




## Employees' behaviours as compliance, resistance, and their relationship with the professional quality of life while facing organisational change

<sup>1</sup>Ayesha Rasheed , <sup>2</sup>Naheed Atta, and <sup>3</sup>Talat Sohail

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Applied Psychology Department, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>1</sup>Primary author: [ayesha\\_lcwu@yahoo.com](mailto:ayesha_lcwu@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**—Organisational change is significant for sustaining justifiable competitive benefits and development in today's fast-changing business. Employees are an organisation asset, while organisational change positively and negatively impacts employees' behaviours. The study investigates the employees' reactions to compliance, resistance, and their relationship with the professional quality of life whenever they face organisational change. This study employed a quantitative approach through a correlational research design. Four hundred (N=400, 212 males and 188 females) employees were selected and stratified from four organisational sectors in Lahore, Pakistan. Compliance to change scale, Resistance to change scale, and Professional quality of life questionnaires were administered to employees as data collection techniques. The results indicate that compliance positively correlates with compassion satisfaction, while the inverse relationship with secondary traumatic stress. When secondary traumatic stress and burnout predict resistance, compassion satisfaction has a negative prediction with resistance. It is recommended that the organisations plan competitive policies and relevant technical courses before the successful implementation of organisational changes, which increases the professional quality of life and compliance in employe by avoiding resistance.

**Keywords:** Compliance, Professional quality of life, Resistance

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of organisational change mainly depends upon the behaviours and feedback of employees (Ahmad & Cheng, 2018). Employee behaviours are always followed by empowered leadership and successful administration, leading them toward organisational commitment (Jung, Kang & Choi, 2020). This study explores employees' professional quality of life while facing organisational change. The competitive market has recently demanded the latest technological enhancements and procedures to maintain market value. Organisations have made organisational changes to meet the latest demands of competitive markets; as a result, employees and the workforce face different emotions and problems that need to be addressed (El-Taliawi, 2018; Odor, 2018). This study mainly focused on two types of personnel responses resulting from organisational change: compliance and resistance. The study focuses on professional quality of life, burnout, compassion satisfaction, and traumatic stress as predictors of compliant and resistant behaviours among employees.

In this era, to improve work progression, effectiveness, value, and worthy response to external compressions, it is crucial to restructure work creativities and make changes in organisational levels, such as budget restraints, value to customer demands and needs along with improved quality products and overall changes in managerial and administrative level (Wang & Kebede, 2020). Organisations experience unpredictable and unexpected hurdles in implementing changes at higher to lower levels, and it has always been difficult for employees and employers. Organisational change sometimes ends unsuccessfully because of illogical implementations, and employees' negative

responses to change affect their professional quality of life. The result of failure leads to resistance and a lack of trust in employees and employers (Rehman et al., 2021).

Researchers claimed that resistance is a psychological process in which a person feels threatened, or fears loss when faced with changes, and compliance is mentioned as supposed profit or benefit practiced by an individual during organisational change (Rasheed et al., 2021). Employees do not resist the change in reality; they perceive it as problematic, challenging, and a loss of their present designation, job, income, and comfort zone (Van Dijk & van Dick, 2009). Weaker planning and implementation of organisational change make employees vulnerable and cause resistance because of their less thoughtful approach and fear of loss (Oreg, 2003). Moreover, compliance is not a sign of effective and fruitful change implementation; neither does it achieve the organisational targets. Complete compliance and resistance harm the organisation because it needs more frequent compliance than complete compliance. Effective organisational change requires better policymakers who mainly focus on the factors forcing resistance, incentives to reduce resistance, and the successful implementation of change (Hill & McShane, 2008). One can develop and implement change perfectly through proper policy-making and internal and external checks, promoting frequent compliance and managing personnel resistance (Pfeiffer, 2016).

Professional quality of life describes the factors affecting organisation's personnel and workforce's tendency to work effectively. Compassion fatigue has two divisions: burnout and secondary traumatic stress. It intellectualises the work environment features as organisational, management, and operational, with prominent work-related traumas which affect compassion satisfaction and fatigue.

Behavioural, emotional, and cognitive impacts are associated with compassion satisfaction and interlinked with employee's response to organisational and occupational change (Stamm, 2010). An employee experiences compassion fatigue when helping and caring for another mentally, emotionally, and behaviourally disturbed employee. It negatively impacts the employees' creativity, productivity, well-being, and performance. Behavioural disturbances may contain resistance and aggressiveness; cognitive factors include dedication and attentiveness problems; emotional factors include helplessness, insignificance, and desperation (Balinbin et al., 2020).

A negative component of professional quality of life is burnout, which can be defined as feelings of abandonment, desperation, lack of performance, less job commitment, and non-supportive behaviours that leads employees toward psychological problems. Professional quality of life has another negative component, which is secondary traumatic stress, which arises in employees in response to workloads, stressful work situations, and competitive environments. The symptoms of burnout are quite like post-traumatic stress disorder, such as sleep difficulties, anxiety, invasive recalls, escaping, and negative reasoning. These symptoms advance speedily, sometimes resulting from a single incident and sometimes a series of traumatic events (Stamm, 2012).

Researchers claimed that successfully implementing changes with beneficial results increases employee's compassion satisfaction and job commitment, lowering the secondary traumatic stress and burnout rate (Lee, Lee, & Jang, 2021). When employees assume threats in the work environment during changes, it results in low professional quality of life and resistance. Employees with security are esteemed with worthy resources and benefits and show a high professional quality of life with compliance (Lawrence, Halbesleben & Paustian-Underdahl, 2013). According to Dubois & Singh (2009), employees' professional quality of life and their compliant or resistant behaviours depend upon the successful implementation of organisational changes, which increases their resources, values, worth, independence, prospects, and overall relationship (Gondo, Patterson & Palacios, 2013). Rearrangement and redeployment create workloads, limitations, and less support with increased duties, which causes more resistance than compliance in employees.

International market competition and competitiveness pressurise the industry to grow and improve its present resources with the latest methods. Employees are any organisation's main asset, and the changes require employees to work efficiently and effectively to achieve their targets (Armstrong, 2009). It is essential for the employee and employer to be satisfied and enthusiastic about their overall well-being and productivity. Organisational changes at any level, such as technical, mechanical, managerial, operational, or human resource, have never been so smooth and easy, and they have mostly had negative impressions (Shum, Bove & Auh, 2008). Readiness is the main factor that forces employees to adopt changes for the organisation's long-term benefits and well-being. Management's role is vital in this procedure because their actions confirm employee behaviours; they can increase employee compliance and reduce resistance by analysing their personality type and professional quality of life (Armstrong & Brown, 2019).

In the past, most researchers focused on the outcome of organisational changes in the form of assets and resources. Still, in recent times, researchers have explored the behaviours of employees and employers when they face changes. According to Gayathiri et al. (2013), employees' reactions to change and management are crucial. Focusing on them individually is bossy; change directly affects their well-being, where employees are the change drivers, and their reactions as compliance or resistance determine the outcome of the change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Conservation resource theory states that initially, an individual's interest is mainly in growth, income, and preservation. This theory explains the association between employee behaviours and professional quality of life. It recognises an apparent loss and profit association

because of employees' frequent responses to organisational and managerial change. The successful implementation of changes develops fruitful results in the form of compliant employees; otherwise, results could be in the form of resistant employees. The development means increased resources and training, schedules, technical enhancements, internal and external developmental changes, and refresher courses to deal with international competitiveness. These resources and changes are good for the rest of the staff who accept the change with compliance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008).

According to Hobfoll (2001), employees' low professional quality of life leads to absenteeism, workplace complaints, and disobedience to work regulations, which are negatively associated with management and personnel. The conservation of resources theory can explain the association between compliance resistance and professional quality of life. It provides a complete model about perceived loss, benefits, and employees' responses toward change. This theory adopts that employees' main inspirations are attaining and conserving resources like emotional well-being, social support, acceptance at the workplace, and stability (Hobfoll, 2001; 2002). These psycho-social resources are directly linked with employees' overall well-being and are the main resources to obtain other treasured capital (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) claimed that employees' apparent esteemed resources are divided into four groups. These resources fix their professional quality of life and reaction to change. Those resources can be explained as task resources (self-sufficiency, chances for exciting responsibilities), relational resources (solidity, group work), administration resources (assistance and supervision), and legislative resources (casual control and authority). Employees struggle to shape, defend, and sustain these resources when they experience threats to their resources or even fail to increase resources because of change, negativity, and low professional quality of life, such as burnout, fatigue, and secondary traumatic stress (Hobfoll, 2002).

According to Halbesleben, Wheeler, and Paustian-Underdahl (2013), an environment that threatens employees' valued resources causes a low professional quality of life that later leads them to resistance; meanwhile, a higher professional quality of life increases employees' resources, subsequently leading to compliance. Likewise, organisational change can threaten resources, resulting in stressors leading to burnout and compassion fatigue (Neveu, 2007). As a result, employees felt strained, burned out, and exhausted, so they implemented a defensive approach to protect their lasting resources, which is resistance to change (Hobfoll, 2001).

Compatibly, when organisational changes maintain and build up employees' resources, it increases their professional quality of life and compassion satisfaction, leading employees into a defensive compliance strategy (Siegal & McDonald, 2004). Organisational change is carried out by management, administration, and company staff to improve personnel work conditions. The studies claimed that the initial response of the workforce has always been negative and less enthusiastic (Wanous et al., 2000). Successful implementation depends on resources, sovereignty, prospects, sustenance, control, and interactive relationships, which rely on employees' professional quality of life and determine their responses. Mostly organisational changes bring resource restrictions, work constraints, workloads, additional tasks, over shifts, and less technical support, which is why there observed more resistance than compliance in employees (Đurišić-Bojanović, 2016). Employees with manageable workloads and job challenges after organisational change show a higher professional quality of life, creating a positive perception of the workplace that leads to compliance (Dubois & Singh, 2009). Meanwhile, destructive organisational change creates dissatisfaction and estrangement in employees, increasing their stressors, burnout, and fatigue, leading to resistant behaviours (Hansson, Vingård, Arnetz & Anderzén, 2008).

The main reason for employees' resistant behaviours includes insecurity, lack of trust, doubts about the future, uncertainty, and unattended behaviours by the managers and senior officers.

Management is responsible for implementing change according to the needs and demands of the market and its workforce. Organisations' that analyse and assess their resources, employees' capabilities, tendencies, skills, and behaviours before implementation successfully implement and get beneficial results (Ramlall, 2008). Communication is essential in analysing employees' skills, capacities, and confidence that organisation never took a step without their consent and participation, which leads to successful implementation (Mangundjaya, 2014).

It is human psychology that change in any field is always challenging to adopt successfully. Readiness is the main ingredient in successful implementation because employees' adoption and compliant behaviours decide changes' positive or negative results. Adopting organisational changes means that employees work hard to do their best to work accordingly by leaving their comfort zone and accepting new duties for their organisation's betterment. The issue arises when its workforce perceives the change negatively and resists it. The results came from employees who had low professional quality of life, were bored, fatigued, and lacked interest (Dahl, 2011; Bouckenoghe, 2010).

Flexible work conditions during change implementation help employees take their time and tendencies to handle stressful and challenging circumstances, increasing their compassion and satisfaction. Soft working hours, new friendly schedules, and assignment-based techniques relaxed the employees and allowed them to show compliance with the changes made by the managers. It also maintains their work-life balance and emotional balance, which keeps them away from exhaustion and resistance (Van Vegchel, De Jonge, & Landsbergis, 2005). Research supports job control and its association with employee's behaviours and professional quality of life (Kaur, 2021). Job control and work-life balance motivate employees to take charge positively and react with compliance and obedience (Grandey & Diamond, 2010; Abdel-Ghany, 2014).

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to explore the employees' reactions in the form of compliance and resistance, when they face organisational changes. It also studied the direct effect of employees' behaviours on their professional quality of life. This study focuses on the practical and theoretical perspectives that explain the employees' responses to change and justify its association with the psychological perspective.

## III. HYPOTHESES

It is hypothesised that

- There was a correlation between professional quality of life, compliance, and resistance of employees.
- The Professional quality of life and its' subscales predicts compliance and resistance in employees.

## IV. METHODS

### Research approach and design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational study, using a cross-sectional research design to explore the results. Cross-sectional research design is used to identify the relationship between variables and determine the population's characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, and states at a specific point (Simkus, 2023). This study has used it to identify the relationship between professional quality of life and employees' behaviours as compliance and resistance.

### Participants

Participants were selected through a stratified sampling technique in this study; 100 white-collar employees were taken from every organisational sector, such as the industrial, banking, medical, and educational sectors of Lahore city. Four hundred white-collar employees from different organisations in Lahore, Pakistan, were considered a sample (N= 400). This constituted 212 males (n = 212) and 188 females (n = 188). These participants had at least one year or more of job experience on the recent designation.

## Instrumentations

### Professional quality of life

This scale measures satisfaction and accomplishment after attaining the desired work goals. In other cases of not achieving the tasks, it measures the desperation and dissatisfaction among employees (Stamm et al., 2004). The scale contains three sub-scales, compassion satisfaction, burnout, and traumatic stress, with a total of 30 items on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 to 5, where 0 implies "never" and 5 implies "very often", with 5 reversed items (Stamm, 1997).

### Compliance to change scale

This scale measures employees' positive reactions and behaviours whenever they face organisational changes. It mainly focused on employee readiness, compatibility, commitment to goals, and change valence to measure employee obedience and compliance. It contains 19 items with a 5 Likert scale where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree". The scale is valid and reliable, with a Cronbach alpha value of .82 to assess employee-compliant behaviours (Rasheed et al., 2022).

### Resistance to change scale

This scale measures the resistant behaviours of employees when they face any management and organisational change at the workplace. Employee resistance can be analysed through failure fear, low adjustment powers, overconfidence, vested interest, and hesitation to lose control. It contains 24 items and measures on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is "strongly disagree," and 5 is "strongly agree". The scale is valid and reliable, with an alpha value of .91 (Rasheed et al., 2021).

### Ethical consideration and procedure

Data collection was started after obtaining permission to use the scales and writing permissions from the concerned authorities of organisations; data collection was started. Study information was given to the participants (verbally and in writing), and their consent was obtained. Accessibility of the participants and their possibility was favored to collect the data. Participants were briefed about the nature of the study and were guaranteed the confidentiality of their personal information according to the ethical code of conduct. Participants were requested to answer the questions honestly, and it took only 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaires. All inquiries by participants were answered. They were aware of their right to withdraw from participation if they were unwilling to participate. After questionnaire completion, participants were thanked.

### Data analysis

Data were analysed through the Statistical Manual for Social Sciences (SPSS). Reliability investigation revealed that all the scales were valid and reliable, with their coefficient alpha values ranging from .50 to .91. Correlation analysis was employed to evaluate the relationship between compliance, resistance, and professional quality of life. Multiple linear regression predicted compliance and resistance from professional quality of life.

## V. RESULTS

Correlation of Professional quality of life, compliance and resistance

The results indicated a correlation between professional quality of life, compliance, and resistance of employees. This correlation between variables could be positive and significant.

The results revealed that professional quality of life has a significant positive relationship with compassion satisfaction compliance and a significant negative relationship with burnout, trauma/compassion fatigue, resistance, and sub-scales. It depicts that employee with satisfaction and high professional quality of life showed compliant behaviours, readiness, personal goals, change valence, compatibility, and commitment towards organisational change. While employees who obtained high scores in burnout and traumatic stress showed resistant behaviours, cognitive rigidity, intolerance to adjustment, and vested interest and lost control while facing organisational change.

**Multiple linear regression for the prediction of compliance and resistance by professional quality of life**

The results revealed that the professional quality of life predicts compliance and resistance in employees.

Table 2: Multiple Linear Regression for the Prediction of Compliance and Resistance by Professional Quality of Life (N = 400)

Predictors	Compliance		Resistance			
	B	SE	B	SE	B	
Compassion satisfaction	.35	.09	.20***	-1.14	.12	-.45***
Burnout	-.71	.11	-.30***	.39	.16	.12*
Trauma/Compassion Fatigue	-.07	.08	-.05	.15	.11	.07
R <sup>2</sup>	.19		.29			
F	31.04		54.39			
P	.00		.00			

The results showed that compassion satisfaction, burnout, and traumatic stress are significantly connected with compliance and resistance. It revealed that white-collar employees had had high compassion satisfaction and showed higher compliance with the lowest resistance. Employees with high burnout scores are exposed to low levels of compliant behaviours and the opposite with resistance. Professional quality of life was inevitably omitted from the model because of the high multicollinearity of its subscales.

## VI. DISCUSSION

Organisations depend on technological enhancements, training, and refresher courses in this global era to maintain competitive advantages and values (Sheeba & Christopher, 2020). Results showed a significant positive correlation between compassion satisfaction and compliance and a significant negative association between compassion satisfaction and resistance. Consecutively, burnout was pointedly connected with resistance. It has been found that Secondary traumatic stress and resistance showed a positive relationship, which assumed that higher scores in traumatic stress led to more resistant behaviours than compliant behaviours.

The multiple linear regression analysis results revealed that burnout and secondary traumatic stress predict compliant employee behaviours. However, resistance is negatively associated with compassion, while it positively predicts burnout.

The existing literature confirms current results that professional quality of life and its sub-scales have directly impacted employees' behaviours when they perceive organisational change. A study claimed that professional quality of life is significantly related to behaviours of employees, and it all sets about the work environment and work-life balance among employees (Kaur, 2021). It has been found that management and workforce productivity are highly associated because employees' readiness and commitment depend upon the professional quality of life and their relevant positive behaviours when faced with organisational change (Bora, 2017).

Employees are the main component of successful change implementation. Whenever management applies the changes, they must be active and attentive to their workforce's work-life balance and capacities. The stamina and skills of personnel matter a lot for the success of any type of organisational change. The uninformed and untrained employees cannot be a perfect component for completing change procedures, leading to unsuccessful outcomes. This study provides a framework to understand the behaviours and factors associated with attaining the company's long- and fruitful goals to achieve organisational targets and objectives. This study also revealed that professional quality of life is highly related to employee behaviours whether employees become compliant or resistant.

## VII. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that managerial, operational, or any form of change such as shifts, refresher courses, practical enhancements, information technology sector enhancement, and changes in the overall environment can create stressful situations for the employees and increase their

resistant behaviours and burnout. It can also be concluded that the company should maintain employees' mental and physical health before and after implementing the change. There should be clear policies for the workforce, and their implications should be equal and just. There should be monthly or annual check-ups of employee's mental health to check their emotional health, specifically work-related stresses and behaviours like resistance, aggression, etc.

The organisations should take the initiative to develop policies to maintain employee stress, trauma, fatigue, resistance, irritation, and lack of interest through rescheduling holidays with packages, bonuses, performance appraisals, and tokens of appreciation to enhance their motivation and enthusiasm, which directly affect the productivity and competitiveness of the organisation.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

More research should be done in the Pakistani industrial sector. More interventions should be designed to improve the employee's professional quality of life. It is recommended that future researchers work on employees' behavioural patterns when they face "bottleneck" situations and challenges at the workplace. The problem-solving tendency, decision-making powers, and commitment help employees enjoy their work and increase their overall well-being. Increased job satisfaction decreases employee stress; refresher courses, relevant training, and positive and creative conversations before change implementation help employees participate actively and fruitfully, increasing their self-esteem and work efficacy. These factors boost the employee's professional quality of life and mental and physical health, which helps them to act accordingly and efficiently even in a challenging situation.

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### Data availability statement

The data is available on demand by the corresponding author.

### Conflicts of interest

The author and co-authors declare no conflict of interest.

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