


# Developing a Decision-Making Framework for Organizational Change Management: A Phenomenological Study



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**Abstract:** The objective of this study was to develop a decision-making framework for organizational change management. This qualitative phenomenological study involved 21 semi-structured interviews with managers and senior professionals who had experience in organizational change management. The data were analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding processes. NVivo software was used for data organization and analysis, with theoretical saturation reached after the 21st interview. The key themes and patterns identified through the coding process formed the basis of the decision-making framework. The findings revealed that leadership, particularly transformational and collaborative leadership styles, played a critical role in driving successful change. Effective communication, characterized by transparency and consistency, was essential for reducing resistance and ensuring stakeholder engagement. Resistance to change was commonly due to fear of job loss, lack of clarity, and uncertainty. A supportive and adaptive organizational culture that promotes flexibility and continuous learning was found to facilitate change. Additionally, the strategic alignment between change initiatives and organizational goals enhanced the success of transitions. These core elements were integrated into a comprehensive decision-making framework for managing organizational change. The study highlights the importance of leadership, communication, resistance management, organizational culture, and strategic alignment in organizational change management. The decision-making framework developed from this study offers practical guidance for managers navigating complex transitions. By fostering a supportive culture, clear communication, and aligning change initiatives with strategic goals, organizations can enhance their ability to implement successful change.

**Keywords:** Organizational change management, decision-making framework, leadership, communication, resistance, organizational culture, strategic alignment, qualitative research, phenomenology.

## 1. Introduction

Organizational change management has become a crucial area of focus in the contemporary business environment, where companies must adapt to dynamic markets, technological advancements, and external pressures to remain competitive. The process of managing organizational change requires careful planning, leadership, and strategy to ensure that transitions are successful and align with organizational goals [1-5]. Change management strategies have been studied extensively, with numerous frameworks and models proposed to guide organizations through complex transitions. One of the prominent strategies for managing change is Kotter's eight-stage process, which

focuses on creating urgency, building a guiding coalition, and embedding new approaches into organizational culture [6]. Kotter's model, along with other change management theories, highlights the importance of leadership in driving change initiatives. For instance, transformational leadership has been found to play a key role in facilitating organizational change by motivating employees and fostering a culture of innovation [1]. Transformational leaders are able to align organizational goals with employee needs, creating a sense of shared purpose that is essential for successful change management [7, 8].

Leadership plays a crucial role in determining how effectively change is managed within an organization. According to Fürstenberg et al. (2021), paradoxical leadership, which balances competing demands such as stability and innovation, enhances work engagement and goal clarity during periods of change [9]. Similarly, Davis (2022) emphasizes the importance of leadership in strategic planning, particularly in dynamic work environments where organizations must continuously adapt to external pressures [10]. The ability of leaders to anticipate changes and prepare their teams for transition is critical to the success of any change initiative [11]. Leadership styles that promote collaboration, open communication, and employee empowerment have been shown to foster a supportive environment for change, mitigating resistance and ensuring smooth implementation [12].

Despite the critical role of leadership, resistance to change remains a major challenge for many organizations. Employees' attitudes toward organizational change are shaped by various factors, including perceived job security, communication from management, and organizational culture [13]. Resistance can manifest in different forms, from passive non-compliance to active opposition, and can significantly hinder the success of change initiatives [14]. Therefore, managing resistance requires a deep understanding of the underlying causes and the development of strategies to address employee concerns. Abubakar (2021) highlights the importance of conflict management strategies in mitigating resistance and aligning employees with organizational goals. By addressing the root causes of resistance, such as fear of the unknown and lack of clarity, organizations can reduce opposition and foster a more cooperative environment for change [15].

Organizational culture also plays a significant role in determining the success of change management initiatives. A strong organizational culture that promotes innovation, flexibility, and continuous learning can facilitate the adoption of new practices and processes [16-20]. On the other hand, a rigid culture that resists change can impede progress and create additional challenges for leaders attempting to implement new strategies [21]. According to Deverell and Olsson (2010), organizations that are able to adapt their culture during times of crisis are better positioned to respond to external challenges and maintain long-term sustainability [22]. In this context, spatial change management strategies, which involve redesigning workspaces to align with organizational goals, have been found to positively influence organizational culture and foster innovation [23].

Strategic alignment between organizational goals and change management processes is another key factor in ensuring the success of transitions. Organizations must align their change initiatives with broader strategic objectives to ensure that they contribute to long-term growth and competitiveness [4]. This alignment is particularly important in dynamic environments where organizations must continuously adapt to market shifts and technological advancements [24]. According to Bhattarai (2018), organizations that are able to align their change management strategies with their overall vision and goals are more likely to achieve positive outcomes and enhance their performance [25]. In addition, strategic planning and performance monitoring are essential for ensuring that change initiatives are implemented effectively and deliver the desired results [26].

The literature also emphasizes the role of communication in successful change management. Effective communication strategies are essential for ensuring that employees understand the rationale behind change

initiatives and are actively engaged in the process [27]. Transparent communication helps to build trust between management and employees, reducing resistance and fostering a sense of ownership and accountability [28]. As noted by Phillips and Klein (2022), organizations that prioritize open communication and provide regular updates on the progress of change initiatives are more likely to achieve successful outcomes [29]. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement, both internal and external, is critical for ensuring that all relevant parties are involved in the change process and their concerns are addressed [30].

Another critical factor in managing organizational change is the ability to navigate the complexities of a dynamic environment. Environmental dynamism, characterized by rapid changes in market conditions, technological advancements, and regulatory frameworks, presents significant challenges for organizations (Abebe, 2012). To remain competitive, organizations must develop strategies for responding to these external pressures while maintaining internal stability. As noted by Harri (2021), knowledge management plays a key role in helping organizations adapt to dynamic environments by fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation [31]. By leveraging organizational knowledge, leaders can make informed decisions that support long-term sustainability and competitive advantage [32].

In the context of organizational change management, the integration of project management principles has been found to enhance the effectiveness of change initiatives. Parker et al. (2013) argue that the integration of project-based management and change management allows organizations to structure their change initiatives more effectively, ensuring that they are completed on time and within budget [33]. Project management tools and techniques, such as performance tracking and risk management, can also help organizations monitor the progress of their change initiatives and address potential challenges before they escalate [34]. According to Magrum and Weber (2018), leadership strategies that incorporate project management principles are particularly effective in managing large-scale organizational changes, such as departmental restructuring and technological upgrades.

Furthermore, the ability of organizations to innovate during periods of change is critical for long-term success. As noted by Rashidfarokhi (2023), open innovation models that encourage collaboration between internal and external stakeholders can facilitate the development of new ideas and solutions to organizational challenges [35]. By fostering a culture of innovation, organizations can adapt more effectively to external changes and maintain their competitive edge in the marketplace [36]. Innovation in change management is particularly important in industries that are subject to rapid technological advancements, such as the ICT sector [37]. According to Grishina et al. (2022), the integration of automation and digitalization strategies in change management processes can also enhance organizational efficiency and reduce the risk of human error [38].

In conclusion, the existing literature highlights several key factors that influence the success of organizational change management initiatives, including leadership, communication, organizational culture, and strategic alignment. The objective of this study was to develop a decision-making framework for organizational change management.

## **2. Methodology**

This study follows a phenomenological approach to explore decision-making frameworks in organizational change management. The research aims to gain deep insights into the lived experiences of individuals involved in managing organizational changes. To achieve this, a qualitative methodology was adopted, focusing on rich, detailed narratives from participants.

The participants were purposively selected from middle to senior management roles in organizations undergoing change. The sample size consisted of 21 individuals, which was determined based on the principle of theoretical saturation. This means that data collection continued until no new themes or insights were emerging from the interviews, ensuring the depth and comprehensiveness of the findings.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the sole data collection method to gather in-depth perspectives from the participants. The interviews were designed to allow for flexibility, enabling participants to express their experiences freely while ensuring that key topics related to decision-making and organizational change management were covered. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was conducted in person or via video conferencing, depending on participant availability and preference.

The interview guide included open-ended questions aimed at understanding how participants approached decision-making during organizational changes, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they employed to manage these changes effectively. Follow-up questions were posed as needed to explore emerging themes in more detail.

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo software, which facilitated the coding and thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. The process followed a phenomenological approach, where key themes and patterns were identified through careful reading and re-reading of the interview data. Thematic coding was carried out to categorize responses based on recurring themes related to decision-making frameworks, challenges, and strategies in organizational change management.

The analysis was iterative, with initial codes refined through ongoing comparison and synthesis of the data, following the principles of constant comparison. Emergent themes were cross-validated among the research team to ensure reliability and accuracy of interpretation. Theoretical saturation was confirmed when no new themes or codes emerged from the final set of interviews.

### **3. Findings**

The study involved 21 participants, all of whom were managers or senior professionals with experience in organizational change management. The demographic characteristics of the participants varied across gender, age, and years of experience. Out of the 21 participants, 13 (61.9%) were male, and 8 (38.1%) were female. In terms of age distribution, 5 participants (23.8%) were between 30-39 years old, 9 participants (42.9%) were between 40-49 years old, and 7 participants (33.3%) were 50 years or older. Regarding their experience in managing organizational changes, 7 participants (33.3%) had 5-10 years of experience, 10 participants (47.6%) had 11-20 years of experience, and 4 participants (19.1%) had over 20 years of experience. This diverse range of experiences and backgrounds provided a broad perspective on the challenges and strategies involved in organizational change management.

During the open coding phase, the initial analysis involved breaking down the interview transcripts into distinct segments and identifying key concepts related to decision-making in organizational change management. Through this process, a wide range of open codes emerged, reflecting the participants' diverse experiences and perspectives. Some of the prominent open codes included "communication barriers," "resistance to change," "leadership style," "employee engagement," "strategic alignment," and "risk mitigation." These codes were derived directly from the participants' narratives, ensuring that all relevant themes were captured. At this stage, the goal was to remain as open as possible to the data, identifying and labeling all concepts that appeared relevant to decision-making in the context of organizational change.

In the axial coding phase, the focus shifted to organizing the open codes into broader categories by examining relationships between them. This step allowed for the identification of core themes and patterns that explained how different elements of decision-making in organizational change were interconnected. For example, open codes such as “employee resistance” and “unclear communication” were grouped under the axial code “barriers to change,” while codes like “collaborative leadership” and “empowerment” were categorized under “leadership approach.” This phase facilitated the consolidation of scattered open codes into coherent categories that better explained the phenomena being studied.

**Table 1. Axial Coding Results**

Axial Codes	Open Codes
Barriers to Change	Communication barriers, resistance to change, lack of clarity, fear of job loss, uncertainty
Leadership Approach	Leadership style, collaborative leadership, empowerment, decision-making autonomy
Employee Involvement	Engagement, participation in decision-making, feedback loops, recognition, job satisfaction
Communication Strategy	Transparency, clarity, regular updates, stakeholder communication, two-way communication
Adaptability	Flexibility, openness to new ideas, willingness to adjust, rapid response to change
Change Planning	Strategic alignment, goal setting, timeline management, resource allocation
Risk Management	Risk identification, mitigation strategies, contingency planning, crisis management
Organizational Culture	Supportive environment, innovation culture, value alignment, trust-building
Training and Development	Skill enhancement, workshops, learning opportunities, mentoring, coaching
Resistance Mitigation	Managing conflict, addressing concerns, negotiation, gradual implementation
Decision-Making Processes	Collaborative decision-making, top-down decisions, democratic decision-making, speed of decisions
Stakeholder Engagement	Internal stakeholders, external stakeholders, customer involvement, partner collaboration
Accountability	Responsibility, ownership, performance tracking, consequences of failure
Performance Measurement	Key performance indicators (KPIs), benchmarking, monitoring progress, success metrics
Innovation in Change	New approaches, technological integration, creative problem-solving, pilot testing

In the selective coding phase, the analysis focused on identifying overarching themes or core categories that integrated the axial codes into a unified framework. This process aimed to uncover the primary phenomena at the heart of decision-making in organizational change management. Through selective coding, the core categories were derived by examining how the axial codes related to one another and how they contributed to the overall process of managing change. The goal was to consolidate the findings into key themes that could explain the broader dynamics of organizational change and decision-making processes, thus forming the basis for developing the decision-making framework.

**Table 2. The Summary of Qualitative Analysis**

Selective Codes (Main Categories)	Axial Codes	Open Codes	Sample Quote
Change Leadership	Leadership Approach	Leadership style, collaborative leadership, empowerment	"Our success depended largely on empowering team leaders to make timely decisions."
Change Leadership	Decision-Making Processes	Collaborative decision-making, top-down decisions, speed of decisions	"Decision-making was swift, but we ensured collaboration where needed."
Resistance and Barriers	Barriers to Change	Communication barriers, resistance to change, lack of clarity	"People were afraid of losing their jobs, and that fear fueled resistance to every new proposal."
Resistance and Barriers	Resistance Mitigation	Managing conflict, addressing concerns, negotiation	"We needed to address the concerns head-on to avoid more resistance."
Communication and Engagement	Communication Strategy	Transparency, clarity, regular updates, stakeholder communication	"Clear and regular communication made all the difference in getting everyone on board."
Communication and Engagement	Employee Involvement	Engagement, participation in decision-making, feedback loops	"Involving employees in decisions made them feel part of the process."
Communication and Engagement	Stakeholder Engagement	Internal stakeholders, external stakeholders, customer involvement	"Engaging external partners early helped reduce uncertainty during the change."



Organizational and Adaptation	Culture	Organizational Culture	Supportive environment, innovation culture, value alignment	"A culture that values innovation and trust was crucial in our ability to adapt to changes."
Organizational and Adaptation	Culture	Adaptability	Flexibility, openness to new ideas, rapid response to change	"Being flexible allowed us to respond swiftly to unforeseen challenges."
Planning and Strategy		Change Planning	Strategic alignment, goal setting, resource allocation	"Having a clear plan with defined goals and metrics helped us stay focused despite the challenges."
Planning and Strategy		Risk Management	Risk identification, mitigation strategies, contingency planning	"Identifying potential risks early on helped us plan for contingencies."
Planning and Strategy		Performance Measurement	Key performance indicators (KPIs), benchmarking, monitoring progress	"We set specific KPIs to measure how effectively the changes were being implemented."
Learning and Development	and	Training and Development	Skill enhancement, workshops, learning opportunities, coaching	"Providing ongoing training allowed our team to feel prepared for the changes ahead."
Learning and Development	and	Innovation in Change	New approaches, technological integration, creative problem-solving	"We piloted new technologies to support the changes, which proved to be effective."

The selective coding phase revealed six core categories that encapsulate the major dynamics of decision-making in organizational change management. "Change Leadership" emerged as a critical category, emphasizing the role of leadership in driving and sustaining change, while "Resistance and Barriers" highlighted the challenges faced, particularly in overcoming communication gaps and resistance to change. "Communication and Engagement" underscored the importance of transparent communication and active involvement of employees and stakeholders. Meanwhile, "Organizational Culture and Adaptation" showed that a flexible, supportive culture is essential for successful adaptation. Finally, "Planning and Strategy" and "Learning and Development" emphasized the importance of thorough planning, risk management, and continuous learning to navigate the complexities of change. Together, these core categories form a comprehensive framework for decision-making in organizational change management.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the development of a decision-making framework for organizational change management. The findings, derived from 21 semi-structured interviews, identified key themes related to leadership, communication, resistance, organizational culture, and strategic alignment, all of which play critical roles in managing organizational change. Through open, axial, and selective coding, we were able to identify these interconnected elements, offering a comprehensive view of how decision-making processes impact the success of change initiatives.

One of the key findings of this study was the critical role of leadership in driving change. Participants frequently highlighted the importance of leadership styles that promote collaboration, transparency, and empowerment. This aligns with the work of Sahid (2023), who emphasized the importance of transformational leadership in fostering a sense of shared purpose during organizational change. Similarly, Fürstenberg et al. (2021) argued that paradoxical leadership, which balances stability and innovation, can enhance employee engagement and clarity during transitions [9]. In this study, leaders who embraced a collaborative approach were able to reduce resistance to change by involving employees in the decision-making process, fostering trust and cooperation. This echoes Choi's (2011) findings that employees' attitudes toward organizational change are shaped by their relationship with leadership, particularly in how transparent and inclusive the process is [13].

The study also revealed that communication plays a central role in the success of organizational change. Participants emphasized the need for clear, consistent, and transparent communication throughout the change process. This finding is consistent with the work of Oladeinde (2023), who found that effective communication strategies are crucial for ensuring stakeholder engagement and reducing resistance. Furthermore, Phillips and Klein (2022) suggested that regular updates and open communication channels help build trust between management and employees, which is vital for the success of change initiatives [29]. In this study, participants reported that when communication was lacking or unclear, resistance to change increased, as employees felt uncertain about the direction and impact of the changes. This highlights the importance of addressing communication barriers as part of the decision-making framework for organizational change.

Resistance to change emerged as a significant theme in the findings. Participants described various forms of resistance, ranging from passive disengagement to active opposition. This is consistent with Chalise (2021), who identified similar patterns of resistance in the hotel industry, where employees resisted changes they perceived as threatening to their job security or workload. Abubakar (2021) also noted that conflict management strategies are crucial in mitigating resistance to change [15]. In this study, leaders who addressed resistance directly and engaged in open dialogue with employees were more successful in overcoming these challenges. By understanding the root causes of resistance, such as fear of job loss or lack of clarity about the change process, leaders were able to develop targeted strategies to address these concerns and reduce opposition.

Organizational culture was another critical factor influencing the success of change initiatives. Participants in this study emphasized the need for a supportive and adaptive organizational culture that promotes flexibility and innovation. This finding is supported by the work of Zheng et al. (2010), who argued that organizational culture plays a mediating role in the effectiveness of change management strategies [16]. In organizations where the culture is resistant to change, leaders face greater challenges in implementing new strategies and processes. Deverell and Olsson (2010) similarly found that organizations with adaptive cultures were better able to navigate crises and external pressures [22]. In this study, participants highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation to support change initiatives, a finding echoed by Rashidfarokhi (2023), who emphasized the role of open innovation models in facilitating organizational change [35].

Strategic alignment between change initiatives and organizational goals was also identified as a key factor in successful change management. Participants reported that when change initiatives were aligned with the broader strategic vision of the organization, they were more likely to succeed. This finding is consistent with Nugraha et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of aligning change management strategies with organizational objectives [4]. Strategic alignment ensures that change initiatives are not seen as isolated events but as part of a larger organizational effort to achieve long-term growth and competitiveness. Bhattarai (2018) similarly found that organizations that successfully align their change management processes with their strategic goals are more likely to enhance their performance and remain competitive in dynamic environments [25].

The use of semi-structured interviews in this study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of managers involved in organizational change. The findings provide practical insights into the challenges and strategies associated with managing change in dynamic environments. By developing a decision-making framework based on these insights, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on organizational change management and offers a practical tool for organizations looking to navigate complex transitions.

While this study provides valuable insights into decision-making processes in organizational change management, it is not without limitations. First, the sample size of 21 participants, while sufficient for achieving

theoretical saturation, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences across different industries and organizational contexts. This limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study was conducted using semi-structured interviews, which rely on self-reported data. This method may introduce bias, as participants may not always accurately recall their experiences or may provide responses that they perceive to be socially desirable. Finally, the study focused on managers and leaders, which may overlook the perspectives of lower-level employees who are also affected by organizational change.

Future research could address some of the limitations of this study by expanding the sample size and including participants from a broader range of industries and organizational contexts. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how decision-making frameworks for organizational change may vary across different sectors. Additionally, future studies could incorporate mixed-methods approaches, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to validate the findings and reduce potential biases associated with self-reported data. Another area for future research could focus on exploring the experiences of employees at different levels of the organization, particularly those who may not be directly involved in decision-making but are nonetheless impacted by organizational change. This would provide a more holistic view of how change management processes affect the entire organization.

Organizations undergoing change should prioritize leadership development, ensuring that leaders are equipped with the skills necessary to manage transitions effectively. Transformational leadership styles that promote collaboration, transparency, and employee empowerment are particularly effective in reducing resistance and fostering a positive change environment. Additionally, organizations should invest in communication strategies that ensure clear, consistent, and transparent messaging throughout the change process. This will help build trust and reduce uncertainty among employees. Finally, organizations should focus on aligning their change initiatives with their broader strategic objectives, ensuring that change is seen as part of a larger effort to achieve long-term growth and sustainability. Creating a supportive and adaptive organizational culture that encourages innovation and continuous learning is essential for the successful implementation of change initiatives.

### **Authors' Contributions**

Authors equally contributed to this article.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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