Exhibiting Resistance During an Organizational Transformation: The Telecommunications Industry in Ghana

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The purpose of this study is to explore how employees reacted by the manifestation of resistant behaviours and attitudes during an organizational transformation in the telecommunication industry of Ghana. The study adopted a qualitative multiple case study using two organizations. Data was obtained primarily through interviews from twenty employees. Seven (7) participants were interviewed from MTN Ghana and thirteen (13) participants from AIRTEL Ghana. Both managers and non-managers were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis was undertaken to identify relevant themes. The main theme determined from the analysis of data is: Manifestation of resistance and the accompanying sub-themes are Active resistance and Passive resistance. The main drawback of this research is due to the fact that it was limited to only two organizations. Participant selection bias is also a limitation. The study is a contribution to resistance to change theory since there is virtually no research conducted in the area studied in Ghana especially in the telecommunications industry. Keywords: Organizational Transformation, Active Resistance, Passive Resistance, Telecommunication Industry, Multiple Case Study, Ghana

Literature on organizational change has been limited by the fact that past studies tended to measure only employee affective and attitudinal responses to organizational change, rather than behavioural responses (Lamm & Gordon, 2010). Constant implementation of change is making employees more accustomed to organisational change, however not much is known about how this familiarity with change affect employees' reaction to large scale organizational change (Piderit, 2000; Stensaker & Meyer, 2012).

There is scarcity of research on the manifestation of resistant attitudes and behaviours in the Ghanaian context particularly in the telecommunication industry. The purpose of this study is to explore how employees reacted by the manifestation of resistant attitudes and behaviours during an organizational transformation in the telecommunication industry of Ghana. Gao and Damsgaard (2007), suggest that in the not too distant past, there has been a tremendous change in mobile telecommunications technology and services. However, they observed that research in this area has largely focused on western countries. Then, Boohene and Williams (2012) in their study, recognised the fact that majority of the studies and theories on change idea, performance and management have been embarked upon in developed countries whereas research on resistance to change in developing countries is non-existent especially in Ghana. It is this gap that the current research seeks to bridge. Studies suggest that employee resistance is the bane of most organizational changes (Bovey & Hede, 2001). It is therefore critical for change leaders to understand the various ways by which employees manifest their resistance to organizational changes. I empirically examined how employees reacted with the introduction of large-scale changes using two organizations operating in the telecommunications industry of Ghana based on an inductive and a comparative study. The telecommunication industry of Ghana has been transformed from a state monopoly-based organization into an open and competitive market industry. "Reform of Ghana telecommunication sector commenced with the development of the Accelerated Development

Plan (ADP) by the Ministry of Transport and Communication in 1994" (Frempong & Atubra, 2001, p. 198). Empirical research on the psychological processes involved in organizational change is only recent (Van Dam et al., 2008). Most of the researches undertaken in organizational change reviews are centred on how organizations get ready for, execute and react to organizational change (Oreg et al., 2011). Contemporary studies of organizational change have established the importance of change recipients' attitude towards change for comprehending the organizational change process (Oreg, 2006). However, different authors have taken on different viewpoints by which different concepts are given the same tag by different authors and comparable concepts are given different tags (Oreg et al., 2011). For instance, Caruth et al. (1985) used the terms open/direct attacks, hidden/indirect attacks and passive behaviour/dropping out to describe the methods by which employees react to a change. On the other hand, authors like Coetsee (1999) used terms such as active resistance, passive resistance and aggressive resistance to describe the manifestation of resistive behaviour. A qualitative research in the context of Ghana is therefore intended to reveal the depiction of resistant attitudes and behaviours by employees as they see and demonstrate them.

According to Rees and French (2013), several environmental forces, both external and internal to organizations usually compel them to undergo changes or transformations in order to survive in the market place. They mention the external drivers of change as including: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors. Internal factors driving organizational change according to them are: New leadership, new strategy, new structures, new business model, organization growth, restructure of jobs, restructure of business processes, outsourcing, change of location, installation of new technology and systems, modifications to employees' terms and conditions, being acquired or merged with another organization and redundancies. They suggest that these internal factors most often are influenced by external factors. In the developing world, including Ghana, forces that assisted or obliged the reform of the telecommunication industry are technological factors, poor performance by players in the sector and then pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the world bank (Wallsten, 1999). Hussey (2000), suggests that most organizations seem to be in an almost constant state of change and that the time interval between one change and another tends to disappear. Changes can be demarcated alongside a range starting from a low range or incremental changes, to a high range or transformational changes (Burnes, 2009). Incremental changes are minor changes that alter certain small sections of the organization while preserving the general working context (Blumenthal & Haspeslagh, 1994). On the other hand, transformational change ensues when the organization alters entirely, its essential structure (Blumenthal & Haspeslagh, 1994) and it is directed at the processes, structure and culture of the entire organization (Henry, 2011). "Transformation involves large-scale change affecting behaviours and more fundamentally the culture of the organization" (CIPD Report, 2015, p. 6). This study is looking at the situation of an organizational transformation. I accept the definition of an organizational transformation provided by the CIPD but in addition, will suggests that transformation involves series of changes undertaken at the organizational level in order to survive the competition. This is to submit that organizational transformation is a continuous activity and not a one-off occurrence. The successful management of change is viewed as an inevitability in order to survive and prosper in today's highly competitive and constantly developing environment (Okumus & Hemmington, 1998). However, a great number of change projects are not commonly and effectively implemented because of problems and hindrances encountered during the change process (Kotter, 1995). While transformations or changes may be necessary, the organizational consequences often fall short of estimated objectives (Gilmore et al., 1997). Indeed, Balogun and Hailey (2004) report a failure rate of around 70 percent of all change programs initiated. The failure of most organizational change

programs can be ascribed to employee resistance (Buelens et al., 2006). This study implements a qualitative multiple case study design to undertake the research.

This research will be beneficial to practitioners and potential investors in the telecommunication industry on how employees react to change interventions. It is also a contribution to knowledge since it is probably the first of its kind conducted in the telecommunication industry of Ghana.

This paper is organized as follows: first I presented an introduction to the study followed by literature on resistance to change and how it is manifested. A section about Ghana and the Telecommunication industry is introduced after the literature review. This is followed by a description of the methodological approach and the findings. A within case analysis is done, then followed by a cross-case analysis. The final part is the discussion section of the study.

I am a lecturer in marketing at the Business School of Accra Technical University. I am currently a PhD student at the faculty of Business and Law of Leeds Beckett University. My research interest is in Organizational Behaviour and Marketing. This article is an aspect of my PhD thesis. I intend to continue with research in OB into other industries in the context of Ghana in order to bring out the needed literature.

Theoretical Background

Resistance to Change and its Manifestations

Resistance is a notable classic reaction of employees to change interventions (Worrall et al., 2004). Individuals go through a reaction process when they are individually met with key organizational change (Jacobs, 1995). When change initiatives are executed within an organization, employees may experience significant anxiety about abandoning what is known and moving to an ambiguous future (Tichy, 1993). This sometimes will lead employees to resist a change intervention. The emphasis within literature has always been on clarifying the reasons for resistance and the techniques of controlling resistance (Stensaker & Meyer, 2012) and while some studies tend to extend the categorization of employee reactions to change, they fail to sufficiently incorporate more ambiguous responses to change.

An essential component of properly planning the successful implementation of a change initiative is the recognition of possible employee resistance towards change (Del Val, 2003). Resistance is frequently being viewed as behaviour not in agreement with efforts of the change leader (Bartunek, 1993) and encompasses behaviours that are put up by change recipients in order to reduce or end an intended organizational change (Lines, 2004). According to Chawla and Kelloway (2004, p. 485) resistance is an "adherence to any attitudes or behaviours that thwart organizational change goals."

There are many reasons why employees resist change. Individuals are creatures of habit and any change initiative that tends to alter the traditional habits of employees may well be resisted (Mullins, 2011). Employees may resist change because the change creates uncertainty and they may fear going into the unknown (Karim & Kathawala, 2005). The ambiguity bordering change, together with the supposed losses and sacrifices involved, undoubtedly have the capacity to arouse substantial fear and anxiety amongst individuals involved in a change, and as a result, can become a possible source of resistance (Caruth et al., 1985; Petrini & Hultman, 1995). Some individuals may resist change because their tolerance level for change is low (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). Others may resist change because of personality factors such as high need for control, locus of control, need for achievement, and attitudes based on previous experience of change (Mabin et al., 2001). It is said that people do not resist change

itself, but rather the anticipated consequences or expected effects that may be related to change, for example, loss of job, loss of status, or loss of comfort (Dent & Goldberg, 1999).

There are several reactions towards change which are classified as the various manifestations of resistance. According to Chawla and Kelloway (2004) resistance may be looked at in two fronts either as attitudinal or behavioural responses to change. They suggest that attitudinal resistance to change will involve a psychological rejection of the need for change whilst behavioural resistance to change will amount to behaviours that mirror a reluctance to support the change. Forms of resistance are the specific behaviours that individuals exhibit when they are resistant to change. People resist change in a variety of ways. Some employees are comparatively intolerant and frank in their opposition to a change. Others resist in more restrained, less noticeable ways (Caruth et al., 1985). Resistance manifests itself behaviourally either by active disagreement with change or by trying to escape or avoid it (Hultman, 2003) without explaining why.

According to Giangreco and Peccei (2005), overt forms of disagreement are linked to the concept of opposition whilst covert forms of disagreement are linked to resistance to change. In the same way, Bovey and Hede (2001) also established a range of behaviours in response to change such as overt versus covert behaviours, active versus passive behaviours and supportive versus resistant behaviours. I am interested in the various manifestations of resistance either overt or covert that were put up by employees of the two organizations studied that reflected their resistance to the implementation of the various transformational programs undertaken.

According to Caruth et al. (1985), the means, methods and ways by which people confront or resist change can be categorized into three groups. These are Open/Direct attacks, Hidden/Indirect attacks and Passive behaviour/Dropping out. Open attacks and absolute aggression against the introduction of new procedures, methods, and equipment are the most apparent ways employees may employ to obstruct a change. According to Caruth et al. (1985), these attacks are manifested in various ways such as, complaining openly about the need for the recommended improvements, intentionally slowing down on the job, spoiling materials and supplies associated with implementing the change, and sabotaging new equipment to make it fail. Hidden or indirect attacks also show adverse attitude towards the introduction of change but may be difficult for the change leader to identify. Through their hidden attacks, change recipients can cause the failure of a change initiative if change leaders fail to detect them and to take the necessary corrective measures. In line with Caruth et al. (1985), behaviours associated with this type of attacks include: requesting unneeded information and stalling for more time in which to make the change, starting and spreading rumours which have little basis in fact, and following the orders of the supervisor "exactly" as the employee receives them even though he or she sees the need for adjustment. In situations of passive behaviour/dropping out, a manager or change agent may not be able to recognize any thoughtful and determined attempt against a change and yet the change is not producing the desired results. When this is the case, Caruth et al. (1985) believe the employees have perhaps succumbed to the change and just dropped out and that they are just disguising that feeling of personal involvement required for any job to be done properly. The end result is that the employees become indifferent and their self-confidence degenerates. Employees sometimes do not simply just drop out but resort to some other behaviours when confronted with new change situation that they feel frustrated about. Caruth et al. (1985), add that sometimes employees may call for transfer to escape from the situation and others go to the extent of leaving the job and that the consequence of not controlling the problem is a loss in productive effort, and possibly the loss of experienced, skilled, and valuable employees.

Others have classified the ways that employees exhibit resistant behaviour into the following categories: *Passive resistance, Active resistance and Aggressive resistance.*

Employees passively resist change, when they harbour negative feelings and opinions. These may include agreeing verbally but not following through, pretending to be ignorant and concealing information (Bolognese, 2002; Petrini & Hultman, 1995), failing to implement change, procrastinating or dragging one's feet, and standing by and allowing change to fail (Hultman, 1995). Coetsee (1999) adds to this by saying that passive resistance exists when minor or weak forms of opposition to change are encountered. This is demonstrated by the occurrence of negative perceptions and attitudes articulated by uttering opposing views, regressive behaviour such as threats to quit or uttering other signs of the rejection of change. Passive resistance in a sense can be described here as a subtle form of reaction by employees. These forms of resistance are harder to recognize. When employees actively resist change they are actively opposing the change with more overt behaviour such as participating in strikes or increased absenteeism (Singh et al., 2012) and includes behaviours such as being critical, finding fault, ridiculing, appealing to fear and manipulating, using facts selectively, blaming or accusing, sabotaging, intimidating or threatening, falsifying facts, obstruction, undermining, beginning rumours and arguing (Petrini & Hultman, 1995), working to rule, slowing activities down, protest and personal withdrawal (Coetsee, 1999). Behaviours that involve attempts to halt the change initiative are categorized as aggressive resistance to change and may include subversion or sabotage (Singh et al., 2012), proactive spreading of rumours and stories, overt blocking behaviour, violent strikes and boycotts, destruction, terrorism and killing (Coetsee, 1999). These behaviours are obviously unconcealed and can easily be detected by management.

Caruth et al.'s (1985) categorization of the means, methods and ways by which change is resisted into Open/Direct Attacks, Hidden/Indirect Attacks and Passive behaviour/Dropping out as outlined above bears some resemblance with what others have suggested. Open/Direct attacks bear some resemblance to aggressive resistance as outlined by Coetsee (1999). Hidden/Indirect attacks on the other hand, are in consonance with passive behaviours as provided for, by Petrini and Hultman (1995), and Coetsee (1999). These are concealed or undercover forms of behaviour that sometimes may be difficult for management to detect but which are nonetheless detrimental to the implementation of a change initiative. The bottom line is that each of these behaviours carries negative attitude towards the introduction of change. According to Caruth et al. (1985), Passive behaviour/Dropping out includes the situation where employees simply resigned themselves to the change and just "dropped out." This implies that they become indifferent and their optimism fades. This state of affairs may lead employees to look for transfers out of the situation or even quit the organisation.

Apart from the behavioural element of resistance, Piderit (2000) and Oreg (2006) also mentioned the cognitive and affective dimension of resistance. They indicated that resistance can be viewed in terms of how people think about the change (Cognitive dimension), and how they feel about the change (Affective dimension). Oreg (2006), mentions that the cognitive dimension of resistance covers the idea of the individual as regards the value of the change to oneself. For instance, what will be the value of the change to the individual as a person? What will be the benefit of the change to the individual, his department or the organization? Negative reactions emanating from such evaluations from the individual will include lack of commitment to the change and a general negative assessment of the change. On the other hand, affective reactions to change involves going through emotions such as anxiety, fear, elation, enthusiasm and apprehension. It is the opinion of Piderit (2000), that the individual functions in all the three elements of behavioural, cognitive and affective resistance concurrently. However, most studies conducted tend to focus on just single dimensions of these individual resistances (Stensaker & Meyer, 2012). As a result, most of these studies fail to speak to varied forms of reactions and therefore fail to adequately include other vague type of responses to change (Piderit, 2000). My interest in this study is just to explore the negative reactions of employees to transformational change since this is an unexplored area in the

telecommunication industry of Ghana. Since different authors used different terms to describe the methods of resistance, the research question of interest for this study is: *What is the nature of employee reaction observed during the implementation of transformational programs in the telecommunication industry of Ghana?*

Ghana and the Telecommunication Industry

Ghana is an independent sovereign nation. Ghana practices a presidential constitutional democracy. It is located in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Its population is estimated at 27.4 million in 2015 (www.tradingeconomics.com/ghana/population; Accessed: 02/09/2016). Ghana is a petroleum and natural gas producer. Oil was discovered in commercial quantities in 2007 and official production commenced in 2010 (Kastning, 2011). Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa in the world (World Cocoa - World Crops.com, 2013; Accessed: 09/10/2013). The Ghanaian domestic economy revolves around services. The services sector accounts for about 50% of the gross domestic product and employs 28% of the work force (Ghana Statistical Service - GDP; September 2012).

The telecommunications industry of Ghana was deregulated with the introduction of the accelerated development plan (ADP) in 1994 (Frempong & Atubra, 2001). This broke the monopoly power of the then Ghana Post and Telecommunications which was privatized into Ghana Telecommunications. As a result of the deregulation of the industry, there are now six major telecommunication companies operating in Ghana. They are MTN Ghana, Vodafone Ghana, Airtel Ghana, Tigo, Expresso and Globacom as they are ordinarily known.

Research Methodology

Research Design: Qualitative Multiple Case-Study

The study adopts a qualitative research strategy based on a multiple case study design. In their research to study newly published research to ascertain findings that offer research-based direction to organisational change agents and managers in discovering answers to individual resistance to organisational change initiatives, Erwin and Garman (2010) considered peer-reviewed journals from 1998 to 2009. They discovered that all the reported research used essentially self-report questionnaires to collect data which were analysed quantitatively. They concluded that such a lack of diversity in the use of research methodologies offers a limited viewpoint of resistance to organisational change that could have been expanded with the use of qualitative and practice-based methods such as case studies and action research. A multiple case study is suitable for this research due to its investigative nature (Voss et al., 2002) and a qualitative research is very appropriate for a case study research (Ellram et al., 2004). Since this study is an exploratory one, I adopted a qualitative case study to carry out this research to unearth in-depth, the feelings and experiences of the research participants in answer to the research question.

Qualitative research strategy provides the methods necessary to enable a researcher to try and find out the experiences and practices of major informants and to find them resolutely in context (Devine, 2002). I therefore wanted to obtain at first hand, the opinions and experiences of employees in the telecommunications industry of Ghana, on the resistant behaviours and attitudes exhibited by them during the implementation of transformational programs undertaken by their organizations. Qualitative data enables a researcher to obtain rich descriptions that are vivid, contained in a real-life context and are truthful (Amaratunga et al., 2002). In addition, qualitative research is appropriate for uncovering the meanings people place

on the events, processes, their perceptions, expectations, presumptions and conjunctures (Van Manen, 1977). By using a qualitative method, it enabled me to investigate in-depth, both managers and employees' perspectives on how resistance was exhibited in their respective organisations.

A multiple case-study design is adopted for this study because the demonstration of resistant behaviours and attitudes by employees is highly contextual. It is therefore important to study in-depth, the phenomenon of resistant behaviour and attitudes within the context of the selected telecommunication organizations. A multiple case-study approach was adopted by both Idiagbon-Oke and Oke (2011) and Tsironis and Psychogios (2016) in their studies and they came out with interesting findings. A case study research offers a holistic perspective on real-life events and the processes leading to certain results (Vissak, 2010). Moreover, case studies allow researchers to explore or test theories within the context of real life settings (Myers, 2013). In addition, case studies allow the expansion and generalization of theories by combining the existing theoretical knowledge with new empirical insight (Yin, 2009). Multiple case study design allows the comparison of events and data across cases (Voss et al., 2002). Since the purpose of the study was to explore the manifestation of resistant behaviours in the telecommunications industry, a multiple case study was appropriate.

Two companies, MTN Ghana and Airtel Ghana were studied. These companies are leading providers of telecommunication services. MTN Ghana holds 46.43 % of the voice subscriber market share in Ghana whilst Airtel holds 13.70 % (National Communications Authority of Ghana Report, December 2015). The two organizations therefore hold about 60 % of the market share.

Data Collection Methods and Techniques

Data was collected primarily through face-to-face interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and this enabled me to obtain subjective but valuable information from participants. Semi-structured interviews are mostly used in qualitative research (Gray, 2007). More so, semi-structured interviews are often the only data source for a qualitative research and are based on open-ended questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) and allows probing questions based on the interchange between the interviewer and the interviewee. Interviews are appropriate when the aim of a research is exploratory and geared towards obtaining the feelings and attitudes of participants (Gray, 2007). The interview schedule was developed based on the purpose of the study. The questions were therefore constructed to depict the essence of the study.

Since I consider organizational transformation as a continuous process and involves a number of large-scale changes, participants were expected to concentrate on particular change or changes that were notable and important to them and then to describe their experiences accordingly. In selecting a sample for a qualitative study, Guest et al., (2006) have endorsed twelve (12) interviews for a researcher who desires to study communal views and experiences amongst a set of individuals who are equally alike. For this study, twenty (20) participants were interviewed.

Table 1. Different types of participants that were interviewed from the two organisations

	MTN GHANA	AIRTEL GHANA
MANAGERS	5	7
OTHER EMPLOYEES	2	6
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	**7**	**13**

Seven (7) participants were interviewed from MTN Ghana consisting of 5 managers and 2 other employees and thirteen (13) participants were interviewed from Airtel Ghana consisting of 7 managers and 6 other employees. Purposeful samples were selected from the two companies. Participants selected were those who had experienced organizational transformations for the immediate past and could speak to the research questions of interest and were willing and available to participate in the interviews. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Both managers and non-managers were interviewed. The managers interviewed were all middle-level managers. The interviews were conducted in 2015. Interviews mostly took place from between 40 minutes and 1 hour. All interviews were audio recorded.

I also examined company documentation in the form of annual reports and newsletters. These documents assisted me in asking probing questions during the interviews.

This research is an extract from my PhD thesis at Leeds Beckett University. The appropriate ethical approval for this study was obtained as required by the University's ethics policy.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was selected as the method of qualitative analysis as it is very flexible and can be used through a host of research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is an analytic method for identifying and analyzing patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). An inductive thematic analysis was applied. This study implemented the outline offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis which comprises of some six stages: familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report.

The source of data for this study was primarily from the semi-structured interviews conducted. Data was transcribed into written form before thematic analysis could be carried out. This offered me the opportunity to familiarize myself with the data. Initial codes were identified from the data from sections of the text that could constitute remarkable patterns. In Vivo coding was undertaken based on meaning units or actual phrases used in the text segments (Thomas, 2003). An example of the coding undertaken can be found on table 2 below.

Table 2: Coding of transcribed text

TEXT	CODE
Emmh like at times when you request for some information to help you do something, the response rate is slow. You realised that when you follow up their demeanour portray like someone who is not really happy.	Unhappiness and withholding of information
There were a lot of rumours. This program brought about a lot of restructuring in terms of employee roles and employees themselves. These particular changes spread a lot of rumours. For this particular change also to work, the rumour and rumour mongering is detrimental to the effect that we wanted to bring.	Spreading of rumours

After the coding, various themes were identified. In line with Braun and Clarke (2006), the various codes were sorted into themes and the relevant data extracts were collated to march onto the various themes. Then, a consideration of the association between the codes and the themes so far identified was undertaken. Through this some themes were recognised as sub-

themes and others as the main themes. The development of these themes, were my interpretation of what participants had expressed in the interview transcripts. To increase the validity of the research results, data triangulation was done by way of the interviews and the secondary information obtained through the companies' documentations (Voss et al., 2002). The multiple case study design used also ensured external validity (Voss et al., 2002). The credibility of this study is further enhanced based on the background information about the organisations studied and the exhaustive research design used (Farquhar, 2012). The final stage is where the analysis is done for the cases. First, a within-case analysis is undertaken for each of the cases then followed by a cross-case analysis.

Findings

Case Studies

MTN Ghana and Airtel Ghana were studied. These companies are leading providers of telecommunication services. MTN Ghana holds 46.43 % of the voice subscriber market share in Ghana whilst Airtel holds 13.70 % (National Communications Authority of Ghana Report, December 2015). The two organizations therefore hold about 60 % of the market share. MTN Ghana, came into being through the acquisition of Areeba in 2007 and it introduced structural changes in 2014 that led to both cultural and system changes. It regularized and unified its operations to that of the MTN group. In effect, the company has altered the manner in which it conducts its business by introducing an integrated set of processes and a mutual way of operating consistent with the MTN group. Airtel Ghana also went through a change in ownership in 2010 after the acquisition of Zain Ghana. In 2014, following a change in leadership with the appointment of a new Managing Director, it modified its culture of doing business and this brought about changes in the processes of doing business and then, attitudinal or behavioural change with an emphasis on facilitating business to satisfy the customer.

It was established from the study that there were resistances exhibited by employees of the two organizations. The main theme identified for the research question of interest for both MTN Ghana and Airtel Ghana is: manifestation of resistance. The corresponding sub-themes are Active resistance and passive resistance.

Findings: Within Case Study - MTN Ghana

Within case analysis is undertaken to examine the findings in relation to the research question for each of the organizations studied. The analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews with both managers and other employees resulted in the development of two major sub-themes for the two organisations on how resistance was manifested, specifically active resistance and passive resistance.

Active Resistance: MTN Ghana

From the study, it was established that employees resisted the transformational changes that were taking place at MTN. Active resistance is where employees openly show their disapproval or rejection of changes introduced. Under the sub-theme of active resistance, the following were the resistant behaviours exhibited by employees at MTN Ghana during the transformation process: Attempts to strike by unions and the spreading of rumours. The most indicative statements illustrating active resistance at MTN Ghana are illustrated below.

Attempts to strike. Unionized employees nearly embarked on a demonstration as a way of showing their displeasure of the changes taking place in MTN Ghana. When asked whether

people in the organization resisted or rejected the transformational program and how that was manifested, this was the response received:

> Yes, they, I wouldn't say they rejected but they resisted because we had like those who are not in management, those who belong to Unions, you know they nearly wanted to embark on a demonstration in disapproval of the transformation that has been implemented.

From the above statement, it is clear that a section of the work force at MTN Ghana demonstrated their resistance to the changes taking place at the time. This they did by attempting to hold a demonstration to indicate their rejection of the changes embarked upon.

Spreading of Rumours. Another way by which active resistance was demonstrated at MTN Ghana by employees was represented by the spreading of rumours amongst employees due to the general fear and anxiety that gripped most of them. This is what was said to that effect:

> Well emmh, there was tension in the office, for about a month, when we come to work everybody is quite serious because we were all at risk, people not knowing what would happen. You could see that people were anxious, others were also hopeful because there were new roles that were being created and they were targeting to at least move from their current situation to a higher role. So it was a mixed feeling but more of anxiety and then let's say, it was more of anxiety, yeah. Yes, there were rumours, as in who becomes the head of the division, emmh who will be laid off, what kind of salary scheme you are going to be on, a whole lot of rumours.

It is obvious from the above quote that the spreading of rumour on all sort of concerns to the employees was a common place. This is illustrated by the fact that the above indicated that they were all kinds of rumour being peddled around due to the introduction of the changes at MTN Ghana. Employees were anxious about what would happen to them as a result of the changes and that made them resort to the vending of rumours.

Passive Resistance

Here, employees through various subtle means, demonstrate their disapproval of the various changes implemented. The following constitute resistant behaviours and attitudes under this sub-theme after the analysis of the interviews at MTN Ghana: Anxiety/Nervousness, Unhappiness and Withholding of information and the maintenance of old habits.

Anxiety/Nervousness. There was general anxiety and nervousness amongst employees with the introduction of the changes. They were nervous because some felt it was a ploy by management to lay off employees and also, they were nervous because they did not know how the changes were going to affect employees. When asked the question if employees resisted the changes, and how that was manifested, the following response was obtained from the interviews:

> I remember trying to, initially when we were trying to get people into buying this idea people were a bit nervous and people did not kind of trust the whole thing. They thought it was one of those things for management to send people home and basically that was what their main focus was. They thought they were going to be sent home. But eventually after we understood the whole thing it

even gave others the opportunity to move from the current position to a much
higher position than they were holding.

General fear and anxiety is an emotional reaction and as can be seen from the above quote, employees were generally nervous and anxious about the changes initiated at MTN Ghana and that is a demonstration of their rejection of the changes.

Unhappiness and withholding of information. Some employees resorted to the withholding of information as a protest since they were not happy with the changes being introduced and this affected the smooth flow of work. When asked whether people in any way resisted the transformation program, this was the response from participants: "Emmh like at times when you request for some information to help you do something, the response rate is slow. You realised that when you follow up their demeanour portray like someone who is not really happy."

Slowing down work through withholding of information and exhibiting general unhappiness are manifestations of resistance to change. As can be seen from the above quote employees were definitely not happy with the changes happening at MTN Ghana and that could be the reason why they were reluctant in releasing information requested from them.

Maintenance of old habits. In order to demonstrate their rejection of the changes taking place at MTN Ghana, some employees resorted to keeping to their old ways of doing things instead of adopting to the new ways brought about by the changes. This is demonstrated by the following response:

> The maintenance of old habits and procedures was a reason just like I mentioned
> with the fear of the unknown when you are not sure of what is at stake, at the
> next stage when you are to move, you tend to be comfortable with what you are
> already doing.

From the above illustration, it is clear that employees were not comfortable abandoning what they were already used to doing and to resort to the new ways of doing things. They therefore continued with some old practices despite the introduction of the changes. From the above, it is established that employees demonstrated their rejection of the changes both overtly and covertly at MTN Ghana.

Findings: Within Case Analysis - Airtel Ghana

The main theme identified here is Manifestation of Resistance and the sub-themes are Active Resistance and Passive resistance just as we saw in the case of MTN Ghana.

Active Resistance: Airtel Ghana

From the study, it was established that there were resistant attitudes and behaviours manifested by various employees. The various ways by which active resistance was manifested are: Spreading of rumours, Resignations, Change of jobs/roles, Complaints and Procrastinating and Absenteeism.

Spreading rumours. Employees resorted to spreading rumours as a sign of protest at Airtel Ghana. When asked in what forms employees demonstrated their resistance to the implementation of the changes, this was the response obtained:

> Can I say mainly the rumours? I will say mainly the rumours because when the
> rumours broke and we didn't actually know what was going on and that even

when the people heard the rumours, people even moved out before the main thing was communicated by HR. So, I am thinking that is the main thing that impeded the restructuring. Besides that, nothing else.

From the above quotation, it can be seen that the peddling of rumours was a common place with the introduction of changes at Airtel Ghana. This affected the implementation of the changes as demonstrated by the above statement.

Resignations. To demonstrate their protest to the changes taking place in Airtel Ghana, some employees decided to leave the organisation. This was said to that effect:

Yeah, they resisted the change. A couple of people resigned and left the business. Emmh a lot of them also started complaining about what was going on, emmh some of them felt they were not being consulted, some of them felt the organisation wasn't meeting their needs, some of them felt they were useless. So, these are some of the reasons why they expressed their displeasure, some left, some people were complaining etc.

Some employees in order to show their displeasure for the implementation of the changes at Airtel Ghana actually resigned their positions and left the organization. That shows how resentful they were to the changes.

Change of jobs/roles. Other employees changed jobs or roles as a protest to the implementation of the changes. This is what participants said in respect of that: "People left, people changed jobs, people complained. There were a lot of rumours, others changed departments, and others went to different roles wherever there was a vacancy."

Resorting to changing jobs and changing roles at the same organisation were means of demonstrating a displeasure of the new procedures and processes that were introduced at Airtel Ghana as a result of the changes initiated. This is very clear from the above statement where it is indicated that some employees changed jobs and others changed their roles to take up new roles as a result of the changes within the same establishment.

Complaints. Some employees resorted to the use of complaints as a sign of their rejection of the changes implemented and also as a sign of their displeasure about the way the changes were being handled. This was a response given to that effect:

O.K. the change, let me use our company when for example we were told to swipe in and they will record, people were coming to work very early earlier than the normal time but people were still complaining, does it mean I have to come early and sit down and do nothing? I am supposed to start work at 8am why should I come to work before 8am and sit down and wait until 8am before I start work?

It is clear that employees were not comfortable with the new procedures introduced into Airtel Ghana as a result of the changes. This is why they complained when they were required to report to work early and swipe in to indicate their time of reporting to work. This is observed from the above statement.

Procrastinating and absenteeism. Some other employees deliberately drag their feet on change implementation and absented themselves from company activities as a way of protest to the changes implemented. When asked how employees resisted the changes, this is what was said regarding the behaviour of some employees:

Yes, it is still happening, we are still facing it. In fact, today for instance emmh I needed some sign off from finance for which I have being facing them back and forth but was hard to get. I was packing my things to go and sit there to get them engaged so we can close on these issues. So yes, you see change, you see the need for you to start doing the things that you use not to do but because you need sign off from stakeholders who are akin to the old way of doing things even they don't want to see eye to eye with you. They find reasons not to get you started as such they find reasons to see everything negative about it. So, these are some of the things we see and sometimes they raise an issue then you get an answer to it then they raise another one. So, it becomes like a snowball approach and then any time they raise it you need to get them a meeting they find a reason, I am busy, I am busy. So, my position is to go and sit at finance and work from there and so after I am done with this I am going to sit down there so that am watching his face. Are you fine so that we can close with this? So that is the approach.

Some employees indicated their resistance to the changes by delaying work that they are supposed to complete together with others. This is demonstrated by the statement above where it is indicated that employees will always find reasons not to get a job started and they would always resort to asking unnecessary questions regarding the same issue just to delay the execution of work.

Passive Resistance

The various resistant attitudes and behaviours observed in this study at Airtel Ghana that are related to passive resistance are: Fear, Anxiety/Mood changes, Unhappiness, and Not working up to expectation.

Fear/Anxiety/Mood changes. General fear was the main feeling harboured by employees with the introduction of changes. Common amongst the fears that caught up with employees are: fear of the unknown, fear of losing one's job, fear of job overload, and fear of failure. In addition, employees were also very anxious resulting in swings in their mood at the time of the changes. The general anxiety that gripped employees led them to illustrate their apprehension and rejection of the changes. This is what was said about this:

They were all anxious, what is Airtel bringing? Will it be the same as Zain or even better than Zain? So, we were all in expectation, what they are bringing and moreover at that time too, the logo of emmh Airtel was similar to Vodafone. It is like how will people take it, how will we conform to it, how will we later on accept it? So, an anxious moment though but later we got to accept it and we have moved on.

People were anxious, they were worried, people were thinking why the change? Definitely people know that when change comes, some things may change and may affect the job, payment structure, role differentiation. So, you will see them from mood swings, mood changes or not coming to work.

Employees reacted emotionally to the changes initiated. This is obvious from the above statements. This is a sign of resentment to the changes.

Unhappiness. Some employees were not happy with the changes happening in Airtel Ghana probably due to the uncertainty surrounding the introduction of changes. When

participants were asked about the attitude or behaviour of employees regarding the changes, this is what was said:

> Like when we were actually being told or being informed about this change, there was, first you can see something like from the facial attitude of the people. The people were not really happy and that even made people actually moved out. That is what I actually saw.

From the above statement, it is obvious that people did not like the changes introduced at Airtel Ghana and that was manifested mostly through their facial expressions. It is obvious from the above illustrations that there were both passive and active resistances demonstrated by employees at Airtel Ghana.

Cross-Case Analysis

The within case analysis presented above are a description of employees' experiences and perceptions about how employees demonstrated resistant attitudes and behaviours in their respective organizations during the implementation of transformational programs. An effort is now being made to illustrate the similarities and differences between the two organizations in terms of the findings. From the findings, the main theme and the sub-themes for the two organizations are the same. The main theme for the two organisations is: Manifestation of Resistance. The sub-themes identified are Active resistance and passive resistance. Whilst some of the specific elements of the sub-themes are the same, there are some differences observed in some of the elements of these sub-themes.

Active Resistance

The common element under active resistance to both cases is the spreading of rumours. Employees did not know the appropriateness and the impact of the changes on them and this made them go into wild speculations amongst themselves regarding the impact and suitability of the changes. This could be the situation because it was realised that employee participation in initiating the changes in both MTN Ghana and Airtel Ghana was poor. Employees were only involved at the stage of the implementation of the changes. As a result, employees did not have any idea about the necessity of the changes and also, they could not determine the likely impact of the changes. This made them resort to all sorts of speculation to the extent that they even speculated that the changes were just a ploy for management to lay off employees and not to improve upon the business of the two cases. This is understandable because the telecommunication sector is a fast-moving industry were changes are a constant feature. Most of these changes usually come with employee layoffs. So, their past experience with other changes could be informing them of their behaviour.

There were some differences observed in the manifestation of active resistance in the two cases. In the case of MTN Ghana, there was an attempt by employees to embark on a strike action as a result of the changes. This could be the reason because it was noticed at MTN Ghana that participation on taking decisions regarding the changes was poor. Added to this was the fact that some employees felt that the communication effort by management about the initiation and implementation of the changes was also not good enough. Staff engagement was not sufficient to allay the fears of employees about the changes introduced in the organisation.

The other active resistant behaviours were observed in the case of Airtel Ghana. These are: Resignations, change of jobs/roles, complaints, and procrastinating and absenteeism.

Employees who are opposed to the changes at Airtel and who probably could not cope with the changes decided to leave the organisation altogether. In Airtel Ghana, some employees felt that the new culture of doing business that was introduced as a result of the changes was alien to the Ghanaian culture of work and they could not put up with that. This resulted in some employees leaving the organization.

Other employees changed jobs or roles within the same establishment at Airtel Ghana. They felt that the new roles assigned them did not match up to their standards and so when the opportunity was provided to move to other roles they wasted no time in taking advantage of that. Some employees changed roles because they did not have the skills set required to undertake certain jobs as a result of the changes.

Complaints was a common feature at Airtel and that is common with the introduction of most changes. Some employees were complaining about the need to change in the first place. Moving from Zain Ghana to Airtel Ghana was difficult for some employees to comprehend. They felt that things were moving on well with Zain Ghana and therefore could not see why the company should be acquired and rebranded as Airtel Ghana. Others were complaining because they were being moved into roles that they were not familiar with. This could also be the case because they were not provided with adequate training to enable them fit into their new roles.

Confronted with the daily frustration of changes, some employees at Airtel Ghana in order to get out of that situation resorted to postponing jobs they are to undertake or they simply absent themselves from doing their jobs.

Discussion of Findings

The main purpose of this research was to explore how employees reacted by the manifestation of resistant attitudes and behaviours in the telecommunication industry of Ghana during an organisational transformation. The main theme identified in this research is: Manifestation of resistance, and the accompanying sub-themes are Active resistance and Passive resistance. It is determined that employees reacted negatively, behaviourally, cognitively, emotionally and affectionately towards the implementation of transformational programmes in the two organisations studied. These negative reactions from employees were done devoid of absolute aggression or dissent. This could be the case because management undertook some deliberate steps just to minimise or eliminate employees' negative reaction during the introduction of the various change initiatives. It is however important for managers or change leaders to realise that any form of resistance is capable of frustrating a change intervention.

Active Resistance

Under active resistance, the element common to both cases is the spreading of rumours. Employees were apprehensive about the changes and they therefore reacted by spreading rumours about the suitability and impact of the said changes. When employees actively resist a change, they are actively opposing the change with more overt behaviour such as the starting and spreading of rumours (Petrini & Hultman, 1995). However, Caruth et al. (1985) describe the spreading of rumours using a different label. They describe that type of behaviour during a change process as a hidden/indirect attack. This is not surprising because as Oreg et al. (2011) alluded to, different researchers usually ascribe different labels to the same concepts when describing employees' reactions to change. The other elements described as constituting active resistance but which are not common to both organisations are: Attempt to strike by unions, Resignations, Change of jobs/roles, Complaints, procrastinating and absenteeism. Whilst

attempt to strike by unions was found with MTN, the rest were observed in the case of Airtel Ghana. Embarking or participating in strikes is an active way of opposing change (Singh et al., 2012). Coetsee (1999), mentioned the use of peaceful strikes and boycotts as constituting active resistance and referred to the use of violent strikes as aggressive resistance which constitute behaviour to stop the change effort. Once again different authors are using different labels to describe similar concepts. The other active resistant behaviours occurred in the case of Airtel Ghana. Some employees resorted to resignations as a way of registering their opposition to the implementation of the changes. If employees are confronted with the daily frustrations of changes some may try to get out of this situation by resigning from the job. This, Caruth et al. (1985) have described as passive behaviour or dropping out. On the other hand, Stensaker et al., (2002) describe this as active/change improbable coping behaviour. They indicated that employees faced with excessive change could try to cope with the situation by acting in ways that are injurious to the organisation such as exiting the organisation. As a way of dealing with the changes, some employees at Airtel Ghana took to changing of jobs or roles within the same organisation. Some of them took advantage of the new and higher roles that were created and others moved into roles that they believed they could handle and perform well. Complaining about the nature of the changes and the consequences of these changes on employees was a common feature in Airtel Ghana. Caruth et al. (1985) label this as open/direct attacks which employees may use to hinder the implementation of a change by complaining openly about the need for the suggested changes. Yet some other employees resorted to absenting themselves from participating in some company activities as a way of protest. Some boycotted meetings that were called for to discuss pertinent company issues. Coetsee (1999) describe any such blocking behaviour or peaceful boycott as a transition phase between active resistance and aggressive resistance. Withholding of any information, support or help is rather described by Hultman (2003) as constituting passive resistance. However, this study has recognised all such negative behaviours as constituting active resistance.

Passive Resistance

Fear and anxiety, and unhappiness of staff are the three shared elements to the two organisations. There was general fear expressed by employees in various ways with the introduction of the changes, prominent among which is the fear of losing one's job. This was a common feeling amongst employees. This type of reaction is described as an affective resistance by Oreg (2006) whilst Piderit (2000) describes it as an emotional attitude. Closely related to this was the general anxiety that engulfed employees with the introduction of the changes. Employees were mostly nervous because they were moving to the unknown with the introduction of the changes. Employees were generally not happy with the introduction of the changes. This was demonstrated through their general attitude and to some extent, their facial expressions. Unhappiness and anxiety are weak or mild forms of opposition which are usually illustrated by negative perceptions and attitudes. Oreg (2006), describes the experience of emotions such as anxiety and apprehension as an affective reaction to change. Coetsee (1999), on the other hand, describes this type of negative attitude as passive resistance. This type of resistance could occur due to lack of information about the changes or inadequate amount of communication about the changes to employees. The other forms of passive resistance observed are the withholding of information, and procrastination and absenteeism. Withholding of information occurred in the case of Airtel Ghana were employees were very reluctant in providing information requested by others. This is associated with the fact that they were simply not happy with the introduction of the changes. Petrini and Hultman (1995) indicated that the withholding of information, suggestions, help or support, constitute passive behaviour by employees. This behaviour amounts to not actively cooperating and promoting

the change effort (Giangreco & Peccei, 2005). Procrastinating and absenteeism was observed also in Airtel Ghana. Some employees were simply not working to expectation with the introduction of the changes. This makes the effective implementation of change very difficult (Giangreco & Peccei, 2005). Some employees took to a very lackadaisical way of working where a seemingly snowball approach to issues was adopted. This attitude amounts to the dragging of feet as described by Petrini and Hultman (1995). However, Caruth et al., (1985) described the behaviour of intentionally slowing down on the job as an act of open attack. Lines (2005), on the other hand, describe these types of attitudes whether active or passive resistance as simply negative attitude. These negative behaviours determined by this study are unique in that they do not follow any prescribed outline by any author. They are a contribution to knowledge since this is the first time in Ghana and also the first time in the telecommunication industry of Ghana that these forms of negative reaction have been determined through empirical studies. As observed by By (2005) most change theories are varied and inconsistent and not clear and they are without the benefit of empirical studies. These theories are mostly based on unopposed presumptions.

Limitations

Applying a case study method in this research implies that I narrowly looked at the data within the context of the two organisations studied. The findings of this study can therefore only be generalised from the two cases to the wider theory and not from a sample to a population as the case may be. The findings of this study cannot be generalised to other industries other than those in the telecommunication industry of Ghana.

An important limitation of this study is that it was limited to only two organisations in the telecommunications industry. This however, does not dilute the strength of the findings in the telecommunication industry of Ghana since the two organisations are representative of the other organisations.

This study did not have the benefit of interviewing former employees of the two organisations who might have left as a result of the introduction of the changes. Their views could provide great insight into how employees reacted to the changes since they actually reacted by leaving the organisations when the changes were introduced. However, I only discontinued conducting more interviews when no new information was being obtained from participants in the two cases.

The purposive sample selected could introduce a bias into the data gathered since those selected for the interviews could be the ones who have experienced several changes introduced and have therefore become familiar with changes and probably have a mild reaction or favourable disposition towards changes.

Managerial Implications

Employees tend to disagree with changes when mostly they do not understand certain issues about the changes. This usually is as a result of poor communication or the lack of it by management or change agents. Managers therefore need very elaborate communication plans during the initiation and implementation of changes. Managers should pay particular attention on the contents and the media used to communicate about changes to employees.

Mild forms of negative reaction just like aggressive resistance have the capacity to delay the realisation of changes or even frustrate the implementation of changes.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study is probably the first exploratory research that sheds light into how employees reacted negatively with the introduction of transformational changes in the telecommunications industry of Ghana. It therefore contributes to the literature by providing insight into the negative reaction of employees under such circumstances. The findings determined in this study do not follow any prescribed outline identified through research.

Future Research

Similar research could be undertaken by other researchers to either validate or enlarge on the themes identified in this study since this study was an exploratory one in the Ghanaian context. The findings of this research therefore offer a pathway for future research.

Future research could expand this study to cover all the other organisations within the telecommunications industry since the current study was just limited to two organisations.

It would be of immense importance if any future research could cover former employees of these telecommunication companies. Their opinions could be of great insight into how employees reacted during the implementation of transformational programmes.

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