participants' body cues, and retrieve relevant responses from research participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The advantage of using face-to-face interviews for a single case study is that through the face-to-face interview, the researcher can gain useful insights and deeper context while also developing rapport and trust (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

At the beginning of each interview, I emphasized the rights of the participant. The collection, recording, and transcription of the data were done via in-person interviews. Recording of the interviews was done using an Olympus digital audio recorder and my smartphone as a backup. I used an interview guide (Appendix A) for the data collection process. The use of open-ended interview questions can improve the quality of interviewees' responses (Yin, 2018). Yin stated that open-ended questions are used to provide opportunities for the researcher to seek further clarifications. During each interview, I kept a reflexive journal to log the observations I noticed related to the participants' facial expressions, gestures, and body movements. I used the information in the journal to buttress my findings during the analysis. I analyzed the reflexive journal in parallel with the recorded interviews to help minimize bias and clarify my assumptions and belief system on the change process in the study.

One of the disadvantages of using face-to-face semistructured interviews is that participants might not respond truthfully to my interview questions. Another potential disadvantage is that participants may express discomfort with using audio devices (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Assuring the participants of the confidentiality of their information may allay their concern about audio devices. Finding suitable and receptive research participants can pose a challenge (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The use of the informed consent form to seek those willing to partake in the study helped identify those who were interested in participating in the study. Using the semistructured interview technique can also take longer and cost more than conducting surveys or more than distributing and retrieving questionnaires (Yin, 2018).

The use of semistructured interviews can also result in extensive data, which might pose management and analysis challenges (Yin, 2018). The eight participants reduced these burdens because they were sufficient to answer the research questions according to the recommendations of Creswell (2011), who proposed five to 25 respondents. Another potential disadvantage of using semistructured interviews as the data collection technique is that the interviewee might try to please the researcher or provide personal views rather than objective feedback (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The ability to be aware of potential personal bias is a way to mitigate influencing the interview results.

A researcher can reduce the potential effects of personal bias by using member checking (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking for qualitative research is when the researcher summarizes the participant's responses to each question in the researcher's own words and verifies with the participant that the summary reflects the participant's intended meaning. I sent each participant a copy of their report and requested the report to ensure that the responses accurately reflect their responses to each question. I gave them two days to review the reports. Member checking is a process through which sharing interview data with the participants ensures the accuracy of collected data and the credibility of research findings (Birt et al., 2016). I used member checking to mitigate bias and increase trustworthiness. Comparing the feedback from member checking, my reflexive journal, listening to the interview records, and accessing participating company's information from available documents (such as the quarterly publication reports) and the company webpage, assisted me with triangulating the study findings. Using methodological triangulation enabled me to assure an objective and richer understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Data Organization Technique

Organizing qualitative research data is important to avoid confusion and delay the process of data analysis (Chowdhury, 2015). After obtaining approval from the institutional review board (IRB approval number 11-29-21-1003464'), I implemented the following data organization process for efficient data retrieval. I used codes to identify the participants in the organization. Participants were represented as “P”. Which meant that there were P1 … P8 as codes for the eight participants. The file name for each interview session followed the format: Participant Code_Date of interview. For example, the recording of a possible interview on January 15, 2022, with participant 3 was “P3_01152022”.

A well-organized and structured data organization process provides for an effective cross-comparison of large amounts of data, data retrieval, and credible data analysis (Leung, 2015). A good data organization technique will assist with data processing for the enhancement of data retrieval and analysis. To maintain confidentiality for this study, I ensured that (a) I did not use third parties, (b) I saved all data files on my personal computer in password-protected folders, (c) I assigned unique identifiers to participants, and the file with the matching name and identifier was in a password protected folder in my laptop. Without an effective data organization technique, the categorizing, sorting, storing, and retrieving of data for analysis, the safety, and security of data would be compromised (Lewis, 2015). I organized the raw data into digital and physical file folders that concomitantly protected my participants’ identities and the confidentiality of their information. I will keep copies of the transcribed interviews, and electronically stored data for 5 years before I destroy the information by shredding the hard copies and deleting electronic data from my personal computer.

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through preparing, collecting, interpreting, organizing, and analyzing the data (Yin, 2018).

Effective data analysis is necessary for ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the results from a qualitative case study (Yin, 2018). The validity of the findings in qualitative case studies depends on the appropriateness of the data analysis (Lancaster, 2016). A qualitative researcher follows a systematic analytical strategy that links the case study data to the research question and conceptual framework to ensure that the research process of data analysis is complete (Yin, 2018). According to Yin, the process of data collection includes sorting data into meaningful groups, coding data into identifiable themes, drawing conclusions based on analysis, and identifying other areas for further research. Reviewing data received from interviews with interview notes and member checking is critical to the process of data analysis for validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Yin (2018) defined data analysis as a continuous process during which the researcher searches for patterns, concepts, and themes to gain insights for answering the research question. The fundamental components of the qualitative data analysis process I used include: (a) organizing the data, (b) familiarizing oneself with the data, (c) classifying the data, (d) coding the data, (e) triangulating the data (including the use of feedback from member checking, my journal, listening to the interview records, and accessing participating company’s information from available documents or the web, (f) interpreting the data, and (g) presenting and defining the results of the data analysis. I used NVivo 11 for data management and organization. The NVivo 11 software is popular among notable qualitative researchers and useful for data management, coding, and categorizing the codes. The use of NVivo gives the researcher the capacity for managing large data sets (Dollah et al., 2017). Qualitative researchers use NVivo to organize, manage, and shape qualitative data (Richardson et al., 2015). NVivo has become a widely accepted software by many prominent qualitative researchers (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

Data analysis is one component of the research process. Data analysis deficiencies can lead to unreliable results. The choice of the data analysis process and supporting software must be made carefully in a study to ensure the dependability of the study (Bhatia, 2018). The commonly used qualitative analytical methods include content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis (Bhatia, 2018). Content analysis is a descriptive approach to qualitative data analysis (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Content analysis is appropriate for analyzing patterns within the content, as in analyzing responses from interviews. The data were coded and summarized into categories for identifying themes. According to Schreier (2014), content analysis is systematic because all relevant material is taken into account, a sequence of steps is followed during the analysis, and the researcher has to check the coding for consistency. In narrative analysis, the researcher interprets data or information which are in story form. Discourse analysis focuses on analyzing languages within the context of the respondents' environment or social settings. Thematic analysis is useful for ascertaining the experiences, opinions, and views of people by identifying the patterns of meaning in data.

I used content analysis for my study to facilitate determining the usage of certain phrases, words, and ideas or concepts from the transcribed data to identify themes for addressing the proposed study’s purpose. According to Yin (2018), there are five stages of qualitative data analysis. These are compilation, dissection (or disassembly), reassembly, interpretation of data, and the drawing of conclusions. As soon as data collection was complete, data compilation is sorting the field notes collected in a meaningful order before embarking on analysis. The compilation includes rereading the transcribed notes over and over again to refresh one’s memory about the interview’s discussions. I placed the data into a consistent format, known as a data record, completing Step 1 of Yin’s procedure. After establishing familiarity with the textual data obtained from the interview, I completed Step 2, disassembly. In this step, I sorted the compiled textual data into smaller fragments and assigned a label to each fragment. I avoided repetitive coding statements and participant statements that were unrelated to the research questions. During the reassembling phase, I attempted to identify patterns by checking to see whether different events or experiences as documented by the different participants were related to each other. After identifying patterns, I proceeded to Step 4, interpretation. Interpretation involves looking for a close alliance of the data with the research question(s). For Step 5, I developed the resulting conclusions about the strategies that public sector managers use to include employees in implementing organizational change to complete the five-step data analysis process for addressing the study’s purpose.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is the consistency and replicability of the research methodology for a case study (Yin, 2018). Cypress (2017) explained that reliability based on consistency is visible during research practices, analysis, and conclusions. Tactics used to guarantee dependability are comprised of interviewees' participation in the analysis through member checking their responses and through providing a detailed description of the research method (Yin, 2018). The researcher can enhance the reliability of the study by asking the right questions during the interviews and by properly documenting the processes and rationale for any decisions made during the research process (Houghton et al., 2015). I mitigated the potential of inaccuracy by using the interview protocol to ensure I stay focused and unbiased during the interview sessions. I asked each participant the same interview questions using the same order and method

Shirazian et al. (2016) explained that rigor in qualitative research means achieving a correct and genuine representation of the study participants' experiences and situations. A study is dependable if others can replicate the findings with similar participants in similar conditions (Webster et al., 2016). Dependability can be ensured by sufficiently aligning the gap in the literature, problem statement, research questions, methodology, research design, and documenting the inquiry process (Asiamah et al., 2017). I documented the steps to be used in the research process and inquiry. Enhancement of reliability of studies increases by using a semistructured interview technique (Kallio et al., 2016). I used a semistructured interview technique, recorded, transcribed, and utilized the NVivo software system to code data accurately. To improve the reliability of the gathered information, participants should be asked to review the interpretation from the interview and provide changes as needed (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). In addition to using the interview protocol for consistency, I used member checking to enhance accuracy and address any gaps or confusion in the interpretation of the data. Member checking allows the researcher to detect any personal bias by soliciting the participants' feedback regarding the interpretation of data (Birt et al., 2016). I provided each participant with the opportunity to review the understanding of the collected data and indicate any necessary changes

Validity

The validity of qualitative research refers to the use of the appropriate methodology for data collection and data analysis to achieve credible results (Saunders et al., 2018). Cypress (2017) explained validity as the trustworthiness of the research. El Hussein et al. (2015) posited that trustworthiness in qualitative research signifies the level of trust and confidence in the data, as well as addressing the quality or credibility of the research. Trustworthiness is a concept that incorporates the transferability, confirmability, and credibility of the research findings (El Hussein et al., 2015).

A researcher can enhance the validity of the study through the methodological triangulation of data from multiple sources, member checking, and peer debriefing (Yin, 2018). Triangulation occurs when the researcher uses more than one source to ensure the credibility of data while decreasing biases and increasing the validity and strength of the research (Joslin & Müller, 2016). With data triangulation, the researcher's different methods and perspectives produce more comprehensive findings (Yin, 2018). Member checking is a process that involves getting the participants to review the themes from the collected data, review the summary of the interpretations, and offer feedback to ensure the credibility and validity of the findings (Birt et al., 2016). I used both methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure my study's validity.

Transferability addresses the ability of the findings to be transferable to other situations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Marshall and Rossman (2016) advised researchers to leave the transferability of the findings to the reader and future researchers. Transferability confirms whether participants respond to the same questions and allow for transferability to another setting (Patton, 2015). I ensured transferability by providing a robust description of the problem under study and the use of the interview protocol.

Qualitative researchers use confirmability to minimize investigator bias by ensuring that the findings are reflective of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers use member-checking to enhance confirmability. Member-checking is the process of providing data summary and interpretation to participants to validate findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use member-checking and detailed record-keeping to ensure confirmability (Connelly, 2016). I ensured the confirmability of the findings by capturing detailed notes and engaging in member-checking before publishing the results of the study.

Data saturation occurs when nothing new is revealed throughout the data collection process, which was established through 'the repetition of responses' (Saunders et al., 2018). Determining data saturation is difficult because researchers are limited only to the information found at a point in time. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), failure to reach data saturation impacts the quality of the research. Sim et al. (2018) explained that one method for reaching data saturation is by asking multiple participants the same questions. The authors added that a researcher attained data saturation when there was sufficient data to repeat the study and when no further coding was necessary. Data saturation occurs when there is enough information to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In the study, I assumed data saturation when no new themes, codes, or data emerged on the topic from the sample population, and there was enough information to replicate the study.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I addressed the role of the researcher, participant selection, research method, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity. I also included a discussion about research ethics and population. Section 3 comprises the presentation of findings, application to professional practices, the implication for social change, the recommendations for action, and future study. I conclude Section 3 with reflections and an overall conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that public sector managers use to include employees in implementing organizational change. This section includes the presentation and application of findings to practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, further research, and reflections. The data came from eight managers within a single public sector organization who have over 10 years of successful experience in implementing strategic change initiatives. Multiple company documents and archival records were also reviewed. The findings show strategies, processes, and methods managers use for successfully implementing organizational change.

To maintain participants' confidentiality, I used codes (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8) to identify participants. Each participant responded to the six interview questions (see Appendix C). The duration of the interviews ranged from 45–60 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded. At the end of each interview, I scheduled a follow-up meeting with each participant to conduct member checking to verify the accuracy of the data. I used email correspondence to conduct member checking for participants who were unable to attend a follow-up meeting. I transcribed the data from the audio recordings and conducted a manual analysis of the data as described in Section 2. I compiled the interview data, addressed the results from member checking, and transferred the data into a Microsoft Word document. I imported the Word document into NVivo 12. Following Yin's (2018) process, I disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted the data to identify themes for developing answers to the overarching research question.

Presentation of the Findings

One primary research question guided this study: What strategies do public sector managers use to include employees in the implementation of organizational change? I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with eight public sector managers from the same organization within Nigeria who have been successful in leading change implementation. I asked each participant the same six open-ended questions regarding strategies to include employees in the implementation of organizational change in the public sector. As an additional means for assuring the validity of the interview data, I audiotaped each interview with permission from the participants and reflected upon handwritten notes. I used member checking to ensure an accurate representation of the participants' experiences. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, each participant received an alphanumeric code (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8) to safeguard their confidentiality. I followed the data protocol approved by Walden University's IRB (11-29-21-1003464).

After I collected and analyzed the data, five major themes emerged: (a) effective communication, (b) creating and sustaining employee engagement, (c) leadership style effect, (d) developing training programs and processes, and (e) strengthening organizational culture. In this section, I present the findings and include a detailed discussion of each theme and a comparison of results with the literature and the conceptual framework used. First, I present the theme; then, I explain the ways this theme connects or does not connect to previous research on the topic. Last, I show how the theme relates to the conceptual framework or not.

I used Kotter's eight-step change model as the conceptual framework for this study. The findings of this study aligned with the conceptual framework and supported most of the peer-reviewed studies from the literature review. Most participants in the current study used at least five of Kotter's eight stages to define and develop the strategies they used to successfully implement organizational change initiatives. The sixth theme identified is not among the strategies presented in the literature review. The sixth theme extends the existing literature and may result in additional studies to better understand this new information.

Theme 1: Effective Communication

The first theme that emerged from the analysis was effective communication. The findings showed the relationship between effective communication and successful organizational change initiatives implementation. The results revealed that effective communication improves the efforts of employees to plan and execute change strategies. All the participants emphasized the crucial role communication plays during a change process implementation. P1 stated that any veil of secrecy is not acceptable and that two-way communication channels are necessary to enable change success. P1 added that secrecy is not recommended because it could amplify fear and prognostication among employees. P1 said, "We organized town hall meetings to properly address employees' concerns and hear their feedback. I strongly believe that those regular town hall meetings helped create a positive atmosphere."

In alignment with Kotter's change model, all the interviewees confirmed the importance of maintaining open internal communication on the benefits of the change to remove any pending reluctance to the change initiative's implementation. Participants declared that communication combined with a question-and-answer meeting have proven to be an effective way of interacting. P3 noted that through regular communication challenges during times of change can be resolved and trust can be built. P3 added, "We had regular town hall meetings. So, we offered a forum for everyone to ask questions, challenge decisions, and also make recommendations." Dialogue is a must and facilitates the creation of a winning partnership among all levels and all functions. P4 stated that continuous communication inspires confidence and encourages candid opinions. P8 further noted that communicating change with empathy should be considered because most of the time the way the information is communicated is more important than the change itself. P6 corroborated this: "We addressed with empathy people's concerns through communication and a lot of human-to-human formal and informal communication. … We communicated via various forums and one-to-one about the change, the goals, and why it was required to be a winning team."

The findings of this study align with prior literature in which communication has been identified as an essential factor for successful change implementation. Several empirical studies indicated a positive relationship between high-quality change communication and employees' support for change. For example, Fuioaga and Rusu (2018) revealed that communication can improve employees' support and success rates for organizations going through a change initiative implementation. Karaxha (2019) suggested a clear effect of effective communication on organizations' change success levels. High-quality change communication can also reduce uncertainty (Ahmad & Cheng, 2018). Messages of quality and timely information are vital (Fugate & Soenen, 2018), even to say there is no new information (Dirva & Radulescu, 2018). Transparent communication can positively benefit employees' openness and readiness to embrace change (Yue et al., 2019).

Kotter (1996) stipulated that communication promotes cooperation and reduces employees' resistance to change. According to Kotter, communication needs to be well managed so that at any time during the change process confusion is avoided through clear, accurate, uncomplicated languages, messages, and images. Kotter recognized that effective and appropriate communication is a vital ingredient in the success of any change program, similar to the findings from this study.

Theme 2: Creating and Sustaining Employees' Engagement

All participants had a common viewpoint that employees who feel comfortable in their working environment are more likely to work effectively and enjoy the working process compared to employees who feel uncomfortable with their work environment. This study's results revealed that the ability to involve people through engagement is one of the most important skills during the implementation of any organizational change implementation. According to Rozman et al. (2019), work conditions contribute to improving work engagement. Rozman et al. further stated that a positive work environment can enhance the level of employee engagement. Employees need to have a healthy work environment that can have an impact on organizational behaviors such as commitment and engagement (Rozman et al., 2019). P1 identified employee engagement and commitment as one of the key enablers for a successful organizational change initiative implementation and considered staff members as partners in both devising and implementing the change. P1 said, “Having skin in the game is key to avoiding employees’ alienation and helped lower barriers to change.” P1 added the following:

> I have learned from experience that the best way to manage resistance to change by employees is to address it head-on at the individual level and by trying to find out the root cause of the demonstrated behavior by the employee, like for instance, not attending certain meetings, lacking on his commitments and timelines, or even adopting a more obvious defensive pushback attitude.

P1 also noted, “Staying close to employees, especially key players and agents of change, was a critical early management means. It helped pinpoint issues early enough, and consequently diluting its negative impact on the overall project.” Most participants emphasized the key role human resources could play during a change process. P2 talked about the contribution of the human resources leader in addressing employee resistance situations and providing adequate mentorship to new members. Most of the participants in the organization mentioned conducting and relying on employee surveys to gather data and feedback to ensure the right steps are being taken for continuous change success. P4 stated that employee commitment is key to the successful execution of change initiatives. P4 added, “People’s feedback and suggestions were welcome to maintain dialogue.” P5’s thoughts on employees’ engagement and commitment could be summarized in the following statement: “The key strategy to the organization’s successful organizational change implementation lies in the hands of the people." P5 asserted that the odds of success are improved by making sure employees' voices are championing the change initiative.

Employees are the heart of change implementation and the most important assets. When employees are convinced of the need for change, they can share the benefits with their peers, leading to a low degree of resistance. P2 noted, "We … held meetings where learnings were shared by some people or functions on how some issues or difficulties were handled." P6 declared, "Any successful organizational change should engage employees; otherwise, it will fail or fade with time." P6 further specified:

> Employees worked in cross-functional focus groups for a certain period on areas that were key to transformation and presented their ideas to subject matter experts. The startup mindset was the framework to ensure employees were empowered to come up with their ideas and felt engaged and involved.

P7 noted that to encourage employees for a desired change, organizations must address the apprehensions and issues related to them. P7 said, "To any employee's change resistance, engagement with the subject in a one-to-one conversation proved to be the fastest and most direct way to get to the real root causes behind his or her resistance to change." Participants referred to comforting the employee, inspiring trust by clarifying the change need, incorporating additional training or support, and providing further clarification on the employee's career path and development as some of the remedies used. Job insecurity should be decreased, and a sense of community should be created so employees can fulfill their responsibilities. It is necessary to make people aware of the effect of their contribution not only on them, but also on their peers, their consumers, their customers, and their communities.

This theme aligned with prior literature addressing employee engagement. The findings of the study confirm Burton and Obel's (2018) statement that posited that managers who understand organizational readiness for change implement specific strategies to promote success. The theme of engagement emanated from participants' responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 and was the most frequent strategy identified throughout the data. All the participants mentioned that engaged employees remain committed to the organization in times of growth, as well as during downturns and challenging times (Lee et al., 2018). Engaging employees also promotes a sense of alignment and commitment to the change at all levels of the organization (Kotter, 1996). When managers inspire a clear vision and purpose, it prompts employees to aspire, to own the change, and to create an emotional attachment to the organization, which ultimately influences the image of the organization in the community (Kotter, 1996). Fundamentally, managers can communicate a clear vision and purpose by targeting employees' perceptions and beliefs while focusing on positive targeted results (Kotter, 1996).

Theme 3: Leadership Style Effect

All participants indicated that they work to ensure employees have a voice and their opinions and input are valued. Such efforts and behaviors are typical qualities of a transformational manager who tends to coordinate with employees to share knowledge and to give opportunities in organizational-level decision making (Hussain et al., 2018).

P2 stated that a culture of change or transformation starts with managers. During a time of change, leaders prioritize deploying required information to all functions. P1 explained that managers should educate and introduce the reasons for the change to navigate the organization's thinking toward change and acceptance. P1 asserted, "The right management behavior inspires employees to exceed their interests for the good of the organization as a whole." P1 added that a resistance to change factor is a lack of support and commitment from the management team in the organization. P1 emphasized that any lack of commitment to organizational change by the top management is a serious challenge to a change process's success. P1 further declared, "Not walking the talk and doing it the right way creates ripple effects in the organizations that would hinder successful organizational change." P6 corroborated by acknowledging that managers should recognize early signs of resistance and cited some of the resources to address employees' potential resistance.

Most participants mentioned that conducting engagement surveys and showing empathy through sufficient formal and informal communication are methods and tactics that leaders often use during the change process. P8 acknowledged that the management team needs to communicate change with empathy, highlighting the importance of making the effort to understand the feelings of the people affected. P8 stated, "Trust me, most of the time, how information is conveyed is more important and can have a bigger impact than what information is conveyed." P8 asserted that empathy is essential for competent leadership and that not having empathy for employees and how they feel about the change could cause its failure.

Managers handle change differently and must understand how to deal with each person based on his or her personality and feelings. P3 suggested that having a well-devised plan for change was not enough; specifying that ensuring the management team was directly and daily involved to immediately address any issues or obstacles was important as well. P4 provided the example of one of the managers who gathered the team in an off-site meeting, positioned the change objectives, put on the table opportunities the change could bring, and tactfully explained how the new structure potentially would be beneficial to both the organization and its employees. P5 stated that trust was a key trait for managers affecting organizational changes and their implementation. Trust in management is what ultimately reduces resistance to change (Cai et al., 2018). P5 added, "Trust helped foster confidence critically needed by affected employees. It helped them take risks and venture into the new changes." Business leaders need to build employee trust, so employees feel encouraged and motivated and become an effective part of the changes.

Managers should know their employees and build relationships with them to be more prepared to deal with resistance to change (Cai et al., 2018). P5 explained that management considered the impacts of the change initiative at different organizational levels and how it would affect each function and each individual before developing a communication strategy. P7 stated that all parties involved actioned the change by defining a clear governance framework. P5 further noted the importance of leading from the front by adopting a PULL approach to prepare and gain employees' confidence. P7 said, "Every time my team told me something was not possible or doable, I showed them how to do it by spending a good amount of time with them on the job, celebrating the wins and learning from the shortfalls." P8 explained that it was necessary to visualize early wins to convey the change's positive side. P5 expressed emotions mentioning how change was not easy on managers either, adding that though they may not be always directly affected, managers still sometimes need coaching to go through the change process.

The results of this study were consistent with the existing literature on the relationship between leadership style and organizational change. The results illustrated the influence of leadership style in terms of employee involvement, change motivation, and individual knowledge sharing to make the loop of the change process. Leaders and employees were considered to be one unit. There is increasing recognition and agreement among scholars that successful implementation of change is impacted significantly by leadership practices, styles, and behaviors. A successful organizational change implementation demonstrates leaders' ability to develop, implement, and sustain the changes long enough to yield the intended results (Militaru & Zanfir, 2016). Researchers have consistently shown that the right leadership style leads to positive organizational change. Most participants indicated that effective leaders provided followers with the necessary skills to achieve organizational change initiatives objectives. The results of this study confirmed the association and positive influence of leadership style on organizational change initiative's implementation level of success. According to Narikae et al. (2017), leadership commitment facilitates the realization of organizational goals and communication ensures the meeting of deadlines while coordination enhances the achievement of sufficient results.

This study's results were also consistent with more recent research. A successful organizational change initiative implementation depends on effective leadership that can convey a clear vision and can motivate employees to work together toward the same goals and organizational change (Ling et al., 2018). The leadership role is the main force behind a successful organizational change initiatives implementation (Adda et al., 2019). Tailoring a leadership behavior to the change situation not only requires that managers be aware of their leadership styles but also recognize what employees need in specific situations (Vos & Rupert, 2018). During a change process, leading by example is a critical leadership trait to engage employees and ensure successful implementation (Hartge et al., 2019). Such behavior is important because it is a buffer against one of the most documented reasons for resistance, miscommunication, lack of information, and fear (Fuioaga & Rusu, 2018). Transformational leadership seems to be productive during organizational change initiatives (Harb & Sidani, 2019). Transformational leadership is also more effective in increasing both trust and acceptance of the change (Cai et al., 2018).

The emergence of the leadership role as a theme to successfully implement organizational change initiatives was aligned with my conceptual framework. Kotter's change model (1996) is driven by strong leadership and identifies critical steps leaders must take when implementing change initiatives. Organizations should have enough proven leaders to be able to drive the change process (Kotter, 1996). By creating short-term wins, leaders build on their success and ensure a sense of urgency while at the same time motivating employees by giving them the possibility to see the progress (Kotter, 1996).

Theme 4: Develop Training Programs and Processes

All participants had one common message revolving around how commitment to change could reflect a state in which employees were made aware of a change, had the skills needed to implement it, were empowered to implement it, were motivated to do so by adequate rewards and shared the vision exemplified by the change. Training and mentorship were sub-themes the participants identified as important strategies to develop and manage a successful change initiative. All the participants emphasized the importance of coaching employees whose jobs or duties must change due to the initiative. P1 explained that “training required maintenance for the new way of doing things to stick. I find that by coaching and mentoring employees on the organization imperatives, the new training information was enforced.” P2 related an experience where a new information technology system was deployed and coaching employees boosted the success of the change initiative, and further stated:

> An experienced employee in the organization provided one-on-one support and advice throughout the hands-on training program. So, the job expectations and benefits of the new system were repeatedly explained by a peer, employees expressed that they felt a greater sense of understanding of what is required of them in their jobs and then better support the implantation of the new information technology system.

P1 advised that “another strategy is the sharing of knowledge through training.” Further, all change initiatives involved a “new learning and new approach” to conducting a task or process and “required active coaching and training”. P1 further noted:

> All my successful change initiatives included a training plan and a coaching plan which detailed how, frequency, and methods to transfer knowledge and sustain the change. Training and coaching are a holistic set of tools to support all levels of employees through a change and to maintain the change.

P1 explained that sometimes external experts were involved in the coaching process but employees could assist with coaching other employees. According to P1, “sometimes a batch of employees received the initial training and then an iterative process allowed the first set of trained employees to become ambassadors for the planned change”. P2 emphasized that “for a successful change initiative, managers must include coaching and mentoring so that trained employees perform differently.”

The managers encouraged training on every change initiative so that all employees can have structured guidance and information. One manager showed a user guide on a customer information system that was implemented and the training register of the staff members who participated in the training sessions. Another manager provided a graphical step-by-step instruction of the process flow that changed in one of the zonal branch offices. P2 asserted that “we facilitated hands-on training so that all employees became familiar with the change before full implementation”. P4 explained that the employees were “assured that no suggestion was insignificant.” P2 explained that “the employees knew that they could make mistakes, the coaching and mentoring from managers and select employees encouraged the transformation."

The study participants emphasized that coaching supported by training and mentoring conducted before, during, and after the implementation helped with building a smooth transition. P2 explained that "training does not work when employees are not sufficiently aware of the change initiative." P3 indicated that leaders must do a constant evaluation of the implementations and recognize when there was a need for additional training." P3 explained that feedback from employees was a useful indicator of the level of preparation and acceptance of the new processes. According to P3:

> Leaders of the change must continue to gauge the implementation process and determine whether the management and employees require additional training and coaching from the change leaders. The fact is, in executing change, there are critical change elements that must integrate into daily organizational practices.

P3 recommended that a committee of persons could provide the coaching and mentoring of staff. The committee could comprise employees and persons external to the organization. P3 further explained that employees who were new converts and accepted the change could be used as ambassadors of the change. Selected employees and external persons can provide coaching and mentorship; not just the managers of the organization.

Interestingly, P6 offered that the managers also benefitted from training and mentoring on how to implement change. P6 referenced several philosophies on change management, (such as Lewin's theory of change and Prosci Levers of Change) and books on leadership (such as Jim Collins' Good to Great) that helped to guide practical experience in implementing change. Managers needed coaching, training, and mentoring. P6 advised that when “managers were trained to execute change, the managers were better able to provide the guidance, motivation, and expression of belonging” the employees needed.

P8 noted, “Work processes were drastically improved thanks to the new performance indicators.” P8 further stated, “We achieved operational excellence thanks to the revised tools and processes.” Participants often cited the scorecard project and the OGSM model (objectives, goals, strategy, measures) as the main tools used. Both models facilitated the effectiveness and the performance of change initiatives implementation tracking. The scorecard focused on common KPIs to quantify the effort and inputs. Some of the secondary sources explored, such as project monthly tracking and project management documents showed that KPIs were used as checkpoints to assess if the changes or new strategies were working. The OGSM model defined the key objectives, how to reach them, and how to measure them. The examination of multiple PowerPoint presentations and management business reviews (MBR) as secondary data revealed that the OGSM model was diligently tracked monthly by the organization. Necessary actions were taken immediately when unexpected issues were raised.

The results of this study indicated that managers could improve change initiatives’ implementation success by setting well-defined key performance indicators and developing adequate training programs. All participants revealed the importance of training and tools during organizational change initiative implementation. The findings were consistent with prior literature. Managers need tools, procedures, and processes to help them be more efficient and more rational during an organizational change implementation experience (Caves, 2018).

The emergence of the tools and training theme aligned with a recent literature review too. Multiple scholars revealed that providing processes, tools, and resources during organizational change was among the key strategies needed to successfully manage the change implementation phase (Ahmad & Cheng, 2018). The findings that the measuring and monitoring of KPIs improved change implementation were also similar to the research findings from Royce (2018). Royce found that measurable goals could positively influence change implementation success.

The results of this study aligned with my chosen conceptual framework because according to Kotter (1996), leaders must create a vision and that vision must be measurable to ensure implementation success and sustainability. Kotter's model provides leaders with specific actions, tools, and techniques to move their organizations from a current state to a more desired state.

Theme 5: Strengthening Organizational Culture

The participants emphasized that the culture of the organization impacted the change initiatives. Culture can influence how employees think and make decisions that may affect job performance and can hinder the execution of strategy by generating opposition to change (Ben Saad & Abbas, 2018). During the interview process, several participants acknowledged that a culture of change started with managers who had to cascade down the information. P1 explained that "the link between the change and the strategic direction of the organization was an effective strategy used to help employees interpret change in an accurate context.” P2 explained that “when employees shared a clear understanding of the mission and values, the strategy provided clarity on how the organization would change.” P3 explained that during the change initiative:

> An understanding of the mission and values of the organization was crucial to being supportive of organizational change. Explanations of the change in the context of the overall mission of the organization were useful in helping the employees to interpret change and process the dynamics of the new culture. It is important for employees to understand.

P4 advised that:

> Managers implementing change must recognize that a clear outline of the organizational mission and values can have positive effects on promoting organizational change. However, managers must exercise caution because the failure to align organizational policies and operations with the stated mission and values can engender change resistance.

P5 noted the importance of establishing a culture of continuous improvement. According to P5, establishing such a culture was one of the best ways to change the hearts and minds of employees when they were continuously asked to change the way they worked. P6 stated that building a culture of change equaled embracing change and succeeding in change. P6 said, “To increase our chances to always make successful changes and successful changes implementations, we need employees who are receptive to new ways of working and new ways of thinking.” P7 noted that organizational change is a reflection of an organization’s culture, adding that the most powerful strategy is to ignite the desire.

The results of this study were consistent with prior literature on the role of organizational culture. Culture is a critical contributor to implementing and sustaining change and can influence team behaviors, motivation, engagement, decision-making, and organizational outcomes. An organization with the best change strategy but without the adequate culture to support the change implementation will not succeed (Mouhamadou et al., 2017).

The results of this study also aligned with recent literature. Ben Saad and Abbas (2018) revealed the existence of a positive relationship between organizational change implementation and organizational culture. Levene and Higgs (2018) suggested that it was necessary to change the culture of the organization to successfully implement change. Business practice indicates that the culture parameter can either hinder or facilitate a successful organizational change (Wyrwicka & Agnieszka, 2019). Organizational climate and culture influence employees' engagement (Febriansyah et al., 2018). Febriansyah et al. posited that employees whose personal interests and work style aligned with that of the workplace would be more likely to embrace change.

The results of this study also aligned with my chosen conceptual framework. One fundamental enabler of organizational change is the culture's readiness to embrace and sustain the change (Kotter, 1996). Kotter's change model calls for a culture of change to be nurtured to anchor the right behaviors in the culture, and ultimately sustain the change effort. Incorporating culture into the change is the eighth step in Kotter's change model where a new and winning behavior continues. Ignoring the influence of culture on change implementation may have a serious effect on the outcome. Preparing the culture for long-term change and identifying effective drivers of change can be important to implementing change (Kotter, 1996).

Findings and Analysis Summary

A high failure rate raises sustained concern and interest in identifying and addressing the factors that can decrease failure and increase the success of organizational change (Kral & Kralova, 2019). According to Kotter (1996), 50% of all change implementations fail due to management not preparing the organization's employees for change. Kotter emphasized that when organizational readiness was high, there was a greater chance that employees would invest more effort and display higher team spirit for more effective implementation of the proposed change.

Improving the success rate of organizational change should serve as the overarching business strategy for the mid and long-term. The process of organizational change begins with a strategic vision that the managers have for their organizations. Effective managers influence successful organizational change and integration of sustainability practices. Management needs to identify key enablers to help the business implement its sought-after strategy. It is important to first define the business strategy milestones and then develop a plan for the best use of the available resources.

Many managers acknowledged how a successful implementation of organizational change initiatives improved the portfolio performance and led to healthier financial results. Maintaining certain flexibility and willingness to pause, align, refine, and go back to execute was also needed at all levels. Organizational change is always about coping with change (Kotter, 1996).

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this single case study was to identify and explore the strategies that public sector managers use to include employees in implementing organizational change. Successful implementation of strategic change initiatives may reduce inefficiencies (Lyu et al., 2017). Karaxha (2019) stipulated that managers give high importance to the process of formulating change strategies, but less attention to the change process implementation. According to Jeong and Shin (2019), managers need to master the tool of organizational change instrument to succeed and persevere in a highly volatile environment. While this study focuses on the public sector industry, this study's findings could be beneficial to managers in all industries.

This study's findings could contribute to business practices by helping managers in public sector organizations develop their strategies and improve the change process efficiency and effectiveness by identifying strategies some managers in public sector organizations used to help mitigate unsuccessful organizational change initiative costs. As a contribution to public sector practice, managers may use the findings of this study to develop plans on how to deploy identified strategies to guide public sector organizations through a planned change. The findings of this study provide managers with examples to successfully implement organizational change initiatives. Managers may use the findings to understand change management implementation strategies, when to embrace change, when to engage employees, and how to develop change strategies to bolster performance. The results of this study could also stimulate human resources managers, supervisors, and managers to improve their organizations' change implementation strategies, leading to growing and more stable employment of citizens for improving communities' local economies through increased tax revenues.

The participants of this study were senior and experienced managers. The findings showed the perspectives of the managers who have led successful change projects. The participants explained the importance of open and continuous communication, proactive and collaborative leadership, employees' commitment and engagement, and clear responsibilities and processes, within the context of values and desired cultural influence. All strategies were noted as being critical to ensuring successful change implementation.

Out of the six themes that emerged from the study, five were fully aligned with Kotter's eight-step change model. No participant mentioned the model or cited any other theorist as a reference point during the organization's change implementation process. Participants tacitly acknowledged that change implementation success required an understanding of influencing factors related to Kotter's change model. It was clear that all managers implicitly believed that the achievement of successful organizational change initiatives implementation was associated with Kotter's change framework. Participants indirectly indicated how most of Kotter's model steps, such as two-way communication, positive employee engagement, appropriate leadership style, proper training programs, cohesive culture, and adequate organizational systems are important and necessary to ensure a successful organizational change initiative implementation.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study contribute to social change by connecting managers from various public sector organizations within the community to identify strategies for engaging employees in the workplace. A successful change process could help sustain employment practices and contribute to positively enhancing employees' commitment and contribution to the greater good. Employees who are personally engaged cognitively and emotionally are more satisfied, and they are more productive. Jones et al., (2018) found that employee participation in the implementation of planning or involvement in pilot programs can help to increase commitment and deepen organizational knowledge, which can help in change acceptance. Employee engagement matters to both the employee and the organization. Amarantou et al. (2018) documented that involving change recipients such as the employees in the change process is an effective strategy to address resistance to change. Management's capability to leverage employee engagement strategies is important in an organization.

The contributions to positive social change include catalyzing employees to have a healthier attitude at work, having a better sense of work-life balance, and having pride in belonging. Understanding the contribution of an engaging workforce may enable organizations to improve performance and profits by catalyzing monetary and nonmonetary contributions to benefit communities' citizens.

Recommendations for Action

Managers in public sector organizations should consider the findings in this study as prerequisites for understanding and developing and using efficacious change strategies. This study took place in an environment where values and culture affect the work environment and reaction to organizational change initiatives. Managers should consider identifying appropriate problem-solving strategies and strong cross-functional teams for implementing the change management strategies. Managers should focus their attention on how well their subordinates understand the overarching goals of the vision, and the mission of the change initiatives. Through implementing and continuously reinforcing such communications, employees are more likely motivated to accept greater responsibility in reaching and maintaining higher performance goals. In summary, to drive successful organizational change: engaging employees, leading by example, communicating the change, putting in place adequate tools and training programs, following up, and removing the barriers are the steps that should be properly planned and closely monitored.

Recommendations for Further Research

A single case study design was used to explore the strategies that the public sector managers use to include employees in implementing organizational change. A limitation of this study is that the findings are based on these eight public sector managers' experiences, strategies used were based on the organization's unique circumstances and were not necessarily transferable to other public sector organizations. Because the research sample data were collected from the selected organization with a convenient sampling method, further research will be essential to verify and determine the appropriateness of generalizing these findings. For instance, future researchers might focus on different contexts, including certain organizations, industries, or occupations with a representation of each occupation, organization, and/or industry and consider different work groups (e.g., age groups, males and females, full-time and contract workers) to further investigate whether there are any significant differences among such strata.

Reflections

The Doctor of Business Administration program was an invaluable learning experience. I can attest that I will miss the interactions with my peers and committee members. The sharing of lessons learned from individual experiences has been phenomenal. In the beginning, when I took the helm of responsibility for my study, I charged myself to remain disciplined and committed to the cause. Reaching my destination required personal sacrifice, motivation, and self-determination. Reflecting upon the difficult days and endless nights, my reviews regarding employee engagement remain the upper in my mind. Throughout this DBA Doctoral study, I contained my perspectives on the topic and attempted to assure objective findings by using an interview protocol approved by my committee and employing member checking.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

What to do	**What to say**
Begin of the interview protocol	-
A brief introduction of myself and the purpose of the research topic under study	My name is xxxxxxxxxxx, and I am a Doctorate student at Walden University. I would like to thank you for your time and for granting me this interview. The purpose of this research interview is xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx By so doing, I will be asking and discussing the interview questions that I provided to you earlier.
Set the stage to get the interviewee at ease by asking about their background. Use the subsequent questions (2–4) to probe further for a more targeted response from the participant.	Before we get into that, could you: 1. Please, briefly tell me about your background. 2. How long have you been working for this company? 3. What is your current position?
Explain the informed consent form process and address any concerns the participant may have.	On [insert date] you received a consent form via email. Please verify this information is *actually in the Informed Consent form you will be submitting*. In addition, participation is voluntary with no monetary incentive. On [insert date] you replied the mail by granting me the consent for this interview. Do you have any questions or concerns before we proceed? My contact information is also included in the consent form; if you have any further questions or concerns about the study after this interview, please feel free to contact me.
Remind and assure participants of anonymity and confidentiality.	Our interview conversation today will be voice recorded and include taking notes to help ensure data transcription accuracy on my part. I want to remind and assure you that your anonymity and identity and all information shared and discussed are protected under confidentiality and will be

	used solely for research purposes without disclosing your identity.
	We will proceed with this interview shortly if I have your consent to begin recording.
Ask participant to verify that you can start the audio recording and/or be prepared to take notes.	-
Introduce participant with code, the date, time, and location.	Interview with Participant [P1, P2, P3…8], [date], [time], and [location].
Begin asking the predefined open-ended interview questions, and probe further with targeted questions when necessary to ensure in-depth exploration.	
Follow-up probing question(s)	
	This concludes our interview, thank you for your time and participation.
Stop audio recording	-
End of the interview, let the participant know the next step. Explain the transcript review process in the following interview.	As indicated in the consent form, the participants will be asked to member check their summarized post-interview transcripts. I will verbatim transcribe this interview and synthesize your responses to each question. I will subsequently email the transcripts to you for confirmation of accuracy; you can make corrections to ensure accurate representation of your views.
Schedule follow–up a meeting or alternative avenue to confirm data accuracy.	I will email you the summarized transcript on [insert date] and would like to schedule a follow–up meeting on [insert date] or you may provide your feedback/corrections (if any) by replying to the email.
	Thank you, once again for your time.
End of the interview protocol	-

Appendix B: Invitation Letter to Participants

Dear XXXXXXXX,

My name is Ibrahim Nasamu, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University and working on my doctoral dissertation research to complete a Doctor of Business Administration degree. I am conducting this doctoral research study to explore and gain an improved understanding of (Strategies for Employees to Effect Change to Improve Performance of Public Organization). I am requesting your kind participation in the study. I respect your time and ask you to please read this email and attached consent form to decide whether you will participate in the study. Your participation in the study will help advance new insights into the (The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies that public sector managers use to include employees in implementing organizational change).

Your participation in the study will consist of a 45-60 minutes interview, and a 20-30 minutes time commitment following an interview to verify data accuracy. The research is purely for academic purposes and all information discussed or shared with me will be treated as confidential and protected. If you feel you understand the study well enough to decide, please review the attached consent form before deciding to participate in this study. If you would like to participate, please follow the instructions at the end of the consent form. I am looking forward to answering any questions or concerns that you may have and discuss further details of my research. You can contact me at (your local phone number) or via email (your Walden email address).

Thank you for your time,

Ibrahim Nasamu
Doctor of Business Administration Candidate
Walden University

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

<<Name of Organization>>
<<Address of Organization>>

<<Date>>

Dear Ibrahim Nasamu,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I permit you to conduct the study entitled "Strategies for Employees to Effect Change to Improve Performance of Public Organization" within the **<<Name of Organization>>**. As part of this study, I authorize you to: contact potential participants in the sustainability department via provided telephone numbers and email addresses; conduct interviews via online platforms like Skype or Zoom at the participants' convenience and timing outside official work hours; and follow-up member-checking and results from dissemination through email addresses of participants. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include providing names and contacts of potential participants for your study. However, the potential participants' acceptance to participate is solely the participants' decision and communication via a consent form.
We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

<<Your Full Name>>
<<email address>>