
Are commitment and job satisfaction affect attitude of employees towards change initiatives? An examination of higher education institutions in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study aimed at examining the influence of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on attitudes of employees toward change initiatives in selected public universities in Ethiopia. Self-Administered questionnaires were prepared and distributed to 200 randomly selected teachers in selected universities via e-mail addresses. By using the average score of three scales, correlation and regression analysis was made to see the relationship and influences of commitment and job satisfaction. The findings revealed that employees' general attitude towards change initiatives is influenced by Job satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). However, it did not indicate the significant influence of employees' commitment to the attitude of employees regarding change initiatives ($p > 0.05$). These imply that job satisfaction may play a greater role in shaping the attitude of employees to change initiatives than organizational commitment. From the results, we recommend that leaders focus on things that can enhance job satisfaction during the implementation of change initiatives.

Keywords

Change Initiatives, Attitude towards change, organizational commitment, Job satisfaction, Higher Education Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Change has happened to be a customary event in organizations because of the quick general public and economic changes. Organizational change in Public sector is usually termed as reform. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) described public management reform as "deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them to run better."

Due to the new challenges in improving quality of education, higher education institutes in Ethiopia are under pressure for restructuring and reforming (Daryush, Mehran & Heydar, 2008). In order to make these efforts fruitful, different change initiatives (e.g. Active learning, Modularization, Change Army, Kaizen) and performance management tools like Balanced Scorecard have been on implementation in higher education institutions.

However, prior study has generally recognized that considerable number of organizational change initiatives neither

brought about their planned objectives nor advance persistent change due to an execution failure (Kotter, 1995 as cited in Choi, 2011). Research suggests that the failure of organizational change initiatives can generally be attributed to negative employee attitudes towards the change during implementation process (Bellou, 2007; Coetsee 1999; Durmaz 2007 as cited in Visagie & Steyn, 2011). Studies have also indicated the failure during change implementation attempt due to undervaluing of the crucial position of individuals in the change practices (Choi, 2011). To make a change to happen in varies organizational contexts, in higher education in particular, individuals must change. This is because individuals, i.e., employees as the target of change, their perceptions, expertise, drives and basic understanding form a considerable element of the workplaces where changes are going to take place (Smith, 2005 as cited in Alfonsus, 2008). In this regard, beside change initiative implementation attempt, identification of employees' attitude toward change initiatives and conditions that

indicate employees' support for organizational change are very important. Studies have demonstrated various antecedents to particular organizational change programs (Deloitte & Touche, 1996 as cited in Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005). The basic reason of failure in change program is due to unconstructive perception of employees towards change. As part of public reform evaluation, study has been conducted by Civil Service Transformation Research Center in 2012. It has indicated a limited success mainly because of the attitudes of the people in general and the civil servant in particular. Besides, it is less exhaustive in nature, this study did not indicate the reason why the attitudes of people toward those change initiatives is negative.

Research scholars had confirmed challenges in executing and leading organizational change endeavors usually result in organizational catastrophes (Probst & Raisch, 2005). Because of this, great consideration has been given to investigating the determinant that increases the probability of effectively realizing organizational change endeavors. Studies on organizational change have examined attitude toward change in connection to stage of commitment and job satisfaction under different public organizations' context (Roderick, 2006; Alireza, 2014; Alfonsus, 2008; Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005). Committed Employees are voluntary to exert more energy in change initiatives and, hence there will be high likelihood of developing constructive attitudes towards change (Iverson, 1996). In addition to commitment, level of job satisfaction has been considered the most important factor that influences employees' acceptance of organizational change. According to Spector (1997), employees stay or leave their organization depending on how much they are satisfied with their job.

However, limited studies have examined those variables in public higher education setting in Ethiopia. Thus, by framing our inquiry in to organizational management perspective, the aims of this research are to investigate the role of organization commitment and job satisfaction in shaping the attitude of employees in selected Public universities.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Kanter (1992) described change as "the crystallization of new possibilities (new policies, new behaviors, new patterns, new methodologies, new products or new market ideas) based on the reconceptualized patterns in the institution".

Attitudes toward organizational change

Elias (2009) defined Attitudes toward organizational change as "an employee's overall positive or negative evaluative judgment of a change initiative implemented by their organization."

Though change is a common agenda for today's modern organization, its success can be affected by different factors. According to Damanpour (1991), leaders' outlook to change governs worker involvement and the successful advancement of programs of change. Further,, one causes for the lack of success in majority of change initiatives are people's struggle against change (Bovey & Hede, 2001). These information alone rationalize the need for examination of individual's cognitive development as an element of organizational change.

The relationship of attitude towards organizational change and organizational Commitment

In his study Iverson (1996) revealed that employee getting in to change process is grown by organizational commitment. Lau and Woodman (1995) also demonstrated that a well dedicated individual is more agreeable to acknowledge organizational change when it seems to be advantageous. However, studies are also shown that a well devoted employees may refuse to accept change if perceived the change as a threat for their personal gain. These indicate the possibility of organizational commitment effect on attitudes to organizational change initiatives. Furthermore, employees committed to their organizations are more voluntary to engage in a change processes and, consequently, there is a high likelihood to develop positive attitudes (Iverson, 1996).

Job satisfaction and attitude towards organizational change

Locke (1976) defined Job satisfaction as "the extent to which an employee feels positively or negatively toward his/her jobs".

Many Researchers have identified the association of job satisfaction and attitudes to change. Yousef (2000a) confirmed that

positive perception toward change in general rose with the boost of satisfaction due to compensation. There is more acceptance of change if employees satisfied with diverse aspects of their job and absence of extrinsic job satisfaction were linked with poor attitudes toward change (Darwish, 1999).

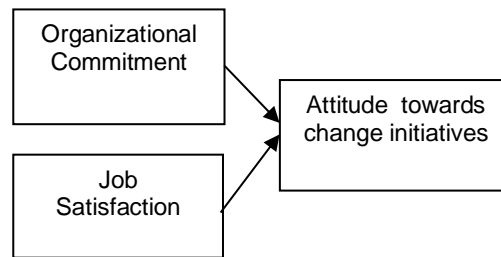
EMPIRICAL REVIEW

This study is aimed at examining the influence of organizational commitment and job satisfaction on general attitudes of employees towards change initiatives. To achieve these purposes we critically reviewed some related empirical studies hereunder. Carlo (2012) has conducted a study to identify how employees perceived the change process affects them. The findings indicated that employees were not pleased with the change course of actions being executed. The study also presented the solutions suggested by employee including introduction of the urgency and requirement of the change in straightforward terms; set up a change leadership management team consists of truthful workforces with good technical and interpersonal relationships skills; with managerial position; and best strategies. Study conducted by Kleanthis (2014) and his friends explored the perceptions of employee about suitability of change at the time of intended change under hospital setting. The results indicated a considerable raise in attitudes of employees towards aptness of change once the deliberate change realization. This result also indicated that variations in the above attitudes are moderated by job satisfaction.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME-WORK

Despite positive contributions, the studies reviewed above have some limitations. First, the inconsistencies of the findings with regard to which factors affect employee attitudes and the role of leaders during implementation of change. Second, regarding the effect of employees commitment and job satisfaction on employees' attitude studies were very limited. Moreover, almost all studies were conducted out of higher education setting. Therefore, the current study filled the gap in literature by examining the attitude of employees toward change initiatives in general, and the role commitment and jobs satisfaction playing in shaping the attitudes using the following conceptual framework.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research



METHODS

Target population

The target population for this research was employees who were engaged in teaching duties at least for one year in three public universities.

Sampling method and sample size

From those three Universities, 200 employees were randomly selected from the lists of about 3000 academic staffs and were distributed with self-administered questionnaire. About 121 questionnaires were returned resulting in 60% response rate. The number of samples was determined based on the guideline proposed by Carvalho (1984). He proposed 200 samples for the study population in the range of 1201-3200 people.

Instrument development and data collection

Three self-administered instruments were distributed to collect cross-sectional data. Online survey was sent to participants' e-mail through Google form. Respondents were requested to show the degree to which they agree with every statements (Items) on a five point likert scale. The average of the items was used for further analysis.

Attitude towards Change (ATC): Attitude towards change was measured with instrument of attitude toward change developed by Dunham et al. (1989). ATC measures employees' attitude in relation to recent organizational change initiatives. The scale consists of 18 items that are measured using a five point Likert-type scale where strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and reversed if the item is stated negatively.

Organizational Commitment (OC): To measure OC, nine general commitment scales were adopted from the three-Component Model of Meyer and Natalie (2004). The scales were measured using a five point Likert-type scale where strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and reversed if the item is stated negatively.

Job Satisfaction (JS): Three items were taken from Michigan organizational assessment package. These items are measured using a Likert scale categorized as highly dissatisfied to highly satisfied.

Model Specification

Since the purposes of the study is to identify if two independents variables (i.e. organizational commitment and job satisfaction) shape dependent variable (i.e. general attitude of employees towards change). So to create the linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, Multiple Linear regression model were used as follows.

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_i X_i + e_i \quad (1)$$

Where,

Y_i is the value of the dependent scale variable.

β_0 = the intercept of regression equation

β_i = the coefficient of each independent variables

X_i = the values of the predictors

e_i = the error term

Hence, it follows,

$$ATC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 OC + \beta_2 JS \quad (2)$$

Where,

β_0 = The value when the value of predictor is equal to 0.

$\beta_{1,2}$ = the coefficient of OC & JS

ATC = Employees` attitude towards change (dependent variable)

OC = Organizational commitment (independent variable)

JS = Job Satisfaction (independent variable)

Data Analysis

Descriptive Analysis was performed using the average of Attitudes towards Change scale to determine if the attitude is favorable or unfavorable towards change. Pearson's correlation coefficients between all variables were conducted to see the strength of correlations. In order to identify the effect of independent variables on dependent variable, multiple linear regressions will be used.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Description

To give few descriptions about the data based on mean and standard deviation, Table 1 is constructed for the variables. The mean and std. deviation of Attitude towards change is

3.48, the highest mean of all and 0.329 respectively. The next highest mean is 2.865 for organizational commitment with 0.348 std. deviation. The smallest mean recorded was for job satisfaction (i.e. 2.929) with std. deviation of 0.424.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Attitude towards change	3.488	0.329	0.806	121
Commitment	2.865	0.348	0.764	121
Job satisfaction	2.929	0.424	0.810	121
Valid N (list wise)				121

In order to identify strict internal consistency of scales, Cranach's coefficient was calculated (table I). Cranach's coefficient in all cases was over 0.7 with employees` attitudes scale (0.806), employees` commitment scale (0.764) and Job satisfaction scale (0.810). Since the acceptable limits of Cronbach's alpha according to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) ranges from 0.60 to 0.80, the items are considered reliable.

The Influence of Commitment and Job satisfaction on Employees` attitude towards change

To see if employees` level of organizational Commitment and Job satisfaction have a role in shaping attitudes towards change, linear regression analysis was conducted. Meanwhile, the second research question of this study is answered. Under this topic, statistics that are related to Linear Regression will be discussed.

Correlation analysis was made to establish the association among the variables of the study. Pearson Correlation coefficient was used for this purpose.

Table 2. Correlations

		attitude towards change	commitment	Job satisfa.
Pearson Correlation	Attitude towards change	1.000		
	Commitment	0.051	1.000	
Sig. (1-tailed)	Job Satisfa.	0.457	-0.109	1.000
	Attitude towards change		0.418	0.024
	Commitment	0.418		0.328
	Job Satisfa.	0.024*	0.328	

*correlation is significant at p value =0.05

As it can be seen in Table 2, employees attitude towards change and job satisfaction

are significantly related ($r=0.457$; $p<0.05$) while statistically insignificant relationships have been found between employees attitude towards change and commitment ($r=0.051$; $p>0.05$).

Next to correlation analysis, multiple linear regression analysis was run to identify if two variables, organizational commitment and job satisfaction affect the current employees` attitude and to model this relationship. Before starting regression analysis, collinearity, was tested. As depicted in table 3, collinearity diagnostics were made using Tolerance and Variance inflation factor. Tolerance values that are close to zero and below are showing the possibility of multi-collinearity of the variables.

Table 3. Multi-collinearity test

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Toleranc e	VIF
Commitment	0.988	1.012
Job satisfaction	0.988	1.012

With respect to Tolerance, the values are not close to zero. Regarding the VIF standards, if the value is greater than two, the possibility of multi-collinearity would be evident. The Lower these values implied that the predictors are free of multi-collinearity problems.

Table 4 shows the coefficients of the regression line. As it can be seen, the expected Attitude scale value is equal to $2.145+0.097\text{Commitmentvalue}+0.364\text{Jobs satisfaction values}$. This implies that a unit variation in commitment value causes 0.097 times increase in variation of attitudes values and the value of attitude to change varies by 0.364 times the unit variation of job satisfaction value. This entails that the unit variations of the predictors cause very little variation in employees` attitude scale.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients^a

Model	Unstand. Coeff.		Std.C oeff.	t	Sig.
1	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	2.145	0.830		2.584	0.020
commitment	0.097	0.210	0.102	0.461	0.651
Job satisfaction	0.364	0.173	0.469	2.109	0.045

^a Dependent Variable: Attitude towards change

Table 4 shows also the significance levels of coefficients. Even though not strong, the significant value of T-test for Job satisfaction ($P<0.05$) shows the contribution of Job satisfaction which is substantial in employees` attitude variation. The implication is that the increase in employees` Job satisfaction to their organization increases their attitudes towards change initiatives and vice-versa. This finding is in agreement with Lau and Woodman (1995) who argued that high satisfaction level of employee on the job they were engaged can enables to predict the acceptance of organizational change. Similar to this, Darwish (1999) demonstrated the association between lower stages of extrinsic job satisfaction and negative attitudes toward change. Cordery et al, (1993) reported the same result that they observed significance interaction between satisfaction and change. Thus, to bring effective change, employees` job satisfaction must be assessed initially.

Further, the insignificant test result is the indication that organizational commitment variable does not contribute much to the model. The implication is that any variation in employee`s job commitment does not result in positive/negative attitudes of employees regarding change initiatives. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Iverson (1996) and Guest (1987) who argued that highly committed employees to their organization are most likely develop favorable attitudes for change. Iverson (1996) found that employees who are highly attached to their organization most probably accept organizational change. Regarding the significance of commitment, Lau and Woodman (1995) confirmed that the more commitment, the more willingness to shoulder organizational change when it is believed to be beneficial. This finding is inconsistent also with the findings of Iverson (1996). He put commitment as a dominant contributing factor of attitudes towards change next to union membership.

To check the model fit or its acceptability, analysis of variance was run (table 5). The F statistic shown in the table revealed that the variation explained by the model is due to significant variation in at least one predictor variable not by chance.

Table 5. ANOVA^{ab}

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.738	2	0.869	4.950	0.009
Residual	19.492	118	0.176		19.492
Total	21.230	120			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Job satisfaction, Commitment

b. Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Change

Analysis of variance also shows the variations that are explained and that are not explained by the model. In the table above, regression sums of square, 1.738 shows the variation accounted for by the model, which is by far less than residual sums of square, 19.492. This implied that little variation in employees' attitude towards change is due to variation in independent variables. This means variables other than commitment and job satisfaction might have large contribution. According to Shah (2011), employee attitudes could be affected by other socio-economic and cultural variables. In addition, Yosef (2011) demonstrated that civil service reforms impeded by lack of structural set up that is amenable to reforms execution, lack of proper control, absence of clearly defined management system and procedure of effective and efficient utilization of human resource and lack of managerial know how.

CONCLUSION

The major purposes of this study were to provide empirical support on the employees' general attitude towards change initiatives as influenced by commitment and job satisfaction. In the surveyed Higher education institutions, the following conclusions were made based on the findings.

Employees' attitude towards change initiatives and employees' job satisfaction found to be significantly related while no relationship exists between organization commitment and employees' attitude. This means any variation in employee's commitment does not result in positive or negative attitudes of employees regarding change initiatives. Moreover, the contribution of Job satisfaction for current employees' attitude found to be substantial and can be deduced that the variation in job satisfaction scale will cause the variation in employees' attitude scale.

Future Research Direction

Like any other study, this is also with some limitations. The second is related to the focuses of this study to mandatory changes. Many scholars demonstrated that attitude towards change is a good predictor of future behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) if it is non-mandatory change. Scholars argued that the more mandatory the change is the more an attitude towards change couldn't predicts real change behavior (Kijisanayotin et al., 2009). The other limitation is its focuses to general attitudes towards change not to specific change. It is recommended that real behavior is more correctly predicted by distinctive attitudes than general attitude (Choi, 2011).

A third limitation is related to target population of this study. To get the full picture of challenges and employees attitude towards change, both academic and administration would have been more appropriate. In this study however, the latter staffs were used as a target population to avoid the variation. Hence, we put suggestions for future research that both mandatory and voluntary changes; both general attitudes towards change and specific change be studied by using both academic and administrative of higher education to get a comprehensive findings in the area.

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