

The Impact of Work Culture and Understanding Capabilities on Change Success

Craig Soliz

12485 Sawyer Ln, Dallas, USA

Email: craigsoliz@gmail.com

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Abstract

This project investigated the creation and implementation of change management strategies within business transformation planning, focusing on how stakeholders navigate resistance to foster resilience in the business environment. Recognizing the challenges faced by business leaders—particularly in small to mid-sized U.S. retail sectors—due to high rates of staff resistance that contribute to a 70% failure rate in strategic change initiatives, this study aims to identify effective training strategies to enhance change management success. Through qualitative inquiry, perspectives of ten retail executives with 1 - 3 years of change management experience were explored via video conference interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis and inductive coding. Results revealed four key themes: the importance of innovative, multi-level training strategies to improve engagement and competence; the necessity of fostering collaboration and feedback from staff to alleviate resistance; the role of effective communication and interpersonal skills in enhancing morale; and the value of leadership development in boosting job satisfaction and competency. The findings suggest that enhancing leadership capabilities in crisis management and communication can lead to more successful change implementations. Implications include the promotion of training and awareness initiatives to better align organizational efforts, reduce employee resistance, and improve overall change management outcomes.

Keywords

Change Management, Business Transformation, Stakeholder Resistance, Resilience in Business, Strategic Change Initiatives, Employee Resistance, Small to Mid-Size Retail Business, Training Strategies, Qualitative Inquiry, Thematic Analysis, Leadership Competencies, Communication Skills, Staff Engagement, Change Management Success, Organizational Development, Job Satisfaction, Workforce Diversity, Employee Knowledge Sharing, Crisis

1. Topic

1.1. Introduction

The evolution of business operations has compelled organizations to incorporate dynamic transformation elements to remain competitive. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, making transformation a necessity rather than an option (Wilcox, 2022). This required effective change management, which addresses systemic deficiencies by guiding the transition of an organization's goals, processes, or technologies and helping to overcome employee resistance (Lawton & Pratt, 2021). Plans that lack change management face greater personnel pushback compared to those that integrate it (Salman, 2021). This project examined how businesses have implemented change management in their transformation planning and what stakeholders needed to consider maintaining resilience. This topic is crucial for business leaders facing resistance to structural and process changes, highlighting strategies to mitigate staff opposition. Effective leadership is vital for fostering teamwork and adapting to changing demands (Bagga et al., 2023), and change management planning is essential amid shifting technological, environmental, or societal conditions (Onufrey & Bergek, 2021).

In the context of this study, "greater personnel pushback" encompasses a range of specific behaviors and outcomes that hinder the successful implementation of organizational change. These include increased employee turnover, as individuals may choose to leave the organization due to dissatisfaction or an inability to adapt to new processes; declines in productivity, which can arise from confusion, disengagement, or resistance to new procedures; and heightened employee dissatisfaction, often stemming from inadequate communication, lack of support, or uncertainty associated with organizational transitions.

The study further identifies that pushback frequently results from fear and ineffective management, leading to resistance to innovations or changes in organizational structures. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the swift shift to digital platforms created significant challenges for employees, many of whom experienced difficulty adapting. This resistance manifested as job abandonment or active opposition to new processes. These findings illustrate that "pushback" is a multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing emotional, behavioral, and operational disruptions that can undermine the success of change initiatives.

1.2. Problem of Practice

In 2020, COVID-19 triggered a global health crisis that swiftly turned into an economic emergency, compelling retail businesses to adapt by modifying organizational structures and complying with new health regulations (Stemmler, 2022; Triggs & Kharas, 2020). Business leaders faced difficulties executing strategic

change initiatives due to resistance from staff, underscoring that failures often stem from inadequate people skills rather than technical abilities (Primeeast, 2020; Samuel, 2022). A lack of organizational change management exacerbated these issues, resulting in failed strategies that could not overcome employee resistance (Aggarwal, 2021).

The specific challenge was that 70% of strategic change management initiatives fail in small to mid-sized U.S. retail businesses because leaders often lack training to effectively reduce staff resistance, which in turn lowers productivity (Bodell, 2022). Employee resistance, driven by fear and mismanagement, is a systematic obstacle to implementing new strategies and innovations (Rehman et al., 2021).

Since the onset of COVID-19, rapid business transformation involving new technologies and processes has been critical for survival (Laberge et al., 2020). Retailers, previously reliant on brick-and-mortar sales, had to pivot to digital solutions to cope with regulatory challenges (Tabish, 2020). This swift transition often left employees struggling to adapt, leading to job abandonment or resistance (He & Harris, 2020).

1.3. Gap in Practice

The gap in practice emerged as small to mid-sized U.S. retail leaders failed to identify essential training components for successful change management and employee integration (Samuel, 2022). Key workforce planning components include ensuring employees possess the necessary skills (Ziakkas et al., 2023). The turbulent environment post-restructuring in 2022 stressed employees significantly, impacting overall productivity (Lundmark et al., 2022). This project aims to address these training deficiencies, providing leaders with strategies to effectively manage change and reduce employee resistance to improve resilience and organizational success (Rehman et al., 2021; Aggarwal, 2021).

1.4. Purpose of the Project and Project Questions

This qualitative inquiry seeks to explore the perspectives of small to mid-sized U.S. retail business leaders on enhancing strategic change management through effective training that mitigates employee resistance. By examining leadership training components, the study aims to identify solutions to workforce challenges that can hinder implementation success, utilizing qualitative methods to gather insights on these issues (Barrett, 2018).

Project Question: What are the perspectives of retail business leaders regarding reducing employee resistance through effective training strategies to improve change management success rates?

1.5. Project Justification

The identified gap highlights the lack of training among small to mid-sized retail leaders to implement effective change management plans, hindering adaptation to new processes and enhancing resilience (Samuel, 2022). Change management

necessitates reevaluating company visions and objectives while understanding leadership dynamics that can impact organizational effectiveness (He & Harris, 2020; Farahnak et al., 2019). This project aims to investigate the root causes of change failures and illuminate best practices from informed leadership training.

Significantly, this research will benefit organizations facing change implementation challenges by equipping them with the necessary leadership training to mitigate common employee resistance. It will particularly be relevant for businesses transitioning to digital platforms that lack experience in effective change management. Ultimately, this project strives to enhance understanding of staff resilience amidst change and the crucial role competent leadership training plays in this process.

1.6. Preliminary Project Framework

A framework is a structured plan guiding research to create, deliver, and capture value effectively (Jubenville, 2021). It helps researchers establish a purposeful foundation for various projects (Godfrey, 2019). The framework shown simplifies Burke and Litwin's (1992) model of organizational performance, focusing on employee needs during digital transformations. Key components include skills (specific knowledge), support (encouragement and resources), and expectations (staff impressions affecting interactions with leadership). This framework identifies areas for improvement while adapting methods and providing insights into study outcomes.

The research project aimed to address challenges in communication and engagement, identify required support and resources, and measure the strategic innovation for change management. These elements were essential to understanding how business problems contribute to ineffective change. Effective communication and resource support from leadership are critical to staff perception of change, and continuous evaluation is necessary for process improvement. The project aligns with the theme of necessary training and implementation for successful organizational change.

1.7. Preliminary Project Plan

This research employed qualitative inquiry to understand social phenomena, focusing on staff resistance due to leadership's failure in change management (Agius, 2013). Analysis of responses aimed to categorize shared attitudes and experiences among staff (Burke & Litwin, 1992).

Anticipated challenges include participant drop-out or incomplete interviews (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). To address this, a sample size of 10 - 12 qualified individuals was established. Ensuring unbiased interviews and allowing participants to express themselves freely were also primary concerns, maintained by confidentiality (Rehman et al., 2021).

Recruitment will occur through professional networking sites, with a survey detailing participation requirements. Candidates must currently hold leadership

roles in U.S. retail organizations that have undergone significant changes in the past three years, and their participation will involve a 45 - 60 minute interview (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Each submission will be screened to confirm compliance with project standards.

Data analysis will follow Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process: familiarizing with the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing reports. This process involves deep immersion in the data, coding important features, identifying patterns, and writing analyses to create a coherent narrative that conveys the study's findings effectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This section introduced literature on leadership within U.S. retail businesses regarding strategic and innovative change management. A thorough literature review was crucial for understanding the topic, offering critical analyses of prior research and establishing theoretical foundations (Nuttall, 2009). This review enabled an exploration of relevant research and informed intellectual conclusions (Turner, 2018). Key components detailed include search methodologies, conceptual foundations, applicable literature, prominent themes, research methodologies, research synthesis, and conclusions.

This qualitative inquiry aims to examine the perspectives of small to mid-size U.S. retail leaders on enhancing the success of strategic change management by implementing effective training strategies that mitigate employee resistance. The guiding question is: What do retail business leaders think about reducing employee resistance through effective training to improve change management success?

2.2. Applied Frameworks

2.2.1. Applied Frameworks Used in Scholarly Research

Scholarly literature aids in identifying and aligning appropriate frameworks with theories and methodologies relevant to sustainable research (Kumar et al., 2022). The chosen framework provides fresh insights into addressing practical gaps in the topic (Cartwright & Joyce, 2020). This project's framework guides the exploration of the topic, business problems, and strategic innovations needed for the DBA Research project. As noted by Moullin et al. (2020), U.S. businesses require leaders trained in innovative strategies to align and address gaps in practice.

1) Leadership Development Framework

Dalakoura (2012) emphasized that leadership development extends beyond personal skills and is essential for organizational success. Hughes et al. (2018) highlighted the important roles of creativity and innovation in leadership. Liu et al. (2021) noted that leadership development is an ongoing process. Continuous adaptation is vital for U.S. retail leaders to meet internal and external business goals (Finlay, 2021). Frameworks that address innovative leadership needs (Hughes et al., 2018) help fill research gaps regarding leadership's role in innovation strategies.

Guzman et al. (2020) expanded this by addressing leadership knowledge deficits in implementing strategic plans.

2) Leadership Competency Framework

This framework explores the development of leadership skills and the challenges posed by outdated change models (Hollenbeck et al., 2006). Ruben (2019) highlighted the importance of moving beyond conventional thinking to adopt innovative strategies necessary for growth. Northouse (2018) focused on broader leadership culture rather than individualistic approaches. The framework's limitations lie in its relevance mainly to existing leaders rather than those lacking adequate training to overcome resistance to change. This project addresses these deficiencies by analyzing leadership training's impact on strategic change management.

3) Innovation Strategy Framework

Ludeke-Freund's (2019) framework initially focused on digital innovation but evolved to emphasize the need for trained leaders to navigate organizational challenges. This framework supports understanding the strategic innovation necessary for reducing leadership skill gaps (Ludeke-Freund, 2019). While it highlights outcomes over processes, the framework falls short by not addressing funding or training resources.

2.2.2. Applied Frameworks Used in Practitioner Research

The applied framework for practitioner research encompasses usage, process application, design, and managing assumptions to bridge gaps in practice (Moullin et al., 2020). Practitioners, including small to mid-sized business leaders and decision-makers, play crucial roles in implementing changes.

1) Lewin's Three-Stage Change Model Framework

Lewin's model describes change as involving unfreezing, moving, and refreezing stages, focusing on overcoming uncertainty and resistance (Shirey, 2013). Effective leadership at each stage—motivating change, facilitating training, and reinforcing new practices—is crucial for successful implementation (Hussain et al., 2018).

2) Burke and Litwin's Casual Model of Organizational Performance and Change Framework

Burke and Litwin's (1992) model identifies twelve variables that influence organizational performance, categorized into transformational and transactional factors. This cyclical model assesses input and impact areas for change, addressing the gap in leadership skills impacting organizational effectiveness. However, its complexity may limit practical application due to the challenge of thoroughly identifying all variables involved.

This project highlights how each framework contributes valuable insights while also acknowledging specific limitations, helping to refine approaches to improving strategic change management in U.S. retail businesses.

3) Balanced Scorecard Framework

Kaplan and Norton (1992) introduced the balanced scorecard (BSC) framework to evaluate organizational performance, including non-financial outcomes. Marr

(2021) observed its evolution from a four-box model to a strategy map for clearer project variable visualization. However, the learning and growth perspectives faced challenges due to organizational misalignments. Adaptations of the BSC now include sub-sections focusing on human, informational, and organizational capital to better address areas like skills and technology (Marr, 2021). Leadership in organizations often struggles with the dynamics of effective change management (Kato, 2017).

The BSC enables leaders to assess their organizations through four lenses: financials, internal processes, innovation and learning, and customer perspectives, essential for navigating change (Kato, 2017). This tool underscores the need for prioritizing innovative leadership development to foster organizational growth (McKinsey & Company, 2009). Though the BSC offers top management a comprehensive business view, it may fail if not integrated with management practices (Chang, 2007).

2.3. Review of Scholarly Literature

Previous Scholarly Efforts to Address the Problem

Literature spanning over five years reveals that inadequate leadership knowledge often contributes to organizational change failures, notably due to employee resistance (Farahnak et al., 2019). Addressing these leadership challenges can enhance efficiency and sustain learning (Liu et al., 2021). Boons et al. (2013) highlighted the potential for organizations to transform challenges into opportunities, while Kang et al. (2016) noted that strategic improvements can foster an environment conducive to revenue growth.

Hollenbeck et al. (2006) advocated for a comprehensive competency approach to leadership effectiveness, stressing the importance of understanding personal and situational variables. Kogan (2020) emphasized that effective change management reduces resistance when the root cause is tackled with senior leadership's involvement.

Deschamps (2005) examined the necessary skill sets for retail leadership to manage employee resistance, advocating for creativity and collaborative problem-solving. U.S. retail leaders who employ strategic change management may unlock additional opportunities and foster cultural transformation (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000). Research by Renko et al. (2015) and Baron & Tang (2011) revealed that innovative leadership correlates with successful implementation across various levels, reducing resistance.

Studies by Vasiliki et al. (2018) and Ferreira et al. (2018) showed a direct link between leadership creativity and successful organizational change, stressing the importance of fostering a positive work culture. To combat employee resistance, leadership training addressing root causes is essential (Kang et al., 2016).

While extensive research exists on change management resistance, a gap remains specific to small to mid-sized U.S. retail organizations, highlighting the need for understanding diverse leadership approaches pertinent to the sector

(Kang et al., 2016; Coakes & Peter, 2007).

2.4. Review of Practitioner Literature

A comprehensive literature review on leadership development in U.S. retail was conducted, analyzing both past and recent practitioner research. This synthesis sought to enhance understanding of leadership training deficiencies affecting change management success.

Practitioner literature reveals that ineffective leadership skills often contribute to change initiative failures due to employee resistance (McKinsey & Company, 2018). Studies indicate that improved leadership communication and collaboration are critical for successful change (Gilley et al., 2009; Jian, 2007).

Previous research demonstrates that diverse, creative collaboration can foster innovation (Llopis, 2014; Chamorro-Premuzic, 2017). Participation from all levels within an organization is vital for effective change management (Sturt & Rogers, 2016).

This project aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation on leadership training by exploring methods to overcome employee resistance and enhance collaboration in change implementations. Past studies underline the necessity for leadership development to improve overall change management processes in small to mid-sized U.S. retail businesses.

2.5. Conclusion and Transition

A synthetic literature review revealed a significant gap in identifying essential training components necessary for small to mid-size retail business leaders to effectively implement change management plans and mitigate employee resistance to new processes. This review analyzed various vetted resources, synthesizing previous methods and strategies to enhance the success of change management in the U.S. retail sector. It compared existing research to identify similarities and differences, thereby informing innovative approaches to bridge the knowledge gap faced by small to mid-sized retailers.

The applied framework offers core concepts to address challenges in change management stemming from employee resistance, promoting improved outcomes. By providing fresh insights, the project aims to enhance understanding of effective leadership in change management, equipping U.S. retail businesses with the tools required for successful implementation of change plans. Previous research emphasizes the necessity of robust organizational change methodologies to reduce resistance (Hill et al., 2021), while the framework highlights critical components for favorable resolutions (Goldsmith, 2021).

The literature review's findings informed the development of a research proposal, which outlines a plan for conducting 10 - 12 interviews with small to mid-sized U.S. retail business leaders about their experiences with employee resistance in changing processes. Given the pandemic's impact on the retail industry, leaders often lacked the knowledge necessary to manage these transitions effectively, with

research indicating that 70% of change initiatives fail in this sector (Bodell, 2022). This project seeks to understand the perspectives of these leaders in relation to effective training strategies for reducing resistance.

Section 3 outlines the intricacies of the project, including the introduction of the problem, purpose, research questions, and selected qualitative inquiry technique. This method was chosen for its ability to capture diverse human perspectives and experiences, which is unattainable through quantitative means. A purposive sampling strategy will recruit 12 to 15 participants from appropriate forums, ensuring qualified individuals who have undergone organizational changes in the past three years.

Recruitment involves posting invitations in Facebook groups focused on change management within the U.S. retail sector and potentially on LinkedIn, aiming to comply with ethical standards of accessibility, confidentiality, and informed consent. This structured approach strives for a robust assessment of participants' experiences, thereby addressing the overarching challenges of implementing effective change management strategies in small to mid-sized retail businesses.

3. Proposal

3.1. Instrumentation/Interview Protocols/Document Review Protocols

In this qualitative inquiry, I explored the deficiencies in leadership development and training that contribute to employee resistance to change. A literature review identified themes such as poor communication, inadequate leadership support, and ineffective training that shaped the interview guide. This synthesis underscored the importance of structured training frameworks for successful organizational change management, highlighting the need to understand social phenomena through experiential research (Agius, 2013).

Data collection involved semi-structured participant interviews, which were audio recorded and securely stored. Transcriptions were shared with participants within three business days for approval; lack of response was interpreted as consent. The transcripts were cleaned of personal information and compared with recordings to ensure accuracy. A rigorous bias mitigation strategy was employed, and all results reflected participants' verbatim responses. Participants could also review their interview outcomes for accuracy.

For data analysis, I employed Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis, beginning with familiarization with diverse data forms, including transcriptions from Zoom or Teams. Phase 2 focused on developing initial codes through inductive coding, highlighting gaps between practice and identified themes. Reviews of the transcriptions helped ensure data relevance to the project question.

In Phase 3, I grouped codes into categories to identify broader themes. Phase 4 involved reviewing and organizing these themes into a matrix for clarity and presentation. The fifth phase refined these candidate themes, confirming their

alignment with the project's applied framework. Finally, in Phase 6, I reported the findings, creating logical, concise narratives based on the data, tables of themes, and participant statements. This report aims to inform leaders in U.S. retail businesses about management competencies needed to address challenges during strategic organizational change.

3.2. Trustworthiness

Connelly (2016) noted trustworthiness of the study involves the degree of rigor and confidence of the data and interpretation by the researcher to ensure quality, usefulness, and integrity of the findings. Forero et al. (2018) described trustworthiness as a stringent criterion associated with qualitative research: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Stahl and King (2020) discussed trustworthiness as being multi-faceted, where trust must be established to convey ideas in a manner that does not discredit trustworthiness due to questionability, reliability, or false data.

3.2.1. Dependability

The purpose of dependability was to ensure the results of this qualitative inquiry are repeatable if an inquiry is recommended or occurs within the same participant demographics, coders, and context (Forero et al., 2018). Potential threats to the integrity of dependability include characteristics like overly narrowed participant profiles and the lack of diversity among the participants that may result in false conclusions or misinterpretations of experiences (McGinley et al., 2021). As a method to overcome these concerns during data collection, participant recruitment, and the analysis phase, participants were asked to verify transcriptions taken during interviews to ensure data validity and accuracy.

3.2.2. Credibility and Confirmability

According to Shenton (2004), credibility speaks to the trustworthiness and validity of the research to ensure consistency of the findings with reality. Confirmability consists of the researcher's ability to preserve objectivity in ensuring the findings are the results of the participant's perspectives and experiences as opposed to the researcher's preference (Shenton, 2004). Credibility and confirmability can present challenges by allowing under-qualified participants to enter this project or using unconventional methods for academic research that cause unreasonable variations in the data. To overcome these challenges, expert evaluation of the data collection process and a test run will ensure that data collection can be accurately completed. The use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic framework for analysis will aid in ensuring that confirmability remains unhindered and valid.

3.2.3. Transferability

Transferability is the ability for a study's results to be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Forero et al., 2018). Activities utilized to preserve transferability included reducing threats to trustworthiness by using detailed descriptions to explain the phenomenon with enough detail that other researchers

may be able to draw inferences on the data of this study. Transferability may be affected by cultural influences, demographics, and environmental factors that are unique within the sampled participants (Singh et al., 2021). To overcome this challenge, a peer audit that included an external researcher reviewing the processes and product of this study to evaluate the accuracy, interpretations, and conclusions of the data. A peer audit may provide an unbiased overview that increased the trustworthiness of the study's outcome.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

An ethical consideration foreground reduces harm to participants, vulnerabilities in the research, and elucidated ethical considerations that can arise within the four phases of the research process: Planning, IRB approval, informed consent, and data analysis (Hennessy et al., 2022). As a researcher, it is vital to note the ethical principles and code of conduct that speak to the research tensions within the target of the research and to generalize the good of others and preserve the rights of the participant's privacy. As Ritchie (2021) described, the IRB process differs for each institution. However, they share specific criteria that force the researchers and students to think critically about respect, beneficence, and justice during their research projects. The creation of the IRB was due to the protection of rights needed for research subjects to reduce or eliminate unethical practices for the need of research (Padowski, 2019).

To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participant data, each written document was digitized by scanning and converting into a portable document format (PDF) or joint photographic group (JPG) and stored in a secured, password-protected file location on a thumb drive. Access to this library was limited to only the researcher and his expert reviewers from Capella University. Paper documents were then set for destruction via document shredding after they have been adequately digitized and saved for a term no less than 7 years.

Conflicts of interest can undermine the integrity of research studies and may threaten public trust in their findings (Mecca et al., 2015). To overcome conflicts of interest, interview questionnaires were uniform and read in a manner that allows for open discussion via open-ended questions. Interview questions did not contain personal inquiries into the participants' religious beliefs, race, age, or education. They were only focused on their experiences within the strategic organizational changes they have experienced.

3.4. Summary and Conclusion

This project employed purposive sampling to select participants with in-depth knowledge of strategic organizational change challenges. The sample consisted of current and former leaders from a mixed group of U.S. retail businesses, representing grocery, fashion, and manufacturing sectors. These participants had all experienced organizational change between 2020 and 2023, and 10 - 12 individuals who met specific criteria were selected for the study. Invitations for voluntary

participation were posted in several U.S. retail business social media groups to minimize personal bias, and applications were reviewed for alignment with the study's requirements. Those not meeting the criteria were notified of non-selection, while eligible candidates were invited for interviews, which were conducted via Zoom or Microsoft Teams to ensure consistency and data accuracy. Transcripts from these interviews were then sent to participants for approval; if no response was received within three business days, the transcripts were considered approved, allowing the data analysis to proceed.

This research aims to enhance the understanding of strategic organizational challenges in U.S. retail and offer solutions to assist practitioners in overcoming these obstacles. A sample size of 10 - 12 participants is adequate to represent small- to mid-sized U.S. retail businesses, particularly when considering data saturation. Data saturation is reached when additional data collection no longer yields new information, indicating that enough participants have been interviewed to thoroughly address the research questions.

Given the study's focus on exploring the perspectives of retail business leaders regarding leadership development and the management of resistance to change, this sample size is sufficient to capture the common themes and challenges faced by leaders across small- to mid-sized retail organizations. While there is diversity within the retail sector—such as variations in business size, geographic location, and leadership structures—the purposive sampling method ensured participants were selected based on their relevance to the research question. This targeted approach allowed for a focused investigation of leadership practices and organizational change, rather than seeking a broad, generalizable representation of the entire retail sector.

Moreover, the qualitative nature of this study is well-suited to a smaller sample size, as the goal is to achieve depth of understanding, rather than breadth. Semi-structured interviews, coupled with thematic analysis, provide the flexibility to explore a wide range of responses while allowing the identification of recurring themes. As is common in qualitative research, data saturation is typically achieved with smaller samples, where the richness of data often diminishes once key patterns and insights have been fully explored. Although a larger sample size could provide additional perspectives, the aim of this study is not statistical generalization but rather to gain in-depth insights into the leadership experiences and challenges within small- to mid-sized retail businesses undergoing change. Therefore, a sample size of 10 - 12 participants is methodologically sound and sufficient for achieving data saturation in this context.

4. Results, Analysis, and Reflection

4.1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic critically impacted businesses worldwide, compelling them to adapt processes and strategies to maintain competitiveness. This qualitative inquiry project seeks to understand how small to mid-size retail business

leaders can enhance change management success by adopting effective training strategies to reduce employee resistance. Notably, 70% of strategic change management initiatives fail, largely due to insufficient training strategies that lead to lower productivity (Bodell, 2022). To address this issue, the project explored the perspectives of retail leaders on improving change management implementation success through interviews aligned with the research question: What are the perspectives of retail businesses regarding change management success and employee resistance? The interview protocol was developed in accordance with this framework.

4.2. Data Collection Results

This section outlines the data collection process for the qualitative analysis project. Participants were recruited over four weeks through Facebook, utilizing a purposive sampling approach. A SurveyMonkey screening survey and a recruitment poster posted in Facebook groups identified potential subjects. Out of 13 applicants, 10 met the eligibility criteria and were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire via Zoom to preserve audio records. The interview guide in Appendix B served as the data collection instrument. Participants verified their credentials through LinkedIn, which were cross-checked against their screening forms. Informed consent forms were emailed to qualified participants for review and signature, and interviews were scheduled within 24 hours, lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Each Zoom interview, averaging 49 minutes and peaking at 55 minutes, featured only the participant and me, and was audio recorded. Participants were assigned alpha-numeric identifiers, such as P1, P2, and P3, prior to recording. Transcripts and audio files were downloaded from Zoom's cloud server and sent to participants for accuracy verification. They received an unedited copy of their transcript and were asked to confirm it accurately represented their session. Participants were requested to return the verification, approved or not, within two days. All approvals came in on time, allowing the data analysis to commence.

4.3. Data Analysis

The six-phased thematic analyses presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used in conjunction with inductive coding to answer the project question: What are the perspectives of retail businesses regarding improving the success rate of change management implementation to reduce employee resistance? The thematic analysis steps include acquainting me with the data collected, creating initial codes, scanning for themes, reviewing themes, naming, and defining themes, and creating the narration for reporting the findings, results, and recommendations. Several revisions of codes and categorization were needed to confirm alignment with this study's aim, problem, and project question and to inform of the gap in practice.

4.3.1. Phase 1 of Data Analysis

In Phase 1 of Braun and Clarke's six-phased approach to data analysis, reviewing

the data, scrutinizing the transcripts, and reviewing the audio recordings were necessary to identify patterns and findings of meaningful data. The data and patterns that were initially identified were reviewed to guarantee alignment with this project's question. Researchers must not include personal bias or external views during the initial coding process (Percy et al., 2015). Assumptions and inferences were identified initially to minimize the development of bias or opinions from external sources.

4.3.2. Generating Codes

Phase 2 of Braun and Clarke's six-phase data analysis approach centered on generating codes from participant interviews. Prior to coding, the interview data was carefully reviewed for accuracy and then entered into Microsoft Excel for word frequency analysis, which was essential for determining the relevance of phrases and codes.

Familiarizing myself with the raw data involved identifying patterns and potential themes. The initial coding phase began with collecting and transcribing interviews, requiring attentive listening for accurate documentation. After transcription, the data was meticulously reviewed to grasp its overall content and context. Inductive coding, a bottom-up approach, allowed codes and themes to emerge directly from the data without preset categories. Significant data segments were highlighted, including repetitive words or phrases among participants, and grouped with related terms to assign appropriate codes.

For example, a participant's statement about remote work included themes of "improved effectiveness," "travel," and "social engagements." Impressions and reflections on the data were recorded via reflective memos, aiding in the code generation process. Analyzing word frequencies was vital; the outputs from Excel informed the coding of concepts from the raw interview data. Initially, 61 frequent words were identified, which were later condensed into a final set of 34 codes, aligned with the study's objectives. Irrelevant terms were categorized as "unused."

4.3.3. Code Categorization

Phase 3 of Braun and Clarke's six-phased data analysis approach consisted of analyzing participant quotes and word counts to develop the classification of similar codes to create initial themes. Creating initial themes consisted of grouping similar codes together that displayed a pattern or relationship to the others and presented a homogeneous connection. Upon completion, all the data within the codes were reviewed, and determined if they aligned with the project question. Seven categories were found and paired with a definition and code. The coded data from the code categories were developed in the following data analysis phase.

4.3.4. Theme Categorization

Phase 4 of Braun and Clarke's data analysis approach focused on naming and defining themes based on the categorized codes. This involved a thorough assessment of the quotes associated with each code to ensure their robustness, meaning, and credibility, considering factors such as homogeneity, consistency, relevance

to the project question, and overall inclusiveness.

The identified themes, shaped by patterns in participant responses, not only validate the findings but also reinforce the alignment with the study's core objectives and research questions. Each theme reflects distinct aspects of organizational dynamics, such as leadership, communication, training, and employee engagement, that are critical to successfully navigating change within the retail sector. The comprehensive analysis of these themes demonstrates how various factors, including leadership strategies, employee involvement, and effective training, interconnect to influence organizational success.

Moreover, the findings illustrate the practical implications of these themes for managers and leaders in the retail sector. For instance, Theme 1 highlights the essential role of communication and engagement in reducing resistance to change, underscoring the importance of transparent, frequent communication and tailored training. This can help leaders to not only manage but also leverage employee concerns, transforming potential barriers into opportunities for growth and alignment.

Theme 2 emphasizes the importance of fostering collaboration and addressing employee fears. This reinforces the idea that organizational change is not just a top-down process but also one that requires active participation and feedback from employees. Tools such as anonymous surveys and regular team meetings emerge as vital methods for understanding employee perspectives and creating a culture of trust and openness.

In Theme 3, the focus on morale and retention speaks to the importance of recognizing and rewarding employees' contributions. By linking employee satisfaction with clear, consistent communication and recognition, organizations can mitigate turnover and foster a loyal, engaged workforce. This aligns with the broader objective of ensuring that employees are motivated and remain committed to the organization's goals, even amidst change.

Finally, Theme 4 highlights the need for strategic leadership development and the use of diverse training methods to enhance organizational competencies. This reinforces the idea that leadership is not only about managing change but also about preparing employees at all levels to thrive in an evolving work environment. The identified gaps in evaluation processes suggest that organizations should implement robust feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of training programs and leadership strategies, ensuring that these initiatives are aligned with the evolving needs of the business.

In summary, the themes identified in this study offer actionable insights into how organizations can navigate and successfully implement change. The themes provide a clear roadmap for retail leaders to strengthen communication, enhance employee engagement, build leadership competencies, and invest in training strategies that foster long-term success. These findings not only address the research question but also provide practical solutions for overcoming challenges in change management within the retail sector.

1) Theme 1

Theme 1 is presented as: *Leaders can address employee resistance to change through online communications, staff engagement, addressing challenges, innovative training strategies, and evaluating staff competencies.* Theme 1 was created from the data coded within the categories of leadership competencies, training flexibility, and communication. This theme emerged using the following words that presented a high occurrence count to form each category: training, competencies, training strategy, implementation, accessibility, innovation, technology, requirement, online communication, challenges, online communication, staff engagement, and environment. This theme materialized from the patterns, word counts, and codes discovered during analysis.

a) Online Communication

Online communication refers to the exchange of information through digital channels such as social media, video conferencing, email, and instant messaging. Several participants highlighted its importance for facilitating change through open collaboration and feedback. For example, P01 noted, "Online communication is important to implement change because it fills the gaps with reaching your workforce." Similarly, P02 mentioned that digital communication allows for tracking information sharing, which reduces the risk of misinformation. P07 emphasized that online methods improved information sharing and confirmation of message receipt, while P08 stated that accessible information made change implementation easier.

When discussing how leadership managed change and reduced employee resistance, P05 pointed out that the pandemic complicated communication as many staff transitioned to remote work. To address this, leadership training focused on effective electronic communication was introduced, leading to weekly check-ins with employees to gauge concerns. P07 added that while leadership reached out to staff effectively, the reverse posed challenges, prompting the creation of opportunities for staff to schedule meetings with leaders, enhancing change implementation.

P01 reinforced the need for a communication forum, stating that before the pandemic, face-to-face interactions sufficed, but remote work necessitated alternatives like Zoom and email for staff to share their situations and seek assistance, restoring coordination.

In summary, online communication became crucial during the pandemic, prompting leadership to enhance their communication skills, implement weekly meetings, and create forums for staff interaction. This approach was essential for successful change implementation and improving employee satisfaction.

b) Staff Engagement

Staff engagement is crucial for addressing employee emotions and concerns. P09 emphasized that management must effectively engage with staff to respond to their issues, noting that failure to do so could hinder successful change initiatives. P01 highlighted the importance of creating an environment where staff feel

comfortable voicing their concerns about upcoming changes, stating, “Management needed to allow staff the opportunity to speak with them regarding any upcoming changes so that their concerns could be acknowledged and addressed.”

P08 shared that involving experts in discussions helped address staff questions: “Once we had the chance to sit and engage with staff about the changes, they were more onboard with it than before. Most of the staff had their questions answered and their concerns addressed.”

In summary, the findings suggest that engagement through regular meetings and a supportive atmosphere allows employees to express their concerns, enabling organizations to better support staff during times of change.

c) Reducing Challenges During Implementation

Thorough planning and preparation are essential for reducing employee resistance during implementation. P03 emphasized that tackling obstacles early by developing contingency plans and keeping stakeholders informed can minimize disruptions and lead to successful implementation.

Effective problem-solving and communication are crucial. P04 noted, “From a management standpoint, we must identify staff’s concerns and provide viable solutions. We need to collaborate to eliminate or minimize challenges.” P01 agreed, stating that leaders must evaluate and resolve challenges that arise during change.

P05 added that addressing these challenges is vital for achieving organizational goals. In summary, the effective identification and resolution of challenges are critical for the success of change initiatives.

d) Innovative Training Strategies

During the discussion on change management and employee resistance, P02, P08, and P07 emphasized the importance of initiative training strategies to enhance implementation success. P01 highlighted the need for synergy between staff and leadership to alleviate concerns through access to various training options. P08 stressed that leadership must be well-trained to grasp workforce nuances and plan effective communication. They noted that underdeveloped leaders require additional training to improve their communication with staff. P07 suggested that innovative training methods throughout the organizational hierarchy can boost morale and reduce resistance, stating that effective communication skills are essential for training to ensure all staff receive consistent messages. In summary, innovative training strategies are crucial for addressing employee resistance during change implementation, ensuring effective communication and alignment across the organization.

e) Staff Competency Requirements

Staff competency criteria define the knowledge, skills, and qualities employees need to perform effectively within an organization. Emphasized as essential for improving change success, these competencies were discussed by P01, who stated, “Leadership must have the ability and skillset to accept, interpret, and understand feedback.” P03 added that management must possess the necessary skills to lead their teams effectively to facilitate understanding of changes. P01

further highlighted the need for staff to be competent in their roles and suggested evaluating their skills to identify areas for development. P05 echoed this by asserting that leadership must possess the competencies necessary for guiding staff through organizational change. Addressing staff under-development is crucial; P01 noted that evaluating competencies can make change smoother by identifying skill gaps that require training. Ultimately, effective leadership and regular assessments of staff competencies foster a competent workforce and enhance buy-in, ensuring a successful transition to new business stages.

f) Theme 1 Summary

Online communication tools—such as video conferencing, email, and instant messaging—are crucial for successfully implementing change and minimizing employee resistance. Leadership training enhances effective staff communication by addressing concerns, and staff engagement is essential for smooth transition and successful outcomes.

To tackle challenges during implementation, a skilled and dedicated team is vital. Proactive problem-solving, clear communication, and thorough preparation help minimize difficulties. A leader's ability to identify and address challenges is key to the success of the change plan. Employing effective strategies like ongoing training, support, and evaluation can help overcome these obstacles.

Moreover, trained leaders must understand workforce nuances and employ innovative communication methods throughout the organization to boost morale and reduce resistance, ensuring alignment among all staff.

2) Theme 2

Theme 2 was identified as: *Improving collaboration and feedback from staff by improving interpersonal skills, offering incentives for reaching goals, and diversifying the workforce may reduce staff fears and resistance while minimizing turnover.*

a) Improving Collaboration and Feedback

To cultivate a healthy work environment, enhance collaboration and feedback, and boost performance, organizations should prioritize cooperation. This includes training in collaboration skills, establishing collaborative workspaces, clearly defining roles, encouraging cross-functional teamwork, fostering a feedback culture, providing timely and targeted feedback, setting a positive example, celebrating successes, learning from setbacks, and regularly reviewing processes. Implementing these strategies will create a culture of transparency and continuous improvement, leading to increased engagement and teamwork.

Management must also recognize and address concerns related to collaboration and feedback. Participants P03 and P09 highlighted the effectiveness of digital collaboration tools for real-time communication and regular team meetings to facilitate open dialogue. P07 noted that addressing fears stemming from COVID-19 helped reduce staff resistance to necessary changes.

Overall, enhancing feedback and collaboration necessitates such methods as communication training, collaborative workspaces, and regular process reviews

to create supportive environments for information exchange.

b) Offering Incentives and Diversifying the Workforce

To attract and retain top talent, organizations must diversify their workforce and provide incentives that promote an inclusive culture and foster innovation. Key strategies include offering performance rewards, career development opportunities, work-life balance, and diverse recruitment practices. Engaging with employees to understand their situations allows organizations to implement effective solutions, as emphasized by participants P02, P07, and P08. They highlighted the need for leadership to grasp the impact of organizational changes, especially during the pandemic. P07 noted that the company needed to adapt to evolving circumstances while ensuring compliance with new operating requirements. P04 stressed that management had to become informed about the pandemic to protect staff and navigate challenges effectively. Staying updated with reliable information sources like the CDC helps leaders collaborate on appropriate responses. Ultimately, understanding business impacts and implementing targeted interventions is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in the retail industry.

c) Reducing Staff Fears

Creating a safe and empowering work environment is essential for reducing employee anxiety. Key leadership aspects include clear expectations, transparent communication, visible leadership, empathy, training, and promoting work-life balance. These practices foster an inclusive atmosphere where staff feel inspired to take risks and realize their potential. P08 highlighted that offering anonymous surveys helped address employees' concerns effectively. However, P10 noted that some resistance to change is insurmountable, resulting in necessary workforce restructuring to eliminate negative influences. Ultimately, addressing staff fears and emotions through feedback and flexibility can lead to a more collaborative and productive workplace, though some employees may need to be terminated to maintain a positive environment.

3) Theme 3

Theme 3 was identified as *Leadership may improve staff morale while reducing workforce turnover by using employee incentives for accomplishing goals.*

a) Improve Staff Morale

Creating a positive work atmosphere where employees feel valued and engaged is vital for boosting morale. Key elements include acknowledgment, clear communication, development opportunities, work-life balance, empowerment, team-building activities, equitable treatment, supportive leadership, and responsiveness to feedback. Implementing these strategies can enhance employee engagement and inspire high performance.

Participants P03 and P04 emphasized that incentivizing staff to achieve job goals can improve morale and facilitate acceptance of changes. P03 highlighted the effectiveness of recognition campaigns and ongoing opportunities for employees to voice concerns, stating, "Motivation and support can enhance appreciation and workforce morale." P04 added that regular recognition, whether monthly or

quarterly, helps maintain employee satisfaction and loyalty, thereby encouraging hard work and dedication.

Ultimately, recognizing and rewarding employees fosters loyalty and creates an encouraging work environment where individuals feel appreciated and motivated. This leads to improved performance, retention, and a sense of accomplishment, making recognition and rewards essential for cultivating a committed and engaged team. By prioritizing these initiatives, organizations can nurture a healthy workplace dedicated to achieving shared goals.

b) Multi-Level Communication

Effective information dissemination is crucial for fostering multi-level communication within organizations, promoting involvement, transparency, and alignment. Key strategies include clear messaging, audience segmentation, multi-channel communication, engaging middle management, feedback mechanisms, leadership communication, training, and recognition. Implementing these tactics ensures that information flows freely across all levels, enhancing collaboration toward shared goals.

Participants P01, P02, P04, P06, and P07 emphasized that open communication from leadership and attentiveness to employee feedback can significantly enhance change initiatives. P01 noted the importance of accessible communication methods throughout the hierarchy for transparency. P08 highlighted the need for employees to express their understanding and suggestions for changes, stating, “Effective leadership involves knowing how to conduct conversations with employees across all levels, creating an environment with fewer challenges.”

Strong leadership requires productive dialogue at every level—executives, mid-level managers, and frontline staff. Characteristics of active listening include empathy, openness, two-way communication, respect, clarity, follow-up, and continuous improvement. By fostering effective interactions, organizations can build trust, engagement, and teamwork, resulting in a workplace where staff feel heard, valued, and empowered to contribute to success.

c) Reducing Resistance and Turnover

To reduce resistance and turnover, organizations must take proactive steps to address underlying issues and create a supportive, engaging work environment. Key strategies include effective communication, change management, employee involvement, visible leadership support, acknowledgment, training, work-life balance, and conflict resolution. Implementing these approaches can enhance employee satisfaction and engagement, ultimately lowering turnover rates.

Participants P01 and P04 emphasized that leadership should address employee concerns supportively rather than in a punitive manner, as negative responses can lead to a polarized workforce. P01 noted that unaddressed employee fears can heighten resistance and turnover, stating, “Not addressing staff concerns makes them feel uncared for, leading to resistance that can spread.” P04 echoed this, saying, “Respecting employees begins with listening to their needs; failure to do so increases resistance and turnover.”

By fostering a respectful and engaged work environment through effective communication and support, organizations can mitigate resistance, enhance employee satisfaction, and reduce turnover. Prioritizing employee needs and concerns is vital for nurturing a positive workplace culture.

4) Theme 4

Theme 4 was identified as: *The use of strategic training delivery for leadership and organizational development and implementation measurement methods can increase growth opportunities while improving change success.*

The categories used to create this theme are leadership competencies, staff engagement, and evaluation. The codes found within the categories are training, competencies, training strategy, implementation, communication, collaboration, job satisfaction, learning, change success, growth opportunities, leadership development, organizational development, and measure.

a) Leadership/Organizational Development and Implementation Measurement

Measuring leadership, organizational development, and implementation involves assessing the effectiveness of techniques, programs, and strategies. Key areas include effective leadership, employee engagement, organizational culture, performance metrics, return on development investments, and continuous improvement. By evaluating the impact of these efforts, organizations can identify strengths and areas for improvement, demonstrating the value of leadership and development programs and informing future investments.

Participant P02 emphasized the importance of simplifying training delivery to ensure clarity and enhance staff development success. P09 echoed this, stating that development courses must be offered in various formats to be effective. Participant P03 noted a lack of evaluation regarding what worked well and the importance of listening to staff. P08 added, “We focused too much on rapid execution and neglected to gather and act on frontline feedback.”

Incorporating frontline staff insights into strategic decision-making can be challenging but is vital, as these employees often understand operational challenges and customer needs best. Organizations that develop action plans, prioritize improvements, maintain feedback mechanisms, and foster a culture of continuous improvement are better positioned to navigate change successfully. By listening to and valuing input from frontline staff, companies can enhance engagement, satisfaction, and productivity, leading to positive outcomes.

b) Increase Job Satisfaction

Creating a work environment where employees feel valued, engaged, and fulfilled is vital for enhancing job satisfaction. This can be achieved by offering growth opportunities, recognizing accomplishments, supporting work-life balance, and cultivating a positive atmosphere. Additionally, competitive pay and benefits, effective workload management, and a focus on health and well-being all contribute to increased satisfaction. By investing in these areas, organizations can boost productivity, improve retention rates, and enhance overall performance.

Participants P03, P07, P08, and P09 emphasized the importance of leadership and communication in fostering job satisfaction. P03 noted that management often struggles to articulate changes effectively, leading to confusion among staff. Training for leaders can improve their ability to communicate change. P07 highlighted the value of strong communication skills in leadership and the benefits of promoting from within to create growth opportunities. P08 mentioned the importance of compromise in addressing staff concerns, while P09 indicated that recognizing good performance helps staff accept change and reduces negative behaviors.

Overall, job satisfaction is critical to an organization's success, and effective leadership and communication are key to fostering an environment where employees feel appreciated and motivated. By recognizing achievements and fostering open dialogue, companies can enhance employee engagement and acceptance of change.

c) Change Success, Measure, and Growth Opportunities

Successful companies must adapt to changes driven by technological innovations, market shifts, or internal reorganizations. The effectiveness of change initiatives hinges on capable leadership, open communication, employee support, and adaptability. Measuring success involves assessing the impact on stakeholders, determining if goals were met, and evaluating overall organizational readiness for change.

Identifying and capitalizing on growth opportunities is essential for long-term success. Organizations can expand by exploring new markets, developing products, enhancing processes, investing in technology, forming strategic partnerships, acquiring companies, and prioritizing employee development. Assessing growth potential requires thorough analysis of market trends, competition, client needs, internal capabilities, and a readiness to embrace change.

Aligning competencies with growth opportunities supports career advancement and employee development. This includes strategies like individual development plans, training, mentoring, job rotation, and recognition for growth. By fostering competency development, organizations enhance job satisfaction and build a skilled, motivated workforce.

Competencies encompass the skills and knowledge necessary for effective job performance. Leaders and employees must be willing to pursue growth opportunities to adapt to the evolving workforce. As P09 noted, leadership must prioritize continual learning, while P01 emphasized the importance of developing potential leaders through targeted training to ensure success in management roles. Organizations should focus on tailored training and development strategies in alignment with their goals to facilitate growth and success.

d) Answering the Project Question

The project question explores retail business leaders' perspectives on reducing employee resistance through effective training strategies to enhance change management implementation. Leadership can improve change success by employing strategic training that builds competencies in communication, collaboration,

interpersonal skills, change management, and staff engagement. By prioritizing open communication and feedback, leaders can foster staff acceptance and create a cohesive workforce.

Technology can further aid change success by providing additional channels for delivering essential information such as training content, change updates, feedback, organizational goals, and employee recognition. To address gaps in technological skills, leadership can implement strategic training methods, including person-to-person instruction.

Following data collection and analysis, a comprehensive audit was conducted to identify potential biases or distortions in the results. This involved verifying participant data, cross-checking transcripts with recordings, and reviewing written notes for subjective interpretations. The integrity of the data was ensured through careful verification processes. My analysis methods were examined, including self-assessment for bias, and theme classifications were re-evaluated for accuracy. Transparency in documentation was maintained throughout the audit, with detailed records of each step and clear reporting of findings.

4.4. Contribution to Theory, the Literature, and the Practitioner Knowledge Base

This qualitative research project explores how retail business leaders can reduce employee resistance by implementing effective training strategies to enhance change management success. The findings contribute to practitioner knowledge by examining leadership's role in addressing employee resistance during organizational changes. This study aims to bridge current industry knowledge with its outcomes by building on insights from past practitioners and scholarly literature outlined in Section 2. Section 5.4.1 will further clarify the relevance and applicability of identified themes within the project's framework. Additionally, further recommendations will be provided to advance understanding of how effective training strategies can mitigate employee resistance and improve change management implementation success.

4.4.1. Theory Contribution - Project Framework

The participant data analysis revealed four themes that address the project's purpose, practice gap, business problem, and applied framework. These themes highlight essential leadership skills, organizational practices, and competencies needed to manage employee resistance during organizational changes. They connect the influence of education in change management concepts for retail leadership to mitigate resistance. This section draws on literature focused on small to mid-level leadership in U.S. retail, emphasizing strategic and innovative change management. A comprehensive literature review helped clarify these concepts, assessing past research and theoretical principles (Nuttall, 2009). The outcomes identified key factors—communication, collaboration, staff engagement, competencies, and training—that can bridge the practice gap by pinpointing necessary training for effective change management and enhancing business resilience.

1) Theme 1

Theme 1 emphasizes that leaders can effectively address employee resistance to change through online communication, staff engagement, overcoming challenges, innovative training strategies, and assessing staff competencies. According to servant leadership theory, leaders must serve their workforce by developing interpersonal skills to empathetically confront current and future challenges (Bradley, 2021; Mahdi & Nassar, 2021). This perspective prioritizes meeting followers' needs to foster a supportive environment, highlighting the importance of effective communication and emotional awareness in facilitating successful change (Ugochukwu, 2024).

The theme suggests that innovative training strategies focused on clear messaging from management to frontline staff can help retail leaders navigate change while minimizing resistance. Leaders equipped with the right competencies are crucial during unexpected challenges, influencing a company's success (Bradley, 2021). The relationship between this theme and the practice gap lies in retail organizations' recognition of the need for leadership development to enhance change plan implementation through better workforce relationships.

This project's focus on leadership training and skills promotes staff engagement and aligns with the organization's goals. The framework underscores that leaders who develop change management competencies and prioritize collaboration and engagement can successfully foster organizational change and sustainable workforce alignment.

2) Theme 2

Theme 2 highlights that enhancing collaboration and feedback through improved interpersonal skills, goal-based incentives, and workforce diversity can reduce employee fears and resistance, as well as minimize turnover. The employment relationship continuum differentiates between transactional relationships (focused on labor for pay) and relational ones (centered on commitment, trust, and loyalty) (Waters & Bortree, 2012). Employers are encouraged to adopt more relational strategies to boost engagement and retention.

This theme connects with the applied framework by identifying the leadership competencies, skills, and training needed for effective change management. Successful leadership must be authentic, inspirational, visible, inclusive, proactive, educational, measured, reinforcing, and adaptable (Brower, 2021). Trust is essential; failing to communicate necessary information or neglecting staff feedback can breed resistance. According to Brower, the success of a change initiative hinges on active, visible, and committed leadership.

Theme 2 reveals a gap in practice regarding leaders' need for development and training in change management to effectively guide their teams during implementation. This theme aligns with the project question by underscoring the importance of enhancing leadership skills to lower employee resistance.

3) Theme 3

Theme 3 emphasizes that leadership can enhance staff morale and reduce

turnover by implementing employee incentives linked to goal achievement. Open, consistent, and inclusive communication fosters a sense of connection among employees with the company's mission and objectives (Stein et al., 2021). When employees understand their roles, they see how their efforts contribute to broader company goals, leading to increased purpose and fulfillment in their work. This alignment not only boosts morale but also strengthens commitment and lowers turnover. Offering incentives such as bonuses, recognition, extra time off, and professional development opportunities reinforces this sense of value.

Additionally, developing organizational communication by addressing multi-level communication challenges can support successful change initiatives. An environment that promotes transparency and open information flow includes clear communication channels, training, feedback mechanisms, technology utilization, clear goals, and recognition of achievements (De Brun & McAuliffe, 2020). Effective organizational communication is essential for fostering collaboration and improving overall success (GeeksforGeeks, 2024).

In relation to the project framework, the importance of organizational communication underscores the need for leadership to develop the competencies required for effective change management. Theme 3 highlights a gap in practice where leaders often lack the skills to overcome resistance, leading to challenges, delays, or failures in change plans. Ultimately, the framework suggests that by creating a collaborative environment that enhances communication, leaders can improve change implementation success and achieve organizational goals.

4) Theme 4

Theme 4 highlights that strategic training delivery and implementation measurement methods for leadership and organizational development can enhance growth opportunities and improve change success. By integrating measurement techniques with targeted training programs aligned with the organization's goals, culture, and strategic priorities, companies can boost job satisfaction and growth prospects (Devine & Ash, 2022). Effective leadership training focuses on overcoming practical challenges through experiential learning methods such as role-playing, case studies, simulations, and real-world scenarios, enabling leaders to develop confidence and competence through immediate application and feedback.

This theme also emphasizes leadership's potential to enhance development opportunities for identified future leaders by leveraging technology to create a robust educational framework for critical leadership skills. It is connected to the project's framework through essential leadership and organizational competencies and addresses a gap in practice by encouraging leaders to assess and improve the frequency and quality of their development initiatives.

Bernmira and Agboola's (2021) theories on transactional and transformational leadership illustrate how leaders can revitalize organizational values and foster stakeholder engagement while cultivating a culture of staff development to enhance change success. This theme aligns with the project question by underlining the need for leadership to encourage ongoing training and knowledge sharing in

change management to boost overall implementation success.

4.4.2. Contribution to Scholarly Literature

This section details the contributions of scholarly literature as it relates to this project's findings and further expands on scholarly exchanges that advocated for existing literature and the project's theme. The results offered thematic insights into practical leadership skills and development through a comprehensive analysis. Moreover, the findings within this project contribute to a scholarly understanding of the requirements for retail leadership to effectively encourage and lead staff during significant organizational change and challenges resulting from that change.

1) Theme 1

Theme 1 emphasizes that cultivating a leadership environment that enhances competency promotes multi-level communication, encourages staff engagement, and streamlines training requirements. According to [Caesens and Stinglhamber \(2020\)](#), organizational support theory enhances employee engagement and commitment by demonstrating that the company cares about their well-being, provides resources, and values contributions. This theme enriches scholarly literature by illustrating how leaders can manage workforce diversity and adapt communication strategies to address different learning styles and challenges, thus facilitating successful change. P01 noted, "Leadership who do not know how to speak to their staff will receive much resistance because an underlying tone may hinder their message." [Baran et al. \(2011\)](#) further support that strong leadership-to-employee relationships can fulfill socio-emotional needs, improving well-being and job satisfaction. P03 added that leadership awareness of organizational needs fosters better communication and teamwork, leading to successful change, while [Nydham \(2020\)](#) highlighted that effective communication strategies empower leadership in organizational management. Improved management-staff relationships enhance multi-level communication and reduce information breakdown ([Gao et al., 2020](#)).

2) Theme 2

Theme 2 highlights that effective leadership enhances communication, collaboration, and feedback by recognizing the challenges of information flow from leadership to employees, which can foster organizational change. [Guillemin and Nicholas \(2022\)](#) assert that effective values such as decision-making, information-sharing, and culture must be consistently implemented across the organization. [Sanford et al. \(2020\)](#) support this by noting that moment-to-moment decisions, including the timing of follow-ups and direct communication, can often be overlooked. P07 emphasizes the importance of interpersonal communication, stating, "If steps are left out in the line of communication, parts of the organization could move in different directions," jeopardizing organizational goals.

3) Theme 3

Theme 3 focuses on the diversity of the workforce and leadership having the wherewithal to effectively lead them during an organizational change of varying

magnitudes to increase the success of those changes. As explained by Tamunomiebi et al., (2020), staff diversity is embedded with advantages like the development of a learning-work climate that fosters staff morale, reduces fears and resistance, and may improve leadership's ability to lead change. Sigroha and Gaurav (2020) agreed with Tamunomiebi et al., (2020) noting that diversity is part of human resource management focused on recognizing, effectively deploying, and harmonizing staff eccentricity. P04 supported the theory that "leadership understanding the different backgrounds and skills makes it easier to get to them and for them to understand what is being said." It can increase interpersonal acumen and build trust.

4) Theme 4

Theme 4 focuses on organizational and leadership development opportunities that can improve job satisfaction and growth by nurturing the current workforce and organizational practices to create a more productive, responsive, and open-minded workforce. Organizational and leadership development are closely related and aim to enhance an organization's effectiveness, agility, and sustainability. Ali and Anwar (2021) noted that rewards, incentives, compensation, and recognition all contribute to the overall satisfaction of most employees. Any deficiency of any of them may hinder the happiness of staff. P01 agreed that "companies need to know how to improve the happiness of their staff. Not all companies have recognition or rewards for meeting goals. This is where organizational structuring or development come into play." P02 contributed that "managers who expect staff to meet goals without giving praise or some kind of reward will see those same staff lose motivation."

4.4.3. Contribution to Practitioner Knowledge

This section highlights the project findings' contributions to the practitioner knowledge base and its four themes. By employing direct and open communication techniques, the project aims to enhance research and resources for overcoming employee resistance and improving change management execution. It offers insights into the U.S. retail sector and managers' perspectives on communication strategies for addressing workforce resistance to change. Study transcripts can provide practitioners with valuable information on employee resistance, effective change management, and U.S. retail executives' views on job satisfaction. This research demonstrates how a successful communication plan can boost productivity and facilitate change implementation. Additionally, practitioners in other industries can benefit from the study of direct communication tactics. Subsequent sections will elaborate on the project's themes and offer practical approaches for effective organizational leadership.

1) Theme 1

Theme 1 underscores that retail leadership competencies in change management foster a collaborative work culture, enhance engagement, and eliminate barriers for workforce management. Dennison (2023) discusses the importance of innovative training, continuous learning, skill evaluation, and upskilling within

organizations. Bhaduri (2023) agrees, emphasizing the need for customized learning paths, flexibility, engaging lessons, quality resources, and the identification of skill gaps in effective training programs. P04 highlights that developing managers into better leaders involves evaluating their performance and ability to motivate their teams, noting that managers who fail to support their staff will face greater resistance.

Practitioners can leverage this study to enhance change management skills critical for retail leadership, promoting participation and collaboration. Effective leaders clearly outline change objectives, employing transparent communication to foster teamwork and reduce uncertainty. They must be attentive to employees' concerns during transitions, providing support and fostering trust. Given the dynamic nature of retail environments, leaders must remain adaptive, receptive to feedback, and flexible when responding to challenges. This adaptability enables teams to overcome obstacles collaboratively.

Strong problem-solving abilities and informed decision-making are essential traits of competent retail executives, helping to remove obstacles to progress. As the retail sector continuously evolves due to internal and market changes, successful leaders prioritize lifelong learning, seek team input, and adapt their leadership approaches. By fostering a culture where employees feel empowered and engaged, retail executives enhance employee loyalty and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to long-term success in a competitive environment.

2) Theme 2

Theme 2 emphasizes that leadership can enhance change success by understanding employee emotions and concerns, as well as organizational disruptions, to create a supportive environment. Chambers (2021) noted that effective leadership boosts productivity, retention, resilience, and drives innovation, a sentiment echoed by Reis (2023), who highlighted how competent leadership fosters positive work culture and engagement.

Practitioners can learn from this study that leaders must empathize with employees' feelings and actively listen to their concerns about proposed changes. Honest communication about the reasons for change and its implications is essential, as change can provoke fear and resistance. By acknowledging these emotions, leaders can build trust and encourage employee engagement in the change process.

Resistance to change, stemming from doubts about benefits and fear of the unknown, is a common response. Proactive leaders anticipate resistance and take steps to address it by providing clear explanations, involving employees in decision-making, and offering support. Understanding the causes of resistance allows leaders to minimize disruptions to team dynamics and workflows, which often occur during change. This might involve additional training, resource reallocation, or temporary adjustments to work schedules.

To maintain momentum and focus on group goals, leaders should quickly resolve disruptions and celebrate small victories along the transformation journey.

Acknowledging accomplishments through team events or recognition can boost morale and reinforce the positive outcomes of change. Since change is iterative, leaders must continuously evaluate their plans by soliciting employee feedback, monitoring performance metrics, and adjusting strategies as needed. Resilient leaders demonstrate adaptability by learning from both successes and setbacks in their approach to change.

3) Theme 3

Theme 3 highlights that improving communication, developing interpersonal skills, and understanding diverse work cultures can help leadership address employee fears, resistance, and turnover. Practitioners recognize communication and interpersonal skills as essential for effective leadership. Pappas (2024) emphasized that these skills are crucial for boosting employee performance, enhancing collaboration, and fostering a strong corporate culture. A company's ability to overcome communication challenges and improve leaders' interpersonal skills is foundational to achieving organizational goals.

Leaders must ensure that change-related communications are honest, clear, and consistent, utilizing various channels such as emails, intranet updates, team meetings, and one-on-one interactions. Open communication should encourage staff to voice concerns and provide feedback, with leaders responding promptly to their input. Establishing both formal and informal feedback mechanisms allows leaders to refine communication strategies effectively.

Theme 3 also stresses the importance of maintaining credibility and trust in the workplace. Leaders should cultivate empathy to genuinely understand and address employee concerns, particularly during times of change. Effective interpersonal skills also enable leaders to resolve conflicts constructively, promoting a harmonious work environment. Coaching and mentoring further empowers employees, enhancing their confidence and readiness for change.

In today's diverse workplaces, leaders must be mindful of cultural differences and adapt their leadership styles, accordingly, promoting inclusivity and preventing miscommunication. By acknowledging and respecting various perspectives, leaders can adjust their strategies to meet the needs of different groups. Focusing on strong interpersonal skills, cultural awareness, and effective communication fosters a supportive and inclusive workplace, ultimately reducing employee resistance to change and alleviating concerns.

4) Theme 4

Theme 4 emphasizes that leadership and organizational development, along with effective measurement of change progress, can enhance change implementation. Rahul (2024) defines leadership and organizational development as systematic processes aimed at improving a company's effectiveness, efficiency, and overall health. Supporting this, Mishra (2024) notes that organizations prioritizing leadership capabilities through aligned strategies and management processes tend to achieve greater success.

Successful organizational change relies on strong leadership and development.

Effective leaders provide a clear vision that aligns with the organization's goals, fostering a supportive environment that motivates employees to embrace change. They demonstrate commitment and model desired behaviors, which instills confidence in staff.

Organizational development enhances adaptability by realigning structures, revising procedures, and fostering necessary skills. Leaders cultivate a culture that prioritizes creativity, collaboration, and continuous improvement, ensuring that new behaviors become ingrained. They track progress and evaluate change efforts using key performance indicators (KPIs) reflective of objectives like productivity, cost reduction, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement. By monitoring these metrics, leaders can identify areas for improvement, make necessary adjustments, and celebrate achievements.

Utilizing feedback tools promotes employee involvement, as leaders gather insights from customers, stakeholders, and frontline workers to understand perceptions and address challenges.

In summary, integrating organizational development strategies, committed leadership, and robust change progress tracking enhances an organization's capacity to navigate and implement change effectively. This approach fosters agility and resilience, positioning the company for sustainable growth and a competitive advantage in a dynamic business landscape.

4.4.4. Practical Applications

Preserving an understanding of retail leadership competencies to overcome employee resistance to change can assist with effectively implementing a change while reducing challenges and staff hesitation to reach organizational goals and improve the success of that change. The applicability of this project's findings can be used outside of the retail industry and allow leadership in many facets of the business to benefit from the themes. This project's findings provide practical applications for leadership to traverse business impacts and disruptions by developing and training leadership and key stakeholders to accomplish organizational outcomes.

1) Theme 1

Theme 1 highlights that retail leadership competencies in change management are essential for nurturing a collaborative work culture, enhancing engagement, and eliminating barriers in workforce management. The project's findings reveal effective management components, with P01 noting the importance of being "sensitive to staff members' opinions, concerns, and ability to collaborate." Leaders can leverage emotional intelligence to identify challenges and empower employees, elevating awareness and skill levels.

By facilitating knowledge exchanges and suggesting effective managerial strategies, leaders can foster cooperation that enhances understanding and reciprocity between management and staff during change initiatives. P7 supports this, emphasizing that employee engagement and collaboration contribute to a sense of value and allow management to align on strategic goals.

Ultimately, by utilizing staff engagement, leadership competencies, and teamwork, leaders can cultivate an open mindset and a culture of continuous improvement, empowering employees to take initiative and recognize organizational change opportunities.

2) Theme 2

Theme 2 emphasizes that effective leadership enhances change success by addressing staff emotions and organizational disruptions, thereby creating an environment conducive to achieving change goals. Leaders can adopt strategies to better understand employee concerns and fears. Research indicates a gap in leadership competence for implementing change and grasping current organizational dynamics. [Sanchez \(2018\)](#) notes that leaders must ensure their team is supportive and committed to driving change.

P6 highlights that understanding disruptions is crucial for improving processes and fostering change. Practical recommendations from Theme 2 suggest that leaders employ competencies to clearly communicate complex transformations, helping staff grasp disruptive concepts through visual aids. Redesigning the workplace can align staff and management with corporate objectives.

Furthermore, according to P2 and P10, developing employee talent equips management for change and ensures staff possess the knowledge and creativity to navigate disruptions. Theme 2 also underscores the importance of leveraging technology to facilitate knowledge sharing and keep employees informed about business developments.

3) Theme 3

Theme 3 highlights that enhancing communication channels, developing interpersonal skills, and understanding diverse work cultures can help leaders address staff fears, resistance, and turnover. [Walter \(2020\)](#) suggests that fostering communication and establishing learning reciprocity through information sharing can accelerate change success. Managers can leverage these skills to boost staff confidence, promote information discovery, and improve workplace culture.

Encouraging learning reciprocity allows for easier access to information, enabling managers to devise plans that mitigate financial instability. Practical recommendations in Theme 3 underscore the importance of evaluating the financial success of organizations through staff-leadership relationships. As employee resistance poses a significant challenge to implementing change ([Rehman et al., 2021](#)), addressing these issues is crucial for organizational survival in today's business landscape.

4) Theme 4

Theme 4 emphasizes that effective leadership and organizational development, coupled with a method for measuring change progress, can significantly enhance the success of change initiatives. Leaders can leverage this theme to cultivate a culture of innovative management and stay aligned with industry advancements that boost market share. [Rahul \(2024\)](#) highlights that leaders can learn from each other's experiences and performances to promote leadership and organizational

development.

The theme elaborates on the role of organizational and management learning in driving business success. By encouraging creative problem-solving and innovative solutions through training and engagement, leaders can pave new pathways for improving change outcomes. Practical recommendations from Theme 4 suggest involving staff in the selection process before finalizing decisions on new procedures and gathering insights from employees to assess the need for modifications.

4.5. Project Application and Recommendations

Ross-Hellauer et al. (2020) argue that disseminating research findings broadens knowledge on key topics and enriches the existing body of literature. For small to mid-sized retail businesses, understanding the managerial competencies that can mitigate staff resistance to change is particularly valuable. This research gathers insights from U.S. retail leaders who implemented changes between 2020 and 2023, with the goal of sharing findings that can benefit retail communities. These insights will help the sector, which has struggled to adopt agile practices in response to disruptive events, by informing leadership, decision-making, and evidence-based practices (Cunningham-Erves et al., 2020). Sharing these results will enhance both leadership and organizational effectiveness.

A strategic change management plan that fosters stakeholder involvement is essential to overcoming internal obstacles and improving effectiveness. Successful change initiatives require executive support and active leadership engagement, which promote collaboration, feedback, incentives, diversity, and communication. These elements help alleviate staff fears, boost morale, and reduce turnover. In addition, focusing on leadership development, job satisfaction, and performance evaluation is vital for success. By fostering collaboration between leadership and staff and emphasizing ongoing development, businesses can improve change management outcomes significantly.

The findings of this study suggest that collecting data across different stages of change could provide valuable insights into the long-term impacts of resistance and the success of change initiatives. Participants faced substantial challenges adapting to new processes, technologies, and organizational structures, especially in the early stages of change, such as the rapid shift to digital platforms during COVID-19. Resistance and the success of change initiatives were dynamic, evolving as participants navigated various challenges over time.

Future studies should adopt a longitudinal approach, collecting data at multiple time points during change implementation, such as during early adoption, mid-point adjustments, and stabilization phases. Conducting follow-up interviews at regular intervals (e.g., every three months) would allow researchers to track participants' experiences and the effectiveness of strategies to manage resistance. This approach would provide a more nuanced understanding of how resistance and support for change evolve over time, helping to identify what works and what

doesn't in managing change within small- to mid-sized retail businesses.

A longitudinal approach would also capture changes in leadership strategies, organizational support, communication practices, and employee engagement during the course of change initiatives. It would enable researchers to assess the effectiveness of ongoing training programs, support systems, and the adaptation of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress. This approach would offer deeper insights into the factors that contribute to successful change management, providing valuable data to refine strategies and inform best practices for different stages of organizational change.

Disseminating Findings

The dissemination of research findings is a critical step in ensuring that the insights gained through this study contribute meaningfully to both academic knowledge and practical applications within the retail sector. Effective dissemination not only allows for the sharing of the study's results but also provides opportunities for feedback, further research, and the translation of findings into actionable strategies for practitioners. This section outlines the plans for disseminating the results of this study and emphasizes the importance of engaging with relevant stakeholders, including academic audiences, industry professionals, and retail leaders.

Given the focus of this study on leadership strategies for managing resistance to change in small- to mid-sized U.S. retail businesses, the findings will be disseminated through multiple channels to reach a diverse audience. First, academic journals will be a primary avenue for sharing the study's results. Submitting the research to peer-reviewed journals that focus on change management, organizational behavior, and retail management will ensure that the findings contribute to the broader body of literature. Targeted journals may include those that specialize in retail studies, leadership development, and organizational change, such as the *Journal of Retailing*, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, or *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. These outlets provide platforms for the research to reach scholars and practitioners who can engage with the findings critically and incorporate them into future academic work or practical applications.

In addition to academic journals, conference presentations will be an important method of disseminating the findings. Presenting the results at academic conferences related to retail, business leadership, or change management allows the researcher to interact with experts in the field, gather feedback, and refine the implications of the study. Conferences such as the Academy of Management Annual Meeting or the International Conference on Organizational Change Management are ideal venues for presenting the study's findings to a broad community of scholars, educators, and practitioners. These events provide opportunities for dialogue and networking, which can lead to collaborative projects and further exploration of the research topic.

Moreover, to bridge the gap between academic research and practical application, the findings will also be disseminated directly to industry professionals and

retail leaders. This will be accomplished through targeted outreach to professional associations and retail industry forums. For example, the National Retail Federation (NRF) or the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA) could serve as key platforms for distributing findings to a large network of retail business leaders. By sharing the results through webinars, workshops, and newsletters, retail leaders can better understand the challenges of organizational change and the strategies that are most effective in mitigating resistance. This ensures that the research findings have practical implications for leadership practices and change management strategies in real-world retail settings.

The use of social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter, where many retail professionals and academic researchers engage in discussions about industry trends, can help amplify the study's findings. Sharing key insights and summaries of the research through these channels would allow the research to reach a wide audience, including those who may not typically engage with academic journals or conferences. The dissemination of bite-sized findings or recommendations through blogs, posts, or infographics could spark interest and conversation within the professional community.

To ensure that the study's findings continue to be relevant and accessible, follow-up reports and case studies could be produced to track the long-term impact of leadership strategies on managing resistance to change. These reports could be shared with participating organizations and other retail businesses to help them assess the effectiveness of the recommended strategies in their own contexts. Additionally, a final research summary or policy brief tailored for retail business leaders could be created to distill the study's findings into actionable insights that can be directly implemented in practice.

In summary, disseminating the findings of this study through academic publications, conferences, professional associations, social media, and direct outreach to retail businesses will maximize the impact of the research. By employing multiple dissemination strategies, the study can contribute to both the academic discourse on change management and provide practical tools for retail leaders to navigate the complexities of organizational transformation.

4.6. Conclusion

This qualitative study explored retail business leaders' perspectives on reducing employee resistance through effective training strategies to improve the success of change management initiatives. According to Bodell (2022), approximately 70% of strategic change management efforts fail, particularly in small- to mid-sized U.S. retail businesses, due to a lack of appropriate training tactics to mitigate resistance. A literature review revealed a critical gap in practice: retail leaders have not adequately identified the key training components necessary for successful change management, which could reduce resistance to new processes and build organizational resilience (Samuel, 2022).

To address this gap, retail leaders were interviewed to gain insights into the

skills required to manage employee opposition to change. This qualitative approach aimed to enhance leadership understanding of change management challenges within the retail sector and explore the principles, attitudes, and competencies essential for effective change implementation. The central research question guiding the study was: What are the perspectives of retail businesses on improving the success rate of change management to reduce employee resistance?

Through systematic data collection, four key themes emerged to address the business problem. These themes include: 1) the use of innovative training strategies via online platforms to improve success, engagement, and access to training, thereby reducing implementation challenges and meeting staff competency needs; 2) the importance of fostering collaboration and feedback through interpersonal skills, goal-oriented incentives, and workforce diversity to ease employee fears, reduce resistance, and minimize turnover; 3) the positive impact of overcoming challenges in multi-level communication on morale and turnover, especially through incentives for goal achievement; and 4) the effectiveness of strategic training delivery methods for leadership and organizational development, along with measurement techniques to boost job satisfaction and promote growth opportunities.

This study holds significance for practitioners, academics, and the broader field, with potential implications for advancing retail leadership practices. [Bagga et al. \(2023\)](#) highlight the importance of strong leadership in fostering a culture that can adapt to change. The findings will be disseminated through academic journals, poster sessions, and industry forums, contributing to both scholarly knowledge and my development as a researcher. By offering insights into leadership competencies and essential skills for managing business disruptions, this research provides valuable guidance to retail management.

The decision not to include employee perspectives in this study was driven by the research focus on leadership strategies for managing change, specifically from the top-down perspective. While this study concentrated on leadership's role in navigating resistance and facilitating successful transitions, future research could benefit from incorporating employee perspectives. Employees often experience change differently, particularly in terms of emotional responses, job security concerns, and adapting to new processes or technologies. Including their perspectives would offer a more comprehensive view of the change process.

A potential solution for future studies would be to conduct dual-level interviews, gathering both leadership and employee perspectives. This would involve separate interviews with employees to capture their experiences, while still focusing on leadership strategies. Combining these data sources would provide a holistic understanding of how organizational change impacts both leaders and employees, and how leadership practices influence the broader organizational response. Additionally, integrating employee surveys or focus groups could further enrich the findings, offering employees a voice and providing deeper insights into how change is perceived at different organizational levels.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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