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Durham Thesis

Understanding Resistance to Large-scale Organisational Change

PULLEN-FERREIRA, Carlos

Qualification: Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

Department: Management and Marketing

Name of Institution: Durham University

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Title _____

Understanding Resistance to Large-scale Organisational Change

Degree _____

Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

Author & Researcher

Carlos Pullen-Ferreira

Supervisors _____

Maria Kakarika & Julie Hodges

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Year of Submission _____

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Abstract

This thesis explores organisational change from an organisational-driven and individual-response perspective to understand and recommend how employees, leaders, scholars and organisations must adapt to achieve transformation outcomes.

Firstly, from an organisational-driven viewpoint, this research investigates the relatively unexplored intersection of decentralisation, organisational change and employee resistance. Conducted within a multinational organisation undergoing substantial transformational change, a longitudinal study collected data pre- and post-critical programme implementation (June 2022 and June 2023). The primary hypothesis posited that decentralisation would positively correlate with reduced resistance to change post-implementation. This aspect of this research also scrutinised national and regional cultural dimensions, based on Hofstede, and contextual factors as moderators: individualism, power distance, and the number of external agile experts. The thesis findings offer crucial insights for organisations to understand how to manage resistance to large-scale change from an organisational-driven viewpoint.

Secondly, from an individual-response perspective, existing research lacks insights into how employees cope with change-related anxiety or fear during organisational change. The researcher proposes and tests a model that examines how employees react to change-related anxiety or change-related fear by engaging in gossip behaviour. This gossip behaviour, in turn, influences resistance to change. Through a critical incident study within the same multinational organisation undergoing significant change, the researcher collected data on a wide range of gossip incidents and argues that gossip operates as a reaction to change-related anxiety or fear and, in turn, influences resistance to change. The relationship between gossip and resistance to change will depend on the gossipers' gender, with female participants resisting change more after gossiping. The findings contribute valuable insights for practical applications and further research on workplace gossip amid organisational change.

Declaration

The researcher collected interview and questionnaire data from organisations that he was associated with, and therefore, due to the sensitivity of the data used in the thesis, the organisation names and some locations have been anonymised. For example, the organisation names will be replaced with [organisation name]. The data and information are for use as part of this thesis only and cannot be used for anything else without permission from the author. Moreover, the distribution is restricted to the marker(s) of this thesis. Any further distribution or publication will require express permission from the author (and, where applicable, the author's supervisor(s)).

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“Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis”.

Emperor Lothair

(Times change, and we change with them)

Dreams can start from the simplest discussion with important people in your life.

I was seven years old, standing in the kitchen helping my mother make dinner when she turned to me and started providing me with advice about my future. Her sentiment was that the world was changing really quickly and that I needed to ensure I educated myself to the highest level so that I could differentiate myself from all the competition. She said that her wish would be for me to become a doctor and have a very successful career. She continued to say that she wanted to live long enough to see that event happen. This stayed with me all my life and I added it to a ‘bucket list’ created in my early twenties. Fast forward to August 2020 and an initial discussion with Jackie Ford and Julie Hodges about doing the Durham Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), during which they both provided amazing viewpoints about how Durham is a great place for me and aligns with my values. And as I write this acknowledgement, I reflect with gratitude on the amazing people that have got me to this place.

The journey since August 2020 has not been simple or straightforward. We have lived through a pandemic and during early 2021 I had a severe reaction to my first vaccine that has changed my life forever. My father had to have a pacemaker and my mother had three operations and twelve months of chemotherapy due to advanced cancer. We have all had different challenges and have had to be resilient as we changed our lives and overcome different levels of resistance to change.

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Firstly, I want to thank my mother Sylvia for all the encouragement and support through my life. Her fortitude, stoicism and focus on continuous improvement and always moving forward, no matter how hard life gets, is a reason I am able to be the human being I am today. Thank you!

Secondly, to my wife Meraewin, who has been a constant support and reminder of what all good things in life should be. She has been there for me in the dark moments and the bright moments. The past four years have felt as if we have been through a whole lifetime with so many changes. She has been there no matter what - thank you for being you.

Thirdly, I want to express my gratitude to my two young daughters, whose laughter and perspectives have infused joy into everything I do. Their innocent curiosity, exemplified by questions like "Why are you back at school? You're too old", inspires me to embrace experimentation without fear of consequences or failure. Their fearless approach to trying new things encourages me to explore and innovate to the fullest extent possible.

Fourth, to my supervisors, staff (admin) and fellow students from Durham. *Maria Kakarika* (my first supervisor) has been instrumental in my academic journey so far. I've gained invaluable insights from Maria, particularly in making an impact, research methodology and data articulation. Her direct communication and engagement style resonates with me both professionally and personally. I have truly enjoyed each interaction with Maria. She has always made time to meet, and when we did meet, she offered great feedback that I could action. This advice helped me design a more robust research proposal and build on that by creating two papers that we plan to publish in the future. Maria is the type of supervisor that every student wants to have in their

corner. She understands the academic journey so well, but she brings a sense of urgency and drive that I haven't witnessed in the academic field in a while.

During our exchanges with my second supervisor, *Julie Hodges*, I received insightful perspectives on the evolution of resistance to change and its significance within organisations. Julie helped me gain a deep appreciation of organisational change and resistance, by highlighting its potential benefits and drawbacks (it's not all bad). She didn't just provide a theoretical viewpoint on resistance to change, she provided practical examples. We covered so many topics, from artificial intelligence in organisational change to how resistance to action and the creation of a psychological contract are all misunderstood. Her knowledge on organisational dynamics is impressive. I haven't met someone who has a more rounded view of both the academia and corporate worlds. I was extremely proud to write a case study in her latest book "People-centric Organizational Change" ([Hodges, 2024](#)); if you don't have a copy of this book yet, it's a recommended read.

Change is the only constant in life, and this was confirmed when I got to the stage where my thesis was written. At this point, Maria (my first supervisor) had the fantastic news that her first child was born (many congratulations) and was going on Maternity leave. At this time, Julie stepped in to provide guidance and review my completed thesis. Thank you so much, Julie, for volunteering at such a pivotal moment. When I used to run marathons, I always said that the last few miles were always the hardest, and Julie provided me with all that was needed to get to the finish line.

I am grateful to *Christos Tsinopoulos*, my former primary supervisor, who was my supervisor when I initiated my DBA journey, and he instilled in me the confidence to make a meaningful contribution to theory and academia. Christos supported me in

many ways with the most important one being his ability to create an environment for me to experiment and learn. This ability to learn, helped me develop my research skills quickly. Thank you, Christos, for all your encouragement and support.

Fifth, I thank all those involved with the research, whether by assisting with questionnaire completion or participating in interviews, as without your support this research would not have provided the insights and recommendations that would be applicable to a cross section of individuals.

A special thank you mum, Professor Kuman, for proofreading my thesis and providing valuable feedback.

Embarking on the DBA programme with the goal of continuous learning and personal growth, I've found this journey profoundly rewarding, enabling me to expand my knowledge, embrace discomfort, and evolve my researching and writing ability significantly.

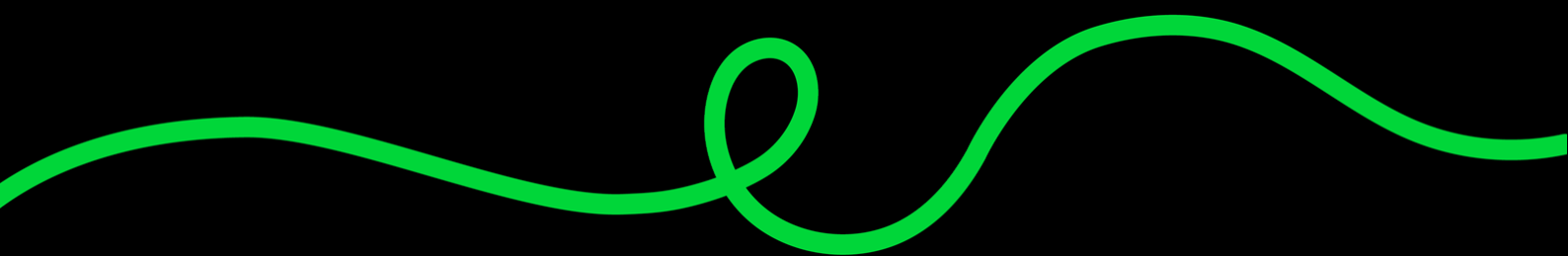
My future self will be thanking me for not giving up after a number of failures throughout the past four years. This is to the point where my ten-year-old, Lexie, is already in the agile mindset that to “FAIL” is one’s ‘First Attempt In Learning’. I am so proud of my family and want to thank all those that have helped me get to this point of completing my thesis and DBA.

Carlos

July 2024

**“The secret of change is to focus all
your energy **not** on fighting the old,
but on building the new.”**

Socrates



1 Introduction

Organisational change, and resistance to change, can be seen and experienced in different ways, but the quote that resonates now more than ever was noted by Kottorou, et al., (2023, p. 459):

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new. Socrates”

As a society there is an assumption that when change is imposed on us, we are programmed to resist change (Oreg, 2003; Peus, et al., 2009; Hubbart, 2023). This stems from a human behaviour deep-rooted in our instinct for survival that dates back to our early ancestors millions of years ago (Boyer & Bergstrom, 2011; Karasewich & Kuhlmeier, 2020). In ancient times stability and familiarity were crucial for safety, as the unknown often harboured potential dangers (Gifford, 2011; White, et al., 2019). Over generations this cautious approach has been ingrained into our collective psyche, making us wary of the unfamiliar and the uncertain to ensure our safety and survival as well as avoid circumstances that would be harmful (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Kurland & Pelled, 2000).

This sense of cautiousness or *resistance* is further reinforced by cultural norms and societal structures that favour tradition and the status quo (Hofstede, 2002; Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018). From a young age we are taught to follow these established patterns and adhere to conventional wisdom, believing that this will provide a sense of order and predictability in our society (Vardaman, et al., 2023). It has been highlighted by White, et al., (2019) that educational systems, religious institutions and even family

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traditions all play a role in perpetuating this mindset. This is because some parts of society often value consistency over innovation ([Hofstede, 1980](#)).

However, there is a natural aversion to change (organisational or personal), which can provide comfort and stability, but it can also reduce the level of adaptation and progress ([Lewin, 1947a](#); [Lewin, 1947b](#)). In an era marked by technological advancements and global interconnectedness, the ability to embrace change has become more important now than ever before. Societal growth, group achievement within organisations and individual development depends on employees' willingness to challenge old paradigms and explore new possibilities ([Schein, 1996](#); [Anderson, et al., 2014](#)).

Understanding an organisation's origins and triggers of resistance to change can empower organisations to overcome resistance ([Ford, et al., 2008](#); [Lee & Lalwani, 2024](#)). By acknowledging the historical and psychological factors at play, theory and practice can consciously work towards a more adaptable and open-minded approach to large-scale organisational change ([McAndrew, et al., 2007](#); [Ewenstein, et al., 2015](#)). Organisations and employees that embrace change often foster a greater level of resilience, which unlocks opportunities for innovation, creativity and growth ([Amabile, 2018](#)).

Furthermore, embracing change provides a platform for organisations to alter direction, which often reduces their threat of organisation mortality ([Hannan & Freeman, 1984](#); [Hannan, et al., 2004](#); [Kotter, 2007](#)). Organisations that stand still, and don't innovate, often struggle with declining profits and inevitably go out of business ([Larkin & Larkin, 1994](#)). This stark reality is prevalent now more than ever with the advent of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution, which is changing how organisations

provide services and develop products (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). The AI revolution could bring about increased efficiency, cost savings, and the ability to gain a competitive edge through data-driven insights (Aguinis, et al., 2024; Wang, et al., 2023; Jia, et al., 2024). Organisations that fail to adapt to these technological and process advancements risk losing customers who prefer using services that minimise the amount of time needed to buy a product, or receive value from that service (Dahl, 2011; Da Ros, et al., 2023).

As leaders and change agents need to consider their role in managing resistance and adapting to change, they need to be equipped with strategies and specific techniques for dealing with core eventualities that are mostly driven from two avenues (Oreg & Berson, 2019; Weber, et al., 2022). Firstly, Armenakis & Bedeian, (1999) suggests that when organisations decide to make fundamental changes (organisational-driven transformation), they must plan and communicate these changes to align with their strategic objectives and minimise disruption. This includes organisations spending more time planning and investing in new technologies, re-skilling employees and redesigning processes to stay competitive (Bordia, et al., 2004; Da Ros, et al., 2023). Secondly, as depicted by Herold, et al., (2007), how employees react to organisational changes (individual-driven reactions, also referred to as individual-response perspective in this thesis) is crucial. Leaders must address employee concerns, provide adequate support, and foster a culture of continuous learning and adaptability. By understanding and managing these dynamics, organisations can navigate the complexities of change more effectively, ensuring that both the organisation and its employees thrive in an ever-evolving business landscape (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burke, 2014; Hodges, 2021; Lee & Lalwani, 2024).

For this thesis, the researcher delves into the vital factor of *resistance to change* by exploring organisational-driven and individual-driven perspectives during large-scale organisational change. Firstly, this introduction starts by establishing the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) research emphasis and assists in contextualising the objectives of this research. Secondly, a subsection focusing on the research significance is followed by the research background. Lastly, the introduction elucidates the research contents (including research questions) and contributions that this research will make to practice and theory, before setting out the thesis structure.

1.1 Overview

There are many definitions for organisational change, and due to the uncertainty that shrouds the phenomenon, it is vital to start with a definition. Therefore, for this thesis, the researcher defines organisational change as a phenomenon that refers to the mechanisms through which an organisation modifies its people, processes, technology, data and culture (Hanelt, et al., 2021). The researcher proposes that organisational change impacts all types of companies and is often broken down into the changes that organisations decide to undertake that impact *organisational structures* (for example, whether to have a flat or hierarchical structure), *strategies* (for example, whether the organisation should focus on increasing revenue in existing markets or venture into new markets), *operational methods* (for example, if the organisation will deploy agile methods or lean process methods), *technologies* (for example, if the organisation will invest in AI or cloud based systems), *processes*, *procedures* and *organisational culture* (for example, moving from a formal culture of wearing suits to informal culture to drive a greater sense of authenticity) to adapt to internal and external pressures and achieve its strategy and goals (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Argyres & Silverman, 2004). As highlighted by Gupta, et al. (2023), these types of organisational changes can be incremental, which involve small adjustments over time, or *transformational*. Transformational changes involve large changes taking longer and focused on strategic outcomes, that alter the way the organisation operates.

Furthermore, organisational change is important because it enables companies to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving business environment, respond

effectively to market demands, leverage new technologies to create a competitive advantage, improve efficiency and productivity, and foster innovation ([Baron, et al., 1999](#); [Cross, et al., 2021](#); [Eva, et al., 2021](#); [Graham, et al., 2022](#)). Literature from [Gunkel, et al., \(2016\)](#) posited that organisations have a greater likelihood of ensuring long-term sustainability and growth if they manage transformational change proactively. However, organisations need to go further than just considering change, it is essential that organisations communicate frequently with stakeholders (for example, employees, partners or customers) to afford them the opportunity to embrace the impending changes and this can also help in enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction, as large-scale organisational change often involves developing new skills and competencies that contribute to personal and professional growth ([Jimmieson, et al., 2004](#); [Hodgson & Briand, 2013](#)).

As depicted in [Harden, et al., \(2020\)](#), organisational change, or change management, can be understood and analysed from different perspectives. These perspectives are often based on the scope and outcomes of change initiatives within the organisation. Therefore, to achieve this, this thesis will examine organisational change and resistance to change (RTC) from two perspectives, organisation-driven change and individual-driven response, and discuss their implications for change, for both theory and practice. There is a contrast between these two levels (or approaches) to change in terms of their characteristics and effects.

When considering the two perspectives of organisation-driven change and individual-driven response, which are defined in the next two paragraphs and in [section 1.3](#), the researcher views them as two different scales and mechanisms of change within a business context; and in this thesis these will be divided into Paper One and

Paper Two. Furthermore, organisational change can be challenging and is influenced by various structural and behavioural factors (Eva, et al., 2021). Of the various factors, two elements that shape these dynamics are decentralisation and workplace gossip (Hodges, 2021; Hubbart, 2023). For this thesis, decentralisation refers to how organisations are structured and the distribution of decision-making authority (Lin & Germain, 2003; Kotter, 2007; Harden, et al., 2020). Gossip on the other hand refers to the informal conversations between colleagues about an absent third party (Kim, et al., 2023; Kakarika, et al., 2021). These concepts will be described in further detail in [section 1.3](#).

Firstly, organisation-driven change refers to the strategic ideas and initiatives taken by a leader (e.g., the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)) or group of leaders (e.g., the Executive Leadership Team) within an organisation to alter its strategy and focus (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010; Zhao, et al., 2022; Pianese, et al., 2023). This often involves extensive shifts impacting structures, organisational culture, processes, and technology used by employees or customers (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Judge, et al., 1999; Harden, et al., 2020). External forces, such as loss of market share or profits, often spur this kind of transformation. It also focuses on employees' perceptions of the change process and its outcomes (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017; Harden, et al., 2020). An example of this type of change includes restructuring the organisation to meet internal and external demands (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017). Lin & Germain (2003) suggest that organisation-driven change is typically planned and implemented from the top down, aiming to improve the organisation's performance, adapt to market changes, or innovate. It is a comprehensive approach

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that often involves changing systems, policies, values and behaviours, and sometimes the entire business model and brand of the organisation ([Kiran & Tripathi, 2018](#)).

While implementing organisation-driven change, companies need to understand that the degree of decentralisation or centralisation of the organisation structure plays a pivotal role ([Hannan & Freeman, 1984](#); [Hodges, 2024](#)). A decentralised organisation structure can empower various organisational levels to contribute further to process and technology changes, which will potentially increase adaptability and reduce resistance ([Hage & Aiken, 1967](#); [Hage, et al., 1971](#); [Lin & Germain, 2003](#); [Kotter, 2007](#); [Pullen & Ferreira, 2017](#)) (further information in [section 2.1](#)). However, for organisations to achieve this they need to provide effective communications strategies to manage informal networks through which gossip can be spread, which in turn could influence employee perceptions and acceptance of organisational change ([Brady, et al., 2017](#); [Kurland & Pelled, 2000](#); [Vos & Rupert, 2018](#); [Zhen, et al., 2021](#)) (further information will be covered in [section 3.1](#)).

Secondly, the literature confirms that individual-driven response relates to the personal choices and reactions that employees make in their work habits, learning, attitudes, and responses to change ([McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002](#); [Bass & Riggio, 2006](#)). Individual behavioural change concerns the micro-level adjustments that employees make to align with the broader organisational goals ([Baumeister, et al., 2001](#); [Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011](#)). Organisational change that focuses on employee levels includes making immediate and flexible adjustments to specific employees/teams/departments by addressing localised challenges with active involvement from frontline employees and mid-level managers ([Kruglanski, et al., 2007](#); [Fugate, et al., 2011](#); [Harden, et al., 2020](#)). It focuses on the emotions and

reactions of individuals to the change initiatives ([Fugate, et al., 2011](#)). Examples include implementing new tools for a team where an employee becomes a user and needs to understand the new tool to be successful in their role ([Kruglanski, et al., 2007](#)). Different organisations support and manage individual-driven responses in different ways. The researcher has seen some organisations provide additional support to colleagues that are more experienced (and tenured) in certain roles, but that may be less experienced in using technology ([Kunze, et al., 2013](#); [Porter & van den Hooff, 2020](#); [Zhao, et al., 2022](#)).

Moreover, employee responses to change are often influenced by how the organisation is structured ([Kunze, et al., 2013](#); [Le Mens, et al., 2015](#); [Morain & Aykens, 2023](#)). Often in decentralised structures employees may experience a greater sense of autonomy which impacts how they engage on change initiatives ([Peng, et al., 2023](#); [Walasek, et al., 2024](#)). At the same time, the prevalence of gossip can shape individuals attitudes and behaviours to change ([Noon & Delbridge, 1993](#); [Oreg & Berson, 2019](#)), either by clarifying uncertainties or by spreading misinformation ([Grosser, et al., 2012](#)), thereby potentially impacting their overall resistance to change ([Wu, et al., 2018](#)).

Additionally, the researcher has seen that in multinational organisations, where employees are based in Asia or Africa they tend to have greater respect for more tenured employees and therefore will provide additional support during times of greater organisational change ([Pihlak & Alas, 2012](#)).

For successful change it's crucial to balance both organisational-driven and individual-response perspectives. While organisation-driven change sets the direction, positive individual-driven response ensures that the change is embraced

and implemented effectively by each member of the team. Therefore, leaders must be adept at influencing stakeholders across the organisation by clearly articulating the rationale for the change and, where needed, understanding the emotional sides of change; this requires leaders to use a variety of leadership behaviours to guide their teams through the transition ([Bartunek, et al., 2006](#); [Bakker & Demerouti, 2017](#)).

In essence, organisational change can only happen, and be sustained, when individuals within the organisation are willing and able to change their behaviours ([Pihlak & Alas, 2012](#); [Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017](#); [Oreg & Berson, 2019](#)). This means that while the organisation may set the direction for change, it is the cumulative effect of individual behaviours that ultimately drives the change forward ([Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012](#); [Dahling, et al., 2012](#); [Cross, et al., 2021](#)). Transformational leaders understand this interplay and work to inspire and enable their teams to adopt and reinforce the desired changes ([DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998](#); [Fugate, et al., 2011](#); [Gartner, 2024](#)).

By focusing on these two perspectives, this thesis aims to bridge existing gaps in the literature by qualitatively and quantitatively examining organisation-driven change and individual-driven response dynamics of RTC. Additionally, to scrutinise organisation-driven change and individual-driven response perspectives for organisational change, the researcher aims to provide a comprehensive approach that recognises interconnectedness, tailors interventions/change programmes, explores coping mechanisms, and considers the different dynamics of organisational change (for example, Hofstede's country culture). Therefore, the researcher will divide this thesis into two main parts, one focusing on organisation-driven change (to be referred

to as *Paper One*) and the second focusing on individual-driven response (to be referred to as *Paper Two*).

1.2 Research Significance and Contributions

Building upon the overview's ([section 1.1](#)) exploration of organisation-driven and individual-response to organisation change, and how change impacts resistance and transformation efforts, this section outlines the significance and contributions of this thesis. It does this by identifying key constructs, such as gossip, decentralisation, and emotions (e.g., change-related anxiety), and positions them as important antecedents to understanding and managing resistance to change.

Do organisations understand the antecedents of resistance to change? And do organisations understand that changing a team's structure doesn't guarantee success? These questions and many more will be answered in this thesis. The majority of the research to date has either focused on the impact of structural change on resistance, *or* the impact of emotions on behaviours ([Oreg, 2003](#); [Oreg, 2006](#); [Mills, 2010](#); [Hon, et al., 2014](#); [Le Mens, et al., 2015](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#)). There is limited research that covers all three facets, namely structural change, emotions and behavioural change in one research paper ([Giannocco, 2018](#); [Malhotra, et al., 2022](#); [Adana, et al., 2024](#)). Paper One will focus on structural change (decentralisation) and behavioural change (resistance), whereas Paper Two will focus on how emotions (change-related anxiety or fear) and behaviours (gossip and resistance) are influenced by the change context.

[Altamimi, et al., \(2023\)](#) stated that to measure all three types of change takes time and requires the collection of much data over multiple time points. This thesis tackles this daunting task of measuring and quantitatively testing all three phenomena. And by doing so, this thesis contributes to both academia and practice by providing a

list of interventions and measuring how the deployment of these has impacted structural change, emotions and behavioural change (see [Figure 26](#) for final graphic).

By investigating these three concepts, the researcher aims to also uncover the importance of gossip and decentralised decision-making as factors that may influence emotional responses and behavioural outcomes during large-scale organisational change ([Hodges, 2021](#); [Hubbart, 2023](#); [Jia, et al., 2024](#)).

As stated in the introduction, employees are programmed to resist change when it is imposed on them ([Ford, et al., 2008](#); [Amarantou, et al., 2017](#); [Vardaman, et al., 2023](#)). This is more prevalent in larger organisations where change is frequent, and employees feel that they don't have an opportunity to get used to a new change before another change is introduced, often leading to change fatigue ([Bernerth, et al., 2011](#); [Ouedraogo & Ouakouak, 2020](#); [Peng, et al., 2023](#)). Moreover, reports and research have highlighted that 31% of projects fail to deliver what was promised to customers ([Iriarte & Bayona, 2020](#)), and 9.9% of every dollar is wasted due to poor performance with employees not delivering what was required ([Herz & Krezdorn, 2022](#); [TeamStage, 2023](#)). This mixture of change fatigue and high levels of organisational change failure provides an opportunity for this research to make sense of this phenomenon by uniquely investigating factors that may influence the success of organisational change, namely the global structure of an organisation and employees' behaviours towards organisational change.

This thesis aims to extend the research on resistance to change, gossip, and decentralisation by building on the limited quantitative studies and adding to the qualitative research, of which there are many studies ([Augustsson, et al., 2017](#); [Islam, et al., 2024](#); [Hagl, et al., 2024](#)). The researcher takes this quantitative approach further

by adding two distinct analysis perspectives. First, an organisation-driven perspective allows organisations and theorists to understand how decentralisation impacts resistance. This contributes to organisational change strategies by providing practitioners with data-driven viewpoints that they can use to reduce organisational change failure. The second is from an employee behavioural viewpoint, and this research offers a perspective of how individuals react to large-scale organisational change. Taking two change-related behaviour factors, anxiety and fear, the researcher tests a theoretical model that provides empirical results highlighting how these behavioural factors impact gossip during organisational change, which in turn impacts resistance to change. Practitioners can use these findings to drive future change strategies which should lead to a more people-centred organisational change (Hodges, 2024), that increases the probability of leaders achieving organisational goals (for example, increased profit, reduced costs or modernisation of organisational systems and processes) (Dang, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, this research advances academia and practices' understanding of decentralisation and its influence on perceived resistance to change (PRTC), by showcasing how Hofstede's country cultures impact the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC.

This thesis also offers insights into the broader landscape of corporate renewal, demonstrating the role of strategic change programmes or interventions in revitalising struggling organisations. Additionally, this thesis provides a blueprint which highlights the types of initiatives (change programmes/interventions) and timing of deployment required to transform underperforming organisations; turning them into successful organisations over time. However, this research has provided a list of interventions that

have worked in one organisation only, and by doing this it has provided researchers and academics with future research opportunities. While the data and insights are drawn from a single organisational context that is predominantly based in Europe and America, they offer a starting point for comparative studies across sectors and cultural settings.

From a literature viewpoint, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on organisation structures, decentralisation and resistance to change ([Agócs, 1997](#); [Agarwal, et al., 2007](#); [Andrews, et al., 2009](#); [Woodman, 2014](#); [Strauss & Parker, 2018](#); [Rovelli & Butticè, 2020](#); [Hodges, 2021](#); [Gupta, et al., 2023](#); [Boothby, et al., 2023](#); [Alves, et al., 2023](#)). However, as highlighted by [Altamimi, et al., \(2023\)](#) there has been a lack of research exploring the impact of decentralised structure and regional culture on employees' perceived resistance to change before and after significant organisational transformation. Therefore, this research closes this gap by proposing and testing a theoretical model that sheds new light on the complex relationship between decentralisation and resistance.

In addition, by focusing on decentralisation, which has been shown in literature to improve empowerment ([Huettermann, et al., 2024](#)), this research contributes to organisational change theories, including Kanter's empowerment theory ([Kanter, 1977](#)). As organisations and researchers strive to understand empowerment and use it as a way of unlocking organisational change success, this thesis provides empirical evidence supporting the positive impact of decentralisation (and empowering employees) on reducing resistance to change. Research by [Da Ros, et al., \(2023\)](#) suggests that employees have greater levels of autonomy and engagement when they work in decentralised structures. Based upon the literature analysed, this thesis tries

to reinforce the importance of empowering employees so that they are able to deliver change programmes more effectively. Furthermore, this thesis offers practical insights for leaders and change agents on implementing decentralisation to foster a more adaptive and resilient organisational culture.

From a practical viewpoint, the researcher aims to provide managers, leaders and employees a critical view on resistance to change during large-scale organisational change. Moreover, by doing this, this thesis will provide an understanding of organisational change which is significant as it provides crucial insights into how organisations can navigate the complexities of the uncertain modern business environment ([Wanberg & Banas, 2000](#); [Graham, et al., 2022](#)). In an era marked by rapid technological advancements (such as remote working, digitisation, Artificial Intelligence (AI)), globalisation, and shifting consumer preferences, organisations must be agile and responsive to survive and thrive ([Friedman, 2016](#)). By understanding the impacts of resistance to change, and then tying these impacts (e.g., lack of engagement or project failure) to principles and practices of effective change management, organisations can implement more effective changes that focus on employees. Therefore, this thesis equips leaders with the knowledge to anticipate and respond to both organisational-driven change and individual-driven responses, which should help businesses remain competitive.

This research attempts to address the employee and leader aspects of organisational change. Employees are at the heart of any successful transformation, and their reactions to change can impact how the change is perceived (for example, employees volunteering to support the change process) and the outcome of the change (for example, increasing revenue which increases employee bonuses).

However, if employee resistance increases, organisations often face a performance impact with employees spending more time talking about not adopting the change (as per Prospect theory ([Kahneman & Tversky, 1979](#))) rather than dedicating their time to finding the best ways to benefit from the changes ([Ford, et al., 2008](#)). Therefore, this thesis provides a view on how anxiety and fear influence the perceptions employees have regarding organisational change and how they adapt to these interventions. This thesis also contributes to theories on employee behaviours, namely to Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping theory ([Lazarus & Folkman, 1984](#)), and self-regulation theory ([Baumeister, et al., 2007](#)).

Organisations that are able to understand and identify best practices for managing resistance are often able to foster a culture that adapts to changes in that environment ([Harden, et al., 2020](#)). Literature has shown that these organisations are able to improve employee morale with clearer messages about impending changes which reduces employee turnover and builds a more resilient workforce that is able to handle complex transformations ([Avey, et al., 2008](#); [Amarantou, et al., 2017](#); [Cross, et al., 2021](#); [Graham, et al., 2022](#)). This focus on employees is often termed human-centric ([Hodges, 2024](#)), and has been linked to increases in long-term employee engagement and productivity ([Gupta, et al., 2023](#); [Morain & Aykens, 2023](#); [Alves, et al., 2023](#)).

Finally, this research on organisational change will inform policy and decision-making at both strategic and operational levels. Organisations that are able to provide leaders with the right tools (for example, frameworks for communicating with employees returning to the office 4 days a week), that are tried and tested within that organisation, will give them the best opportunity to make informed decisions about

when and how to implement change programmes. This includes selecting the right technologies, redesigning workflows, and aligning organisational structures with strategic goals. Furthermore, this thesis provides employees, managers and leaders with a deeper understanding of how to create leadership and training programmes that will better equip leaders and employees as they undertake organisational change more effectively. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to the current body of knowledge by providing research that may help build more adaptive, innovative and sustainable organisations that thrive in the current ever-changing global landscape.

1.3 Research Background and Key Definitions

The following subsection will provide key definitions that will be used throughout this thesis. The researcher provides further detail for each of these definitions later in this thesis, but below is a summary of the text, in some cases verbatim (word for word), from each relevant section so that the reader understands the main definitions before reading this thesis. For example, perceived resistance to change (PRTC) is summarised in this subsection and defined in detail in the [Literature Review](#) of Paper One ([section 2.1](#), page 47), including links to literature sources.

The following definitions on organisation change are extracted and summarised from [section 2.1](#), page 46. As theorised by [Harden, et al., \(2020\)](#) *organisational change* is the process through which an organisation modifies its structure, strategies, operations, technologies, or culture to adapt to internal and external pressures, enhance performance, or achieve specific goals. This type of change can be minor or substantial, planned or unplanned, and encompasses strategic, structural, technological, cultural, operational, and people-centric aspects. Most organisational changes stem from leaders deciding that changes are needed for future success ([Van Dam, et al., 2008](#); [Walk, 2023](#)). These types of changes are often referred to as large-scale organisational strategic changes and involve shifts in the organisation's goals and mission, structural changes which affect the hierarchy and reporting relationships, and technological changes introduce new systems and processes to boost efficiency and competitiveness ([Yi, et al., 2016](#); [van der Meulen, et al., 2020](#); [Wang, et al., 2023](#)).

The researcher acknowledges that it is important to understand the role that culture plays in organisational change. Therefore, the role of culture focuses on altering

the values, norms, and behaviours that define the organisation, while operational changes address day-to-day workflows and procedures (Puffer, 1993; House, et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2011). Furthermore, changes that are classed as ‘people-centric’ aim to improve employee skills, attitudes and behaviours through training and development programmes (Hodges, 2024). These changes are driven by various factors, including external pressures such as market dynamics, economic conditions, competition, regulations and technological advancements. In addition to the external factors, internal factors like shifts in strategy, leadership, performance issues and cultural dynamics have been shown to drive people-centric organisational change (Judge, et al., 1999; Hempel, et al., 2012).

Transformational change is a type of organisational change that is becoming more common across larger organisations (Nieto-Rodriguez, 2021). Also referred to as large-scale organisational change, transformation change is a profound, comprehensive shift in an organisation’s operations, culture, strategy, and structure, distinguishing it from more incremental organisational changes (Chapman, 2002; Da Ros, et al., 2023).

The drivers for transformational change are proactive and can often stem from new leadership, significant external pressures or the need for a complete turnaround (Bartunek, et al., 2006). In contrast, smaller organisational change can be reactive as it focuses on immediate issues or continuous improvements driven by the need to enhance efficiency or adapt to changes in the external environment (Altamimi, et al., 2023).

The impact and outcomes of transformational change are far-reaching, leading to significant shifts in culture, performance and competitive positioning/advantage

(e.g., being first to market to launch a new product). Transformational change involves high levels of risk and uncertainty but has the potential for substantial rewards that create a fundamentally different organisation ([Van der Voet, 2014](#); [Zhen, et al., 2021](#)). As posited by [Hannan & Freeman \(1984\)](#), organisations may run the risk of going out of business when they conduct large-scale changes to organisation structures, because when leaders decide to change the core of the business they cannot guarantee that the outcome will be what was envisioned. Smaller organisational change, on the other hand, aims for incremental improvements with more predictable and manageable outcomes, enhancing existing capabilities and processes with less disruption to daily operations and can reduce the level of risk ([de Vries & de Vries, 2023](#)).

For this thesis, the researcher looks at resistance to change from two viewpoints. Firstly, from an organisational-driven viewpoint, the researcher defines *perceived resistance to change (PRTC)* as the perceptions of employees regarding the reluctance or opposition of an employee or group of employees to adapt to changes that deviate from established norms within a specific organisation ([Amarantou, et al., 2017](#); [Moradi, et al., 2021](#)). This definition is taken from [section 2.2.1](#), page 54. Secondly, from an individual-driven reaction viewpoint, the researcher defines *resistance to change (RTC)* as the emotional and psychological response (such as protesting against the change, sabotage or non-compliance) that employees exhibit when their organisation undertakes change ([Oreg, 2006](#); [Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012](#); [Mumby, et al., 2017](#)). This definition is extracted from [section 3.2.2](#), page 138.

Organisational change can be emergent or planned. Emergent change is often seen as organic change within an organisation that employees and leaders undertake without being asked to do so, whereas planned change is where leaders and

employees consciously change in a structured way, following explicit steps, to achieve a specific outcome (Burnes, 2004).

As posited by Weick (2009, pp. 238, 239), *emergent change* is the “ongoing accommodations, adaptations, and alterations that produce fundamental change without a priori intentions to do so. Emergent change occurs when people reaccomplish routines and when they deal with contingencies, breakdowns, and opportunities in everyday work. Much of this change goes unnoticed, because small alterations are lumped together as noise in otherwise”.

Whereas, as described by Bamford & Forrester (2003, p. 547), *planned change* is the approach that “views organisational change as a process that moves from one ‘fixed state’ to another through series of pre-planned steps”.

Therefore, for this thesis the researcher is focused on *planned change*. Planned change has many advocates (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Altamimi, et al., 2023), but it also has many critics (Bordia, et al., 2004; Danisman, 2010; Chen, et al., 2013; Ouedraogo & Ouakouak, 2020) who believe that in the modern world of constant transformation, trying to adopt a simpler linear process only leads to employee fatigue, cynicism and reluctance to adopt new changes. This is because the planned approach to organisational change is based upon the assumption that employees agree to work in a single way, but unfortunately, this is not the case and therefore highlighting the importance of understanding resistance.

This thesis builds on the theory of social constructionism, which states that organisational change happens through conversations with other employees (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009). This in conjunction with the review of gossip, provides a deeper understanding of how conversations impact resistance to change.

Taken from [section 2.2](#), page 53, *decentralised structure* or *decentralisation* refers to an organisational structural archetype that is flatter and may lead to greater self-organising behaviour between colleagues as decision-making is moved to colleagues further down in the organisation ([Hage & Aiken, 1967](#); [Hage, et al., 1971](#); [Lin & Germain, 2003](#); [Kotter, 2007](#); [Pullen & Ferreira, 2017](#)). When an organisation's structure is flatter, employees can participate in decision-making and are empowered, and therefore, they should resist changes less, as is suggested by research ([Fiedler, et al., 1996](#); [Argyres & Silverman, 2004](#); [Giannocco, 2018](#)).

Summarised from [section 2.2.2](#), page 59, for this thesis, the researcher will define country culture by using the extensive work by Hofstede ([Hofstede, 1980](#); [Hofstede, 2001](#); [Hofstede, 2002](#); [Hofstede, 2011](#)). Hofstede's model of country culture, also known as Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, defines culture through a framework that identifies distinct cultural dimensions that can be used to describe the values, behaviours, and social norms of different countries ([Hofstede, 1980](#); [House, et al., 2004](#)). Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, developed this model based on his research with IBM employees in over 50 countries, and it has six dimensions of culture ([House, et al., 2004](#)). For this thesis, the researcher uses two of these dimensions as moderators, namely the Power Distance Index (PDI) and Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV) ([Hofstede, 1980](#); [House, et al., 2004](#); [The Culture Factor Group, 2024](#)).

Firstly, the *Power Distance Index* dimension measures the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally ([Hofstede, 2001](#)). High power distance cultures accept hierarchical order and authority

without much question, while low power distance cultures strive for equality and participative decision-making (House, et al., 2004).

Secondly, the *Individualism versus Collectivism* dimension explores the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups (Hofstede, 2001). In individualistic societies, ties between individuals are loose, and everyone is expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. In collectivist societies, people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups that protect them in exchange for loyalty (House, et al., 2004). Both power distance and individualism versus collectivism have been applied to organisational change research in the past, with authors providing valuable insights that have allowed organisations to successfully achieve defined strategies (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2020).

While employees can have more than one emotional reaction as they go through large-scale organisational change, it is important for the researcher to differentiate between the two that will be used in this thesis. Change-related anxiety and change-related fear are distinct yet related emotional responses to organisational change (Avey, et al., 2008; Van Dam, et al., 2008). The following definitions are extracted from [section 3.2.1](#), page 137.

Change-related anxiety refers to the emotional responses employees experience when facing organisational changes, characterised by feelings of nervousness, anxiety, worry, and apprehension (Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011). Employees going through organisational change often describe change-related anxiety as a state of unease or concern regarding the impact and/or outcome of the change. The researcher measured this variable using a scale adapted from Brooks & Schweitzer

(2011), where participants rated their feelings of nervousness, anxiety, worry, and apprehension regarding organisational changes over the past twelve months.

Change-related fear refers to an emotional reaction to organisational changes, marked by feelings of fear and being scared (Oreg, 2006). This type of fear goes beyond general anxiety to encompass a stronger, often paralysing response to the prospect or implementation of changes within the organisation. Change-related fear can be measured by using items from Oreg's (2006) affective subscale, asking participants to reflect on their fear of organisational change and whether thinking about the changes made them feel scared over the past twelve months.

As mentioned above, change-related anxiety is characterised by a general state of unease about the impact and uncertainties associated with the changes that have happened, are happening or will happen in the future (Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011; Boothby, et al., 2023). Neuroscience research from Grupe & Nitschke (2013) highlighted that, when compared with other emotional reactions, in some organisational contexts change-related anxiety can be seen as a milder, more anticipatory form of distress, often linked to concerns about potential negative outcomes or disruptions. Organisations can often mitigate this emotional response with better communication from leadership and providing certainty (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Demeyere, et al., 2023). In contrast change-related fear can be a more intense emotional reaction, marked by feelings of being scared and afraid, often resulting in a paralysing response to the prospect of change, indicating a deeper level of emotional distress and perceived threat (Kotter, 1995; Oreg, 2006). In the context of organisational change, change-related anxiety can be seen in the broader sense of concern and anticipation. At the same time, fear involves a more acute, immediate

emotional reaction to the perceived dangers of organisational change (Kang & Sung, 2017).

As posited by Mills, (2010, p. 216), the “dimensions for *gossip* are (a) that it is informal talk, (b) has some degree of veracity, and (c) it is personally focused (usually on an absent third party)”. Therefore for this thesis, *change-related gossip* refers to positive or negative informal evaluative talk between employees about another employee who is absent (Brady, et al., 2017; Dunbar, 2004; Eder & Enke, 1991; Foster, 2004; Grosser, et al., 2010; Kurland & Pelled, 2000). That is, the gossip sender shares information about the target person with the recipient (Dores Cruz, et al., 2021; Michelson, et al., 2010).

Due to the word *organisation* being used so frequently in this thesis, the researcher will use the terms *organisation*, *company* and *business* to mean the same thing.

Lastly, the researcher will interchangeably use the term *employee* or *colleague* to refer to an individual that is employed by the multinational organisation where the research was conducted.

1.4 Research Contents and Thesis Structure

The following subsection covers three areas. Firstly, a high-level view of the research methodology is presented. Secondly, the research questions are described and provide the overall context of the areas the research will focus on. Lastly, the overall thesis structure is explained.

1.4.1 Research Questions

The main research question proposed is:

How is resistance during large-scale organisational change, in multinational organisations, impacted by the following factors: the organisation's decentralised structure; the culture of the country in which it operates; the number of agile experts; change-related gossip; and the emotions and behaviour of the individuals affected by the change.

The following sub-research questions are proposed in order to address the main research question:

- How does organisational decentralisation impact resistance to change during organisational change?
- How does the regional culture in which an organisation is based moderate the impact of resistance to change within a decentralised structure?
- How do the number of agile experts in an organisation impact the relationship between decentralised structure and perceived resistance to

change? Does an increase in the number of agile experts strengthen the effect on perceived resistance to change?

- How does employee change-related anxiety or change-related fear impact gossiping behaviour during organisational change?
- How does gossip impact resistance to change during organisational transformation?
- How does gossipers' gender influence the relationship between gossip and resistance?

1.4.2 Research Methodology

This thesis will utilise both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand resistance to change and explore the factors that impact this phenomenon. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, this thesis will provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship between key organisational change variables, for example employee change-related emotions and RTC.

Firstly, qualitative methods, more specifically interviews conducted for this thesis, will offer in-depth insights into employees' personal perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards the organisational changes, revealing their underlying thoughts and perceptions of resistance, gossip and emotions. The interviews afforded the researcher an opportunity to further explore the research topic and select the most appropriate areas to focus on during further analysis.

Secondly, quantitative methods, including questionnaires and statistical analysis in SPSS (IBM's Statistical Package for Social Science), will allow for the testing

of hypotheses and analysis of trends from Time 1 (June 2022) to Time 2 (June 2023). This is because the researcher was fortunate to have the opportunity to conduct a longitudinal quantitative study, over an 18-month period, at the organisation for which he worked. By utilising quantitative methods, the researcher is able to measure and analyse patterns and trends across a larger population, providing generalisable data on the extent and nature of resistance to large-scale change. The questions used in both questionnaires were based upon literature and validated variables, see [sections 2.4](#) and [3.5.2](#) for details on the measures used in this research.

By adopting a mixed methods approach, the researcher is able to capture both the rich, detailed narratives from employee experiences and the broader, and systematic factors that influence resistance to change.

1.4.3 Thesis Structure

In section 2 of this thesis, the researcher delves into *Paper One*, which proposes a model focusing on decentralisation and resistance to change that will assist organisations undergoing large-scale transformation. The research described within this section was based on a longitudinal study within a multinational organisation undergoing substantial change and involved collecting data pre- and post-implementation of key programmes (June 2022 and June 2023). These key programmes are described in [Section 1.6](#). This is followed by a subsection focusing on four hypotheses (see [section 2.2](#)), which predicted that decentralisation would result in reduced perceived resistance to change post-implementation. Additionally, the researcher explores various boundary conditions, including individualistic country culture, number of agile experts brought in during the process, and power distance

country culture. The next subsections give further detail on the studies, including the sample, procedure, variables and method for data collection. The penultimate subsection covers the results. The final subsections cover a summary, contributions to theory, practical implications, limitations, future research directions and a short conclusion.

In section 3, the researcher delves into *Paper Two*, which focuses on workplace gossip in times of organisational change and how employees cope with anxiety and fear, as well as the effects of gossip on resistance. Similar to section two, this section has nine key parts. Starting with an abstract that is followed by a literature review. Hypotheses will be presented followed by an overview of the studies. The fourth subsection covers the interviews and results from the quantitative study. The fifth subsection explores the replication study. These are followed by a summary, contributions to theory, practical implications, research limitations and further research directions. This section finishes with a short conclusion of Paper Two.

In section 4, the final section, the researcher summarises the key findings from both the papers, highlighting how they impact literature and practice. This forms an overall conclusion that explores next steps and how academia and practitioners can use this research to achieve greater success in the future by understanding resistance to large-scale organisational change.

1.5 Overview of Studies

For this thesis there are four studies. Paper One includes Study 1 and Study 2; and Paper Two includes Study 1, Study 3 and Study 4.

The first study (Study 1) was an exploratory, qualitative, study, where the researcher interviewed a small subset of employees (15) from the same large multinational organisation as Study 2 and 3 to create themes for the hypotheses, validate some of the findings and provide verbatims for the research.

In Study 2, the researcher tested the above research questions (outlined in [section 1.4.1](#)) and hypotheses (see [Paper One](#) for detail) in a longitudinal study with data collected at two distinct time points (June 2022 and June 2023) within a large multinational organisation where employees were experiencing the implementation of large-scale change. Longitudinal studies done at two-time points, after a set of interventions are deployed, are not new and have been referred to as pre- and post-studies in literature ([Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2013](#); [Grant, 2014](#); [Augustsson, et al., 2017](#); [Olaru, et al., 2024](#)).

[Giæver & Smollan \(2015\)](#) suggested that conducting longitudinal research provides a more detailed view of how variables change over time and how organisations and employees must adapt to these changes. Furthermore, [Pettigrew \(1990, p. 270\)](#), defined longitudinal research as an essential part of understanding the context of organisational change, stating that by capturing the “reality in flight”, organisations can better understand the reality compared to a snapshot.

For Study 3 and Study 4, the researcher tested the research questions related to change-related emotions (anxiety and fear), gossip and resistance to change in two

main studies with field data. First, the researcher utilised the interview data from Study 1 to provide a view, narrative and focus for the creation of the hypotheses (see [Paper Two](#) for details). While the qualitative study was part of the overall methodology, it was not used to test the hypotheses. Next, at Time 2 (June 2023) the researcher conducted Study 3 by using an online questionnaire to collect data on the impact that change-related anxiety or change-related fear has on gossip and resistance to change in the same organisation using quantitative data and a critical incidents technique. Lastly, Study 4 replicated the questionnaire from Study 3 with a sample of 100 employees from various organisations recruited via an online panel called Prolific.

1.6 Change Programmes/Interventions

This subsection details the interventions that were deployed in a multinational organisation during major transformation. The first subsection covers the importance of interventions to this research. This is followed by a subsection that covers the brand launch intervention. After that, a subsection covers two ways of working interventions, namely: Squads and Organisation Restructure. Following that is a subsection covering the refreshed values and behaviours linked to the new Brand and organisational structure changes. Following that is a subsection that explains the importance of neuroscience and agility training to help colleagues shift from current ways of working. Lastly, this section concludes with a summary of interventions six to ten.

1.6.1 The Importance of Interventions

A pitfall for many hierarchical leaders occurs when organisations try to deliver projects or transformational change by using methods that have not worked in the past while repeatedly expecting different results (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Both theory and practice have highlighted that the only way to truly change an organisation is to add interventions into the current ways of working and measure the response before and after to ensure these interventions have propagated across the organisation (Alshayeb & Li, 2006; Denning, 2007; Nieto-Rodriguez, 2021). Interventions, also referred to as change programmes or transformation in this thesis, are the catalyst for changing an organisation and driving the objectives of an organisation (Andersen & Johansen, 2024). They provide a platform to articulate what needs to change in a structured manner and to measure how engaged colleagues are with each intervention. As part of

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this research, a questionnaire was sent out in June 2022, before the interventions were deployed. The same questionnaire was sent to the same sample group in June 2023, six months after the final intervention had been deployed.

As part of the initial thinking for this research, the researcher conducted a longitudinal study that utilised several high-priority interventions ([Figure 1](#)) that were part of the change strategy at [organisation name]. Therefore, some of the interventions documented below were high-profile externally communicated campaigns (e.g., brand launch), compared to others that were purely internal initiatives implemented to support the organisation achieve the goals of the change strategy (e.g., meeting effectiveness).



Figure 1. Ten Interventions

1.6.2 Learnings and Thoughts from Deploying the Interventions

The deployment and measurement of these interventions were challenging, with many (e.g., values and behaviours) facing some opposition. The researcher assumed that this resistance may be due to a request to change the contractual expectations that each colleague has with the organisation from the time they were recruited. [Hodges \(2021\)](#) refers to these contractual expectations as the psychological contract an employee uses to understand how much change is acceptable, when comparing to an employee's start date. Following feedback related to longitudinal research, interviews were conducted, with these interviews informing the creation of the hypotheses. [Figure 2](#) depicts a high-level timeline for this research with detailed descriptions of the studies in [section 1.5](#).

Understanding Resistance to Large-scale Organisational Change

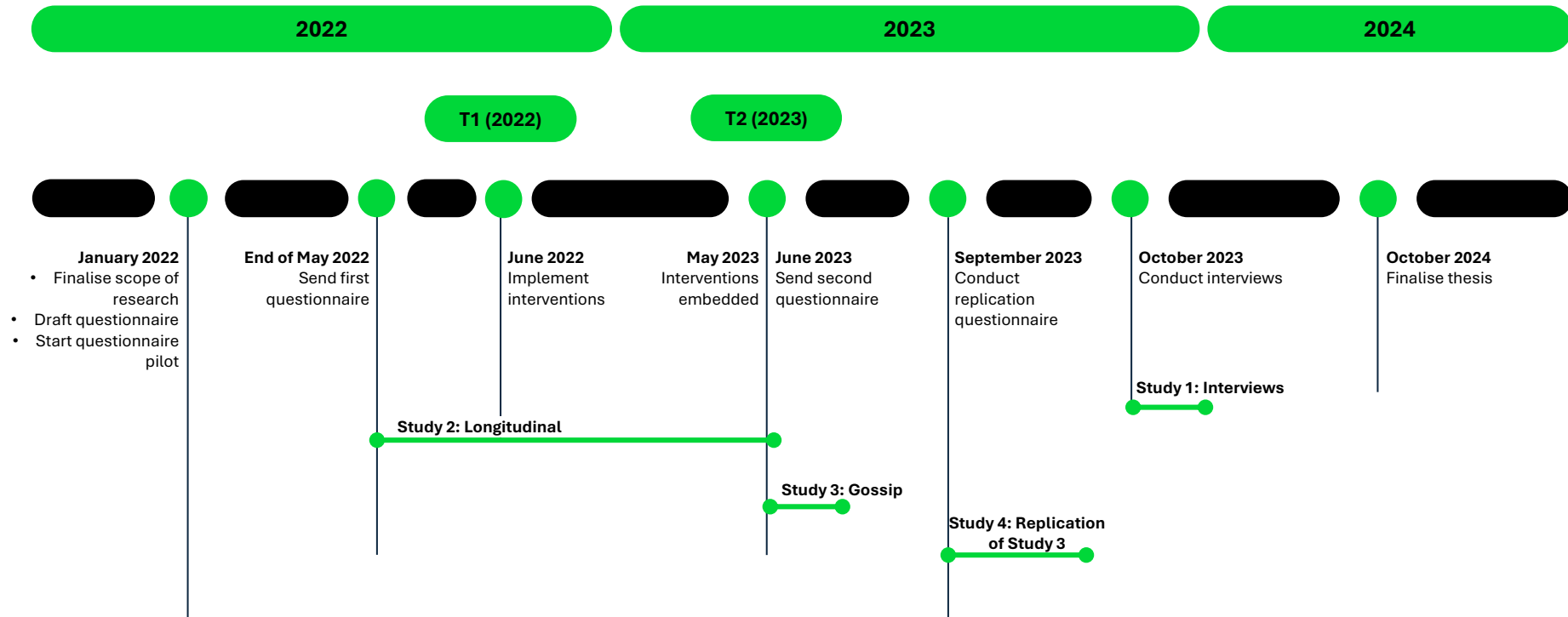


Figure 2. High-level Research Timeline

1.6.3 Intervention 1: Brand Re-launch

The first intervention deployed in June 2022, after all responses to the first questionnaire were received, was the brand re-launch. This intervention was a global strategic programme to deliver a new, modern brand. It included changing the brand identity alongside the creation of new brand and organisational values and behaviours (intervention four ([section 1.6.6](#))) that would position the multinational organisation as a memorable, customer-centric and humanistic organisation. Furthermore, the brand launch included ‘Symbols of Change’ that would be used to transform ways of working, which research has shown to create a deeper connection for colleagues that increases collective ownership of the organisation and customer responsiveness ([Causon, 2004](#)). So, while the logo, font and colours changed, the transformation was much more profound and was aimed at changing the organisation's culture, focusing on increasing brand awareness, brand association and colleague engagement. Literature from various studies ([Cova & Paraque, 2016](#); [Yang, 2022](#); [Chen, 2022](#); [Andersen & Johansen, 2024](#)) has shown that such brand transformations can significantly enhance employee engagement, leading to improved brand equity and organisational performance by fostering a sense of belonging and ownership among employees, thereby boosting their motivation and productivity.

1.6.3.1 Brand Awareness

Research by [Ihzaturrahma & Kusumawati \(2021\)](#) has described brand awareness as one of the most important aspects of defining and understanding a brand. As depicted in [Figure 3](#), the multinational organisation's brand ranking,

according to Brand Finance's Brandirectory, had decreased from 90 out of 150 in 2018 to 112 in 2020 ([Brand Finance, 2022](#)). However, in the past two years, an increase from 112 to 94 had been achieved with an increase in investment in the organisation's brand awareness. The brand launch at the multinational organisation aimed to increase the prominence so that in 2024 they are in the top 75 companies in the US.

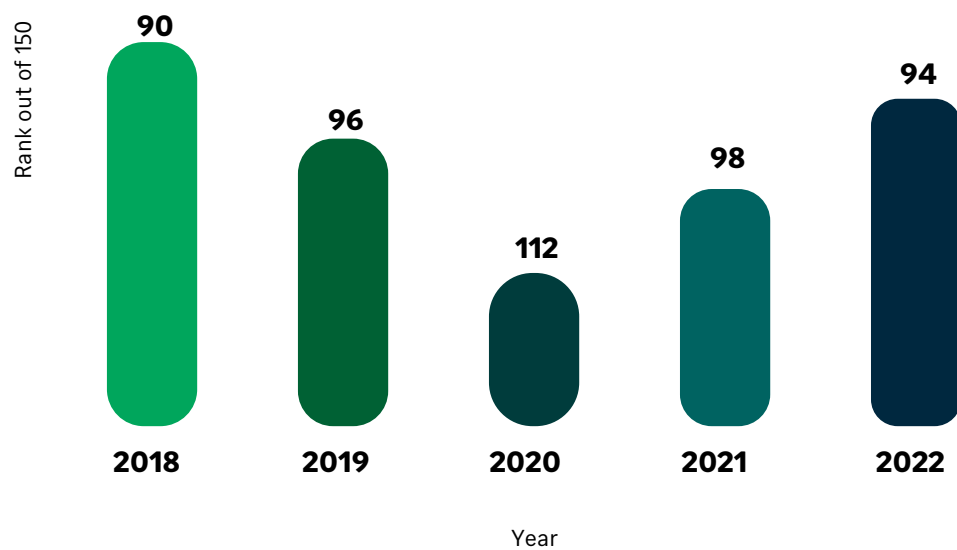


Figure 3. Organisation's Brand Ranking on Brand Finance US 150 ([Brand Finance, 2022](#))

1.6.3.2 Brand Association

Research has shown that a brand, specifically a logo, creates a visual identity of the organisation to colleagues and customers ([Erjansola, et al., 2021](#)). This identity impacts how customers purchase products, and in the multinational organisation's case, this was a fundamental driver for changing the brand. [Lucarelli & Hallin \(2015\)](#) highlighted that brand regeneration could have a direct impact on increasing market share and colleague buy-in because these stakeholders feel proud to be associated with the organisation. Moreover, increasing pride has been proven to drive a cultural change epitomised by the reduction in negative resistance to change ([Causon, 2004](#)).

1.6.3.3 Colleague Engagement with the Brand and Likelihood to Recommend the Brand

The last reason for changing the brand was to increase employee engagement. The multinational organisation's leadership team hypothesised that rebranding would increase the trust employees had, and hopefully foster a collective ownership for achieving the organisation's goals. The leadership team also hypothesised that this increase in trust should also increase the level of advocacy which would lead to an improvement in external perceptions of the organisation. Research by [Alloza \(2008\)](#) has shown that enhancing an organisation's brand reputation can lead to the ability for the organisation to attract highly skilled individuals. Finally, with employees more engaged with the brand identity, they are more likely to increase their loyalty to the brand, which will lead to their defending the brand and being more customer responsive with every interaction ([Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013](#)).

1.6.3.4 Rebrand Results

Before the Rebrand intervention (see [section 1.6.3](#)) was launched externally in 2022, over 8,000 colleagues joined a briefing on what to expect from the new organisation's brand. In addition, 85% of the colleagues opened the 'Symbols of Change' email sent by the CEO. This showed excellent engagement with the brand programme. This was a purposeful strategy to engage with employees earlier in the deployment of the rebrand programme to support each and every colleague through the change. Furthermore, the organisation was also shortlisted for Marketing Week's

2022 Brand of the Year award ([Marketing Week, 2022](#)), showcasing that this intervention provided value and was externally recognised.

1.6.4 Intervention 2: Squad Ways of Working

The second intervention, Squad Ways of Working, was based on a concept that was made famous by Spotify in 2012 when they launched a new way of working centred on decentralising work to a team. This focused on empowering them to make the decisions they needed without having to seek multiple approvals further up the organisation's hierarchy ([Salameh & Bass, 2019](#)). Squads are autonomous teams, typically between six to twelve employees, focused on a specific outcome that will add value to an organisation ([Pullen & Ferreira, 2017](#)). They are long-lived and stay together beyond the delivery of a single outcome, which differs from traditional projects with distinct start and end dates ([Gartner, 2008](#)). Research has shown that having cross-functional squads who deliver features across projects provides consistency and means the squad becomes an expert in the area ([Zhen, et al., 2021](#)). By driving enhanced collaboration and transparency, squads empower each employee to add value and showcase their skillset. However, as Spotify deployed this new way of working across their organisation, they realised that fully autonomous teams didn't consistently achieve the organisation's vision, and therefore adaptation was required ([Bäcklander, 2022](#)). For [organisation name], this adaptation meant that a squad focused on the outcome of the project, which is often short-term to a specific date, as well as for the long-term horizon of the organisation. While the changes have been embedding since 2022, the evidence was positive, with the delivery cadence increasing as employees embrace the change.

Before the intervention was launched, circa 400 colleagues (who were early adopters) met to agree on the fundamental principles and how [organisation name] should drive the cultural shift to improve the collective ownership and leadership style. This was another purposeful involvement of the team in decision-making and communication, in an attempt to ensure that the changes were deployed following all the agreed principles. Research has shown that Squads will help enhance the level of decentralisation ([van der Meulen, et al., 2020](#)).

1.6.5 Intervention 3: Organisational Restructure

The third intervention was to conduct a large scale organisational restructure, which built upon the Chapter and Guild concepts from the Spotify model but taking these concepts further by decentralising and focusing on the core skillsets of the employees, which were then grouped into those core skillsets that ensure they are developed in the best possible way to deliver quickly to the customer ([van der Meulen, et al., 2020](#)). To achieve this, the large restructure of the organisation required trust from employees and leaders. Grouping colleagues by their expertise requires continuous personal development as employees need to focus on training, coaching and personal reflection. Employees with specific skillsets are then deployed to projects and squads. Therefore, each squad has skilled employees that can maintain high standards and deliver more quickly, potentially reducing the level of resistance because they feel part of a bigger society and are less likely to be anxious or nervous as they go through any change ([Roberts & Grover, 2012](#); [Ravichandran, 2018](#)).

The researcher also used literature to select the best options for decentralisation ([Baron, et al., 1999](#); [Lin & Germain, 2003](#); [Argyres & Silverman, 2004](#); [Hannan, et al., 2004](#); [Le Mens, et al., 2015](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#); [Adana, et al., 2024](#)).

Conducting this organisational restructure was fundamental in changing how employees represented their skillset, and being recognised for being experts has helped build trust and improve the culture. Furthermore, there was a hope (from the organisation's leaders) that this intervention would increase the level of empowerment across the leaders and employees. Research has highlighted that organisations that emphasise skill recognition and development tend to experience higher employee satisfaction and engagement ([Bäcklander, 2022](#); [Da Ros, et al., 2023](#); [Narayan, 2023](#)).

1.6.6 Intervention 4: Values and Behaviours

The fourth intervention, Values and Behaviours, was linked to the launch of the new brand in 2022 and focused on symbols of change within the multinational organisation. To achieve this, the intervention focused on how the multinational organisation wanted employees to behave when representing the new Brand, meaning that employees considered the following four new values. Research has shown that organisations across the globe have changed their values and behaviours to drive internal cultural change ([Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011](#)). However, the multinational organisation where this research was conducted had to ensure that its values were reflected in every customer interaction. Therefore, an internal campaign highlighted what each value meant and what behaviour was required to epitomise these values and behaviours. Over 100 masterclasses and communication sessions were run, with all employees attending at least one of these masterclasses. Feedback received in

early 2023 was positive, and colleagues were using these in discussions on squads/projects, which will help improve the decentralised culture and hopefully increase agility. However, being bold and speaking out does mean that resistance to change could increase, as highlighted by [Vos & Rupert \(2018\)](#).

1.6.7 Intervention 5: Neuroscience and Agility Training

The fifth intervention focused on enabling each employee to understand what it takes to go through change and learn the various neuroscience techniques that might unlock a reduction in resistance to action by focusing on mindset ([Lieberman, 2013](#); [Vardaman, et al., 2023](#)). Neuroscience research indicates that resistance to change can be mitigated by addressing the brain's response to social threats and fostering neuroplasticity ([Grant, 2015](#); [Warrick, 2023](#)). Techniques that encourage self-directed neuroplasticity, such as focusing attention on constructive ways, can help employees adapt to change more effectively ([Wayne, et al., 1997](#); [Burton, et al., 2019](#); [Bäcklander, 2022](#)).

In addition, it was focused on helping leaders understand how employees perceive change and what mindset strategies are required to support employees through change ([Rehman, et al., 2021](#); [Demeyere, et al., 2023](#)).

Literature has shown that the brain is not designed to process a lot of change at once and often copes most effectively when change is delivered in iterations that alternate between a threat [fear] and a reward ([Ford, et al., 2008](#); [Kiran & Tripathi, 2018](#)). Moreover, colleagues trained in neuroscience can be better equipped to recognise signs of anxiousness earlier and are prepared with techniques that allow them to

identify the phase of change, type of person and best way to help colleagues through the transition ([Moradi, et al., 2021](#)). Agility training supported this by providing the methods to deliver projects more iteratively, which will create a habit of fear followed by reward, versus waterfall projects that lead to long periods of anxiety before the project is delivered.

[Chang, et al., \(2024\)](#) highlighted that it takes time to convert training into practice, especially when organisations are trying to fundamentally change how employees think and feel.

1.6.8 Summary of Interventions 6 through 10

The last five interventions were aimed at building on the first five interventions by providing the right tools, processes and partnerships to enable success for the multinational organisation.

The sixth intervention was to deliver a new tooling platform for delivering outcomes, projects and transformational change across the multinational organisation. This allows for using Squads and projects, and, most importantly, linking to the values, behaviours and strategic outcomes. This was achieved by creating a single source of data and seamless self-serve reporting and automation ([Turner, et al., 2010](#)).

The seventh intervention focused on optimising both internal and external processes. Process improvement initiatives have demonstrated significant benefits by streamlining workflows, eliminating unnecessary steps and making tasks more efficient for employees ([Fincham, 1999](#); [Gandomani & Nafchi, 2015](#); [Gartner, 2024](#)).

Research by [Alshayeb & Li \(2006\)](#) proved that organisations that embed the right processes and tools, which are appropriate for the organisation, have a greater likelihood of being successful. Additionally, building critical strategic partnerships and establishing effective ways of working with these partners can reduce the creation of silos (functions working on their own and not collaborating). This is particularly important as partners often create silos to increase their profits ([Gulati, 2007](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#)). By minimising these silos, organisations can foster a more collaborative and cohesive work environment ([Harden, et al., 2020](#); [Nieto-Rodriguez, 2021](#); [Allen, et al., 2021](#)).

The main aim of the last two interventions was to reduce the delays in delivering projects, and ultimately value, to stakeholders and customers. By prioritising projects and squads across the organisation, the multinational organisation was able to create a platform for synchronised initiatives and promote 'Meeting Effectiveness', which will help employees spend more time on work and less time in unproductive meetings ([Allen, et al., 2021](#)).

1.7 Section 1 Summary

This section described the structure of the thesis, and established the rationale for the research, which will help close the current gaps in longitudinal organisation change research. This section also included a description of the interventions and an overview of the two papers and four studies.

A Longitudinal Exploration of the Impact of Decentralisation on Perceived Resistance to Change during Large-Scale Transformation



2 Paper One: Decentralised Structure and Resistance to Change

As highlighted in the introduction, the first paper delves into decentralised structure and perceived resistance to change with the inclusion of country culture and external agile experts as moderators. The researcher adopts a standard format commonly used within journal articles and theses that encompasses twelve sections.

Firstly, the researcher utilises an abstract to provide an executive summary of the whole paper which centres on organisational-driven actions. Secondly, a literature review provides a deeper understanding of the historical significance of the variables and importance of research that articulate the phenomenon ([section 2.1](#)). Third, in [section 2.2](#), the researcher uses research and key models, such as Kanter's empowerment theory, to formulate testable hypotheses. Fourth, an overview of the studies for Paper One is provided ([section 2.3](#)). Fifth, the researcher describes the measures, including the main variables (independent and dependent variables), the moderators and control variables ([section 2.4](#)). Sixth, the researcher describes the method deployed for this paper, including the data collection method, sampling approach and profile as well as methods for validity and reliability ([section 2.5](#)). Seventh, in [section 2.6](#), the results from the data collection are presented and explained. Eighth, a brief discussion provides an overview ([section 2.7](#)). Ninth, a summary provides a view of how the results link back to the literature. Tenth, the researcher describes the contributions to theory ([section 2.8](#)). Eleventh, the practical implications are elucidated ([section 2.9](#)). Twelfth, the researcher describes the limitations of the current research and future research directions ([section 2.10](#)). Lastly, in [section 2.11](#), the researcher provides a short conclusion for the first paper.

A Longitudinal Exploration of the Impact of Decentralisation on Perceived Resistance to Change during Large-scale Transformation

Abstract

A considerable amount of research has been separately conducted on decentralisation and resistance to change. However, there has been a lack of research exploring the impact of decentralised structure and culture on employees' perceived resistance to change before and after significant organisational transformation. Therefore, this research proposes a model that focuses on the effects of decentralisation during large-scale transformation on perceived resistance to change. In a longitudinal study conducted within a multinational organisation undergoing significant change, data were collected before and after the implementation of key programmes (June 2022, N = 322 and June 2023, N = 256). After conducting matching between June 2022 and June 2023 datasets, 194 participant's responses (60%) were used for analysis. The hypotheses posited that organisational decentralisation would lead to lower levels of perceived resistance to change among employees after the programmes were delivered. Additionally, the researcher explored the following boundary conditions of the relationships between decentralised structure and perceived resistance to change, namely: individualistic country culture; power distance country culture; and the number of external agile experts. The findings have significant implications for both practical and research purposes concerning perceived resistance to change during times of large-scale transformation and change.

Understanding Resistance to Large-scale Change

Keywords: *decentralised structure, change, resistance, external agile experts, individualistic country culture, power distance country culture*

2.1 Literature Review

Change is hard, especially in large and complex organisations. Many change initiatives fail to achieve their desired outcomes, or even result in more harm than good (Kotter, 2007). According to a survey by Gartner, only 34% of change efforts are clear successes, 16% show mixed results, and 50% are clear failures (Gartner, 2018). However, failure is often a catalyst for learning, or improving, and it has been shown that 30% of change initiatives succeed in the long run (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Morain & Aykens, 2023). Furthermore, reports and research have highlighted that 70% of transformation or change projects fail to deliver what was promised to customers, and 9.9% of every dollar is wasted due to poor performance and employees not delivering what was required of them (Herz & Krezdorn, 2022; TeamStage, 2023). A study by McKinsey found that a chief reason that change programmes fail to achieve their goals is employee resistance and lack of management support (Ewenstein, et al., 2015). Moreover, some other common reasons for change failure are lack of clear vision and alignment, lack of agility and adaptability, issues with the organisation's culture and lack of capability, and employee resistance and sabotage (Prasad & Prasad, 2000; Ford, et al., 2008; Chen, et al., 2013; Amarantou, et al., 2017; Hodges, 2021).

One way to overcome these challenges is to have a decentralised structure, synonymously referred to as decentralisation in this thesis. This is the creation of cross functional teams that are empowered to make decisions more quickly through an increased level of authority, which enables organisations to achieve more holistic outcomes (Fiedler, et al., 1996; Argyres & Silverman, 2004; Eva, et al., 2021; Altamimi, et al., 2023). Furthermore, decentralisation often leads to the distribution of decision-

making authority and power across multiple levels, functions or business units within an organisation, rather than concentrating it at the top (Lin & Germain, 2003). In a decentralised structure this manifests through decision-making power given to lower levels of the organisation, allowing for greater self-governance and flexibility among individual functions, teams or even individual employees (Fiedler, et al., 1996; Altamimi, et al., 2023). This approach to organisation design aims to empower frontline employees, promote innovation and enhance responsiveness to departmental needs and market dynamics (Andrews, et al., 2009; Hodges, 2021). Literature has emphasised that decentralised structures can be described in many ways, including organisations delegating decision-making authority to employees lower in the hierarchy, fostering an organisation culture of collaboration, and organisations implementing distributed systems and processes (Eva, et al., 2021; Zhao, et al., 2022). Literature suggests that organisations focus on decentralisation as a way of striking the balance between central oversight and local autonomy, as they focus on optimising organisational effectiveness and adaptability (Puranam, et al., 2014; Giannocco, 2018).

Past research highlights that dealing with employee resistance can be one of the biggest challenges when implementing organisational change (Ford, et al., 2008; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017). Employees typically resist change because of fear of the unknown, loss of status and preference for stability (Will, et al., 2019; Hodges, 2021; Hodges, 2024), resulting in unwillingness to support and accept the change (Godkin & Allcorn, 2008; Moradi, et al., 2021) and engaging in negative behaviours toward the change (Ford, et al., 2008; Shimoni, 2017; Sverdlik & Oreg, 2023). Resistance can hinder the successful implementation of change as it can affect the performance and

well-being of employees and organisations. This lack of performance can cost organisations millions of pounds every year due to failed projects (Rigby, et al., 2016; Gartner, 2019; Hodges, 2021).

Therefore, it is crucial to understand and manage the way employees perceive resistance in their organisation during and post change implementation because this will provide each employee with a way of coping with the change.

For this thesis, the researcher defines **perceived resistance to change (PRTC)** as the perceptions of employees regarding the reluctance or opposition of an employee or group of employees to adapt to changes that deviate from established norms within a specific organisation (Amarantou, et al., 2017; Moradi, et al., 2021). PRTC can manifest in many ways, from employees not making an effort to understand and engage with the change and increasing their psychological inertia, to petty sabotage or outright rebellions (Godkin & Allcorn, 2008; Thomas & Hardy, 2011). PRTC can be visible or hidden, organised or disorderly, and often disruptive, leading to transformation failure (Amarantou, et al., 2017; Gutiérrez-Crocco, et al., 2024; Hodges, 2024). Additionally, this type of resistance can range from employees expressing their resistance publicly to unknowingly resisting change through minor actions, language, or general actions (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Yi, et al., 2016; Harden, et al., 2020).

It is important to recognise that leaders and employees all have their own comfort zone, a way of operating and understanding their world within which they feel safe, and once forced to act out side of this zone they will all react in their own unique way, with some embracing the opportunity to develop and others resisting (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Le Mens, et al., 2015; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017). Sudden or significant change, or too much change, can cause stress, fear and anxiety, resulting in employees

retreating to where they feel safe and increasing their resistance to change ([Schabracq & Cooper, 1988](#); [Hofstede, 2001](#); [Hon, et al., 2014](#)).

In particular, this research investigates the effects of decentralisation on perceived resistance to change. It is argued that decentralisation will reduce perceived resistance to large-scale organisational change, contributing to the literature of organisational change in the following ways.

First, this study proposes and empirically tests a theoretical model of decentralised structure and perceived resistance to change during large-scale transformation attempts (see [Figure 4](#)). In doing so, this research integrates decentralisation literature ([Hage, et al., 1971](#); [Lin & Germain, 2003](#); [Argyres & Silverman, 2004](#); [Kotter, 2007](#); [Hempel, et al., 2012](#); [Pullen & Ferreira, 2017](#); [Will, et al., 2019](#); [Burton, et al., 2019](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#)) with perceived resistance to change (PRTC) literature ([Godkin & Allcorn, 2008](#); [Moradi, et al., 2021](#); [Hodges, 2021](#); [de Vries & de Vries, 2023](#); [Warrick, 2023](#); [Walk, 2023](#); [Lyu, et al., 2024](#)) and proposes that as decentralisation increases employee's perceived resistance should decrease. This study thus advances our understanding of resistance ([Rindova & Kotha, 2001](#); [Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011](#); [Ravichandran, 2018](#)) and adds vital insights to our understanding of organisational change. Furthermore, the researcher created [Table 1](#) which provides a high-level comparison of the literature related to decentralisation and PRTC.

Table 1: Comparison of Literature on Decentralisation and PRTC

Article Title	Author(s)	Strengths	Limitations	How this Thesis might Address Limitations
An empirically derived taxonomy of information technology structure and its relationship to organizational structure	(Fiedler, et al., 1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong foundational article Introduces structural concepts well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to traditional structure models Outdated paper that focuses on IT 	Provides an updated theoretical framework with recent organisational trends and interventions (section 1.6)
Not Too Much, Not Too Little: Centralization, Decentralization, and Organizational Change	(Altamimi, et al., 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on resistance (e.g., “Without a moderately centralized authority to overcome resistance” (Altamimi, et al., 2023, p. 174)) Relevant quantitative research Recent study that captures a novel view on organisational change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context specific results (large city governments) Limited study to specific types of decision making and didn’t focus on what happens over time 	Clarifies context specific drivers with the use of interventions and an organisation-driven and individual-driven response
R&D, organization structure, and the development of corporate technological knowledge	(Argyres & Silverman, 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong empirical analysis Organisation-level insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on Research & Development (R&D) Limited sector generalisability 	Collected data and tested in a broader organisational (more than 10 functions (see Figure 9) and sector context
Centralization, Organizational Strategy, and Public Service Performance	(Andrews, et al., 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on public sector Measures centralisation against a number of factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on the UK Limited generalisability 	Expands the geographic and organisational focus (e.g., Prolific study) while noting limitations (see sections 2.10 & 3.10)
Does organizational structure render leadership unnecessary? Configurations of formalization and centralization as a substitute and neutralizer of servant leadership	(Eva, et al., 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent data that focused on types of leadership interventions Quantitative study that focused on leadership Multi-method and study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Collected our data from a single source” (Eva, et al., 2021, p. 53) and focused on Australia Limited control variables 	Builds on the framework by including multiple studies with a rounded view of control variables based on literature

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Article Title	Author(s)	Strengths	Limitations	How this Thesis might Address Limitations
Organizational structure, context, customer orientation, and performance: lessons from Chinese state-owned enterprises	(Lin & Germain, 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content rich study Links structure to performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on China and state-owned enterprises Limited generalisability 	Extends analysis beyond state-owned enterprises to other sectors and includes varied organisational context and regions
Implementing organizational change in supply towards decentralization	(Johnson & Leenders, 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlights key issues with decentralisation Provides a view on resistance and “structural change” (Johnson & Leenders, 2004, pp. 193, 198) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on a specific function and sector Focuses on North America, which reduces generalisability 	Builds upon the structural change concept by broadening the constructs and studies
Overcoming resistance to organizational change: Strong ties and affective cooptation	(Battilana & Casciaro, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides difference lens, including network and power Deep quantitative analysis with various measures, including “Hierarchical level” (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013, p. 828) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited scalability Focused on change projects in the NHS (National Health Service) in the UK Focused on case studies 	Builds upon findings to provide a boarder more generalisable data set as a starting point for future researcher
Organizational Inertia as Barrier to Firms’ IT Adoption – Multidimensional Scale Development and Validation	(Haag, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies coordination issues Provides a detailed view of factors influencing resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks long-term outcome analysis Focuses on IT Adoption 	Explores organisational change variables over time and post decentralisation
The efficacy of executive coaching in times of organisational change	(Grant, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a strategic, organisation-driven, perspective Focuses on factors that impact empowerment and resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks quantitative data Findings may not be generalisable 	Supports organisational change theory and builds on this was quantitative validation

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Article Title	Author(s)	Strengths	Limitations	How this Thesis might Address Limitations
Evolving emotional experiences following organizational change: a longitudinal qualitative study	(Giæver & Smollan, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional experience focus Psychological focus on employee resistance Strong longitudinal quantitative research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited organisation structure focus 	Combines multiple types of change, including structural and behavioural
An explanatory and predictive model for organizational agility	(Felipe, et al., 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation-driven and policy focus (includes “Hierarchy culture” (Felipe, et al., 2016, p. 4625)) Includes multiple factors impacting organisation change Creates a central model that can be replicated by future researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample size limitations Focuses on Spanish organisations Focuses on a limited number of sectors May have generalisability issues 	Applies both organisation-driven and individual-response to decentralisation and PRTC with country culture (from multiple regions) and external agile experts. Attempts to increase generalisability
The organizational design of entrepreneurial ventures	(Burton, et al., 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on systems theory Good design principles for organisational design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversimplifies practical implications Limited to entrepreneurial ventures 	Tests elements of systems theory and logic with the inclusion of interventions. Provides practical examples as well as theoretical contributions.

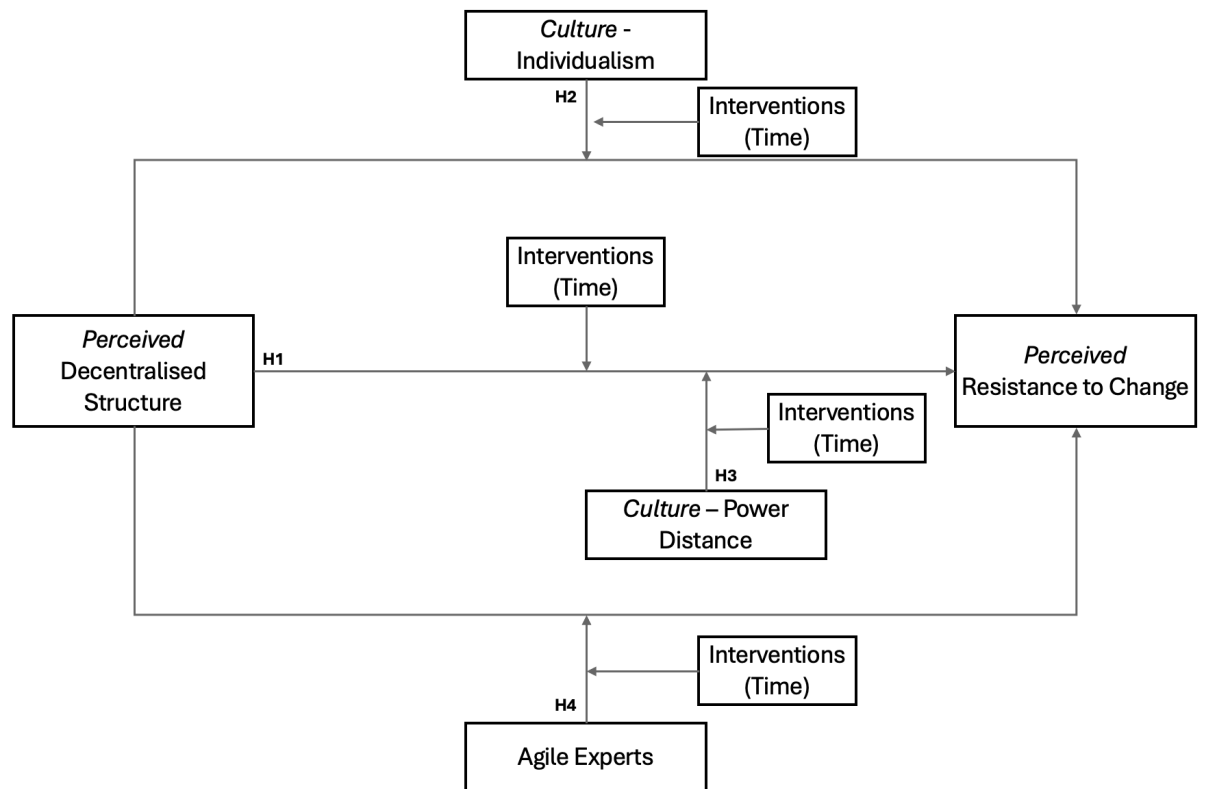


Figure 4. Paper One Hypothesised Model

Second, the researcher offers a longitudinal examination of the above relationships with a pre/post research design sampling employees in the same organisation, providing a unique perspective of how deploying change impacts perceived resistance. That is, the researcher examined how the relationships between variables changed over time and whether or not the interventions that were deployed impacted the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC, this framework is similar to past research (Raudenbush, 2001; Heck, et al., 2022). The recommendations provided in this study have the potential to benefit both theory and practice by becoming data-driven strategies that can be used by change leaders, scholars and change professionals to deliver successful transformational change within large multinational organisations. These strategies will help organisations better support

employees through change with appropriate communication. Research by Hagl, et al., (2024) showcased that leaders who use tailored interventions or transformations are able to engage with employees in a way that increases employee openness and acceptance of the change. Moreover, by adopting these strategies organisations can enhance their organisation's effectiveness, resulting in substantial cost savings and increased profits (Rovelli & Buttice, 2020; Yang, 2022).

Third, this research examines important boundary conditions of the organisational-driven change perspective. In particular, the researcher examines how individualistic vs collectivistic country culture and power distance country culture, (Hofstede, 2001; Brewer & Chen, 2007; Gunkel, et al., 2016) influence the relationship between organisational decentralisation and perceived resistance to change (PRTC) by proxying culture with employee's location and nationality. Such proxies have not been heavily scrutinised in previous literature (Benito & Gripsrud, 1992; Ravichandran, 2018; Metwally, et al., 2019), although this literature has highlighted that culture plays a pivotal role in the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC. For example, in country cultures with high power distance, where there is a greater acceptance of unequal distribution of power, decentralised structure may be less effective in reducing PRTC (Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018). Similarly, in country cultures with high individualism, where there is a greater emphasis on individual rights and autonomy, decentralised structure may be more effective in reducing PRTC (Schwartz, 2006). These influences have been highlighted in previous research (Benito & Gripsrud, 1992; Danisman, 2010; Dahl, 2011; Feng, et al., 2023) as areas for future researchers to explore as they will provide organisations with valuable insights to target change strategies, helping deliver organisational change more effectively across various

regions. The researcher will delve into these topics further in this thesis, including highlighting how the literature differs between countries and Hofstede dimensions for national/country culture.

Fourth, this study reviews an important team-level factor called *external agile experts*. External agile experts are usually external consultants specialising in agile delivery and transformation ([van Oudenhoven, et al., 1998](#); [Lee, et al., 2000](#); [Danisman, 2010](#)). This thesis will also review how they shape the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC.

How employees, teams and organisations respond and adapt to organisational change is of great interest to both academia and practice as it allows everyone (organisations, employees, partners, customers and shareholders) to increase the predictability of change and enables greater success ([Harden, et al., 2020](#); [Herz & Krezdorn, 2022](#); [Hodges, 2024](#)).

Overall, this study advances our understanding of PRTC by taking an organisational-driven approach. The methodology, which combines a quantitative longitudinal field study with a qualitative methodology (15 interviews) and provides a rich explanation of the phenomenon without compromising internal and external validity. This means that the researcher considered the study design (for example, whether it would be qualitative and quantitative), data collection, and analysis to avoid any bias, assure internal validity and make the findings generalisable to other contexts ([Sekaran & Bougie, 2013](#)). While not used to test the hypotheses, the 15 interviews were conducted to establish the theoretical model, validate the researcher's literature reviews and thinking, provide verbatims, and justify some of the data collected.

2.2 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The following subsection covers the researcher's hypotheses for the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC. The researcher will intertwine literature ([Kanter, 1987](#); [Judge, et al., 1999](#); [Hofstede, 2001](#); [Oreg, 2003](#); [Mills, 2010](#); [Kakarika, et al., 2023](#)) to highlight key areas of focus and establish the rationale for the hypotheses by linking them to key theories.

Decentralised structure or decentralisation refers to an organisational structural archetype that is flatter and leads to greater self-organising behaviour between colleagues as decision-making is moved to colleagues further down in the organisation ([Hage & Aiken, 1967](#); [Hage, et al., 1971](#); [Lin & Germain, 2003](#); [Kotter, 2007](#); [Pullen & Ferreira, 2017](#)). As research ([Fiedler, et al., 1996](#); [Argyres & Silverman, 2004](#); [Giannocco, 2018](#)) suggests, when an organisation's structure is flatter, employees can participate in decision-making and are empowered, and therefore, they should resist changes less.

2.2.1 Decentralisation and PRTC (Pre and Post Interventions)

This research explores the application of Kanter's empowerment theory in addressing PRTC within an organisation undergoing multi-million pound interventions (see [section 1.6](#) for details). According to Kanter's empowerment theory, employees are more likely to be motivated, or satisfied in their work, and therefore perform better when they have autonomy and control when making decisions ([Kanter, 1977](#); [Kanter, 1987](#); [Kanter, 1993](#); [Tripp, et al., 2016](#)).

By drawing upon Kanter's theory, this thesis examines how empowerment can explain why increasing decentralisation reduces PRTC by deploying tailored interventions (Puffer, 1993).

Furthermore, this thesis builds on research by Spreitzer (1996) to suggest that organisations can reduce their resistance level by increasing employee ownership and commitment to organisational change, which leads to employees feeling empowered and participating in change processes when organisations decentralise structures.

2.2.1.1 Theory of Empowerment

Kanter's theory of empowerment posits that employees' motivation, job satisfaction, and performance are enhanced when employees are provided with the necessary resources, information and support to take control of their work (Kanter, 1993). Furthermore, research by other scholars (Hempel, et al., 2012) proposes that, for empowerment to be most successful, organisations should consider flattening hierarchies, decentralising decision-making, and promoting collaboration, open communication, and autonomy within organisations. Therefore, by empowering employees to make meaningful contributions and take ownership of their work, organisations can create a sense of commitment that transcends PRTC by creating a psychologically safe environment (Castañer & Oliveira, 2020; Cross, et al., 2021; Narayan, 2023).

However, empowerment theories are not new and have been defined in literature since the late 1950s, where Seeman (1959) highlighted the influence of alienation and how that impacted the way in which employees worked and felt. Since then, there have been many definitions of empowerment, and for this thesis, the

researcher will use the definitions described in previous research ([Kanter, 1987](#); [Spreitzer, 1996](#); [Thomas & Velthouse, 1990](#)). [Kanter \(1987\)](#) identifies structural empowerment, psychological empowerment, and empowerment outcomes as key components of this theory, all of which are relevant to understanding and addressing PRTC. Furthermore, literature has highlighted that empowerment involves four key aspects: *meaning*, *competence*, *self-determination*, and *impact* ([Kanter, 1993](#)). [Kanter \(1993\)](#) defines these four in specific ways. Firstly *meaning* refers to alignment between job requirements and personal beliefs. Secondly *competence* is the belief in an employee's skill. Third *self-determination* involves autonomy in actions. Lastly impact is the ability to influence outcomes. These aspects collectively show active engagement with work, and were the cornerstone of the researcher creating Intervention 2 (Squad Ways of Working), 3 (Organisational Restructure) and 4 (Values and Behaviours) (see [sections 1.6.4, 1.6.5, and 1.6.6](#)). The researcher chose to use Kanter's theory because it helps unearth and understand how employees behave when they are given greater decision-making power, and as research by [Spreitzer \(1995\)](#) built on this theory by suggesting an additive model, underlining the importance of each aspect in empowerment.

2.2.1.1 Empowerment and Resistance to Change

As highlighted earlier in this thesis (see [section 2.1](#)), PRTC is a common challenge faced by organisations transforming from their current ways of working ([Lewin, 1947a](#); [Burnes, 2004](#)), whether in response to technological advancements, market shifts, or strategic reorganisations. Despite the potential benefits of

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organisational change, employees often exhibit resistance due to fear, uncertainty and a perceived loss of control ([Hodges, 2021](#); [Feng, et al., 2023](#)).

As defined in the previous subsection (see [subsection 2.2.1](#)), Kanter's empowerment theory suggests that organisations can address PRTC through the empowerment of employees ([Spreitzer, 1996](#); [Sahadev, et al., 2024](#)). This empowerment often manifests with employees taking ownership of the organisational change process because they are able to participate in decision-making ([Gunkel, et al., 2016](#); [Porter & van den Hooff, 2020](#)). Furthermore, research by [Fullan \(2020\)](#) proved this point by highlighting that by fostering a supportive environment where employees feel valued, respected and engaged, organisations can reduce resistance and drive successful change initiatives.

Therefore, as mentioned in the overview of studies (see [section 1.5](#)), at Time 2 (T2 - June 2023), when the interventions/transformational changes have been implemented, it is expected based upon the literature and research that the interventions will have a positive impact on decentralisation. However, the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC may change and could be positive (increase PRTC) or negative (reduce PRTC).

In other words, decentralisation could **increase PRTC** because employees may have more 'room' to resist the change in flatter structures. In addition, they may feel a loss of power or status, and perceive a threat to job security ([Malmi, 1997](#); [Feng, et al., 2023](#)). Furthermore, PRTC could be higher as decentralised structures may face challenges related to a lack of coordination within the organisation's structure. It may also be the case that communication gaps develop due to too many decision makers existing at the same level ([Eva, et al., 2021](#); [Morain & Aykens, 2023](#); [Warrick, 2023](#)). This

may lead to confusion, which is often exacerbated by regional cultures that may require a need for hierarchical decisions (Chang & Luo, 2007; Demeyere, et al., 2023).

Finally, in decentralised structures there could be a lack of clarity between employees regarding decision rights, with employees at the same level all believing they own each decision (Fiedler, et al., 1996; Shaw, et al., 2005; Danisman, 2010; Gandomani & Nafchi, 2015).

One of the interviewees highlighted their view on decentralisation:

“You know when you have too many leaders at the same level they all just want to make decisions and [act] like they own the company, but they don’t ... this leads to friction, you know, when they have too much power and stuff but don’t know how to use it. These leaders are used to being the only decision maker and then we are pulled in different directions as nobody knows who makes the decision, it’s frustrating”.

(Interviewee 2: Data Engineer)

On the other hand, the opposite may occur and lead to a **reduction in PRTC**. Literature from multiple sources (Hon, et al., 2014; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017), cited that this was owing to factors such as increased empowerment, heightened engagement with the organisation’s strategy and a stronger sense of ownership of the change. Furthermore, decentralised organisations often benefit from quicker adaptation due to enhanced agility and employees’ increased familiarity with organisational change, perceiving change positively, and having a diminished sense of threat from change (Yuan & Van Knippenberg, 2022). Consequently, employees view change as a progressive force, as they increase collaboration and achieve organisational outcomes (Hon, et al., 2014; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017; Shimoni,

2017; Giannocco, 2018; Zhen, et al., 2021; Yuan & Van Knippenberg, 2022; Wu & Konrad, 2023).

As mentioned in the Introduction ([section 1.4](#)) the interviews helped the researcher define the hypotheses. Therefore, the following quote from one of the interview participants highlights their views on decentralisation and PRTC:

"The more structured and hierarchical you are in [Function Name], the greater the level of resistance and challenge you have within your teams or your organisation."

(Interviewee 13: Partner Engagement Lead)

Therefore, based on the literature review and the interviews, the researcher thus predicts the following:

Hypothesis 1. *The interventions deployed will moderate the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC, such that the relationship will be negative (reduce PRTC) after the interventions.*

2.2.2 Individualistic Country Culture Dimension as a Moderator

The effects of decentralised structure on PRTC may further depend on the employee's country culture. Hofstede (2001) defined country or national culture with a number of dimensions, with individualism versus collectivism as one of the six dimensions that describe cultural values in different societies. First, in individualistic cultures, the emphasis is placed on individual rights, autonomy, and personal achievement (House, et al., 2004; Knoll, et al., 2021). Employees in such cultures tend to prioritise personal goals over group interests, value independence, and have a strong sense of self (Hofstede, 2001). Examples of individualistic cultures include the United States, Canada, and Western European countries (Hofstede, 1980; House, et al., 2004).

Second, in collectivist cultures, there is a stronger emphasis on group harmony, cooperation, and loyalty to the social group such as family, community, or organisation (Schwartz, 2006; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022). Employees in collectivist country cultures often prioritise the needs of the group over individual desires, value interdependence, and often maintain close-knit relationships within their friendship groups in the organisation (Hofstede, 1980; House, et al., 2004). Examples of collectivist cultures include many Asian, African, and Latin American countries. An interviewee from the African & Middle East region gave their view on working with teams and leaders from different cultures, especially when decisions are being made:

“In South Africa we have a different way of doing things [and] then you like get those from England who try to tell us what changes we need to make to our teams. It's tough as they don't understand how we work or our cultures. It can be challenging when they bring new systems and things and don't give us the time as a group to discuss.”

(Interviewee 5: Engineering Manager)

Introducing the **individualistic versus collectivist country culture** dimension as a moderator underscores the importance of country cultural factors in change management ([Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018](#)). These literature sources collectively highlight that leaders and change agents need to understand and adapt how they engage with employees during organisational changes to align with the relevant countries' and regions' cultural norms and values. However, failure to adapt change strategies when deploying large-scale transformations could lead to increased resistance, despite efforts to decentralise decision-making or implement multi-million-pound transformation programmes ([Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017](#)).

Furthermore, individualistic cultures may prioritise personal autonomy and individual goals over collective organisational objectives ([Hofstede, 2001](#); [Hofstede, 2002](#)). In such contexts, even with decentralisation, resistance to change might persist if the changes are perceived as threatening individual freedoms or disrupting personal goals ([House, et al., 2004](#); [Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018](#)). Transformation programmes that align with individualistic values may help alleviate resistance, this could include providing autonomy in decision-making or emphasising personal benefits of change ([Van Dam, et al., 2008](#); [Walk, 2023](#); [Warrick, 2023](#)). Individualistic culture may also have long-term implications for organisational change. It may influence employee engagement, commitment and overall effectiveness of change initiatives ([Spreitzer, 1996](#); [Schwartz, 2006](#)). Understanding these dynamics can inform how leaders adjust their communication styles and tailor interventions to specific cultural contexts for both theory and practice ([House, et al., 2004](#); [Hodges, 2024](#)).

In addition, in cultures that value individual autonomy and independence, decentralisation might be embraced more readily and lead to reduced PRTC (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Harden, et al., 2020). However, the potential negative effects that individualism might have on the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC should be reduced if the interventions (see [section 1.6](#)) prioritised employee decision-making and team cohesion.

As highlighted above, when employees are based in North America and United Kingdom, according to Hofstede they have more individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Brewer & Chen, 2007; Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018), and therefore when considering the overall model, decentralisation should reduce PRTC after the interventions and reduce the impact even further when individualism is included as a moderator. This contrasts with such experience in more collectivistic cultures, such as South Africa, Morocco and Malaysia (Hofstede, 2001; Gunkel, et al., 2016; Peng, et al., 2023).

The following quote from one of the interview participants highlights their views on country culture, which links to the discussion above regarding Hofstede's definition of individualistic versus collectivist culture:

"Cultural background makes a huge difference. It impacts how individuals perceive and respond to organisational changes."

(Interviewee 8: Finance Professional)

The researcher thus predicts a triple interaction as follows:

Hypothesis 2. *The time-moderated relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC will be moderated by country culture, such that the negative relationship after the interventions will weaken (reduce PRTC) for country cultures that are more **individualistic** rather than collectivistic.*

2.2.3 Power Distance Country Culture Dimension as a Moderator

As mentioned in Hypothesis 1, it is predicted that decentralised structure will have a negative relationship with PRTC over time (reduce PRTC over time). Next the researcher builds on this hypothesis by focusing on another moderator (power distance) that may impact this predicted relationship. *Power distance* refers to the extent to which authority and decision-making of a country culture are centralised or distributed among hierarchical levels within an organisation, team or community (Daniels & Greguras, 2014). It encompasses the degree to which employees accept and expect unequal distributions of power, status, and influence within the organisation (House, et al., 2004). Therefore, the second moderator focuses on power distance, and more specifically on Hofstede's country cultural dimension of high power distance (e.g., Malaysia, Portugal, Spain, France and Italy) and low power distance (e.g., Canada) (Hofstede, 2001; House, et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2011). The relationship between decentralisation and PRTC, moderated by power distance country culture dimension underscores the importance of addressing cultural dynamics to effectively manage change initiatives in diverse, global, organisational contexts (Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018).

However, there is a counter argument to the above literature and thinking. With sustained globalisation, continued transformation in technology and increased remote working have reduced the divide between continents, facilitating a global recruitment pool from diverse backgrounds and cultures (Knoll, et al., 2021). Over the past twenty years there has been an increase in the number of articles focusing on cultural organisation change research, allowing academia and practitioners to be

better equipped to understand the impact of power distance during times of organisational change (Lee & Lalwani, 2024).

One of the interviewees gave their view on the technology in use:

“From my view it is great that we have Zoom and Teams as it saves time and I can work from home and be productive. It also means I can interact with our teams in all different countries, you know, it has changed my way of working.”

(Interviewee 8: Finance Professional)

In the context of high power distance, leaders typically have greater control and authority over decision-making. As research by Meyer & Hammerschmid (2010) has shown, high power distance country cultures, as described by Hofstede (2001), may exhibit hierarchical structures where authority is unquestioned and leaders hold significant power. In such contexts, resistance to change can be pronounced due to several factors.

Firstly, literature has shown that hierarchical or authoritarian leadership styles, which are commonplace in high power distance cultures, result in top-down decision-making that alienates employees further down the hierarchy (Seeman, 1959; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Huettermann, et al., (2024) propose that this can lead to employees feeling disempowerment and reluctant to accept changes imposed by leaders. As reiterated by Kanter (1993), this often manifests with a decrease in the level of empowerment for employees, which can lead to colleagues either passively or actively resisting changes brought about by leaders. The following quote from one of the interview participants highlights their views on power distance culture:

“Personally, I have no problem with working with different countries. Like I said, I do feel that, you know, we are part of a bigger team, [Organisation Name], and we all ultimately want to succeed so we need to consider all cultures when engaging in change.”

(Interviewee 12: Product Programme Manager)

Secondly, [Herz & Krezdorn \(2022\)](#) and [Hodges \(2024\)](#) suggest that employees can be deterred from expressing their opinions or concerns about organisational changes because of the fear of consequences, which include retribution or loss of status after questioning leaders. This research highlighted that this could lead to passive resistance where employees follow any organisational changes regardless of their viewpoint.

[Islam, et al., \(2024\)](#) suggest that in high power distance country cultures, employees’ dependency on leaders for guidance may limit active engagement in the change process, further increasing resistance. Research has shown that high power distance cultures are more risk averse, and this can fuel a reluctance from employees to embrace organisational changes that are perceived as risky ([Rovelli & Buttice, 2020](#); [Moradi, et al., 2021](#); [Peng, et al., 2023](#)). A quote from an interviewee speculated that in their high power country culture, employees reduce their engagement as they wait for leaders to make decision:

“Well, I am part of a team that will want a decision from our leader before we implement the changes, or act on information received. We don’t want to be part of the discussions because our leader will want to be at the same meeting.”

(Interviewee 3: Product Manager)

Lastly, to the extent that communication barriers are experienced as a negative event, it is likely to make employees feel marginalised from the change process and resent the organisational changes. This is likely due to a lack of open dialogue and information sharing between leaders and employees, which leads to employees feeling that the changes are being imposed (Lin & Germain, 2003; Hodgson & Briand, 2013).

Conversely, in low power distance country cultures, power differentials are minimised, and there is a greater emphasis on equality, participatory decision-making, and empowerment of employees at all levels (Colquitt, 2001; Daniels & Greguras, 2014). Understanding power distance in organisations is crucial for effective leadership, communication, and organisational dynamics, as it shapes attitudes towards authority, collaboration, and more importantly organisational change strategies (Harden, et al., 2020; Morain & Aykens, 2023; Hodges, 2024).

Therefore, the effect of decentralised structure should reduce PRTC at first, and over time, it may reduce it further in low power distance cultures. In other words, there should be a double negative effect on PRTC.

The researcher thus predicts a triple interaction as follows:

Hypothesis 3. *The time-moderated relationship¹ between decentralised structure and PRTC will be moderated by low power distance culture, such that PRTC will reduce for lower power distance cultures over time.*

¹ For this research time-moderation is defined as the time points (Time 1 (June 2022) and Time 2 (June 2023)) where the researcher is assessing if the relationship between the independent and dependent variables changes over time.

2.2.4 External Agile Experts as a Moderator

For the last moderator, the researcher examines the impact of employing external agile experts during large-scale organisational change. Organisations spend vast amounts of money and time bringing in experts, as their leaders perceive that there is a knowledge gap with internal employees (Fincham, 1999; Demeyere, et al., 2023). As literature has shown, this can lead to employees feeling threatened by the presence of external agile experts and worried about the changes that may be perceived as imposed upon them without their input (Kitay & Wright, 2003; Dahl, 2011). This loss of autonomy has been shown to increase PRTC, especially in decentralised structures (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017; Nowak, 2023). However, the reverse is also possible, where employees feel relieved when external experts are brought in to provide support and solve a problem that couldn't be solved by internal employees (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Porter & van den Hooff, 2020; Hodges, 2021).

As part of the first study, the interviews provided insights into perceptions about external agile experts from both positive and challenging aspects. Some interviewees acknowledged the value of external agile expertise and emphasised the need to bring in external specialists to help navigate complex organisational changes, with one interviewee stating, *“I think having that expertise is fantastic and we need to hire more and more agile experts [from outside of Organisation Name]. [They] upskill people I think.”*

(Interviewee 3: Product Manager)

This reflects a positive view on the contribution of external agile experts. On the other hand, challenges were also highlighted, particularly when external agile experts come in too strongly and cause unnecessary disruption.

Another interviewee noted:

"When you bring someone from outside, someone who is coming as a stranger... If you're coming in and you're a little bit too strong... I think people do freak out a little bit."

(Interviewee 15: Senior Project Manager)

This interview quote and research by [Bordia, et al., \(2004\)](#) suggests the potential for opposition or discomfort when external experts assert themselves too forcefully. However, employees can contribute further, and especially in decentralised structures, where they have the autonomy to recruit as many experts as needed to get the transformation delivered, or to request specific external agile experts ([Chung, et al., 2017](#); [Morain & Aykens, 2023](#)). This often leads to a reduction in PRTC, and manifests in a reduction in innovation within the organisation ([Nowak, 2023](#)).

Therefore, as the number of external agile experts increases within the team or organisation, the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC should reduce further, after the interventions.

The researcher thus predicts:

Hypothesis 4. *The relationship between decentralisation and PRTC is jointly moderated by time with interventions and the number of agile experts. After the interventions, the negative relationship will reduce further as the number of external agile experts increases.*

2.3 Overview of Studies

The first study (Study 1) was an exploratory, qualitative, study, where the researcher interviewed a small subset of employees (15) from the same large multinational organisation as Study 2 and 3 to create themes for the hypotheses, validate some of the researcher's initial thinking based upon the literature review and provide verbatims for the research.

In Study 2, the researcher tested the above hypotheses in a longitudinal study with data collected at two distinct time points (June 2022 and June 2023) within a large multinational organisation where employees were experiencing the implementation of large-scale change. Pre- and post-studies involve collecting data before and after implementing changes (or interventions), and they have been frequently conducted within organisational change research ([Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2013](#); [Grant, 2014](#); [Augustsson, et al., 2017](#); [Olaru, et al., 2024](#)). This cited literature has shown that pre- and post-studies aim to comprehensively explore how the implemented changes have influenced key variables within the organisational change and psychological contexts.

2.3.1 Study 1: Interviews

2.3.1.1 Sample and Procedure

The researcher used stratified sampling (DuMouchel & Duncan, 1983) to select the participants based upon the criteria mentioned in [section 2.5.2](#), Interview Groups. The researcher selected stratified sampling because it focuses on creating a sample grouped by shared characteristics of involvement with the organisational change (Robinson, 2014). Furthermore, research by Campbell, et al., (2020) highlighted that using stratified sampling reduces the variance and increases the level of accuracy in measuring and understanding key variables.

A total of 15 employees were interviewed between November 2023 and January 2024 based upon the three groups mentioned in the next subsection ([section 2.3.1.2](#)). The outcomes from the interviews shaped the analysis and provided additional commentary and quotes for this thesis.

£50 Amazon vouchers were offered to all those that took part in the interviews and were sent to them after the interviews were completed. This was conducted as it is standard practice within the organisation when requesting employees take time out to participate in interviews.

2.3.1.2 Interview Groups

The first interview group, to be referred to as Group 1 from hereon, included employees that were *involved with changes/interventions*. To determine participants in this group, an email was sent to the full sample (1,736 colleagues) asking for participants for the interviews. The first five to respond who had not completed the

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previous questionnaires at T1 (2022) and T2 (2023) were selected. In the email it was made clear that the interviews were anonymous and voluntary.

Furthermore, it was stated that for participants to take part in the interviews, they needed to meet the following criteria:

1. The participant had been at [organisation name] since April 2022 (and therefore had been involved with the changes/interventions)
2. The participant had not answered either or both questionnaires (June 2022 and June 2023)
3. The participant was willing to meet for up to 60 minutes to answer questions about the research (and their experiences)

The second interview group, to be referred to as Group 2 from hereon, included employees that were *impacted by the changes/interventions*. While Group 1 consisted of employees that were heavily involved with the changes, including deploying the changes to the various functions, for example Project Managers creating plans and conducting stakeholder management. The second group comprised those who were not as involved in creating or running the changes/interventions but were on the receiving end of the change as it impacted the way they worked. Interviewees in the second group would provide a different perspective from the first group. For example, this group included employees that were Sales Agents selling products and services to customers and their goal is to earn revenue instead of changing how the organisation works. Differentiating between Groups 1 and 2 was necessary to provide a more holistic view of the impact of deploying the changes. A list of 100 employees was randomly created from those who were impacted by the changes in the past six months (from June 2023 to October 2023). From that list, an email was sent asking for

participants for the interviews. The first five to respond were selected. They were assured anonymity and reassured that no responses would be used or shared within anyone else within the organisation.

The third interview group, to be referred to as Group 3 from hereon, were employees who were *randomly selected from across the organisation*. A list of all employee emails was reviewed, and 20 employee email addresses were selected at random. These 20 colleagues were emailed and the first five to accept were selected. This group was chosen in an attempt to understand the views of those outside of the change community. Details of the interview structure and the interview questions can be found in [Appendix A: Interview Structure](#).

For the interviews, the researcher aimed to explore specific topics related to organisational structures and informal communications. Participants' involvement in the interviews was entirely confidential and voluntary; and the researcher emphasised the anonymity of their participation, with no inclusion of their name in any research outputs. It was also made clear during that interviews that the participants were selected based on their response to an email requesting volunteers for interviews. Prior to the interview starting, participants were given the option to enable or disable their camera and were asked for consent to record the interview; if recording was declined, detailed notes were taken instead by the researcher. Data from the interviews were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. Additionally, data retention policies for [organisation name] and Durham University were followed. Following each interview, participants were informed about the next steps and provided with contact information should they have any further questions. See [section 3.4](#) for details of how the interviews were transcribed and themes created.

2.3.2 Study 2: Longitudinal Field Study

2.3.2.1 Sample and Procedure

The second study (first quantitative study) was based on a questionnaire and was analysed using SPSS and Hayes Process Macro. The research was conducted in a large multinational organisation that operates in the software and services sector. The quantitative research involved collecting data at two time points. The first in June 2022, prior to the commencement of transformation initiatives (known as interventions). The second was in June 2023, after the deployment and embedding of the transformation initiatives. Running the second questionnaire after the interventions (June 2023) provided an understanding of the evolving organisational landscape.

The organisation consists of over 30,000 employees based in over fifty different countries. Their main presence is in North America and the United Kingdom where the majority of colleagues are based. When the research was conducted, the organisation was in the middle of a transformation aimed at delivering strategic objectives linked to improving customer experience and developing better cloud-based products.

Over the past five years (leading up to 2022) the organisation had struggled with many challenges, including declining profits due to increased competition and an erosion of brand trust due to a perception of being outdated. These challenges and a loss-making business led to the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and board members in late 2021. The new CEO had to create a purpose and drive a new culture that focused on the customer. To realise this vision, the organisation initiated strategic change programmes in early 2022, backed by a \$50 million investment. This effort included ten interventions delivered between June 2022 and

April 2023. These initiatives were deployed after all the first questionnaire responses were received. Key components of these interventions included a strategic transformation of systems and processes to meet future market challenges and a customer-centric approach aimed at reducing churn (loss of customers) and boosting profits. These interventions are defined in the introduction of this thesis (see [section 1.6, Change Programmes/Interventions](#) for details).

Due to the Covid pandemic in 2019 and employees requiring job security during this period ([Alharbi, 2022](#)), attrition within the organisation remained low throughout this transformational period (between June 2022 and June 2023). The questionnaire findings (described in [section 2.6](#)) were encouraging because they provided a quantitative view that the planned changes were effectively permeating throughout the organisation, and employees held a positive view of the transformation.

Before and after all the interventions were completed, the researcher sent an online questionnaire to 1,736 employees, assuring anonymity and confidentiality. The criteria for selection and approach is described in [section 2.5.2](#). The researcher received 322 responses to the first questionnaire and 256 responses to the second, which was a response rate of 19% and 15%.

One of the challenges of conducting longitudinal research is matching respondents over the different questionnaires ([Audette, et al., 2020](#); [Schnell, et al., 2010](#)). However, to maintain anonymity, matching cannot be done with any data that can be linked to a respondent. This means that the traditional ways of identifying colleagues (e.g., email address and name) can't be used. This dilemma is faced across all longitudinal research, with researchers taking different options ([Catania, et al., 1990](#); [Dilorio, et al., 2000](#); [Tregarthen, et al., 2015](#)). Therefore, the researcher, with

support from his supervisors, decided to use an electronic anonymised system. [Audette, et al., \(2020, p. 172\)](#) suggest that the main benefits of this method are “prevent[ing the] identification of participants”, and those who complete the questionnaires will view the data gathering as truly anonymous. [Organisation name] conducts much longitudinal data with customers, partners and external stakeholders, and therefore the researcher was able to adopt the existing electronic anonymising systems. This was important as [Schnell, et al., \(2010\)](#) highlight that a large investment is required to establish such a system.

After conducting matching of responses between the first and second questionnaire, 194 responses (60%) were used for the researcher’s analysis as these were the same employees who answered the first and second questionnaire (54% female, 34% in main age range (41 to 55 years old)). These are visualised in [Figure 5](#) below.

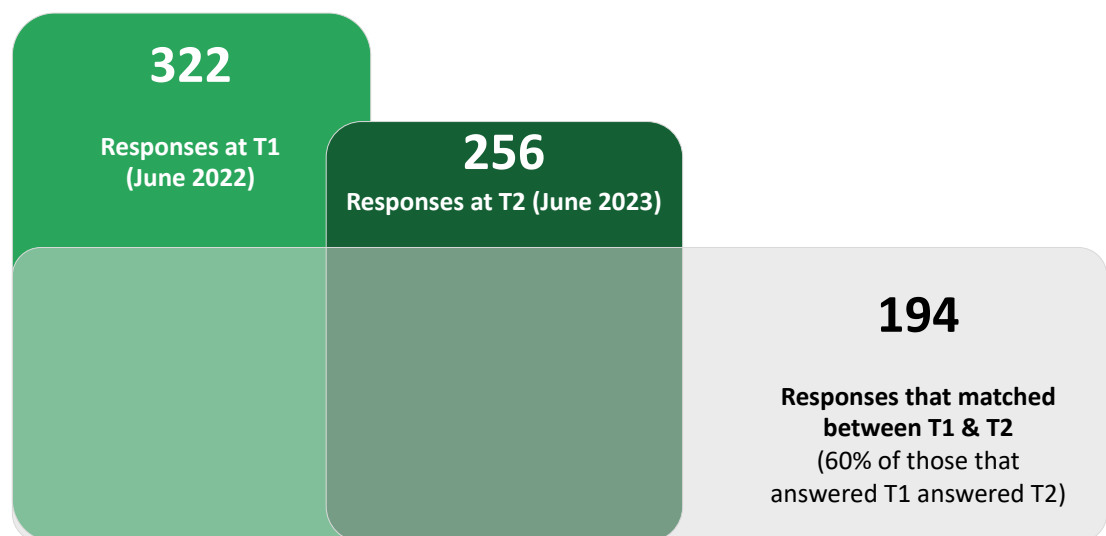


Figure 5. Questionnaire Responses

2.4 Measures

The following subsection shares the variables to be used in this thesis for Paper One. This subsection starts with the main independent and dependent variables that were analysed by collected data from the questionnaires. This is followed by a definition of the moderators. The last subsection shares further details on how the control variables were measured. For each of the upcoming subsections, the researcher utilises previous research to ensure the measures are based upon relevant literature in the organisational change field.

2.4.1 Main Variables (Independent and Dependent Variables)

The first main variable, ***Decentralisation***, was measured by adapting four relevant items from [Lin & Germain's \(2003\)](#) subscale for measuring organisational decentralisation, focusing on which decisions are made at which levels, and on how empowered employees are within the organisation. Variations of this scale have been used in decentralisation literature over the past twenty years ([Fiedler, et al., 1996](#); [Argyres & Silverman, 2004](#); [Andrews, et al., 2009](#); [Eva, et al., 2021](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#)).

The researcher asked participants the following four questions: 1) “[The organisation’s] strategy is usually made by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – [CEO Name]”; 2) “[The organisation’s] strategy is usually made by the Corporate Management Team (or Executive Leadership Team (ELT))”; 3) “[The organisation’s] employees feel empowered by having input in the formulation of strategies”; and 4) “[The organisation’s] structure can be described as flat as employees’ input to

decisions that directly affect them”. Answers to question one and two were reverse scored. Responses were aggregated to an overall decentralised structure score (T1 $\alpha = .947$; T2 $\alpha = .904$). These questions were all mandatory and were all measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*).

Next, the dependent variable, ***perceived resistance to change*** (PRTC), was measured by adapting four items defining perception of resistance to change measures from published research (Godkin & Allcorn, 2008; Moradi, et al., 2021). The items are: 1) “[The organisation’s] employees are afraid of any organisational change”; 2) “[The organisation’s] employees are defensive about any organisational change”; 3) “[The organisation’s] employees feel anxious when recalling past experiences of change”; 4) “[The organisation’s] employees like the organisation’s current processes and do not like change”. Responses were aggregated to an overall PRTC score (T1 $\alpha = .968$; T2 $\alpha = .925$). These were all measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*).

2.4.2 Moderator Variables

Hofstede National Culture (Individualistic Country Culture) was measured by asking, “Which country are you based in?” and “What is your nationality?”, and this was grouped into two categories based on Hofstede and the GLOBE study that represented individualistic versus collectivistic national culture dimension (Hofstede, 2001; Brewer & Chen, 2007; Gunkel, et al., 2016). The former (individualism) included Central Europe (e.g., Germany), Iberia (e.g., Portugal and Spain), North America (USA and Canada) and UKI (United Kingdom and Ireland), and the latter included APAC (Asia Pacific) and AME (Africa and Middle East). The researcher examined all responses and

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compared the regions (and countries) and nationalities of the participants. The researcher's intention was to remove any responses where the country was collectivist, and the nationality was individualistic (or vice versa) from the analysis. Fortunately, all region (and country) and nationality values fell within the same categories. The researcher requested support from an independent coder who conducted the same matching exercise between regions (and countries) and nationalities, and the results were identical.

Using the widely acknowledged Hofstede insights tool by The Culture Factor Group ([The Culture Factor Group, 2024](#)) and work by [Hofstede \(2001\)](#) and [House, et al., \(2004\)](#), mentioned above, the scores for countries that were above 50 were classed as individualistic, and scores for countries under 50 were classed as collectivist. These categories were coded 0 for collectivist and 1 for individualistic. Additionally, the researcher emphasises that due to the research being conducted in a single organisation that had over 75% of employees in the UKI and North America, the data would be more representative of individualistic countries. Preliminary data analysis showed that 83% of participants were from an Individualistic country culture. The researcher acknowledges this as a limitation, which is further described in [section 2.10](#).

Country Culture (Power Distance Country Culture) was measured by asking, “Which country are you based in?” and “What is your nationality?”, and this was grouped into two categories based on Hofstede and the GLOBE study that represented Power Distance culture ([Hofstede, 2001](#); [Peng, et al., 2023](#)). The first, included those regions with low power distance, for example Central Europe (e.g., Germany), North America, UKI (United Kingdom and Ireland). The second, high power distance, included APAC (Asia Pacific), Iberia (e.g., Portugal or Spain) and Southern Europe (e.g., France). These categories were coded 0 for low power distance regions, and 1 for high power distance regions. Similar to Individualistic country culture, the preliminary analysis highlighted that 84% of respondents were in the Low Power Distance category. This limitation will be discussed further in [section 2.10](#).

To measure **external agile experts** the researcher asked, “How many external Agile Experts are currently in your team?”, with five groupings related to the number of experts (1 = less than five; 2 = five to nine; 3 = ten to fourteen; 4 = fifteen to twenty; 5 = greater than twenty). These categories were then coded from 1 to 5. Similar scales have been used in previous agile research to measure number of agile experts or agile team members by [Misra, et al., \(2009\)](#) and [Vithana, et al., \(2015\)](#).

Due to the curvilinear nature of this variable, a quadratic variable was included and termed Agile Experts Squared and was used during analysis. Similar to previous organisational change research by [Jiang, et al., \(2022\)](#), to validate that the variable was curvilinear, the researcher used hierarchical regression (on the squared term) and then used Curve Estimation in SPSS (see [Figure 6](#)).

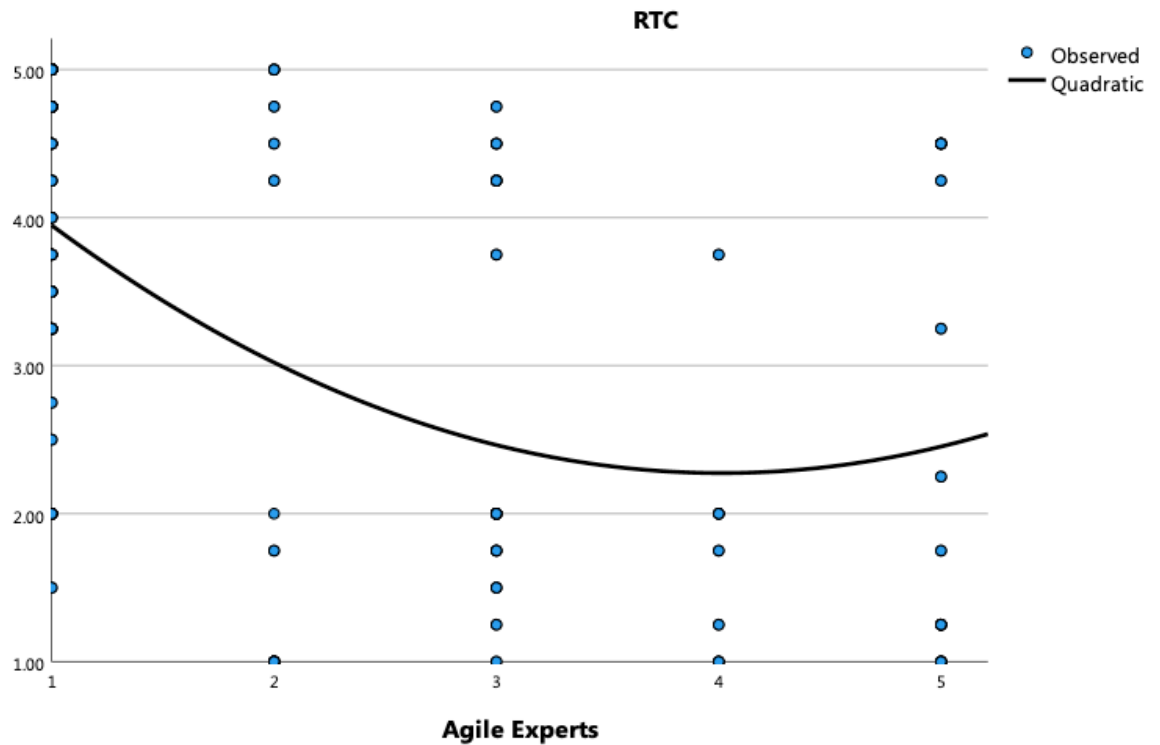


Figure 6. Curvilinear Relationship between Agile Experts and PRTC

2.4.3 Control Variables

Since the literature shows that age, education level, and job level (e.g., employee or manager) may be related to organisational change variables (such as resistance and decentralisation) (Brady, et al., 2017; Massar, et al., 2012), the researcher controlled for participants' **age** measured in years, **education level** (with five categories ranging from 1 = None; 2 = High School; 3 = Diploma or equivalent; 4 = University (Undergraduate); 5 = University (Postgraduate)), and **managerial status** (with a binary variable where 1 signified 'manager').

Because employees with longer tenure are more resistant to change ([Van Dam, et al., 2008](#)), the researcher controlled for **organisational tenure** by asking participants: “Approximately how many years have you been at the organisation?”.

For **delivery methodology**, the researcher had a single question: “Which option best describes the Delivery Methodology most frequently used in your team?” and this was grouped into five categories (1 = Fully Waterfall; 2 = Partly Waterfall; 3 = Hybrid (Mix of Waterfall and Agile); 4 = Partly Agile; 5 = Fully Agile). Research has shown that delivery methodologies that are more agile often lead to lower levels of resistance to change ([Baham, et al., 2017](#); [Moradi, et al., 2021](#); [Ravichandran, 2018](#); [Rindova & Kotha, 2001](#)). Furthermore, a delivery methodology often has implications for how the organisation is structured; this is because the choice of delivery methodology, particularly agile methodologies, can support and enhance decentralised structures by promoting empowerment and alignment with agile principles, facilitating communication and collaboration, empowering teams, and enabling adaptability to change ([Agile Manifesto, 2001](#); [Ferreira & Cohen, 2008](#)). As a result, organisations that adopt agile methodologies are likely to experience lower levels of resistance to change and greater success in implementing decentralised structures ([Agarwal, et al., 2007](#); [Felipe, et al., 2016](#)).

Research on gender differences, decentralised structure and resistance to change is not entirely conclusive, from the researcher’s perspective, as there are many factors at play beyond just gender when organisations are analysed for structure and resistance ([Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018](#); [Shahbaz, et al., 2020](#)). However, some studies have explored potential relationships between gender and different organisational variables, e.g., communication, structure and resistance ([Leaper & Holliday, 1995](#);

Michelson & Mouly, 2000; Watson, 2012; Eckhaus & Ben-Hador, 2019; Shahbaz, et al., 2020). One perspective suggests that gender may not be a direct predictor of resistance to change but rather that differences in resistance to change may arise from socialisation and cultural norms associated with gender roles (Gefen & Straub, 1997). For example, traditional gender roles may lead to differences in communication styles, risk-taking behaviours, and attitudes toward authority, all of which could influence how individuals respond to change initiatives in the workplace (Kang & Sung, 2017).

Therefore, since the literature above shows that gender may be related to organisational change variables (such as resistance), the researcher included **gender** as a control variable, and the researcher asked participants “What is your gender?” and coded it as follows: 1 = Female; 2 = Male; 3 = Non-binary; 4 = Prefer not to say. This scale is similar to research that has previously used a single item scale and four options (Baber & Tucker, 2006).

There has been much literature highlighting the fact that country impacts decentralisation and PRTC (Benito & Gripsrud, 1992; Andrews, et al., 2009; Hon, et al., 2014; Giannoccaro, 2018; Demeyere, et al., 2023). Creating diversity of perspectives by collecting and analysing data from a multinational organisation has numerous benefits, but it also has many limitations (Amarantou, et al., 2017; Burton, et al., 2019; Demeyere, et al., 2023). Many of the potential limitations, for example, language and missing data, were mitigated by making all fields on the questionnaire mandatory and only having an English version of the questionnaire. However, one of the limitations to this research, outlined in [section 2.10](#), is that the data was pooled from multiple countries to conduct this research. To minimise this limitation, the researcher used **country** as a control variable. The researcher asked participants, “Which regions are

your team based in?” and coded it as follows: 1 = United Kingdom & Ireland; 2 = North America.

Lastly, literature ([Baron, et al., 1999](#); [Bass & Riggio, 2006](#); [Ford, et al., 2008](#); [Haag, 2014](#)) has highlighted that team size and team age may impact decentralisation and resistance, therefore, for **team size** the researcher asked participants: “How many employees are currently in your team?”. This control variable was grouped into five categories and treated as a categorical variable in analysis (1 = less than five; 2 = five to nine; 3 = ten to fourteen; 4 = fifteen to twenty; 5 = greater than twenty). For **team age** the researcher asked participants: “Approximately how many years has your team been within the organisation (in its current structure and make up)?”, and this was grouped into five categories (1 = less than 1 year; 2 = 1 year; 3 = 2 years; 4 = 3 years; 5 = greater than 3 years). This was based on literature that highlighted how team size and age may be related to organisational change variables, such as decentralisation and resistance ([Curral, et al., 2001](#)).

2.5 Method

This subsection introduces the research design employed to answer the research questions and hypotheses, and it discusses the data collection procedure, approach to analysis, pre- and pilot tests, and credibility considerations. This subsection ends with a discussion of the limitations and a brief conclusion.

2.5.1 Method Overview

Due to the scarcity of existing empirical decentralised structure and PRTC data related to organisational change, a large sample questionnaire was employed. Appendix B: Questionnaire provides a list of the questions asked on the questionnaire. These questions were primarily formed from a comprehensive literature review, discussions with the researcher's supervisors, and the main questions for the variables were analysed as described in [Measures subsection](#). The data collection was planned with the launch of the organisation's campaign to assess the organisation's change strategy between 2022 and 2023. The campaign and this research have had complete buy-in from key leaders across the organisation, and the organisation's employees receiving the link to the questionnaire had full knowledge of the purpose and a clear understanding of how the results would help drive future improvement within the organisation. There was no requirement for the questionnaire to be translated, as the common language across the organisation is English.

2.5.2 Data Collection, Sample and Anonymity

A large sample questionnaire was chosen as the method to gather data, which was used to quantitatively test the hypothesised effects of decentralisation on PRTC, as well as the moderation effects of country culture dimensions and external agile experts. Furthermore, this method was perceived by the researcher and the researcher's supervisors as appropriate as it would provide a substantial scale of data required to highlight the relationship between variables, inputting into the recommendations for future strategies on organisational change. With such geographically dispersed participants, research by [Sekaran and Bougie \(2013\)](#) recommends using an online questionnaire to reach the target audience.

For this research, data were collected from employees from [organisation name] via a questionnaire sent to 1,736 colleagues. Those that were included as participants were employees affected by transformation or change initiatives (i.e., project stakeholders) who worked on change initiatives *or* led change initiatives across the organisation. A change initiative will be defined as a piece of work undertaken to achieve an organisational outcome that will benefit the organisation using any form of delivery methodology (e.g., Waterfall, Agile or mixed) (see [section 1.3](#) for all definitions). During the interventions time window (between June 2022 and May 2023), the organisation deployed the ten interventions mentioned in the [Change Programmes/Interventions](#) section.

All potential respondents were sent the questionnaire using Microsoft Forms, the authorised questionnaire software at [organisation name]. Previous research of this type has yielded relatively low response rates, between 10% and 30% from a single organisation, and between 10% and 20% where multiple organisations are surveyed

(Joseph, et al., 2001; Wiles, et al., 2013). Therefore, incentives and management support were used to increase response rates. Incentives were namely Amazon vouchers for winners of a draw for participants who completed the questionnaire and entered their email address in a separate form. Furthermore, it was made clear that responses were anonymous, with ethical approval received from Durham University and [organisation name] prior to the distribution of the questionnaire (see [section 6.3](#) ([Appendix C](#)) for ethical approval).

The variables and questions were designed in such a way to ensure anonymity and only one response per participant, but they also allowed the data to be used to form trends and to validate the hypotheses (Wiles, et al., 2013). To ensure this, the setting in Microsoft Forms, for example “Record name” were turned off, as detailed in [Figure 7](#) (Microsoft, 2022).

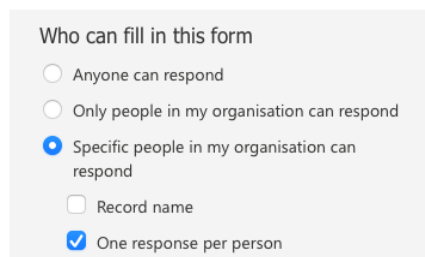
A screenshot of the Microsoft Forms settings interface. The title is 'Who can fill in this form'. There are three radio button options: 'Anyone can respond' (unselected), 'Only people in my organisation can respond' (unselected), and 'Specific people in my organisation can respond' (selected with a blue dot). Below these are two checkbox options: 'Record name' (unselected) and 'One response per person' (selected with a blue checkmark).

Figure 7. Microsoft Forms One Response Per Person Setting

Requests for results, along with inclusion in the Amazon Voucher draw, were kept separate from the questions and only used for sharing results and including participants in the draw. This was achieved by having a separate Microsoft Forms questionnaire, with the link on the main questionnaire to navigate employees that wished to enter their email address. Therefore, no personal data that could identify any employee were used on the main questionnaire to ensure that all data were anonymised and could not be linked back to a specific variable.

2.5.3 Procedure

As a longitudinal study was chosen for this thesis, the researcher included three parts to data collection. Firstly, a pre-test was conducted in April 2022. Secondly, the questionnaire was sent to the entire sample in June 2022 with a couple of reminders and a cut off for all responses in June 2022. Lastly, the same questionnaire was sent to the same sample in June 2023 with the request for all responses by the end of June 2023.

Longitudinal studies allow for higher levels of validity, greater flexibility, and the ability to identify further trends ([Osborne, 2008](#)). However, while there are many benefits, many risks were considered. Firstly, due to a gap of 12 months between the first and second questionnaire being completed, and potentially high attrition rates, the respondents might change dramatically. Fortunately the attrition rate was low within this time period. Secondly, a large number of respondents was required to complete the first and second questionnaires to ensure the researcher had over 100 responses after matching ([Osborne, 2008](#)).

In April 2022, questionnaire pre-tests were conducted with a small group of employees to ensure the questions were accurate and relatable to the organisation. The pre-test included ten employees completing the questionnaire and providing feedback about the time to complete, any clarity required, and issues with questions or access to parts or all of the questionnaire. The pre-tests for the questionnaire were conducted with employees from various regions within the organisation. This included employees from the UKI, North America and France. The researcher decided to use these colleagues to ensure a diverse and inclusive perspective. The questionnaire was sent to this small group with specific instructions to first review the clarity of the

question wording in order to ensure it was easily understandable across different regions. Second, the employees were asked to confirm the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire, initially set at 15 minutes. Following these, participants were asked to review each of the section headings to ensure they offered the right level of guidance for any further participants. Lastly, they were asked to verify that there were no legal or regional issues, such as ensuring that the questionnaire was available only in English and that it did not use complicated language.

Subsequently, in June 2022, a link to the questionnaire was sent to 1,736 employees from the researcher's organisational email address, with prior approval from [organisation name]. The email explained the purpose and essential information about data usage (see [Appendix B: Questionnaire](#) for details). Then in June 2023, the same email and a new link were sent to the same sample of employees. The data were captured and stored in separate Microsoft Forms initially, so that the data were not mixed prior to being transferred to Excel and SPSS.

2.5.4 Approach to Analysing the Data

Once the data were received in Microsoft Forms, the researcher conducted a review of the data. This started with downloading the data from Microsoft Forms into a Microsoft Excel format. Before this could be uploaded into SPSS, empty rows/columns and any columns that included the date and time of submission were removed. At this point, a check was conducted to assess if any data were missing in the Microsoft Excel file (e.g., 322 rows were downloaded from Microsoft Forms). Because all the fields were mandatory, there was no missing data. Research from [Saunders, et al. \(2015\)](#) highlighted that missing data should always be checked before conducting any further

analysis as this could lead to invalid conclusions. Within Microsoft Excel, the Likert Scale options (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) were converted to a numeric format (1 to 5). Research has shown that a five-point Likert scale is suitable because it provides a balanced range of responses that are easy for respondents to understand and use, yet still offering sufficient granularity for meaningful analysis ([Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007](#)). Finally, to make it easier to identify the headings in SPSS, the author changed the headings related to the variable questions (e.g., '[Organisation Name] colleagues are afraid of any organisational change' to PRTC1').

Once the data were imported into SPSS, the researcher conducted preliminary analysis which included reliability, validity, multicollinearity and outlier analysis. Firstly, reliability and validity were checked. Once this was conducted, variables were created as described in the [Measures subsection](#). Next, multicollinearity was checked, and all values were within the threshold (see details in [Appendix D](#)). However, due to the low values of certain variables, there could be a low correlation between variables because the VIF is below 5 for all variables.

The analysis for Study 2 used multiple techniques with the majority of analysis in SPSS. Firstly, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to understand the sampling profile ([Sekaran & Bougie, 2013](#)). This provided an accurate reflection of the population and highlighted any outliers (results that should be excluded as they did not meet the criteria) or areas where sample bias was created. As a guideline, a standard deviation of greater than 1.5 was used to detect the presence of an outlier ([Sekaran & Bougie, 2013](#)), and the outlier labelling rule was used to determine this. Secondly, fixed effects regression analysis was used to quantify the

relationship for Hypothesis 1. Lastly, Hayes Process Macro was used for analysing all moderation effects (Hayes, 2022).

2.5.5 Sampling Profile: T1 June 2022

Respondent's locations are depicted in [Figure 8](#), with the majority (46%) of the respondents in the UKI. This is a representative percentage of the whole population of project delivery stakeholders across the organisation. Furthermore, most of the teams delivering transformational change or impacted by change are based in the UKI and North America (NA). Regions that were lower than expected for this research were Central Europe and Africa and Middle East (AME), which should have been circa 10%. All other regions were as expected, especially APAC, which has a reduced number of employees after several divestitures (e.g., Australia).

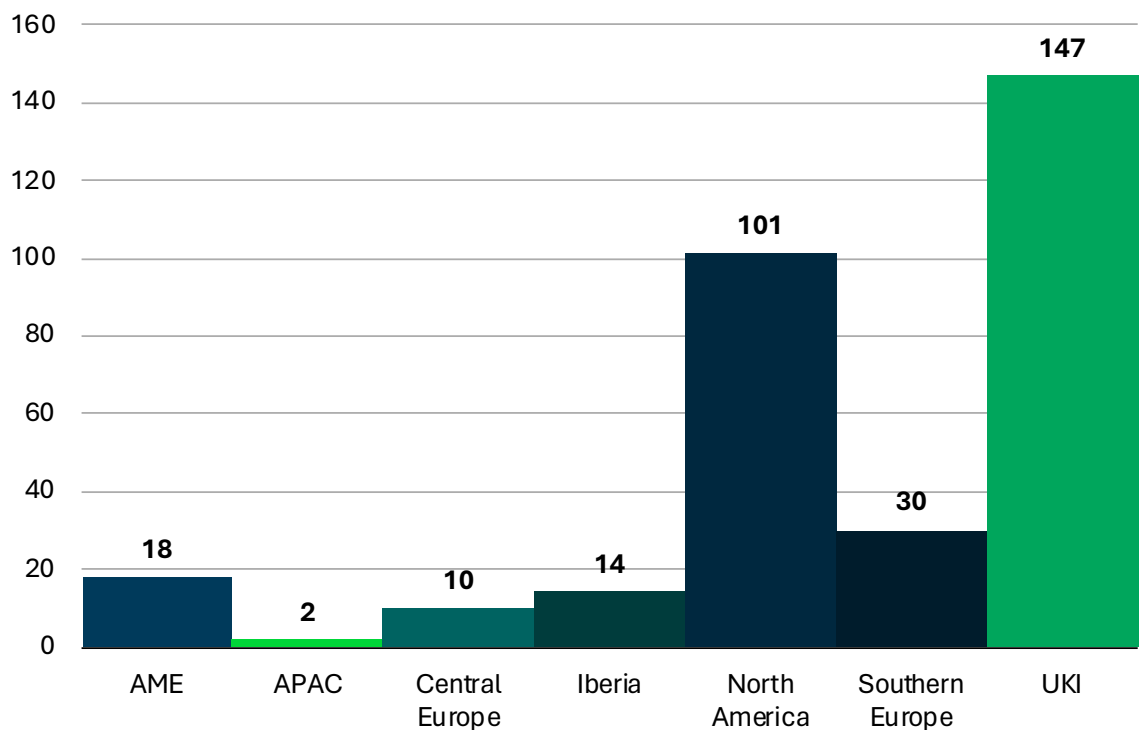


Figure 8. Respondents by Location (T1 (June 2022))

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[Figure 9](#) highlights the respondents by function, with 215 respondents (67%) spread across the three main functions, namely Business Transformation, Product and Customer Operations. Business Transformation makes up 32% of the employees that responded to the questionnaire. While this percentage is high, these employees are deployed into various functions and are essential for delivering the changes as they provide specific skillsets to deliver the initiatives (e.g., Project Management, Data Development, Change Management and Business Analysis), but they also work across the other functions when they are not working on specific projects. Where functions had less than 10 employees, these were grouped into an ‘Other Functions’ category for any analysis and visualisation.

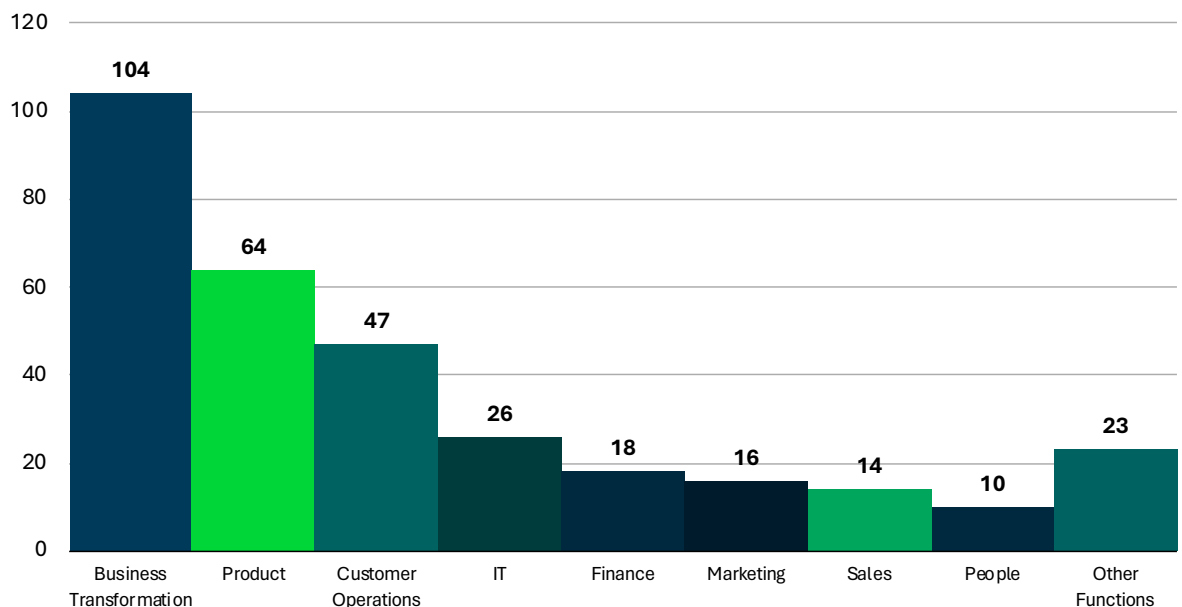


Figure 9. Respondents by Function (T1 (June 2022))

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Methodologies play a vital part at [organisation name], and based on the initial questionnaire, 47% of the respondents followed a hybrid methodology (mixture of waterfall and agile), with only 7% following a fully agile approach, as depicted in [Figure 10](#). As described in the in [Measures subsection](#), due to this interplay, delivery methodology was included as a control variable.

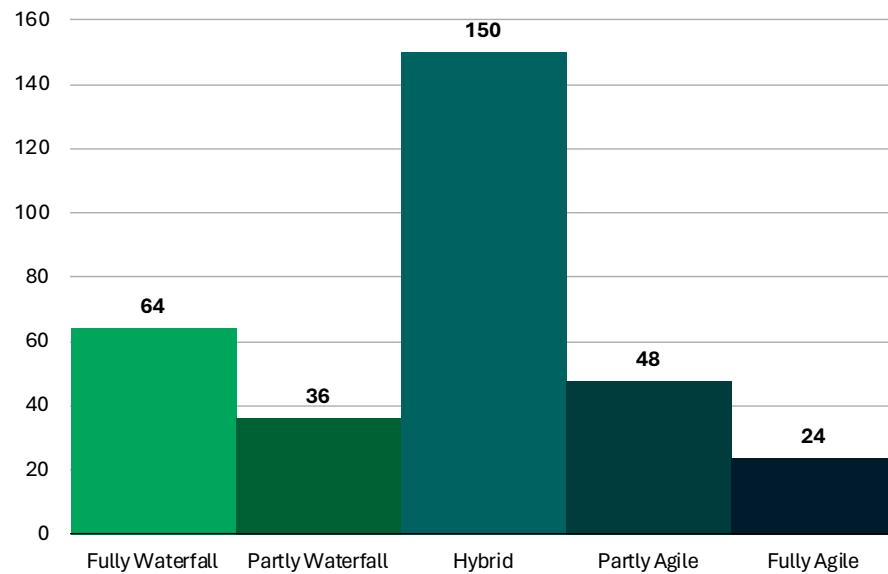


Figure 10. Respondents by Delivery Methodology (T1 (June 2022))

2.5.6 Sampling Profile: T2 June 2023

Respondent's locations for data collected at T2 (June 2023) are depicted in [Figure 11](#), with the majority (53%) of the respondents in the UKI. This is a seven percent increase in responses when comparing to T1 (June 2022).

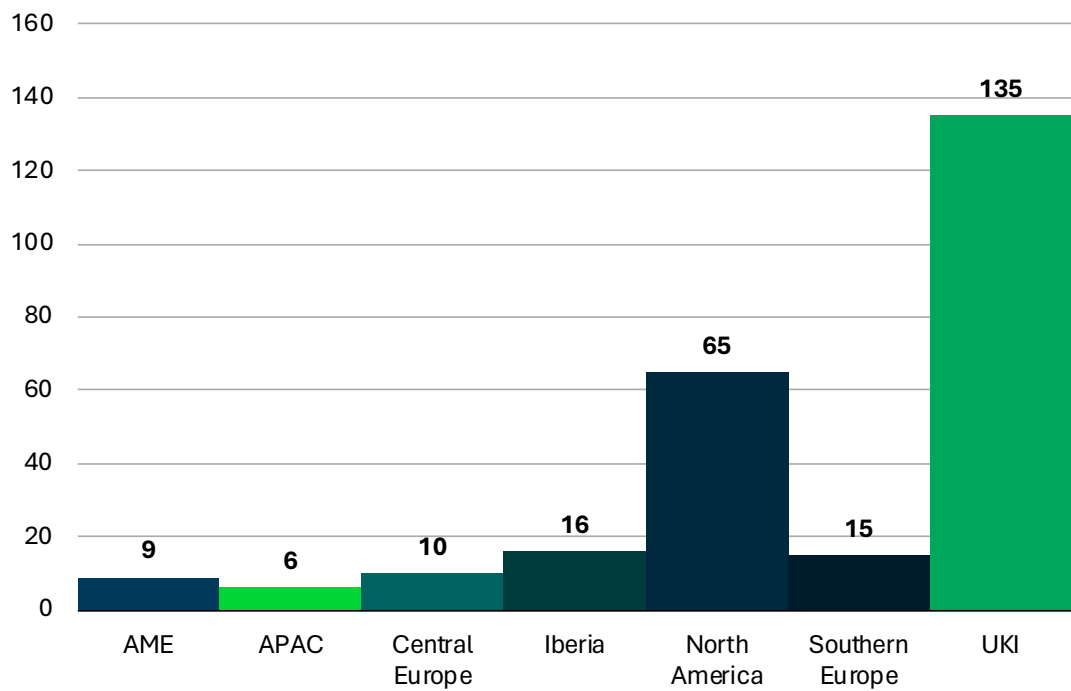


Figure 11. Respondents by Location (T2 (June 2023))

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When comparing the number of responses as a percentage between T1 (June 2022) to T2 (June 2023), [Figure 12](#) shows that for the UKI there was an increase from 46% to 53% (7% increase), with a reduction of 6% in North America and 3% reduction in Southern Europe. All other regions had a one or two percent difference.

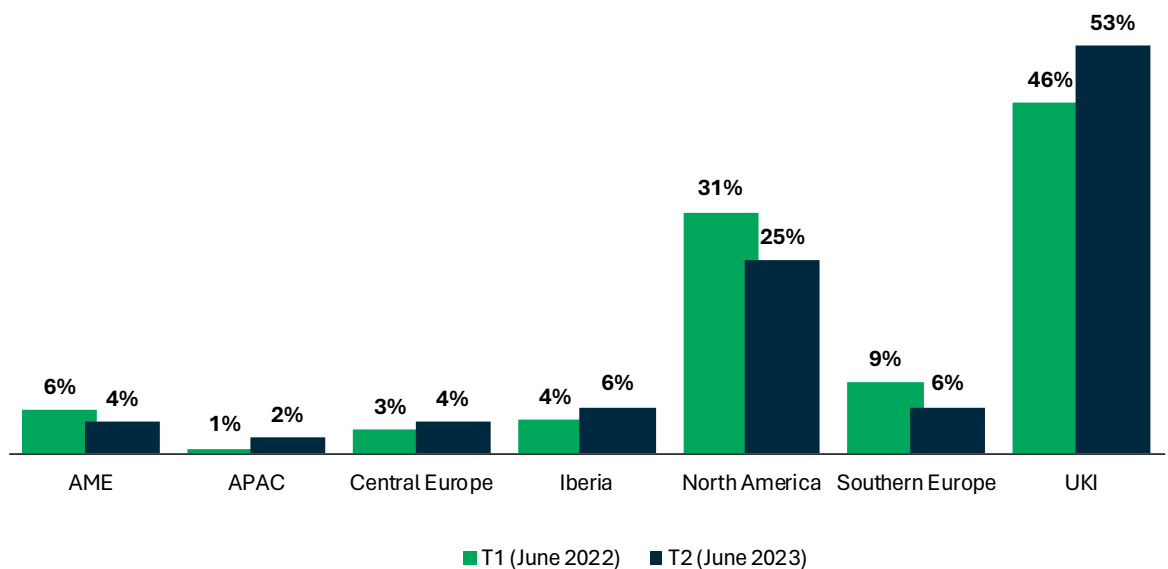


Figure 12. Comparison of Respondents by Location (T1 to T2)

[Figure 13](#) highlights the respondents by function, with 133 respondents (52%) spread across the three main functions, Business Transformation, Product and Customer Operations. This is a reduction of 11% from T1 (June 2022). For data at T2 (June 2023) Business Transformation makes up 24% of the employees that responded to the questionnaire, which is a reduction of 8% when compared to T1 (June 2022). [Figure 14](#) highlights the differences between T1 (June 2022) and T2 (June 2023). Once again, where functions had less than 10 employees, these were grouped into an 'Other Functions' category for any analysis and visualisation.

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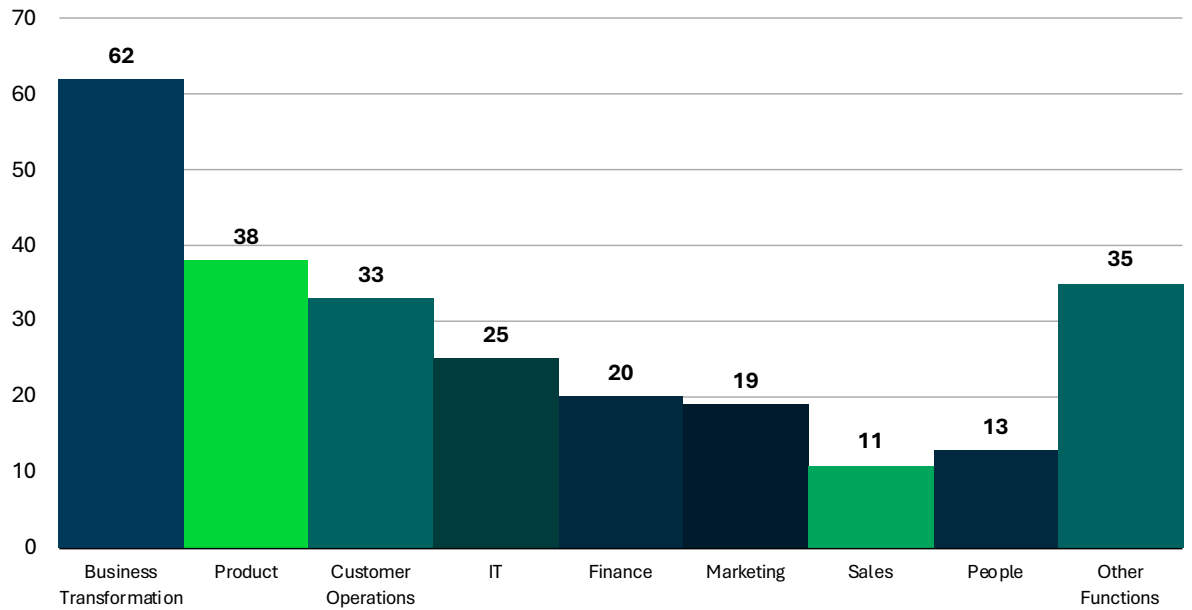


Figure 13. Respondents by Function (T2 (June 2023))

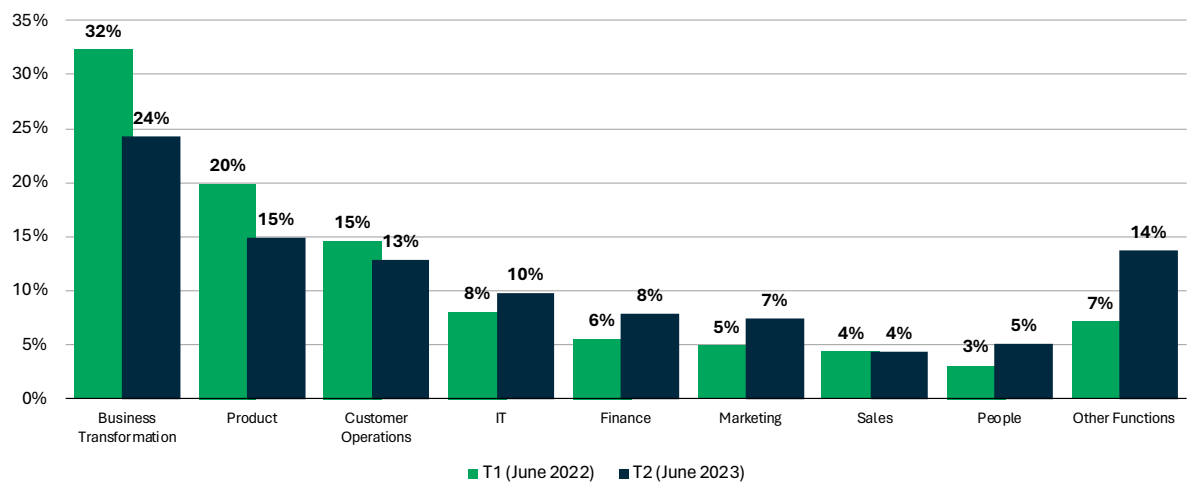


Figure 14. Comparison of Respondents by Function (T1 to T2)

For data at T2 (June 2023), 56% of the respondents stated that they followed a hybrid methodology (mixture of waterfall and agile), with only 4% following a fully agile approach, as depicted in [Figure 15](#).

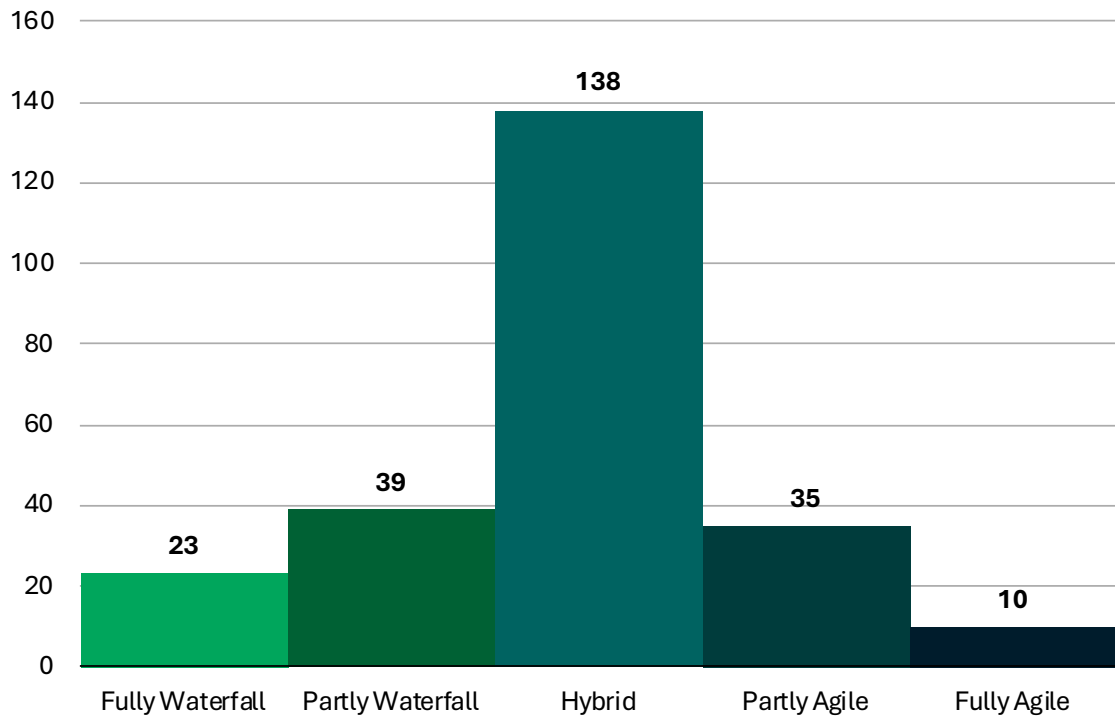


Figure 15. Respondents by Delivery Methodology (T2 (June 2023))

When compared to T1 (June 2022), hybrid methodologies increased by nine percent and the Partly Waterfall category increased by five percent (from 47% at T1 (June 2022)). The most notable difference was the decreased number in the Fully Waterfall category by 11%. One of the key outcomes of the interventions was to deploy Squad Ways of Working to increase agility. [Figure 16](#) shows the difference between T1 and T2.

While these changes may initially raise concerns about fluctuations in delivery methodologies, it is important to contextualise these shifts within the current software and services industry which requires organisations to increase their level of agility ([Alves, et al., 2023](#)). Additionally, the observed changes in methodology adoption rates

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might reflect that the interventions successfully deployed in the organisation, rather than indicative of significant concerns. The overall distribution of methodologies (percentage within each category) is within a good range. Thus, while the changes between T1 and T2 are noticeable, they are considered acceptable by the researcher.

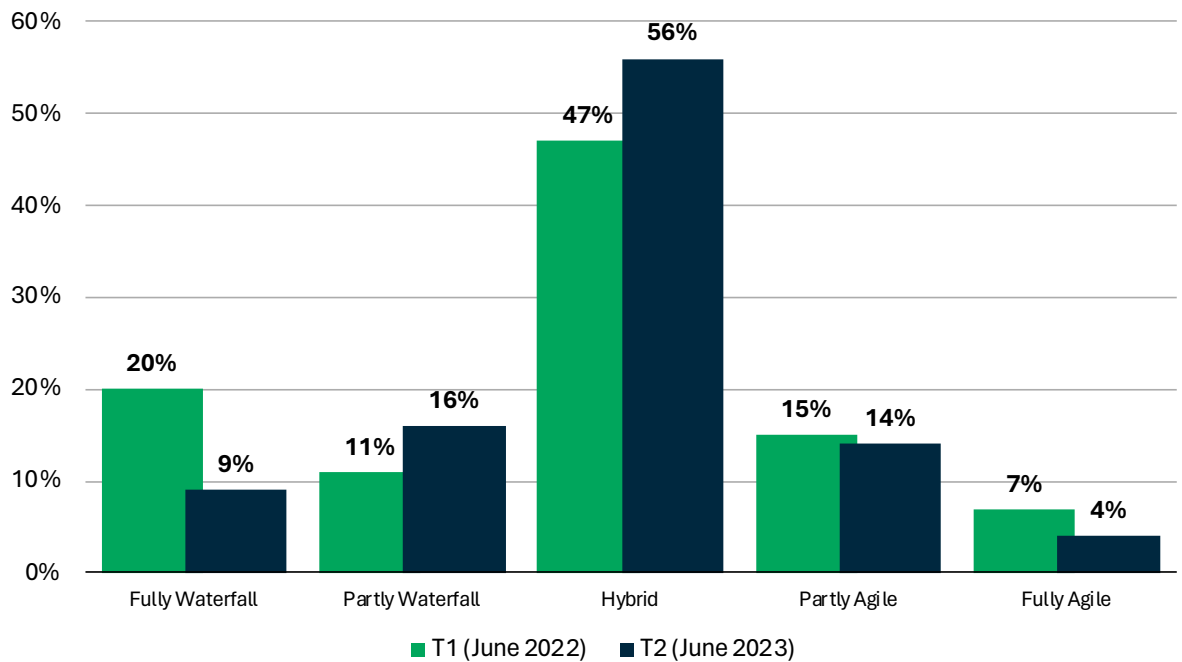


Figure 16. Delivery Methodology (T1 to T2)

2.5.7 Validity and Reliability

For empirical research, it is essential that a permissible degree of validity and reliability is achieved. Validity is often described as the absence of systematic measurement errors and reliability is taken as the absence of random errors (Straub, 1989; Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). For the purpose of this research, validity was ascertained via the use of factor analysis, with the Oblimin method of rotation for highly correlated variables and Varimax for the remainder. As a guideline, acceptable levels of extraction commonalities must be above 0.3 and factor loadings above 0.5 onto each dominant factor. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which will be discussed further in the next subsection, was used to establish discriminant validity of the latent variables in the research (Thompson, 2007; Chung, et al., 2017). After this, reliability was established through the use of Cronbach alpha, a measure used to check the internal reliability (Bonett & Wright, 2015; Cronbach, 1951). Acceptable levels require the alpha coefficient, for items that combine to make up the variable, to be above 0.7. Acceptance levels will be adopted for both validity and reliability, which will be discussed in the next subsection.

2.5.8 Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

As highlighted in the previous subsection, to achieve a permissible degree of validity and reliability, the researcher first conducted exploratory factor analysis. As a guideline, acceptable levels of extraction commonalities must be above 0.5 for each dominant factor. At T1 (June 2022), the minimum factor loading for decentralised structure was 0.916 and for PRTC it was 0.907. At T2 (June 2023), the minimum factor loading for decentralised structure was 0.836 and for PRTC it was 0.862. [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#) present the factor analysis for the combined items, following the methods defined by [George & Mallery, \(2021\)](#).

Following this, the researcher conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to establish discriminant validity of the latent variables ([Thompson, 2007; Chung, et al., 2017](#)). To conduct this analysis, the model including all variables separately which provided superior results against alternative models that collapsed variables, demonstrating discriminant validity (at T1 results were: $\chi^2=354.43$, $df = 146$, RMSEA = .060, CFI = .967; at T2 results were: $\chi^2=584.99$, $df = 246$, RMSEA = .0593, CFI = .434). Secondly, the researcher conducted reliability analysis to confirm that all factors were loaded onto the correct variables prior to hypothesis testing. After analysis, all Cronbach Alpha values were in the acceptable range ([Price, et al., 2002](#)); results are presented in [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#).

Table 2. Results from Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis (T1 – June 2022)

Item	No. of Items	Min. Factor Loading	Alpha	Alpha Range
Decentralised Structure	4	.916	.947	Excellent
PRTC	4	.907	.968	Excellent

N = 194.
Note:
 All Cronbach Alpha values were in the acceptable range as described by [George & Mallery, \(2021\)](#) ($\alpha > 0.7$ = Acceptable; $\alpha > 0.8$ = Good; $\alpha > 0.9$ = Excellent).

Table 3. Results from Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis (T2 – June 2023)

Item	No. of Items	Min. Factor Loading	Alpha	Alpha Range
Decentralised Structure	4	.836	.904	Excellent
PRTC	4	.862	.925	Excellent

N = 194.
Note:
 All Cronbach Alpha values were in the acceptable range as described by [George & Mallery, \(2021\)](#) ($\alpha > 0.7$ = Acceptable; $\alpha > 0.8$ = Good; $\alpha > 0.9$ = Excellent).

2.6 Results

For testing the hypotheses, the researcher converted the two sets of data (T1 for 2022 and T2 for 2023) into a single set of long format data. [Table 4](#) presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables, in long data format.

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Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (T1& T2 Long Data)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Age	3.27	1.11	1												
2 Education Level	3.28	1.24	.183**	1											
3 Country	1.04	0.69	.011	-.018	1										
4 Managerial Status	0.82	0.67	-.028	-.048	.412**	1									
5 Organisation Tenure	2.72	1.18	.023	.054	.140**	.068	1								
6 Methodology	2.73	1.21	.084	-.004	.005	-.054	-.012	1							
7 Gender	2.50	1.21	.010	-.006	.106*	.480**	.001	.038	1						
8 Team Size	3.49	1.41	-.005	-.018	-.021	-.087	-.054	.101*	-.156**	1					
9 Team Age	3.68	1.62	.005	.053	-.147**	-.335**	.029	.059	-.298**	.174**	1				
10 Agile Experts Squared	6.64	8.03	.031	-.018	.046	.055	-.015	.350**	-.006	.243**	.132**	1			
11 Culture - Individualism	0.83	0.38	-.020	.047	-.066	.112*	.042	.002	.028	.007	-.065	-.004	1		
12 Culture - Power Distance	0.16	0.36	.043	.017	.049	-.136**	.050	.066	-.026	.000	.052	-.039	-.483**	1	
13 Decentralised Structure	2.79	1.14	.058	.032	-.171**	-.190**	-.092	.351**	.045	-.113*	.003	.008	-.007	-.048	1
14 Resistance to Change	3.31	1.28	-.046	.016	.127*	.155**	.072	-.389**	.024	.017	-.036	-.176**	.046	-.030	-.449**

N = 388
 p* < .05 level; *p* < .01 level.

To test the first hypothesis, the researcher used fixed effects regression in SPSS with the least squares dummy variable approach. Dummy variables, to be referred to as dummies throughout this thesis, are numerical variables used to represent categorical data (for example with values of 1, 2 or 3) (Suits, 1984).

The changes in PRTC over time as a function of decentralised structure: R^2 change was .054 (5%) and $p < .001$ (Model 3 in Table 5, after control variables were included). Highlighting this by adding in the time-varying predictor in the model it accounts for an additional 5% of total variation in PRTC.

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression for Hypothesis 1: Decentralised Structure to PRTC (T1& T2 Long Data)

Long Data (T1 & T2)		PRTC		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Control variables				
Age		-.002	-.010	
Education Level		-.014	.021	
Country		.220	.128	
Managerial Status		.403**	.201	
Organisation Tenure		.003	-.002	
Delivery Methodology		-.298***	-.152*	
Gender		-.097	-.048	
Team Size		.041	-.030	
Team Age		.042	.003	
Independent variables				
Decentralised Structure			-.406***	
R ²	.552	.633	.687	
ΔR ²		.082	.054	
ΔF		4.571	31.840	
N = 388.				
* p < .05 level; ** p < .01 level; *** p < .001 level.				
Coefficients are unstandardised				

The formula below is based upon research by [Cohen \(1988\)](#) and [Darlington & Hayes \(2017\)](#) and was used to calculate the Multiple R^2 partial, which represents the proportion of remaining unexplained variation.

$$\text{Multiple } R^2_{\text{partial}} = \frac{R^2_{\text{model3}} - R^2_{\text{model2}}}{1 - R^2_{\text{model2}}} + \frac{\Delta R^2}{1 - R^2_{\text{model2}}} = \frac{.054}{1 - .633} = \frac{.054}{.367} = .147$$

After residualising for the 193 dummy variables (model 1), and taking into account the control variables (model 2), the time-varying predictor of decentralised structure accounts for approximately 15% of the remaining (unexplained) variation in the dependent variable (PRTC). Therefore, as shown in [Table 5](#), decentralised structure was a negative and significant predictor of PRTC in the model ($b = -.406$, $s.e. = .072$, $p < .001$).

To validate the above results, the researcher used Hayes Process Macro (Model 1) to test the moderating effect of time between decentralised structure and PRTC (see results in [Table 6](#), [Table 7](#) and [Figure 17](#)). The results revealed that the interaction variable (Decentralised Structure X Interventions [Time]) has a significant unconditional interaction with PRTC ($\Delta R^2 = .013$, $p < .01$). The conditional effect of decentralised structure on PRTC was negative and significant for T1 and T2 (T1: $b = -.234$, $p < .01$; 95%CI [-.383, -.085]; T2: $b = -.514$, $p < .001$; 95%CI [-.665, -.364]).

The significant interaction (Decentralised Structure X Interventions [Time]) effect observed between decentralised structure and time indicates that the interventions deployed (represented by Time) moderate the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC ($b = -.281$, $p < .01$). In addition, the negative

coefficient associated with the interaction effect suggests that the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC becomes increasingly negative over time. This aligns with the hypothesis which predicted that the relationship will be negative (i.e., reduce PRTC) after the interventions were deployed. Lastly, the statistically significant ' p ' value associated with the interaction term further supports the notion that the interventions deployed have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC.

Therefore, these findings support Hypothesis 1.

Table 6. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 1) for Hypothesis 1 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Long Data (T1 & T2)		coeff
		PRTC
Control variables		
Age		-.013
Education Level		.035
Country		.062
Managerial Status		.192
Organisation Tenure		.021
Delivery Methodology		-.237***
Team Size		.014
Team Age		-.006
Gender		.051
Independent variable		
Decentralised Structure		.048
Moderator		
Interventions (Time)		.988**
Interaction		
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 1)		-.281**
<i>R</i> ²		.287***
ΔR^2		.013
<i>F</i>		12.611
N = 388.		
* <i>p</i> < .05 level; ** <i>p</i> < .01 level; *** <i>p</i> < .001 level.		

Table 7. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderator for Hypothesis 1 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Decentralised Structure to PRTC					
<i>Moderator</i>		<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>BootULCI</i>
Interventions (Time)	T1	-.234	.002	-.383	-.085
Interventions (Time)	T2	-.514	.000	-.665	-.364

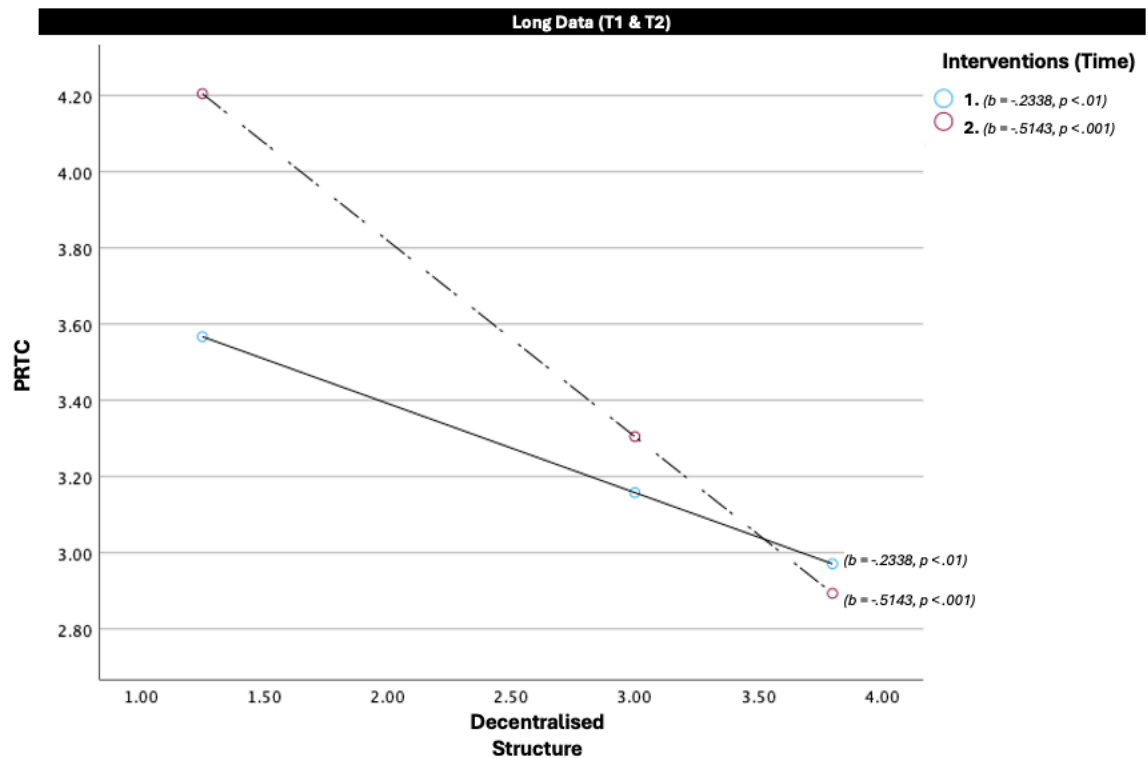


Figure 17. Hypothesis 1 - Effects of Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (Long Data - T1 & T2)

The researcher next examined the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC where individualistic vs collectivistic country culture was a moderator. The researcher ran moderation analysis with Model 3 of the Hayes Process Macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2022) using a bootstrapping procedure to construct 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CI) for the effects, based on 5,000 random samples with replacement from the full sample.

The results revealed that the test for highest order unconditional interactions between decentralised structure, individualistic culture and the interventions (Time) was significant ($p < .01$). The conditional effect of decentralised structure on PRTC for those with an individualistic culture was negative and significant for T1 and T2 (T1: $b = -.338, p < .001$; 95%CI [-.493, -.184]; T2: $b = -.879, p < .001$; 95%CI [-1.046, -.711]).

The conditional effects analysis reveals that the effect of decentralised structure on PRTC varies based on time. Particularly, when employees were categorised with an individualistic culture and time increases (moves from T1 to T2), the negative relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC weakens (reduces PRTC).

Therefore, the results provide evidence that the time-moderated relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC is further moderated by individualistic culture, supporting Hypothesis 2. Results are presented in [Table 8](#) and [Table 9](#), and visualised in [Figure 18](#).

Table 8. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 2 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff
PRTC	
Control variables	
Age	-.018
Education Level	.011
Country	.047
Managerial Status	-.003
Organisation Tenure	.042
Delivery Methodology	-.203**
Team Size	.010
Team Age	-.009
Gender	.042
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	-.074
Moderator	
Individualistic Culture	-.495
Interventions (Time)	-.321
Interaction	
DS x Individualistic Culture (Int 1)	.276
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	.126
Individualistic Culture x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	1.783**
DS x Individualistic Culture x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	-.666**
R^2	.396
ΔR^2	.014
F	15.210

Table 9. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 2 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change						
<i>Moderator 1:</i>	<i>Moderator 2:</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>BootULCI</i>	
<i>Individualistic Culture</i>	<i>Time</i>					
Collectivist (0)	T1	.051	.744	-.258	.360	
Collectivist (0)	T2	.178	.124	-.049	.402	
Individualist (1)	T1	-.338	.000	-.493	-.184	
Individualist (1)	T2	-.879	.000	-1.046	-.711	

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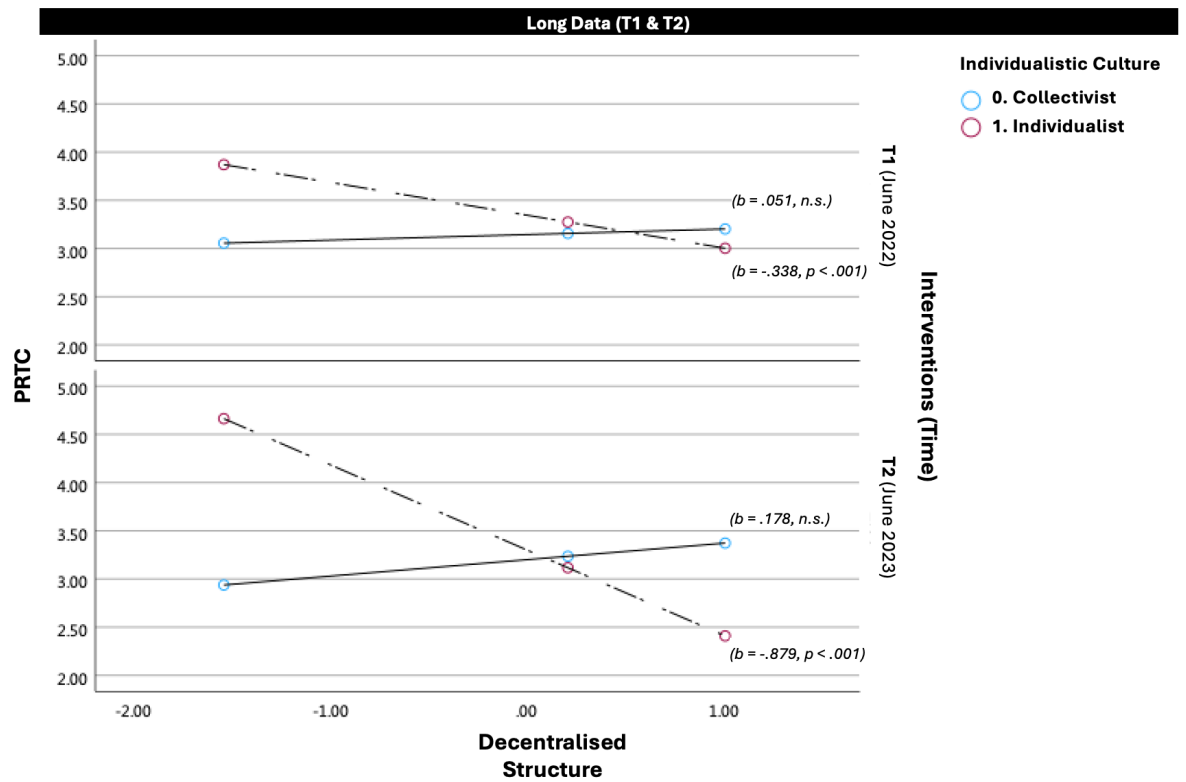


Figure 18. Hypothesis 2 - Effects of Individualistic Culture and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (Long Data - T1 & T2)

For Hypothesis 3, the researcher used Hayes Process Macro Model 3 to test if power distance national culture and interventions (time) had a moderation effect on the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC. Results from the tests of highest order unconditional interaction showed that there was a significant interaction ($p < .01$). The conditional effect of decentralisation on PRTC for those with a low power distance culture was negative and significant for T1 and T2 (T1: $b = -.318$, $p < .001$; 95%CI [-.486, -.151]; T2: $b = -.464$, $p < .001$; 95%CI [-.623, -.305]).

The interaction effect between decentralised structure and power distance is significant ($p = .0063$), indicating that the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC is moderated by power distance. Additionally, the interaction effect between power distance, time and decentralised structure is also significant ($p = .0045$), suggesting that the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC is further moderated by both power distance and time.

The conditional effects analysis demonstrates that, as time increases, the relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC weakens (reduces PRTC) for low power distance cultures. This finding validates the hypothesis that the time-moderated relationship between decentralised structure and resistance to change is further moderated by low power distance country culture, indicating that PRTC will reduce for low power distance cultures over time in the context of decentralised structure.

Results are presented in [Table 10](#) and [Table 11](#) and visualised in [Figure 19](#), which support Hypothesis 3.

Table 10. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 3 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Control variables	
Age	-.013
Education Level	.044
Country	.033
Managerial Status	.200
Organisation Tenure	.006
Delivery Methodology	-.223***
Team Size	.004
Team Age	-.007
Gender	.060
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	-.173
Moderator	
High Power Distance	-3.30***
Interventions (Time)	.615
Interaction	
DS x High Power Distance (Int 1)	1.15***
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	-.146
High Power Distance x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	2.17***
DS x High Power Distance x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	-.769***
R^2	.305
ΔR^2	.017
F	10.165
N = 388.	
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.	

Table 11. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 3 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change					
<i>Moderator 1: High Power Distance</i>	<i>Moderation 2: Time</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>BootULCI</i>
Low Power Distance (0)	T1	-.318	.000	-.486	-.151
Low Power Distance (0)	T2	-.464	.000	-.623	-.305
High Power Distance (1)	T1	.070	.675	-.256	.395
High Power Distance (1)	T2	-.845	.000	-1.176	-.514

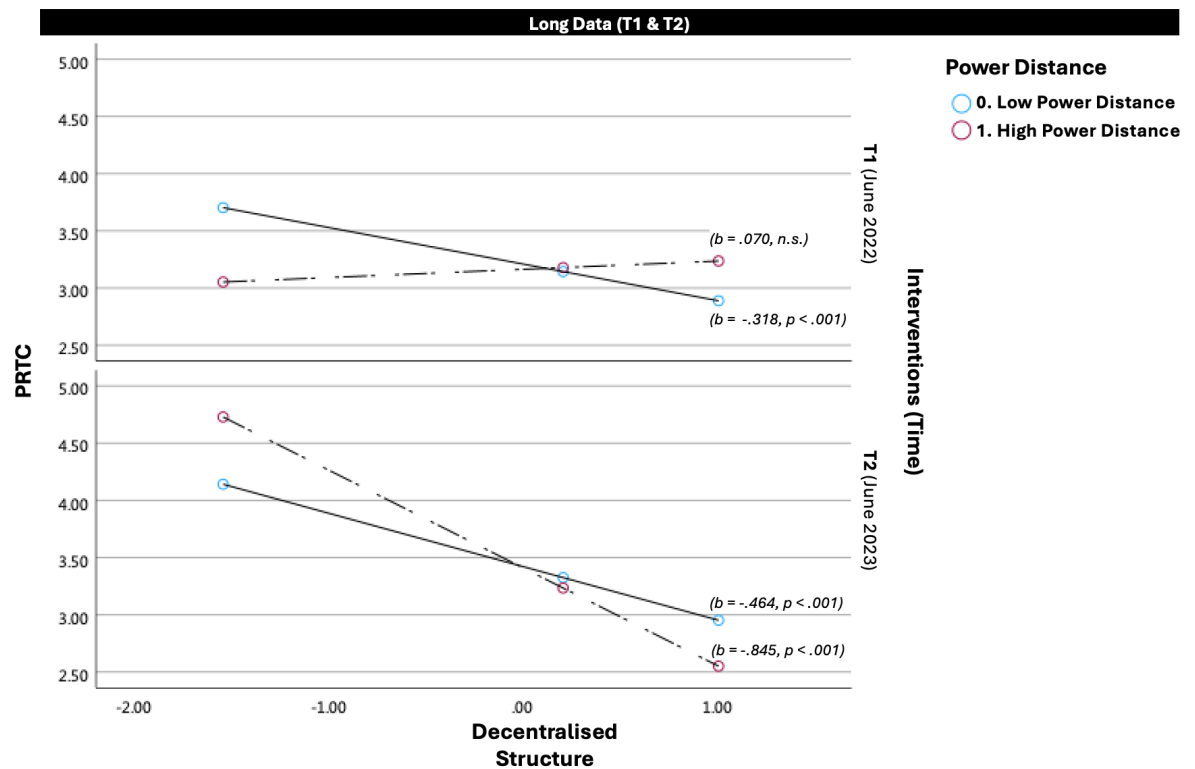


Figure 19. Hypothesis 3 - Effects of Power Distance and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (Long Data - T1 & T2)

Lastly, for Hypothesis 4, the researcher ran moderation analysis with Model 3 of the Hayes Process Macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2022) using a bootstrapping procedure to construct 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CI) for the effects, based on 5,000 random samples with replacement from the full sample. Results revealed a significant conditional effect of the focal predictor decentralised structure (X) on PRTC (Y) for specific combinations of external agile experts (W) and interventions (time) (Z). Specifically, when the number of external agile experts was high ($W = 16$), at T1 the effect was significant ($b = -.406, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.603, -.209]$), and at T2, the effect was significant ($b = -.564, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.763, -.365]$). Results are presented in Table 12 and Table 13, and Figure 20, shows these results and all the other non-significant conditional effects. However, because this was a longitudinal study, the main focus is on interaction term four ($X*W*Z$), which had a p value of .0849; which shows very weak evidence that the null hypothesis does not hold. Therefore, these findings do not support H4 (at a $p < .05$ level), and further research is required into this hypothesis in the future.

Finally, all effects were similar with or without control variables in the models. Furthermore, as per research by Becker (2005, pp. 285, 286), this thesis incorporates key recommendations, with specific attention given to recommendations 2 and 11:

“Recommendation 2. Beware of impotent control variables (i.e., ones uncorrelated with the dependent variable). Unless there is reason to believe that an MCV is a legitimate suppressor, including an MCV that is uncorrelated with the dependent variable in analyses reduces power.” (Becker, 2005, p. 285);

“Recommendation 11. Run and report the primary results both with and without the MCVs. If the results do not differ, then authors and readers can rule out the controls as a potential explanation for the findings.” (Becker, 2005, p. 286).

Table 12. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 4 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Control variables	
Age	.006
Education Level	.034
Country	-.001
Managerial Status	.191
Organisation Tenure	.008
Delivery Methodology	-.150**
Team Size	.018
Team Age	-.007
Gender	.031
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	.463*
Moderator	
Agile Experts Squared	.189***
Interventions (Time)	1.918***
Interaction	
DS x Agile Experts Squared (Int 1)	-.044
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	-.478***
Agile Experts Squared x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	-.111***
DS x Agile Experts Squared x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	.020
R^2	.343
ΔR^2	.005
F	12.102

N = 388.

* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

Notes:

Table 13. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 4 (T1& T2 Long Data)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change					
Moderator 1: Agile Experts Squared	Moderator 2: Time	Effect	p	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low Level (1)	T1	-.040	.679	-.231	.151
Low Level (1)	T2	-.498	.000	-.676	-.321
High Level (16)	T1	-.406	.000	-.603	-.209
High Level (16)	T2	-.564	.000	-.763	-.365

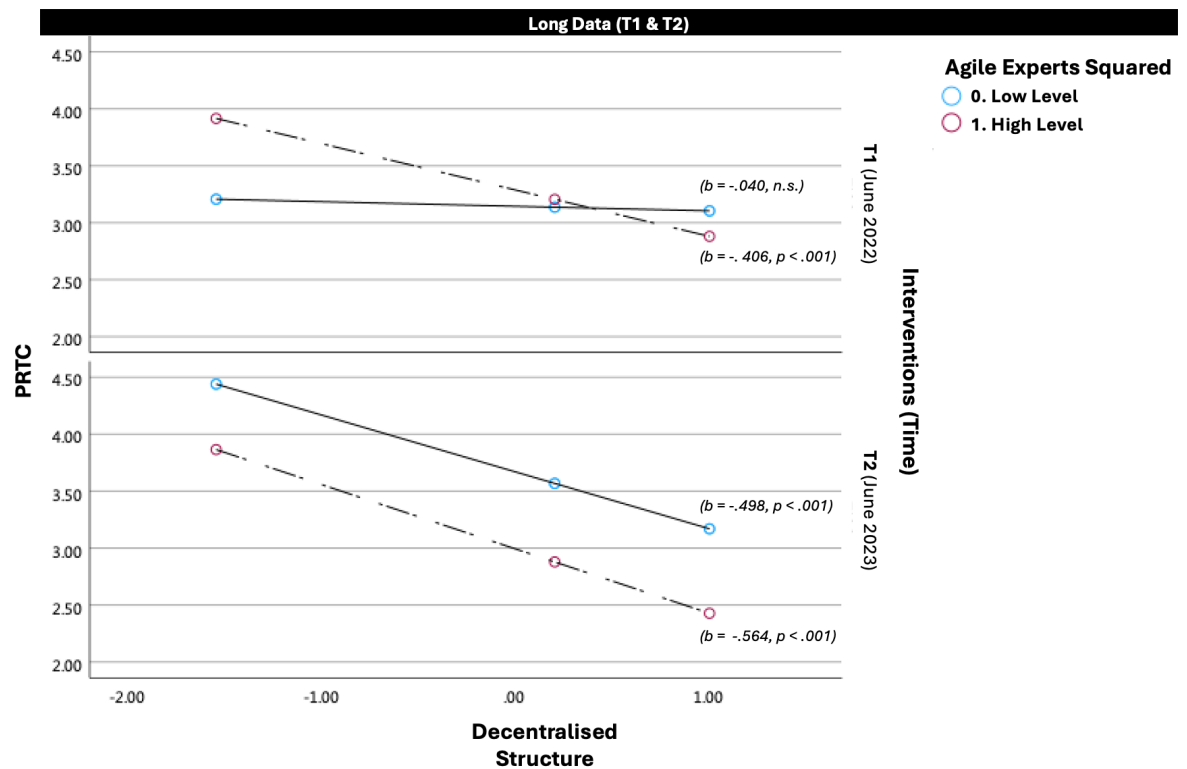


Figure 20. Hypothesis 4 - Effects of Agile Experts and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (Long Data - T1 & T2)

2.7 Paper One Summary

This sub-section provides a summary of the results (see [section 2.6](#)) and how they tie to the literature review (see [section 2.1](#)). The researcher's findings explain how, pre- and post-transformation, decentralisation impacts PRTC and how Hofstede's country/national cultural dimensions (power distance and individualism) and external agile experts impact the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC ([Hofstede, 2001](#); [Hofstede, 2011](#); [Gandomani & Nafchi, 2015](#)).

In this study, the researcher investigated the dynamics of decentralised structure and its impact on PRTC across two time periods (T1 in 2022 and T2 in 2023). Utilising fixed effects regression, and the Hayes Process Macro, the researcher found a negative relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC. Notably, the inclusion of the time-varying predictor accounted for an additional 5% of the variation in PRTC after controlling for relevant variables. Additionally, using Hayes Process Macro to test Hypothesis 1 led to the same outcome over time by implementing the ten transformation programmes, with increasing levels of decentralisation, levels of PRTC decreased.

In the context of organisational change, the concept of decentralised structure refers to employees' perception of the distribution of decision-making authority within their organisation ([Altamimi, et al., 2023](#); [Alves, et al., 2023](#)). A decentralised structure is generally characterised by a greater degree of autonomy at lower levels of the hierarchy ([Bordia, et al., 2004](#); [Andrews, et al., 2009](#)). The statistical analysis using Hayes Process Macro (Model 1) revealed that an increase in decentralised structure is

associated with a decrease in PRTC among employees. This relationship is quantified by the negative '*b*' values at two different time points, T1 and T2.

At the first time point (T1), the '*b*' value of $-.243$ indicates that as employees perceive the structure to be more decentralised, their PRTC diminishes. This suggests that decentralisation may be facilitating a better transition during organisational changes by reducing pushback from employees. The effect is even more pronounced at the second time point (T2), where the '*b*' value of $-.514$ suggesting a stronger association between decentralisation and the reduction in PRTC. The more negative '*b*' value at T2 compared to T1 implies that, over time, as an organisation moves towards a more decentralised structure, employees' readiness to embrace change increases (PRTC reduces).

This is an important finding as it unlocks our understanding of how deploying organisation-driven transformation impacts levels of resistance. Furthermore, Study 2 delved into the moderating effects of time, individualistic vs collectivistic country culture and power distance. The findings highlighted in the previous sections (see [section 2.6](#)) supported hypotheses related to the moderating effect of time and cultural dimensions (H2 and H3), suggesting that over time and within different cultural contexts, the influence of decentralised structure on PRTC varies.

The results supported the researcher's rationale that during large-scale organisational changes increasing decentralisation will lead to a reduction in PRTC (see [Table 14](#)). The interventions deployed during T1 and T2 led to changes in the organisational structure, shifts in customer demands and alterations in the level of expertise among Agile Experts, all of which are factors that could have influenced these results. It is also possible that the organisation's culture or external market

conditions may have changed during this period. These topics provide opportunities for further research which is described in [section 2.10](#).

For organisations planning to implement decentralised structures, these findings emphasise how over time the impact on PRTC changes. It underscores the need for organisations to communicate early and frequently with their employees. These results also provide an empirical view of how PRTC changes as decentralised structure increases.

In summary this study underscores the role of change programmes and interventions in steering organisations towards profitability and trustworthiness.

Table 14: Study 2 Summary

Hypothesis	Path	Prediction	Method	Result	Conditional Effects Result
H1	DS → PRTC (Mod: Time)	↓ PRTC	Regression	Supported	T1: $b = -.234, p < .01$; 95%CI [-.383, -.085] T2: $b = -.514, p < .001$; 95%CI [-.665, -.364]
H2	DS → PRTC (Mod: Individualism & Time)	↓ PRTC	Regression	Supported	T1: $b = -.338, p < .001$; 95%CI [-.493, -.184] T2: $b = -.879, p < .001$; 95%CI [-1.046, -.711]
H3	DS → PRTC (Mod: Low Power Distance & Time)	↓ PRTC	Regression	Supported	T1: $b = -.318, p < .001$; 95%CI [-.486, -.151] T2: $b = -.464, p < .001$; 95%CI [-.623, -.305]
H4	DS → PRTC (Mod: Experts & Time)	↓ PRTC	Regression	Not Supported	Not applicable as interaction term was not significant.

2.8 Contributions to Theory

Research on decentralisation and resistance is becoming more prevalent and integral in the redefinition and usage of empowerment theories, such as Kanter Theory (Spreitzer, 1996; Lin & Germain, 2003; Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018; Metwally, et al., 2019; Rovelli & Buttice, 2020). This study contributes to the literature on factors that influence perceived resistance to change, as stated by a participant in the interviews: *"loss is more powerful than the joy of getting something new"*.

By exploring the impact of decentralised structure and country culture on employees' PRTC before and after significant organisational transformation, this research shares factors that influence employees' reactions to organisational change. Furthermore, this study contributes to theoretical frameworks and models of change management (Lewin, 1947a; Bernerth, et al., 2011; Pullen & Ferreira, 2017; Walk, 2023), by adding quantitative research to our understanding of the dynamics involved in organisational transformations.

Firstly, and primarily, this thesis builds on Kanter's Empowerment Theory (Kanter, 1977) by quantitatively demonstrating how decentralisation, through increased empowerment, influences PRTC, particularly by integrating Hofstede's country culture dimensions of Power Distance and Individualism (Hofstede, 2001; House, et al., 2004; Jimmieson, et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2011; Hamlin, 2016; Gunkel, et al., 2016; Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018). Moreover, this research utilises and builds upon various empowerment literature sources (Kanter, 1993; Tripp, et al., 2016; Vos & Rupert, 2018; Will, et al., 2019; Warrick, 2023; Hodges, 2024) to define interventions within a multinational organisation undergoing large-scale change, and uses these

interventions to showcase the impact of decentralisation on PRTC. Furthermore, this thesis investigates change management principles by utilising literature (Herold, et al., 2007; Hempel, et al., 2012; Giannocco, 2018; Altamimi, et al., 2023; Jia, et al., 2024; Hodges, 2024) to shape a longitudinal, quantitative study that captures employees' reactions over a twelve-month period. This offers an alternative view to the dominant focus on communication and leadership styles driving resistance (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Danisman, 2010; Ewenstein, et al., 2015; Moradi, et al., 2021; Feng, et al., 2023). It also bridges gaps and future research areas in literature (Fiedler, et al., 1996; Argyres & Silverman, 2004; Giannocco, 2018) on decentralisation and PRTC.

When organisations go through transformation, they are often changing the psychological contract that an employee has with their organisation, as well as the expected ways of working (Hodges, 2021). Much of the literature has mainly focused on factors such as organisational justice, support, and leader-member exchange (Amarantou, et al., 2017; Vos & Rupert, 2018). Therefore, this thesis provides quantitative, longitudinal, results that contribute to the current discourse surrounding change management practices and organisational behaviour theories that are focused on organisation structures (Altamimi, et al., 2023; Walk, 2023; Wu & Konrad, 2023; de Vries & de Vries, 2023; Adana, et al., 2024).

Furthermore, current literature indicates that clear communication of change initiatives and adequate training and support for employees can reduce resistance to change, but it has not delved into the specific impact of decentralised structure on PRTC (Fiedler, et al., 1996; Argyres & Silverman, 2004; Eva, et al., 2021). However, this research takes the first step by showcasing how ten specific interventions or change programmes impact variables that are fundamental to theories and literature. By taking

this approach, this research further advances our understanding about organisational change over time (longitudinal). The researcher advances this stream of research by identifying factors (e.g., number of agile experts, individualism and power distance) that, albeit not investigated in detail, show influence on perceived resistance in important ways.

This research builds upon Kanter's empowerment theory ([Kanter, 1987](#); [Kanter, 1993](#)) and contributes to the broader body of organisational empowerment theory by shedding light on the interplay between structure, culture, and change dynamics within organisations. Firstly, by quantitatively demonstrating how decentralised organisational structures can foster employee empowerment through the deployment of interventions (based on Kanter's empowerment theory ([Kanter, 1977](#)), see [section 1.6](#)) and, in turn, reduce PRTC during large-scale organisational change, organisations are able to understand which interventions to deploy and at which intervals. Secondly, unlike much of the existing literature ([Argyres & Silverman, 2004](#); [Johnson & Leenders, 2004](#); [Battilana & Casciaro, 2013](#); [Felipe, et al., 2016](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#)), which often treats empowerment and decentralisation as static concepts that are measured at one time point, this thesis captures the relationships between structure, country culture, and behavioural response over time. This will help leaders, employees and scholars that focus on organisational change understand how they need to change their strategies to consider changes over time. Third, this longitudinal study within a single organisation provides a viewpoint for future researchers and builds on research by [Giæver & Smollan \(2015\)](#). Fourth, this thesis introduces a novel theoretical model ([Figure 4](#)) that integrates decentralisation, country cultural dimensions (such as power distance and individualism), and external agile experts. By focusing on these variables,

this research builds on literature and theory from Hofstede ([Hofstede, 2001](#); [Hofstede, 2011](#)), as the researcher highlights how country cultural context moderates the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC. This should help leaders understand how to adapt their communications strategies by country ([Grant, 2014](#); [Gartner, 2018](#)). The research also deepens our understanding of how structural empowerment influences behavioural reactions to change, which leaders can use to better manage relationships with employees ([Hempel, et al., 2012](#); [Grant, 2015](#)). By doing this, this study increases our understanding of empowerment theory from both a conceptual and practical standpoint.

This research contributes to the ongoing dialogue among scholars and practitioners who are seeking to understand and navigate the complexities of organisational change ([Walk, 2023](#); [Jia, et al., 2024](#)).

While research on organisation structures, including decentralisation and centralisation, is growing ([Fiedler, et al., 1996](#); [Argyres & Silverman, 2004](#); [Andrews, et al., 2009](#); [Eva, et al., 2021](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#)), and while some anecdotal evidence suggests that decentralisation is mostly prevalent in times of organisational change ([Lin & Germain, 2003](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#); [Adana, et al., 2024](#)), the industry has limited insight into the reasons behind and mechanisms of large-scale transformational change, as well as its true role in the process. By incorporating recent decentralisation literature ([Sounman & Lee, 2018](#); [Burton, et al., 2019](#); [Altamimi, et al., 2023](#)) alongside studies from resistance during organisational change ([Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018](#); [Metwally, et al., 2019](#); [Warrick, 2023](#); [de Vries & de Vries, 2023](#); [Feng, et al., 2023](#); [Demeyere, et al., 2023](#)), the researcher has crafted a unique theoretical model. This

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model provides an initial answer to these questions, contextualising research on decentralisation and PRTC within an organisational change context.

Finally, this thesis enhances change management practices by examining changes in PRTC over time, before and after significant organisational transformation. Understanding how decentralisation and cultural factors influence employees' acceptance of change can inform the development of more targeted adaptive change interventions. This may include strategies to mitigate resistance, build trust, and facilitate stakeholder engagement through the change process; ultimately theory would be able to provide best practices that would improve the likelihood of successful organisational transformations ([Brady, et al., 2017](#); [Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017](#); [Burton, et al., 2019](#); [Cross, et al., 2021](#); [Demeyere, et al., 2023](#); [Hodges, 2024](#)).

2.9 Practical Implications

For practitioners looking for answers to unlocking strategic outcomes of organisation-driven decisions, understanding decentralised structure and PRTC during times of organisational change is fundamental. Furthermore, organisations need to recognise that employees will perceive resistance in different ways depending on their level of comfort (Oreg & Berson, 2019). Understanding these relationships will help create directed transformation programmes, interventions and strategies for more effective change management.

This study echoes those scholars who urge for strategies to overcome PRTC by involving employees in the change process, and by addressing concerns and objections through understanding the role culture plays in organisational change (Colquitt, 2001; Ford, et al., 2008; Hodges, 2021; Malhotra, et al., 2022). More specifically, the researcher's findings build upon decentralisation literature (Hage, et al., 1971; Fiedler, et al., 1996; Lin & Germain, 2003; Argyres & Silverman, 2004; Shaw, et al., 2005; Hempel, et al., 2012; Altamimi, et al., 2023) by adding to an organisation's thinking and strategies that can be deployed in the future to increase profitability. Often strategic decisions are made by leaders with little quantifiable data. This research affords an organisation the opportunity to utilise this data-driven thesis to improve future decision-making.

While there was no significant finding (at $p < .05$) for external Agile Experts, during the interviews there is clearly still a divided view, with one interviewee stating: *"What a relief [when an expert was brought in,] we were sinking, and they could work 80 hours each week"*. Another stated, *"Experts are a waste of time and money; they*

come in and ask us all the questions and then convert what we say into a pretty PowerPoint that our senior leaders are so impressed with. All style over substance”.

Furthermore, this divide requires further communication to ensure that organisations understand what is required to get the most out of the large sums invested in experts.

When reviewing literature, most studies that analyse PRTC and culture provide only a snapshot in time ([Danisman, 2010](#); [Giannoccaro, 2018](#); [Metwally, et al., 2019](#); [Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022](#)), but this research unearths critical findings from a large organisation that was actively undergoing transformation. These transformation interventions were meticulously selected and executed, which meant that the pre/post study had clear parameters and the change initiatives were known quantities, which means that the results from this study can be shared with other organisations.

2.10 Limitations and Further Research Directions

This thesis provides a foundation for future research. However, one of the main issues with conducting research from an organisation-driven perspective is the fact that it measures the perceptions of employees in the organisation, or more specifically, the individuals' thoughts about how others might behave, feel or think. Moreover, these are self-reported rather than using more objective measures that focus on an individual's viewpoint of their behaviour in relation to resistance. To overcome this limitation, the researcher suggests that future researchers conduct a research experiment with employees from various organisations. Such an experiment could provide a scenario that manipulates organisation structures (a decentralised (flatter) structure and a hierarchical structure) and would invite employees from different cultures to understand how they adopt a change. In addition, while the questionnaires provided validity, this was within a single organisation, and did not prove causality. This type of experiment would be similar to research conducted by [Argote, et al., \(1989\)](#) or literature from [Huvaj & Johnson \(2019\)](#). Therefore, conducting the experiment with employees from outside of a single organisation would prove causality and address this limitation. As [Tsang \(2014\)](#) points out, biases and homogeneity inherent to the organisation may limit the external validity of the research. Moreover, variables may be difficult to control without comparison groups, and with limited variation in key variables possibly hindering the detection of meaningful patterns ([Baruch, 1999](#); [Bryman, 2003](#); [Sekaran & Bougie, 2013](#)).

Based upon the research so far, this study provides different paths for further research directions.

Firstly, the sample size was less than 200 (after matching between questionnaire at T1 and T2) but expanding the sample to over 500 could provide further validation for the findings ([Baruch, 1999](#)). Larger sample sizes generally provide greater statistical power and precision ([George & Mallery, 2021](#)).

Furthermore, future research could expand beyond a single organisation with more than the 10 countries that were part of this study, which would allow for better evaluation of national cultural dimensions, thus providing more variation for greater impact. [Bryman \(2003\)](#) has highlighted that collecting all data from a single organisation presents various challenges and limitations because the findings may lack generalisability to other contexts (e.g., different industries or organisation sizes). There may be additional concerns regarding organisational politics, confidentiality, and resource constraints that are further complicated by conducting research within a single organisation. These all require ethical considerations, which are documented in [section 4.1](#). To address these issues, researchers may supplement single organisation questionnaire collection with multi-organisation studies, cross-organisational comparisons, or mixed methods approaches (e.g., including experiments) to enhance the robustness and generalisability of their findings ([Sekaran & Bougie, 2013](#); [Tsang, 2014](#)).

Building on the limitation that the research was conducted in a single organisation that had a majority of employees (over 75%) based in individualistic and low power distance country cultures (e.g., UKI and North America). Therefore, this high concentration of respondents from the UKI and North America may lead to an overgeneralisation of individualistic country culture traits, which may also introduce a sampling bias that limits the generalisability of the findings to more collectivist country

culture organisations, and potentially reduces external validity of Study 2 (George & Mallery, 2021). However, supplementary analysis revealed that there were no significant differences between low power distance and high power distance respondents in terms of PRTC (the same was the case for individualistic and collectivistic country culture respondents). To address this limitation, future researchers may use a multi-organisation approach and increase the participation from collectivist country culture organisations, so that there is a balanced view that is more representative across all categories (Lune & Berg, 2017; Memon, et al., 2020).

Secondly, this research only used two dimensions of Hofstede's (2001) cultural attributes. Therefore, future research could utilise other Hofstede country cultural dimensions, such as uncertainty avoidance index or masculinity versus femininity index (Hofstede, 2011).

Third, the researcher acknowledges that by using Hofstede's measures via the Culture Factor Group's country comparison tool (Shi & Wang, 2011), it was a simple view of culture, focusing on national or country culture, and there are more sophisticated models. Future researchers can use this thesis as a starting point and then measure culture, at a lower level, using research from Jackson, et al., (2006), which has a scale of measuring collectivism with the following example questions: "I preferred to work in those groups rather than working alone"; "Working in those groups was better than working alone"; "I wanted to work with those groups as opposed to working alone".

Fourth, another limitation is that the researcher did not baseline the level of resistance prior to the first questionnaire being sent out. By not establishing a baseline level of PRTC in June 2021 or at an earlier timepoint before administering the first

questionnaire (in May 2022), the researcher may have missed the opportunity to contextualise and interpret changes in PRTC over a longer period of time accurately. Furthermore, [Osborne \(2008\)](#) has highlighted that baseline data could provide a reference point for understanding the initial state of key variables, which would provide a comparison of changes throughout the study period. Without this baseline, it may be more difficult to attribute any observed changes to the interventions deployed which may reduce the validity and interpretability of the study findings.

Fifth, a further limitation of this research is that the data was pooled from 23 countries. Using a single model for all countries may fail to capture these country-specific relationships and lead to misspecification and biased results ([Bryman, 2003](#); [Osborne, 2008](#)). Additionally, the relationship between variables (e.g., decentralisation and PRTC) may differ across countries due to contextual factors. To overcome this limitation, the researcher used 'Country' as a control variable (see [section 2.4.3](#)). Future researchers may consider conducting multi-level hierarchical regression to address different country-specific nuances, although this would require more responses per country.

Sixth, the focus of this research was limited to a specific industry, Software/Product Development and Services. Although literature has shown that this type of longitudinal research can be generalised across various sectors ([Baruch, 1999](#); [Bryman, 2003](#); [Sekaran & Bougie, 2013](#)), the results may not be extended to other industries without caveats and further data gathering and analysis.

Seventh, future researchers could consider each intervention as a variable or as individual moderators of the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC.

Eighth, the interventions were decided three years ago (December 2021) and as technology has changed during the pandemic, other interventions such as generative artificial intelligence (AI) and remote working should be considered by future researchers ([Aguinis, et al., 2024](#); [Wang, et al., 2023](#); [Jia, et al., 2024](#)). Generative AI and remote working have the potential to reinforce and mitigate the relationship between decentralisation and PRTC. Generative AI, with its capacity to automate tasks, analyse data and generate insights, can facilitate decentralised decision-making by providing employees with real-time information and analysis ([Ransbotham, et al., 2019](#)). There is limited research into the impact of Generative AI and resistance, therefore future researchers could provide insight into this phenomenon. Additionally, AI-driven tools can empower employees by augmenting their capabilities, enabling them to adapt to new challenges and opportunities more effectively ([Jia, et al., 2024](#)).

Remote working, accelerated by technological advancements and the Covid pandemic, has reshaped how organisations operate, blurring traditional boundaries and necessitating new approaches to collaboration and communication. While remote working can enhance decentralisation by allowing employees to work autonomously and asynchronously, it also introduces challenges related to social isolation, communication barriers and the blurring of work-life boundaries ([Gutiérrez-Crocco, et al., 2024](#)). These challenges can exacerbate PRTC by increasing feelings of uncertainty, disconnection and mistrust among employees ([Pianese, et al., 2023](#); [Narayan, 2023](#); [Sagredo-Lillo, et al., 2024](#)). While these were not tested in this research, understanding how employees who are office based versus those who are remote or hybrid resist change would be valuable. Furthermore, the lack of human connection may have an impact on employees who build more meaningful social

relationships through daily in-person interactions versus online calls ([Allen, et al., 2021](#)).

However, when managed effectively, generative AI and remote working can complement decentralisation efforts and mitigate PRTC ([Jia, et al., 2024](#)). Research by [Colquitt, et al., \(2012\)](#) proposed that automating communication and analytics can provide a greater level of transparency and inclusive decision-making.

Similarly, remote working can promote decentralisation by empowering employees to take ownership of their work and collaborate across geographical boundaries ([Gutiérrez-Crocco, et al., 2024](#)).

Future researchers may investigate how value is maximised in an organisation by reducing PRTC. For example, to maximise the benefits of generative AI and remote working, while minimising PRTC, researchers could measure the amount of money organisations are investing in leadership programmes, communication channels and change management plans that focus on employee engagement and involvement ([Wang, et al., 2023](#)). Ultimately, the successful integration of new technologies into decentralised structures will depend on organisation adaptability, resilience and continuous learning ([Ransbotham, et al., 2019](#)). Therefore, this makes an interesting area for future research and would provide valuable insights into how generative AI and remote working impacts empowerment, PRTC, decentralisation and national culture.

Lastly, while this research has a number of limitations and areas for future research, it arms academia, practitioners and researchers with an initial set of hypotheses, variables and a methodology that can be used as a starting point for future research that would provide organisations with vehicles to gain competitive advantage in an ever-changing environment.

2.11 Conclusion

This research indicates how decentralised structure correlated with PRTC, within a large multinational organisation, and generated interesting findings for theory and practice. The moderation of individualism and low power distance provides a deeper understanding of what large scale organisations need to consider as they go through transformations.

**Workplace Gossip in Times of
Organisational Change:
Coping with Anxiety or Fear and
Effects on Resistance**



3 Paper Two: Workplace Gossip in Times of Organisational Change: Coping with Anxiety or Fear and Effects on Resistance

The second paper delves into change-related anxiety and fear and the impact of these emotions on gossip and resistance to change. In the theoretical model for Paper Two ([Figure 21](#)), gossipers' gender is included as a moderator between gossip and resistance to change. As per Paper One, the researcher adopts a standard format commonly used within journal articles and theses, encompassing twelve sections.

Firstly, the researcher starts by providing an abstract of Paper Two, which centres on individual-driven responses to organisational change. Secondly, a literature review ([section 3.1](#)) is conducted which showcases the relevance of this phenomenon. Third, this thesis uses theories, such as Lazarus and Folkman's model of stress and coping ([Lazarus & Folkman, 1984](#)), and a theoretical background, to formulate testable hypotheses ([section 3.2](#)). This is followed by an overview of the studies conducted for Paper Two ([section 3.3](#)). Fifth, in [section 3.4](#), the researcher focused on Study 1 and defined the interviewees, procedure, and data analysis method and shared selected findings from the qualitative study. Next, the researcher describes the samples, measures, research method, results, and shares a brief discussion, for Study 3 ([section 3.5](#)). Seventh, Study 4 (replication study) is described, including the sample and procedure, measures, results and a brief discussion ([section 3.6](#)). Eighth, the researcher provides a summary of Paper Two. The next three sections provide the

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contributions to theory ([section 3.8](#)), practical implications ([section 3.9](#)), and limitations and further research directions ([section 3.10](#)). Twelfth, a conclusion for Paper Two is presented ([section 3.11](#)).

Workplace Gossip in Times of Organisational Change:

Coping with Anxiety or Fear and Effects on Resistance

Abstract

The researcher proposes and tests a model of gossip during organisational change by focusing on senders' change-related anxiety and change-related fear, and their effects on gossip and resistance to change. An exploratory pilot qualitative study with 15 interviews in a multinational organisation undergoing large-scale strategic change revealed that employees engage in gossip as a reaction to anxiety. Following on from Study 1 and 2 for Paper One, Paper Two on Study 3 is based on a critical incident study conducted in the same organisation confirming that gossip operates as a reaction to change-related anxiety or change-related fear and, in turn, influences resistance to change. These effects depend on the gossipers' gender, with women resisting change more after gossiping than men. Study 4 replicated these results with a sample of 100 employees from an online panel. The researcher discusses findings for practice and research on workplace gossip in times of change.

Keywords: *gossip, change, resistance to change, change-related anxiety, change-related fear*

Author's note: *While the vast majority of the work in this section is my own, including the fact that I conducted all the questionnaire and interview creation, data collection, data preparation, analysis in SPSS and writing of sections, my first supervisor (Maria Kakarika) provided support with idea formation and editing of this paper in preparation for journal and conference submission.*

3.1 Literature Review

As organisations become more agile, they implement frequent changes, which cause stress, anxiety and feelings of uncertainty (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991; Jimmieson, et al., 2004; Kiefer, 2005; Jones, et al., 2008) and job insecurity (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Sutherland & Cooper, 2000) as people react emotionally to important workplace events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The latter reduces organisational commitment and intentions to remain with the organisation (Paulsen, et al., 2005; Terry, et al., 1996). However, research on how people cope with such change-related anxiety and change-related fear is limited (Ford, et al., 2008; Vos & Rupert, 2018). One way to cope with change is by the spreading of gossip and rumours (Bordia, et al., 2006), which we also know is important in change management (Larkin & Larkin, 1994; Smeltzer, 1991). These findings are consistent with evidence that approximately 12% of all conversations in companies revolve around gossip (Robbins & Karan, 2020; Nieto-Rodriguez, 2021), and in a study during times of upheaval in United States of America (USA) and European organisations, over 90% of employees become involved in gossiping (Grosser, et al., 2012). Despite the prevalence of gossip in organisations (Dunbar, 2004), research has not extensively examined gossip in the context of organisational change.

For this thesis, *gossip* refers to positive or negative informal evaluative talk between employees about another employee who is absent (Brady, et al., 2017; Dunbar, 2004; Eder & Enke, 1991; Foster, 2004; Grosser, et al., 2010; Kurland & Pelled, 2000). That is, the gossip sender shares information about the target person with the gossip recipient (Dores Cruz, et al., 2021; Michelson, et al., 2010). In this paper the

researcher moves beyond most past studies that focus on the target of gossip (Burt & Knez, 1996; Ellwardt, et al., 2012; Feinberg, et al., 2012; Feinberg, et al., 2014; McAndrew, et al., 2007; Sommerfeld, et al., 2008; Wert & Salovey, 2004; Wu, et al., 2018; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). Rather, this research focuses on the gossip sender in order to understand how workplace gossip shapes the subsequent change-related behaviours of employees. More specifically, the researcher argues that resistance during times of change is impacted by anxiety and fear. The researcher therefore aims to understand how gossip operates, whether negatively or positively, as an outcome of anxiety and in turn how gossip influences employees' resistance to change (RTC).

Understanding change-related behaviours is crucial for effectively managing organisational change and promoting positive outcomes. The first change-related behaviour is *change-related anxiety*, which refers to the nervousness, worry, and apprehension employees might experience when confronted with significant large-scale changes within their organisation (Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011; Mukerjee, et al., 2021; Da Ros, et al., 2023). Secondly, for this thesis the researcher uses literature from Oreg (2006) to define *change-related fear* as employees feeling afraid of the organisation change and the unknown, as employees are concerned about potential negative outcomes and their ability to cope with new circumstances. This perceived loss of control, during such large-scale organisational changes, can exacerbate these feelings as employees can find comfort in predictable environments (Bordia, et al., 2004; Felipe, et al., 2016). Additionally, the stress of adjusting to new roles, environments or expectations contributes to heightened anxiety levels, which can impact performance leading to conservative decision-making and premature exits

from challenging situations (Harden, et al., 2020; Herz & Krezdorn, 2022; Narayan, 2023).

By examining gossip as a behaviour in which employees engage to cope with large-scale change, the author contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, this thesis is unique as it empirically examines a process model of gossip as a reaction to change-related feelings (see Figure 21). In doing so, the researcher integrates gossip literature (Brady, et al., 2017; Kurland & Pelled, 2000) with that on organisational change (Boehm, 2002; Sambamurthy, et al., 2003; Vos & Rupert, 2018; Zhen, et al., 2021) to propose that, at the episodic level, people engage in gossip as a reaction to change-related anxiety or change-related fear, due to potentially unfavourable outcomes (Rosnow, 1980). This thesis thus advances our understanding of gossip as a beneficial behaviour in reducing anxiety or fear (Baumeister, et al., 2004; Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012; Noon & Delbridge, 1993; Wert & Salovey, 2004) and provides insights into how individuals engaging in gossip may drive behaviour.

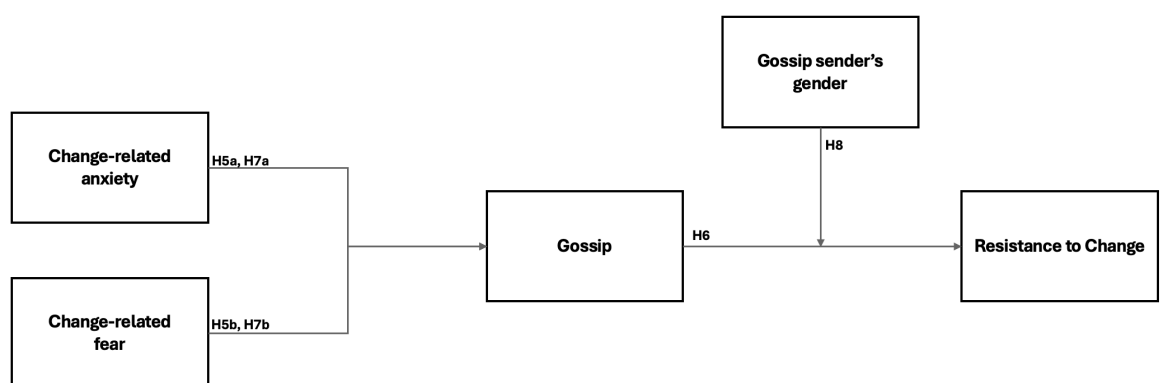


Figure 21. Paper Two Hypothesised Model

Furthermore, the hypothesised model in [Figure 21](#) distinguishes between stressors, coping responses, and behavioural outcomes by utilising elements from [Lazarus and Folkman's \(1984\)](#) model of stress and coping (which is described further in [section 3.2](#)). Firstly, for this research the stressors were the organisation changes (interventions) that occurred, and as depicted in literature ([Huvaj & Johnson, 2019](#); [Herz & Krezdorn, 2022](#); [Zhao, et al., 2022](#); [Warrick, 2023](#)), these types of events may be appraised as stressful. Moreover, change-related anxiety and change-related fear are conceptualised as emotional reactions that may be triggered by organisational change (the stressor) ([Rosnow, 1991](#); [Ashford & Black, 1996](#); [Bordia, et al., 2004](#)), such as the interventions defined in [section 1.6](#). Secondly, in response to these stressors, gossip is framed as a coping mechanism used to manage the anxiety and fear emotions through the sharing of information about an absent third party ([DiFonzo & Bordia, 2000](#); [Sutherland & Cooper, 2000](#); [Wert & Salovey, 2004](#)). Therefore, this research doesn't operationalise coping, it operationalises the response (gossip). Third, RTC represents a behavioural outcome where an employee chooses how to react based upon their coping response, in this case, gossip ([Oreg, 2006](#); [Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017](#)). Lastly, the gossip sender's gender is proposed as part of the model as a moderator and is not a stressor, coping response or behavioural outcome. In [section 3.10](#), the researcher highlights other potential emotional reactions to stressors (e.g., excitement or stress), coping responses (e.g., venting), and behavioural outcomes (e.g., collaboration) which future researchers may consider adding to their hypothesised model and testing.

For Paper Two, *organisational change* refers to the mechanisms through which an organisation modifies its people, processes, technology, data and culture ([Hanelt,](#)

et al., 2021). This definition was used for Paper One and is defined in the [Overview section](#).

Second, the researcher examines the effects of gossiping behaviour on RTC. Although gossip may alleviate anxiety and fear experienced during organisational change, its effects on RTC are harder to predict. On the one hand, gossip may help “share the burden” (Chang & Luo, 2007, p. 558) and reduce RTC (Kim, et al., 2023). On the other hand, it may reinforce negative attitudes towards change as people confirm and reinforce their concerns with each other. By providing an answer to this empirical question, the researcher contextualises the phenomenon of gossip and advances both theory and practice through understanding of its effects during organisational change.

Third, the researcher examines those conditions under which gossip results in benefits or detrimental consequences for change; thereby contributing to the literature on RTC. Because gender differences have been proposed in the way that individuals experience gossip (Leaper, et al., 1995; Michelson & Mouly, 2000; Watson, 2012), examining gossip outcomes in relation to gender is theoretically and practically important. This study thus contributes to ongoing research on workplace gossip and the sender’s gender (Eckhaus & Ben-Hador, 2019). Furthermore, gender differences in the workplace and how employees react according to gender have become of greater interest as organisations strive for greater diversity and equity (Kakarika, et al., 2021; Kakarika, et al., 2023; Lau, et al., 2023).

Overall, this study increases our understanding of RTC by taking a novel approach through the study of gossip, using a methodology combining exploratory interviews with two field studies for both internal validity and external validity.

3.2 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The following subsections provide a literature review, and each subsection concludes with a definition of each hypothesis.

3.2.1 Gossip as a Reaction to Change-related Anxiety or Fear

[Lazarus and Folkman's \(1984\)](#) model of stress and coping suggests that, when a situation is appraised as stressful, people engage in a coping response and judge what to do to reduce their stress. A positive coping response is known to alleviate the negative effects of stress ([Lazarus & Folkman, 1984](#); [Terry, et al., 1996](#); [Yeo & Frederiks, 2011](#)), and thus the literature has examined positive interpersonal coping responses ([Gore, 1985](#); [Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1987](#); [Marzillier & Davey, 2005](#); [Lawrence, et al., 2007](#)).

Similarly, self-regulation theory suggests that individuals attempt to regulate emotions, cognitions, and behaviours to attain their goals ([Baumeister, et al., 2007](#)). From this perspective, gossip can serve as a self-regulatory tool that helps employees seek and share information that will either confirm or challenge their current understanding of the situation, which can support each individual process their emotions and make sense of uncertainty ([Ouedraogo & Ouakouak, 2020](#); [Outlaw & Baer, 2022](#); [Sun, et al., 2023](#)). For example, during an organisational restructure (see intervention 3, [section 1.6.5](#)), employees who hear conflicting messages about potential redundancies as the organisation decentralises may engage in gossip with colleagues to gather informal insights. By doing so, they may reduce their anxiety by gaining a clearer, though not always accurate, picture of what to expect, which may

help then decide how to act next (Colquitt, et al., 2012; Brady, et al., 2017; Boothby, et al., 2023).

The researcher proposes that as change triggers stress and anxiety, often because of concerns that it will affect their job role and rewards (Bartunek, et al., 2006), individuals will engage in efforts to cope with these negative emotions. Anxiety inherent in change may motivate information-seeking as an effort to reduce it (Rosnow, 1991; Ashford & Black, 1996; Bordia, et al., 2004). The literature confirms that rumours spread because of anxiety or fear (Rosnow, 1991) and as expressions of employee concerns during organisational change (Bordia, et al., 2006), so it is logical to expect that gossip, which refers to transmitting rumours about a specific absent person, will also be a result of personal anxiety or fear. A qualitative study with nurses has also shown that gossip can be an expression of anxiety (Waddington, 2005). Furthermore, the literature shows that gossip can warn of threats (Dunbar, 2004; Foster, 2004), which is why it is likely to be used to warn of anxiety-causing threats related to change. Taken together, the researcher predicts that gossip can be used to reduce anxiety or fear that arises from organisational change.

Taken together, both Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory, and Baumeister's self-regulation theory (Baumeister, et al., 2007) support the idea that gossip can be an individual's response to negative emotional states (such as anxiety) (Oreg & Berson, 2019; Lee & Barnes, 2021; Dores Cruz, et al., 2021). If employees appraise organisational changes (e.g., the interventions defined in [section 1.6](#)) as threatening and they lack an immediate, alternative, coping strategy, they may turn to gossip as a way to manage their emotions and regain or create a sense of clarity and control based upon the information shared (Peters, et al., 2017; Kakarika, et al., 2023).

The researcher thus predicts the following:

Hypothesis 5a. *Change-related anxiety will increase gossiping behaviour.*

Hypothesis 5b. *Change-related fear will increase gossiping behaviour.*

3.2.2 Effects on Resistance to Change

Is gossiping caused by change-related anxiety, or change-related fear, likely to decrease resistance to change (RTC)? Research indicates that being exposed to rumours and gossip during change may increase anxiety and stress, as rumours and gossip may not adequately address uncertainty and instead raise further concerns about change (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2000; Bordia, et al., 2006). According to Prospect theory, people are more likely to process negative information than positive information due to their sensitivity to losses (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). This theory suggests that losses loom larger than gains, meaning that employees are more impacted by the prospect of losing something than by the potential of gaining something of equivalent value (Walasek, et al., 2024). Additionally, research has shown that individuals tend to pay attention to bad news more than good news (Pratto & John, 1991). As highlighted in the introduction of this thesis, this preference may be driven by prioritising threats, which are often signalled by negative information (Biberman & Whitty, 1997). Furthermore employees tend to process negative information more thoroughly and in greater detail than positive information (Baumeister, et al., 2001). This phenomenon, often referred to as the ‘negativity bias’, suggests that negative events and experiences have a more substantial effect on our psychological state and influence our decision-making processes more than positive ones (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). These literature sources collectively highlight that

employees have a propensity to be more attuned to negative stimuli and information. Moreover, as Interviewee 11 from the interviews mentioned, *“Loss is more powerful than the joy of gaining something new”*.

(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)

To the extent that change is experienced as a negative event, it is likely to make individuals more sensitive and defensive against it (Michelson, et al., 2010; Iriarte & Bayona, 2020). The more employees gossip about change, the more weight they may give to it and their concerns may be magnified. That is, their concerns about change may be validated (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012). In addition, research shows that gossip increases the gossiper’s understanding of the prevailing social norms and sense of cohesion (Peters, et al., 2017). In the context of change, gossiping about change might increase individuals’ understanding of others’ change-related concerns, which may also increase their RTC. Therefore, the researcher predicts:

Hypothesis 6. *Gossiping behaviour will increase RTC.*

Hypothesis 7a. *Change-related anxiety will increase gossiping behaviour, which in turn increases RTC.*

Hypothesis 7b. *Change-related fear will increase gossiping behaviour, which in turn increases RTC.*

3.2.3 Moderating Effects of Gossiper's Gender

The mediated effects of change-related anxiety, or change-related fear, on RTC via gossip may depend on the gossiper's gender. Although research shows that men and women gossip approximately to the same extent (Eckhaus & Ben-Hador, 2019), the researcher does not expect that the effects of anxiety or fear during periods of change will present any gender differences for gossip. However, the researcher expects that the actual effects of gossip on RTC may be stronger for women than for men since research shows that women react more negatively to unpleasant experiences than men (Grossman & Wood, 1993; Bradley, et al., 2001; Chentsova-Dutton & Tsai, 2007) and they are more emotionally responsive than men (Fujita, et al., 1991; Seidlitz & Diener, 1998; Lucas & Gohm, 2000; Bradley, et al., 2001). As they also have more positive attitudes towards gossip (Leaper & Holliday, 1995), gossip may magnify their concerns about change more than it does for men, and they are likely to react with higher resistance to change. This argument is further empirically supported by studies showing that women exhibit higher RTC than men (Agócs, 1997; Shahbaz, et al., 2020).

The researcher's logic so far leads to the prediction of the following moderated mediation effect:

Hypothesis 8a. *The mediated effects of **change-related anxiety** on RTC via gossiping behaviour will be moderated by the gossiper's gender, such that the effect of gossip on RTC will be stronger for women than men.*

Hypothesis 8b. *The mediated effects of **change-related fear** on RTC via gossiping behaviour will be moderated by the gossiper's gender, such that the effect of gossip on RTC will be stronger for women than men.*

3.3 Overview of Studies

The researcher tested the above hypotheses in two main studies with field data (Study 3 and Study 4). First, before testing the hypotheses, the researcher ran a qualitative study with 15 interviews (as described in [Study 1: Interviews subsection](#)) in the same multinational organisation undergoing significant change to understand how anxiety or fear due to change may result in gossip. While the qualitative study was part of the overall methodology, it was not used to test the hypotheses above ([section 3.2](#)). Next, Study 3 tested the impact of anxiety or fear on gossip and behaviour in the same organisation with quantitative data and a critical incidents technique. Study 4 replicated these results with a sample of 100 employees from various organisations recruited via an online panel.

3.4 Study 1: Qualitative Exploratory Study

3.4.1 Participants and Procedure

As mentioned earlier in this thesis (see [section 2.3.1](#)), the qualitative exploratory study took place within a large multinational organisation in the software and services sector that has over 30,000 employees. The organisation was going through a large transformation with many changes and interventions to enable the organisation to achieve its strategic goals. In late 2021 a new CEO and several new board members were appointed, as the organisation had been struggling with declining profits and brand trust for years. The CEO had a clear mission to increase profits and restore confidence in the brand. To achieve this, the organisation launched

a strategic change programme in early 2022, with a \$50 million investment and 10 prioritised interventions/change programmes delivered until mid-2023. These interventions included major organisational restructuring to make the organisation more agile and dynamic, a systems and process transformation to prepare the organisation for the future market, and a customer-centric approach to reduce churn and increase profits.

After all interventions were delivered and the changes were being embedded across the organisation, the researcher sampled 15 participants for interviews lasting between 30 and 60 minutes, with participation that was voluntary, with organisation recommended compensation, and with assurance of confidentiality. The interviewees' demographics are summarised in [Table 15](#). The researcher conducted these semi-structured interviews to allow for following up with concepts raised by participants ([Lune & Berg, 2017](#)) and for investigating complex processes within the organisation ([Astedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994](#); [Barriball & While, 1994](#); [Turner, 2010](#)). The questions (e.g., 'How did you feel when the changes were taking place?') prompted discussion on feelings during organisational change and gossip.

The researcher conducted the interviews face-to-face (over Microsoft Teams), recording and transcribing them utilising the features within Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams has become a cornerstone of the way in which organisations communicate and interact. As stated by [Vuchkovski, et al., \(2023, p. 14\)](#) by using Microsoft Teams *"over time, more precise and richer data on the impact of such a transition on team effectiveness may emerge"*.

Table 15. Interviewee's Demographics

Interviewee Number	Function	Country	Age Group	Gender	Organisational	
					Tenure (years)	Role
Interviewee 1	IT	Southern Europe	26 to 40	Male	1 to 5	Software Engineer
Interviewee 2	Marketing	United Kingdom	18 to 25	Female	1 to 5	Data Engineer
Interviewee 3	Product	Spain or Portugal	41 to 55	Female	1 to 5	Product Manager
Interviewee 4	Product	Africa & Middle East	18 to 25	Female	1 to 5	UX Designer
Interviewee 5	IT	Africa & Middle East	41 to 55	Female	1 to 5	Engineering Manager
Interviewee 6	Strategy	United States	41 to 55	Female	11 to 15	Programme Manager
Interviewee 7	Marketing	Germany	26 to 40	Male	6 to 10	Marketing Manager
Interviewee 8	Finance	United Kingdom	26 to 40	Male	1 to 5	Finance Professional
Interviewee 9	Customer Support	United Kingdom	41 to 55	Female	6 to 10	Operations Manager
Interviewee 10	Human Resources	United States	26 to 40	Male	1 to 5	Payroll Administrator
Interviewee 11	Finance	United Kingdom	41 to 55	Female	> 15	Portfolio Director
Interviewee 12	Product	United Kingdom	26 to 40	Male	1 to 5	Product Programme Manager
Interviewee 13	Partners	United Kingdom	18 to 25	Female	1 to 5	Partner Engagement Lead
Interviewee 14	Customer Support	Africa & Middle East	18 to 25	Male	1 to 5	Sales Advisor
Interviewee 15	Business Transformation	United States	26 to 40	Male	6 to 10	Senior Project Manager

3.4.2 Data Analysis and Selected Findings

The researcher coded the qualitative data inductively by listening to the audio files and re-reading the transcriptions multiple times ([Brooks & King, 2017](#)). The first-level data analysis resulted in the following two higher order categories ([Miles & Huberman, 1994](#)): 1) Emotions; and 2) Behaviours. The researcher added the following lower order codes that accurately represented the data: 1) Anxiety; 2) Stress; 3) Fear; 4) Fatigue; 5) Uncertainty; 6) Gossip; and 7) Resistance to Change. In the second-level analysis, categories were analysed in relation to each other, and patterns or themes emerged ([Eisenhardt, 1989](#)). The trustworthiness of the analysis was ensured by discussing codes and categories with the researcher's supervisors. [Table 16](#) illustrates selected findings from the first- and second-order analysis with fictitious participants' names to preserve anonymity.

Table 16. Coding and Example Quotations

Higher Order Codes	Lower Order Codes	Quotations
Emotions	Anxiety	<p>"I think the biggest challenge is the uncertainty. You know, when people don't know what's coming, they tend to get anxious."</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 13: Partner Engagement Lead)</i></p> <p>"Embracing change is an opportunity. Feeling safe and addressing anxieties related to change is crucial for a positive attitude."</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 8: Finance Professional)</i></p> <p>"Loss is more powerful than the joy of gaining something new for many people..."</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)</i></p>
	Stress	<p>"Feeling stressed. Excited in a way. I think, I see certain change as an opportunity. Even if it's scary."</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 12: Product Programme Manager)</i></p>
	Fatigue	<p>"Change will be constant and rather than adding extra complexities, I think we need to just transform how we work and just, you know, adapt to that new changing environment. If we don't, we will burn out."</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 7: Marketing Manager)</i></p>
	Excitement	<p>"See certain change as an opportunity. Even if it's scary and then you don't have to feel, you know, one emotion and kind of, you know, don't feel stressed..."</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 12: Product Programme Manager)</i></p>
	Fear	<p>"There's a lot of fear especially when it comes to job security. People worry about how changes will impact their roles."</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 3: Product Manager)</i></p>

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Higher Order Codes	Lower Order Codes	Quotations
		<p>“Fear is a natural response to the unknown. When the future is unclear, it's human to feel a sense of vulnerability.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 9: Operations Manager)</i></p>
		<p>“Fear often stems from the feeling of losing control. Change brings that feeling to the surface for many.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)</i></p>
	Uncertainty	<p>“Uncertainty can be paralysing. It's like standing on shaky ground, not knowing when it will stabilise.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 6: Programme Manager)</i></p>
Behaviours	Gossip	<p>“I sometimes needed to offload and get someone else's opinion.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 5: Engineering Manager)</i></p>
		<p>“Through word of mouth, information tends to spread. You know someone else's opinion and say this is what's happening about someone else. I'm nervous about X, I heard from Y. What do you think? So, it will be happening. It was happening. It will be happening, and it is happening in [name of organisation], even though I've only been here a year. I definitely have heard things about others that makes me nervous.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 9: Operations Manager)</i></p>
		<p>“Informal discussions are happening, and it's important to ...not let them be the main source of truth for people within the organisation.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 14: Sales Advisor)</i></p>
		<p>“Gossip is inevitable. [I] think we sell ourselves or others for an element just as an add on which is that it creates a bond and when we are a people-oriented organisation sharing and receiving gossip creates a bond between employees which doesn't naturally necessarily arise through</p>

Higher Order Codes	Lower Order Codes	Quotations
		<p>just standard day-to-day business conversation. So, there is an element of building your network through that informality as well. And there is of course a political side that can be beneficial.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 10: Payroll Administrator)</i></p> <p>“Informal channels are unavoidable. We share information, sometimes leading to rumours and unofficial discussions.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 6: Programme Manager)</i></p> <p>“Gossip [during change] is bound to happen, but leaders should focus on making formal channels more transparent to counteract its negative effects.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 15: Senior Project Manager)</i></p>
Behaviours	Resistance to Change (RTC)	<p>“I think there are two types of resistance [within] our organisation that I have to deal with [during change]. There is passive and active resistance, and they have both been disruptive to me in different ways. Resistance for me is about preventing the achievement of the change if we put it into that context of it, the realisation of that change and the success of the value creation from that change and that resistance could be active. So, I am not going to use system X over system Y if I've still got the opportunity to do so or I'm going to bad mouth the thing that's happening around us and do that and then there's passive, which is more about maybe an internal monologue or a general behavioural attitude, even if you're doing [it]. I make decisions and resist change all the time based upon the person leading the change and what's in it for me.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)</i></p> <p>“Gossip can be disruptive during change. So, if you ask me now, having come through the change curve to a large degree, I don't feel like I have resisted because I am embracing the opportunity. But I know if you asked me this in December, I absolutely was resisting it.”</p>

Higher Order Codes	Lower Order Codes	Quotations
		<i>(Interviewee 14: Sales Advisor)</i>
		<p>“I like it when it comes to big things. I need to be able to simplify it, even if it's big, even if it's complex. If I can't simplify it so that those that are receiving the change will understand regardless of whether they're close to. You know, sometimes people don't like it, sometimes people don't get it. Sometimes people don't like the person who is applying that change onto them. So, they resist anyway, and I know I resist. So, the reasons are different, but I think, but when it comes down to it people resist what they can't understand.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 12: Product Programme Manager)</i></p>
		<p>“Effective communication is the cornerstone; leaders should ensure transparency and clarity in conveying organisational changes [to reduce resistance].”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 1: Software Engineer)</i></p>
		<p>“When you bring someone from outside, someone who is coming [in] as a stranger... If you're coming in and you're a little bit too strong... I think people do freak out a little bit. They then don't do what is asked by that person.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)</i></p>
		<p>“Embracing a mindset shift is crucial for successful change management. The 'why' behind the change should be clearly communicated to the team [to reduce resistance]. And can only be achieved with an open feedback environment where I can provide my view and I'm taken seriously.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 2: Data Engineer)</i></p>
		<p>“The resistance to change often stems from individuals' reluctance to relinquish control.”</p> <p><i>(Interviewee 6: Programme Manager)</i></p>

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The first main finding was that organisational change causes negative emotions. Some responses took the form of single words; for example: ‘overwhelmed’, ‘afraid’, and ‘nervous’. Overall, employees across various roles expressed anxiety, stress, and a sense of fear associated with the unknown aspects of change. Examples of more responses include the following:

“[Because of change I was] feeling stressed [but] excited in a way. I think, I see certain change as an opportunity, even if it's scary.”

(Interviewee 12: Product Programme Manager)

“I think the biggest challenge is the uncertainty. You know, when people don't know what's coming, they tend to get anxious.”

(Interviewee 13: Partner Engagement Lead)

“There's a lot of fear especially when it comes to job security. People worry about how changes will impact their roles.”

(Interviewee 3: Product Manager)

“Fear is a natural response to the unknown. When the future is unclear, it's human to feel a sense of vulnerability.”

(Interviewee 9: Operations Manager)

The second main finding was that gossip may result from the negative emotions experienced during periods of organisational change, especially from anxiety and fear. Many interviewees (80% - 12 out of the 15 interviewed) described how they turned to informal conversations as a coping mechanism, inadvertently participating in gossip. That is responses reflected that gossip was experienced as a behavioural reaction to emotions, for example:

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“Through word of mouth, information tends to spread. I'm nervous about X, I heard from Y. What do you think? So, it will be happening. It was happening. It will be happening, and it is happening in [name of organisation].”

(Interviewee 9: Operations Manager)

“[I gossiped because] I sometimes needed to offload and get someone else's opinion.”

(Interviewee 5: Engineering Manager)

“Gossip is inevitable [during change] ... Sharing and receiving gossip creates a bond between employees which doesn't naturally necessarily arise through just standard day-to-day business conversation. So, there is an element of building your network through that informality as well. And there is of course a political side that can be beneficial.”

(Interviewee 10: Payroll Administrator)

The quotes above provided a clear understanding that gossip was prevalent within the organisation, and the interviewees speculated that gossip offered a way to cope with organisational change.

Third, resistance to change (RTC) was associated to gossiping and there was an acknowledgment that it often stems from negative emotions associated with change, and the person leading the change. The following examples demonstrate the latter:

“I think there are two types of resistance within our organisation ... There is passive and active resistance ... Resistance for me is about preventing the achievement of the change ... the realisation of that change and the success of the value creation from that change, and that resistance could be active. So, I am not going to use system X over system Y if I've still got the opportunity to do so, or I'm going to bad

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mouth the thing that's happening around us and do that; and then there's passive, which is more about maybe an internal monologue or a general behavioural attitude, even if you're doing it. I make decisions and resist change all the time based upon the person leading the change and what's in it for me."

(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)

"You know, sometimes people don't like it, sometimes people don't get it. Sometimes people don't like the person who is applying that change onto them. So, they resist anyway, and I know I resist. So, the reasons are different, but I think, but when it comes down to it people resist what they can't understand."

(Interviewee 12: Product Programme Manager)

"Gossip can be disruptive during change. So, if you ask me now, having come through the change curve to a large degree, I don't feel like I have resisted because I am embracing the opportunity. But I know if you asked me this in December, I absolutely was resisting it."

(Interviewee 14: Sales Advisor)

"When you bring someone from outside, someone who is coming [in] as a stranger... If you're coming in and you're a little bit too strong... I think people do freak out a little bit. They then don't do what is asked by that person."

(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)

The interviewees acknowledged that they resisted the changes for varying reasons, including the relationship with the person leading the change and whether the person leading the change was from outside the organisation.

Finally, while gossip was often viewed with scepticism, it emerged as a significant element at the workplace, especially as highlighted by female participants.

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For example:

“Informal channels are unavoidable. We share information, sometimes leading to rumours and unofficial discussions.”

(Interviewee 6: Programme Manager)

“You just want to discuss [things about people] with certain people. And there were many times when I had to say something to someone and emphasise how critical it is. And most people would adhere to that and feel scared or nervous. You know, I'm not saying every single individual and it wasn't even the case of people like gossiping, it's just needed.”

(Interviewee 5: Engineering Manager)

“Well, I guess gossip is an interesting thing [during change]. So yes, yes, I do either way, right. But then there is a distinction that I would make in proper gossip versus idle gossip. Which could be did you hear about person X or who have you seen this versus some information about someone and I am sharing that information with somebody whether through appropriate or otherwise channels to help me get someone to do something.”

(Interviewee 4: UX Designer)

Female interviewees acknowledged that informal conversations which are often labelled as gossip played a crucial role during organisational change.

Overall, this exploratory qualitative study (Study 1) gave some insights into how employees experience organisational changes and emotionally react with gossiping behaviour. Specifically, the findings point to anxiety and fear as major triggers of gossip. Gossip in turn appears to be leading to more RTC. This gossip behaviour was also more pronounced for women than men. Of the 15 interviewees, 53% were female (8 female

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interviewees) and 75% of these female interviewees (6 female interviewees) stated that they actively gossiped due to organisational change fear or anxiety.

Hence, these qualitative findings offer a first, preliminary validation of the hypothesised model (see [Figure 21](#)), which the researcher subsequently tested in Study 3.

3.5 Study 3: Gossip Critical Incident Study

3.5.1 Sample and Procedure

The field study to test Hypotheses 5 to 8 was conducted in the same large multinational organisation as in the exploratory qualitative study (Study 1), at T2 (June 2023). After the delivery of all interventions, the researcher sent an online survey assuring anonymity and confidentiality to 1,736 employees and received 256 responses (response rate of 15%). The researcher used a critical incident technique following [Bradfield & Aquino \(1999\)](#) to elicit reflection upon a particular organisational event and collect rich data with external validity ([Chell, 1998](#)). The researcher increased recall accuracy by using a six-month timeframe and, similar to [Kakarika, et al. \(2023, p. 337\)](#), the researcher asked participants:

“Think back over the last six months during the changes at [organisation name] when you informally talked about organisational change to one of your colleagues. That is, take a moment to think of an incident when you informally talked to your colleague about a colleague who was not present. Please write a two or three sentence description of the gossip you shared with your colleague”.

The participants next answered a short questionnaire about the incident, themselves, and their feelings and behaviour.

These descriptions were reviewed by the researcher and one independent coder and were coded as gossip (positive or negative), non-gossip/unclear. Interrater reliability was very good ($ICC(2,1) = .839$). Out of the 256 responses, 141 reported either no incident (blank), or non-gossip/unclear information. The researcher thus used the remaining 115 observations (53% female, 38% in the 41 to 55 age range) with

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both positive and negative gossip for all analyses. Sensitivity power analysis using G*Power for the F-test under standard criteria ($\alpha = .05$ and $b = .20$) conducted with this sample size yielded an effect size of $f^2 = .18$. As in past research (e.g., [Bordia et al., 2006](#)), negative gossip was more prevalent than positive gossip (71% negative, 27% positive and 2% neutral).

3.5.2 Measures

3.5.2.1 Independent Variables (Anxiety and Fear)

Change-related anxiety was measured by adapting four items by Brooks & Schweitzer (2011). The researcher first asked participants to consider the changes within the organisation over the last twelve months and rate the extent to which they felt “nervous”, “anxious”, “worried”, and “apprehensive” about the organisational change process ($\alpha = .927$).

Change-related fear was measured by adapting two items from the affective subscale developed by Oreg (2006): “Over the past 12 months, I felt afraid of organisational change” and “Thinking about the changes made me scared”. Responses were aggregated to an overall change-related fear score ($\alpha = .932$).

3.5.2.2 Mediating Variable (Gossip)

Next, the researcher measured *gossip* based on the critical incident with a single-item index assessing the perceived severity of the gossip behaviour. The researcher asked, “How would you rate the communication you described” (1 = *not at all serious* to 10 = *extremely serious*). The researcher used this index in further analysis as used in past research with critical incidents (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Kakarika, et al., 2022; Kakarika, et al., 2023). Research by Kakarika, et al., (2023, p. 9) used a single question that reflects gossip because it prompts participants to rate the severity of a specific gossip-related communication they previously described in the critical incident, therefore capturing the perceived seriousness of the gossip incident.

3.5.2.3 *Dependent Variable (RTC)*

Finally, employees' *resistance to change* (RTC) was measured by adapting five items from the behavioural subscale developed by Oreg (2006). The items are: "I spoke rather highly of the change to others" (reverse coded); "I looked for ways to prevent the change from taking place"; "I presented my objections regarding the change to management"; "I emailed colleagues to protest against the change"; and "I voiced my complaints about the change to my colleagues". Responses were aggregated to an overall RTC score ($\alpha = .845$). These were all measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*).

These items have been used in previous studies to measure employees' RTC from a behavioural viewpoint (Baumeister, et al., 2007; Amarantou, et al., 2017; Oreg & Sverdlik, 2018).

3.5.2.4 *Moderator Variable (Gender)*

Gossip sender's gender took the value of 1 if the gossip sender was female and 0 if otherwise.

3.5.2.5 *Control Variables*

Since the literature shows that age, education level, and job level may be related to gossip (Brady, et al., 2017; Massar, et al., 2012), the researcher controlled for participants' **age** measured in years, **education level** (with five categories ranging from 1 = None; 2 = High School; 3 = Diploma or equivalent; 4 = University (Undergraduate); 5 = University (Postgraduate)), and **managerial status** (with a binary variable where 1

signified ‘manager’). Because employees with longer tenure are more resistant to change (Van Dam, et al., 2008), the researcher controlled for **organisational tenure**.

Because familiarity may influence gossip episodes and related reactions, the researcher controlled for **tenure of the relationship with the gossip recipient** by asking participants to report how long they have worked with the colleague with whom they shared the gossip (Kim, et al., 2019; Outlaw & Baer, 2022).

In addition, the researcher controlled for participant’s **tendency to gossip** with three items² from Erdogan, et al., (2015) (from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*)): “I talk with others about other colleague's mistakes”; “I talk about other colleague's failures”; and “I talk about the bad things that happen to other colleagues” ($\alpha = .804$).

Further, the researcher controlled for three important gossip incident characteristics that may influence the hypothesised relationships. First, **gossip valence**, i.e., the positivity or negativity of the information spread (Fine & Rosnow, 1978; Kurland & Pelled, 2000), e.g., praising vs. blaming the change agent was coded based on participants’ descriptions of the incident. Each incident was first coded as positive vs. negative vs. unclear gossip, and the researcher next created a dummy variable labelled “negative valence” that took the value of 1 if gossip was negative and 0 otherwise.

Second, the researcher controlled for **gossip content**. The researcher coded the content of gossip based upon three grouping categories related to the type of

² The following two items were removed from the original scale based on factor analysis “I talk with other about other colleague's poor performance” and “I talk about the successes of other colleagues” (reverse-scored).

intervention/change within the organisation: a) restructuring; b) system change; and c) process and brand change. These categories were then coded from 1 to 3 and used for creating dummies ($ICC(2,1) = .825$).

Third, to ensure that anxiety or fear are driving the gossiping behaviour above and beyond other motives, the researcher controlled for **self-reported motives**. The researcher asked participants to report the reason they engaged in gossiping behaviour as follows: “When you think back on the talk you had with your colleague, what do you think was the cause of your talk (why did you engage in informal evaluative talk)”. Following [Beersma & Van Kleef \(2012\)](#), the researcher and a second coder, blind to the study’s hypotheses, grouped comments into four motives (1) information gathering and validation; 2) social enjoyment; 3) negative influence; and 4) group protection) ($ICC(2,1) = .773$). The researcher created dummy variables for each of these motives. The frequencies for each category are: 31.3% for (1) information gathering and validating, 5.2% for (2) social enjoyment, 25.2% for (3) negative influence, and 38.3% for (4) group protection.

The researcher controlled for country by creating dummy variables for the **countries** that had the majority of respondents, and that also represented the overall population of the organisation at T2 (June 2023). Based upon the organisational location strategy, the United Kingdom and United States of America were the main locations with over 75% of the organisation’s employees. This was further validated in the demographics section (see [Sampling Profile: T2 June 2023](#) for details), which shows that the United Kingdom had 53% and the United States of America had 25% of the respondents to the questionnaires. Therefore, the researcher created dummy variables that were: 1) United Kingdom; 2) United States of America; and 3) Otherwise.

This is similar to literature that has used country as a control or main variable in the past ([Smeltzer, 1991](#); [Strauss & Parker, 2018](#); [Warrick, 2023](#)).

Baseline RTC³: The researcher proxied baseline resistance based on items used in resistance to change literature ([Godkin & Allcorn, 2008](#); [Hannan, et al., 2004](#); [Moradi, et al., 2021](#)) and by measuring the respondent's perception of resistance to change in their organisation when the organisational changes started (12 months before conducting this study). The researcher asked the following questions: "Employees are afraid of any organisational changes"; "Employees are defensive about any organisational changes"; "Employees supported the organisational changes" (reverse scored) ($\alpha = .917$). These were all measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*).

3.5.3 Research Method

The researcher used a five-point Likert scale for most main variables. Factor analyses were conducted utilising the Oblimin method for highly correlated variables and the Varimax method for others. An acceptance threshold of 0.5 or higher for factor loadings was used ([George & Mallery, 2021](#)). Reliability was gauged through Cronbach's alpha, with set criteria of 0.7, 0.8, and 0.9 for acceptable, good, and excellent internal reliability. Additional questions were incorporated to address potential endogeneity issues (see [section 6.5.9](#) for further details and limitation in

³ The researcher also proxied baseline resistance to change with the following two items. "Think back over the past 12 months, when the changes were announced/started. The researcher asked: "I felt defensive about any organisational changes"; "I supported the organisational changes" (reverse scored). ($\alpha = .917$). Results using this measure were identical.

[section 3.10](#)). The researcher used Mahalanobis to identify outliers above 13.82 ([Price, et al., 2002](#)). Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), adopting a threshold of 10, while Durbin-Watson tested independence, expecting values between 1.5 and 2.5 ([Price, et al., 2002](#)). Descriptive statistics, outlier checks, bivariate correlation and linear (hierarchical) regression were adopted for comprehensive data analysis. For moderation and mediation analysis, the researcher used Hayes Process Macro v4.2 and Johnson-Neyman technique, with CAHOST Excel Workbook aiding visualisation. To mitigate multicollinearity, variables were mean-centred. In addition, the researcher used tables, simple slopes, and Johnson-Neyman graphs to scrutinise moderating effects ([Carden, et al., 2017](#)). For all analysis the researcher used SPSS v.29.

3.5.4 Results

First confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to establish discriminant validity of latent variables ([Thompson, 2004; Chung, et al., 2017](#)). The model including all variables separately ($\chi^2 = 97.58$, $df = 73$, $RMSEA = .05$, $CFI = .94$) provided superior results against alternative models that collapsed variables, demonstrating discriminant validity. Further details can be found in [Appendix E, section 6.5.8](#). All alphas were in acceptable ranges ([Price, et al., 2002](#)). [Table 17](#) and [Table 18](#) presents the alphas and minimum factor loadings for the combined items for Study 3 and Study 4.

Table 17. Results from Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis (Study 3)

Item	No. of Items	Min. Factor Loading	Alpha	Alpha Range
Tendency to gossip	3	.794	.804	Good
Baseline RTC	3	.925	.917	Excellent
Change-related anxiety	4	.897	.927	Excellent
Change-related fear	2	.968	.932	Excellent
RTC	5	.546	.845	Good

N = 115*Note:*

All Cronbach Alpha values were in the acceptable range as described by [George and Mallery \(2021\)](#) ($\alpha > 0.7$ = Acceptable; $\alpha > 0.8$ = Good; $\alpha > 0.9$ = Excellent).

Table 18. Results from Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis (Study 4)

Item	No. of Items	Min. Factor Loading	Alpha	Alpha Range
Tendency to gossip	3	.809	.813	Good
Change-related anxiety	4	.648	.844	Good
Change-related fear	2	.885	.716	Acceptable
RTC	5	.696	.744	Acceptable

N = 100*Note:*

All Cronbach Alpha values were in the acceptable range as described by [George and Mallery \(2021\)](#) ($\alpha > 0.7$ = Acceptable; $\alpha > 0.8$ = Good; $\alpha > 0.9$ = Excellent).

[Table 19](#) presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all Study 3 variables. The analysis highlighted that participants' tendency to gossip had a significant positive correlation with RTC ($r = .226, p < .05$).

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Table 19. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Study 3)

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1 Age range	3.304	.938	1																
2 Education level	3.391	1.219	.125	1															
3 Managerial status	.374	.486	-.059	-.086	1														
4 Organisational tenure	2.861	1.263	.080	.064	.157	1													
5 Tenure of the relationship with the gossip recipient	3.626	1.442	-.025	.029	.051	.255**	1												
6 Tendency to gossip	3.038	1.305	.205*	.071	-.059	.023	.028	1											
7 Gossip valence	.722	.450	.098	.056	-.041	.086	.298**	-.017	1										
8 Gossip content - restructuring	.139	.348	.057	-.150	-.155	-.015	.052	.091	.081	1									
9 Gossip Content - system changes	.044	.205	.113	.072	.011	.125	-.034	.070	-.153	-.086	1								
10 Self-reported motives	2.704	1.270	.069	.047	-.075	.034	-.027	.068	.024	.054	.084	1							
11 Country - UKI	.591	.494	-.013	-.140	.058	.035	-.044	-.071	-.003	-.075	.004	.113	1						
12 Country - US	.261	.441	-.045	.184*	-.009	-.045	.155	.029	.148	-.010	-.030	-.002	-.715**	1					
13 Baseline RTC	3.073	1.285	-.115	.105	-.025	.026	.024	.142	.050	-.075	-.023	.183*	-.077	.178	1				
14 Gender	.530	.501	-.048	.145	.115	.131	-.063	.005	.077	.076	.115	.014	-.038	.122	.167	1			
15 Change-related anxiety	4.000	1.641	-.071	-.008	.099	.011	-.154	-.060	.074	-.008	.020	.146	.008	.045	.546**	.189*	1		
16 Change-related fear	4.235	1.550	.085	.080	-.077	.075	.128	.035	.167	.024	.085	.058	.086	-.010	.081	.109	.152	1	
17 Gossip	6.426	2.283	-.049	.069	.092	.082	-.162	.081	.014	-.097	-.190*	-.026	.062	-.059	.050	-.100	.267**	.189*	1
18 RTC	3.216	1.048	.043	.089	.150	.015	-.015	.226*	-.028	-.141	-.044	.052	.104	-.134	.102	-.126	.193*	.063	.408**

N = 115. * $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level.

Notes:

1. Age range is coded "1" = 17 & 18 years old (apprentices/trainees); "2" = 18 to 25 years old; "3" = 26 to 40 years old; "4" = 41 to 55 years old; and "5" = Above 55 years old.

2. Gossip valence is coded "1" = Negative; and "0" = Positive or Unclear

3. Self-reported Motives are coded "1" = information gathering and validation; "2" = social enjoyment; "3" = negative influence; and "4" = group protection.

4. Gossip sender's gender is coded "1" = Female; and "0" = Otherwise

As shown in [Table 20](#), results of hierarchical regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between change-related anxiety and gossip ($b = .517; p < .01$), supporting H5a (see Model 2). Change-related fear and gossip was also statistically significant ($b = .366; p < .01$), supporting H5b (see Model 3). The researcher next examined the relationship between gossip and resistance to change (RTC). Results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .152; p < .01$), supporting H6 (see Model 5).

Table 20. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Hypotheses 5 to 8 (Study 3)

	Gossip			RTC		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6 [^]
Control variables						
Age range	-.196	-.204	-.236	-.007	.029	.059
Education level	.196	.231	.177	.109	.076	.086
Managerial status	.466	.258	.566	.335	.280	.335*
Organisational tenure	.294	.289	.287	-.009	-.052	-.036
Tenure of the relationship with the gossip recipient	-.394*	-.280*	-.434**	.020	.069	.078
Tendency to gossip	.212	.300	.211	.215**	.170*	.187*
Gossip valence	.340	.134	.187	-.053	-.057	-.152
Gossip content - restructuring	-.392	-.526	-.413	-.369	-.288	-.278
Gossip Content - system changes	-2.244*	-2.432*	-2.484*	-.422	-.024	-.070
Self-reported motives	-.057	-.088	-.061	.022	.036	.040
Country - UKI	.268	.275	.123	-.012	-.035	-.073
Country - US	-.015	.053	-.042	-.367	-.371	-.356
Baseline RTC	.071	-.303	.043	-.040	.003	.024
Moderator variable						
Gossiper's gender	-.678	-.783	-.781*	-.350*	-.219	-1.951**
Independent variables						
Change-related anxiety		.517**		.163*	.092	.088
Change-related fear			.366**	.032	-.014	.022
Gossip					.152**	-.018
Interaction						
Gossip X Gossiper's gender						.262**
<i>R</i> ²	.150	.235	.207	.205	.286	.354
<i>F</i>	1.261	2.030	1.719	1.584	2.281	2.922
ΔR^2		.085	.057	.205	.080	.068
ΔF		11.029	7.060	1.584	10.877	10.162

N = 115.* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

Coefficients are unstandardised

Notes:

1. Age range is coded "1" = 17 & 18 years old (apprentices/trainees); "2" = 18 to 25 years old; "3" = 26 to 40 years old; "4" = 41 to 55 years old; and "5" = Above 55 years old.

2. Gossip valence is coded "1" = Negative; and "0" = Positive or Unclear

3. Self-reported Motives are coded "1" = information gathering and validation; "2" = social enjoyment; "3" = negative influence; and "4" = group protection.

4. Gossip sender's gender is coded "1" = Female; and "0" = Otherwise

[^] Model 6 was created using Hayes Process Macro (Model 14 for moderated mediation)

The researcher ran mediation analysis with Hayes Process Macro, Model 4, which revealed that change-related anxiety has a significant indirect effect on RTC through gossip ($b = .079$, 95%CI [.018, .167]). The total effect of change-related anxiety on RTC was positive and significant ($b = .160$, $p < .05$; 95%CI [.014, .305]). Finally, the researcher found that the indirect effect of change-related fear on RTC via gossip was also significant ($b = .061$, 95%CI [.013, .121]). The total effect of change-related fear on RTC was positive and significant ($b = .045$, $p < .05$; 95%CI [.008, .174]). These findings (see [Table 21](#)) suggest that gossip mediates the relationship between change-related anxiety or change-related fear and RTC, supporting H7a and H7b.

Table 21. Total and Indirect Effects for Hypothesis 7a and 7b (Study 3)

Total effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	p	LLCI	ULCI
Gossip	.160	.032	.014	.305

Indirect effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC			
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Gossip	.079	.018	.167

Total effect of Change-related Fear on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	p	LLCI	ULCI
Gossip	.045	.048	.008	.174

Indirect effect of Change-related Fear on RTC			
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Gossip	.061	.013	.121

Hayes Process Macro, Model 14, was used to test the mediated moderation effect for the relationship between change-related anxiety and RTC via gossip, with gossipers' gender as the moderator. Results revealed that the conditional indirect effect of change-related anxiety on RTC through gossip was significant for female gossipers ($b = .122$, 95%CI [.038, .240]), but not significant for males/otherwise. The index of moderated mediation showed a significant difference in the conditional indirect effect for female gossipers ($W1$ (*Female Gossiper*) = .128, 95%CI [.033, .263]), supporting H8 (see also Model 5 - [Table 20](#)). Results for change-related fear were positive for the conditional indirect effect ($b = .090$, 95%CI [.023, .168]) and for the index of moderated mediation ($W1$ (*Female Gossiper*) = .091, 95%CI [.017, .205]). As depicted in [Figure 22](#) and [Figure 23](#), gossip has a positive and significant effect on RTC for female participants ($p < .001$).

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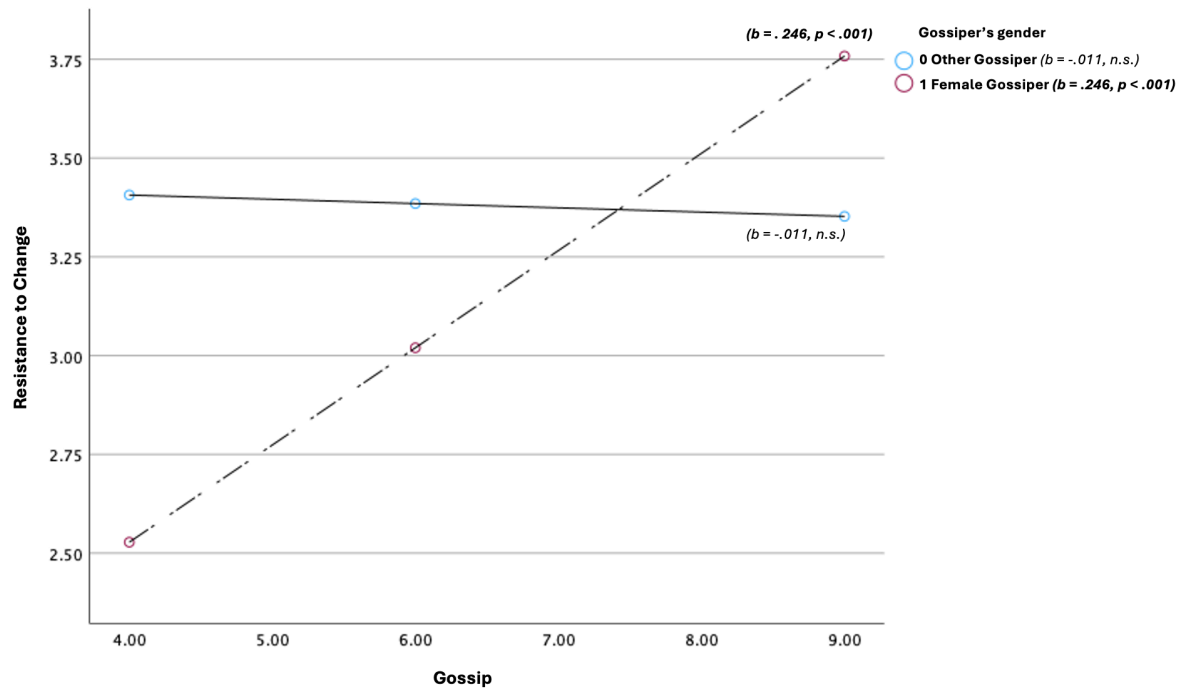


Figure 22. Study 3, Hypothesis 8a - Simple Slope from Hayes Process Macro Analysis for the Relationship between Gossip and RTC, moderated by Gossiper's Gender where Change-related Anxiety was the Independent Variable)

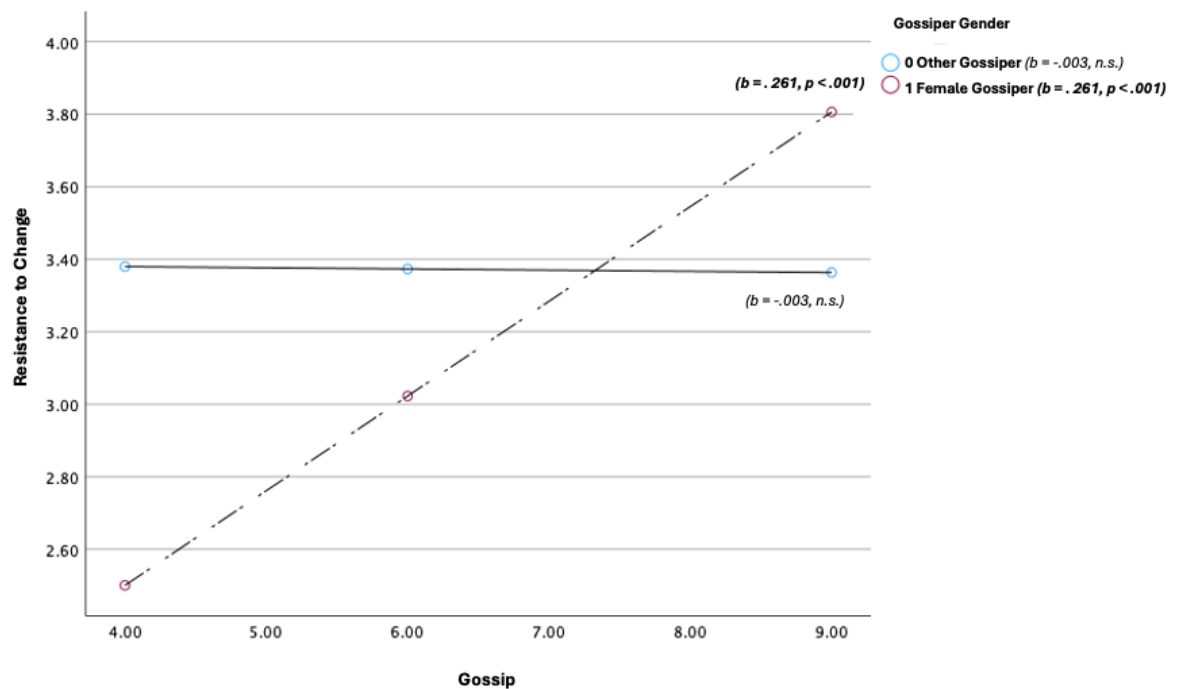


Figure 23. Study 3, Hypothesis 8b - Simple Slope from Hayes Process Macro Analysis for the Relationship between Gossip and RTC, moderated by Gossiper's Gender where Change-related Fear was the Independent Variable)

3.5.5 Supplementary Analysis

Because [Hayes \(2022\)](#) suggests that there are limitations to using Model 14 of the Hayes Process Macro (moderation of the b-path only) as it may highlight biased findings if other checks aren't conducted (e.g., that c-prime isn't moderated), the researcher used Hayes Process Macro 1 (while non-significant test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s) with a $p = .2950$) and Model 15 to validate the findings and results were identical. All effects were also similar with or without control variables (or without impotent control variables) in the models. The researcher further tested whether the gossip valence moderated the theoretical model, and results were not significant. Finally, the researcher tested the robustness of the rationale that change-related anxiety or fear elicits gossip by repeating the analysis with change-related uncertainty and worry⁴ as alternative antecedents, and the results were identical. The researcher also ran the same model with two alternative single-item measures of RTC ("I supported the change" (reverse scored); see [Tyler \(1999\)](#) and "I voiced my concerns about the changes"), and results were similar.

All detailed results from the supplementary analysis mentioned above can be found in [section 6.5](#), Appendix E: Supplementary Analysis.

⁴ Worry was measured with the following single item: "Thinking about the changes made me worried".

3.5.6 Brief Discussion

The results supported the researcher's rationale that organisational changes elicit anxiety or fear, and people may gossip at work to alleviate it. However, such gossip within the workplace might create a culture of scepticism and increase RTC. The researcher also found that the gossipers' gender moderates the relationship between gossip and RTC, with the effect becoming pronounced when the gossipers are female. These results are summarised in [Table 22](#), which highlights the hypotheses tested in Study 3 alongside the prediction and results.

However, these results were obtained from a single organisation. To address this limitation and increase external validity the researcher conducted Study 4.

Table 22: Study 3 Summary

Hypothesis	Path	Prediction	Regression/ Hayes Process Macro Model	Result	Result
H5a	Anxiety → Gossip	↑ Gossip	Regression	Supported	$p < .01$; $b = .517^{**}$
H5b	Fear → Gossip	↑ Gossip	Regression	Supported	$p < .01$; $b = .366^{**}$
H6	Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	Regression	Supported	$p < .01$; $b = .152^{**}$
H7a	Anxiety → Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 4	Supported	Indirect Effect: ($b = .079$, 95%CI [.018, .167])
H7b	Fear → Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 4	Supported	Indirect Effect: ($b = .061$, 95%CI [.013, .121])
H8a	Anxiety → Gossip → RTC (Moderator: Gender)	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 14	Supported	Index for Moderated Mediation: ($W1$ (Female Gossiper) = .128, 95%CI [.033, .263])
H8b	Fear → Gossip → RTC (Moderator: Gender)	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 14	Supported	Index for Moderated Mediation: ($W1$ (Female Gossiper) = .091, 95%CI [.017, .205])

3.6 Study 4: Replication Study

As described in the introduction (see [section 1](#)), replication studies have been used across different academic fields to increase the generalisability of results and further validate the findings using the previous measures and frameworks on a different sample ([Woodman, 2014](#)). However, in a research article written in 2018, [Shrout & Rodgers \(2018\)](#) claimed that there was a replication crises where researchers were trying to use measures, methodologies and frameworks from previous research and getting different conclusions. Their work provides a detailed view of these discrepancies and calls for more replication studies by the original author or authors of the work. [Hamlin \(2016\)](#) posited that replication studies help understand a specific phenomenon from multiple viewpoints. By conducting a quantitative replication study the researcher is able to increase the level of confidence that the hypotheses tested provide the same answers across multiple scenarios. Therefore, to reduce this potential limitation, the researcher utilised a replication study as a basis for Study 4.

3.6.1 Sample and Procedure

For Study 4 (Replication Study) the researcher recruited 100 employed individuals (average age = 34.40, $SD = 8.399$; 58% female) via Prolific⁵. When compared to other online platform for recruiting questionnaire participants online, Prolific has been highlighted as one of the best for academic purposes (Douglas, et al., 2023). Sensitivity power analysis using G*Power for the F-test under standard criteria ($\alpha = .05$ and $b = .20$) conducted with this sample size yielded an effect size of $f^2 = .21$. The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and provided full consent for participating in a study on organisational change for a compensation of £9 per hour. At the end of the survey, participants were thanked and debriefed. The researcher used the same critical incident technique as in Study 3.

The researcher ensured that the recruited individuals were from any location across the globe and that the participants had gone through large-scale organisational change within the last twelve months. The researcher ensured this by selecting the specific criteria in the Prolific platform prior to starting the process. In addition, the researcher added text in the introduction that stated that participants must have been involved in large-scale organisational change. Participants had to acknowledge this statement and briefly describe the type of change they had gone through prior to completing the questionnaire.

⁵ Prolific was used by the researcher for the replication study to recruit 100 participants. "Prolific is a platform that helps researchers recruit participants for their online research" (Prolific, 2024).

3.6.2 Measures

Change-related anxiety, change-related fear, gossip, gender and resistance to change (RTC) were measured as in Study 3 (see [section 2.4](#)). The researcher also controlled for the same variables as in Study 3 (see [section 2.4](#)), except for Baseline RTC.

3.6.3 Results

The researcher analysed the data with a similar procedure as in Study 3. [Table 23](#) presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables. As per Study 3, correlation between the main variables (for example gossip and RTC) was statistically significant. The researcher also conducted other checks, such as Durbin-Watson (checking for any autocorrelation), and all models were within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5 ([Saunders, et al., 2015](#); [Thompson, 2007](#)).

Table 23. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Study 4)

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 Age range	3.160	.615	1															
2 Education level	3.370	1.195	.070	1														
3 Managerial status	.400	.492	-.047	.021	1													
4 Organisational tenure	2.890	1.310	-.241*	.026	.053	1												
5 Tenure of the relationship with the gossip recipient	3.650	1.520	-.102	-.073	-.094	-.060	1											
6 Tendency to gossip	1.827	.585	-.091	-.013	.009	.142	-.027	1										
7 Gossip valence	.710	.456	.095	-.024	-.018	-.037	.158	.049	1									
8 Gossip content - restructuring	.420	.496	-.123	.025	.091	.212*	-.178	.137	.142	1								
9 Gossip content – system changes	.310	.465	.072	.046	-.238*	-.176	.026	.001	-.096	-.570**	1							
10 Self-reported motives	2.730	1.294	.182	.033	-.051	.209*	-.069	-.076	.020	.131	-.044	1						
11 Country - UKI	.300	.461	-.064	.072	-.089	.022	-.079	.032	-.014	.327**	-.109	-.100	1					
12 Country - US	.200	.402	-.131	-.072	.051	-.054	.215*	-.223*	-.066	-.274**	-.065	.047	-.327**	1				
13 Gender	.550	.500	-.125	-.074	-.082	-.092	.030	-.062	-.224*	-.167	.041	.123	-.110	.050	1			
14 Change-related anxiety	4.565	1.391	.053	-.001	.091	.108	.086	-.007	.002	-.099	.027	.118	-.291**	-.019	.017	1		
15 Change-related fear	3.968	1.476	-.008	-.060	-.041	.058	-.115	-.067	-.010	.012	.122	.077	-.071	-.061	.038	.250*	1	
16 Gossip	6.010	2.751	-.019	.128	.146	.177	-.031	-.007	.075	-.040	.100	-.016	-.194	-.020	.025	.339**	.348**	1
17 RTC	2.758	1.573	-.106	.025	.012	.024	.016	.074	-.032	-.104	.107	-.116	.098	-.162	.210*	.264**	.364**	.325**

N = 100. * $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level.

Notes:

1. Age range is coded "1" = 17 & 18 years old (apprentices/trainees); "2" = 18 to 25 years old; "3" = 26 to 40 years old; "4" = 41 to 55 years old; and "5" = Above 55 years old.

2. Gossip valence is coded "1" = Negative; and "0" = Positive or Unclear

3. Self-reported Motives are coded "1" = information gathering and validation; "2" = social enjoyment; "3" = negative influence; and "4" = group protection.

4. Gossip sender's gender is coded "1" = Female; and "0" = Otherwise

As shown in [Table 25](#), results of hierarchical regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between change-related anxiety and gossip ($b = .578; p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 5a (see Model 2). To test Hypothesis 5b, the researcher used hierarchical regression analysis and the results highlighted a positive, significant, relationship between change-related fear and gossip ($b = .614; p < .01$). This relationship is depicted in Model 3 in [Table 25](#). Moreover, the hierarchical regression analysis also revealed a significant positive relationship between gossip and RTC ($b = .194; p < .05$), supporting Hypothesis 6 (see Model 5).

Mediation analysis using a similar procedure as in Study 3 (Hayes Process Macro Model 4) revealed that change-related anxiety has a significant indirect effect on RTC through gossip ($b = .099, 95\%CI [.007, .239]$). The total effect of change-related anxiety on RTC was positive and significant ($b = .354, p < .01; 95\%CI [.116, .592]$), supporting Hypothesis 7a. Additionally, running Hayes Process Model 4 revealed that change-related fear has a significant indirect effect on RTC through gossip ($b = .090, 95\%CI [.012, .214]$). The total effect of change-related fear on RTC was positive and significant ($b = .421, p < .001; 95\%CI [.214, .628]$), supporting Hypothesis 7b. Results for Hypotheses 7a and 7b are represented in [Table 24](#).

To validate these results, the researcher ran a hierarchical regression analysis with a combined variable (Gossip multiplied by Gender) which highlighted a significant relationship (Model 6 in [Table 25](#)).

Table 24. Total and Indirect Effects for Hypothesis 7a and 7b (Study 4)

Total effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Gossip	.354	.004	.116	.592

Indirect effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC			
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Gossip	.099	.007	.239

Total effect of Change-related Fear on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Gossip	.421	.0001	.214	.628

Indirect effect of Change-related Fear on RTC			
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Gossip	.090	.012	.214

Table 25. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Hypotheses 5 to 8 (Study 4)

	Gossip			RTC		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6 [^]
Control variables						
Age range	.120	.087	.155	-.193	-.207	-.163
Education level	.297	.291	.354	.074	.036	.013
Managerial status	.884	.749	.920	.162	.073	.037
Organisational tenure	.491*	.425	.444*	.023	-.020	.001
Tenure of the relationship with the gossip recipient	-.034	-.094	.029	.028	.031	.026
Tendency to gossip	-.281	-.242	-.118	.222	.234	.411
Gossip valence	.707	.751	.674	.152	.074	.145
Gossip content - restructuring	.474	.595	.251	-.548	-.589	-.554
Gossip Content - system changes	1.172	1.212	.796	-.052	-.149	-.215
Self-reported motives	-.228	-.284	-.252	-.158	-.126	-.125
Country - UKI	-1.248	-.720	-1.040	.730*	.804*	.813*
Country - US	-.249	.091	-.120	-.441	-.454	-.322
Moderator variable						
Gossiper's gender	.516	.549	.454	.707*	.654*	-1.080
Independent variables						
Change-related anxiety		.578***		.261*	.214	.152
Change-related fear			.614**	.355***	.298**	.309**
Gossip					.194*	-.038
Interaction						
Gossip X Gossiper's gender						.295**
<i>R</i> ²	.152	.226	.253	.315	.341	.398
<i>F</i>	1.186	1.769	2.058	2.581	2.689	3.194
ΔR^2		.074	.101	.315	.026	.057
ΔF		8.085	11.513	2.581	3.266	7.773

N = 100.**p* < .05 level; ***p* < .01 level; ****p* < .001 level.

Coefficients are unstandardised

Notes:

1. Age range is coded "1" = 17 & 18 years old (apprentices/trainees); "2" = 18 to 25 years old; "3" = 26 to 40 years old; "4" = 41 to 55 years old; and "5" = Above 55 years old.

2. Gossip valence is coded "1" = Negative; and. "0" = Positive or Unclear

3. Self-reported Motives are coded "1" = information gathering and validation; "2" = social enjoyment; "3" = negative influence; and "4" = group protection.

4. Gossip sender's gender is coded "1" = Female; and "0" = Otherwise

[^] Model 6 was created using Hayes Process Macro (Model 14 for moderated mediation)

Next the researcher tested Hypothesis 8a and Hypothesis 8b, which addresses the mediating effects of change related-anxiety or change related fear on RTC via gossip, where the relationship between gossip and RTC is moderated by gossipers' gender. To test this hypothesis, the researcher used Hayes Process Macro Model 14 to conduct moderated mediation analysis as in Study 3. This analysis revealed that the conditional indirect effect of change-related anxiety on RTC through gossip was significant for female gossipers ($b = .174$, 95%CI [.021, .391]), but not significant for males. The index of moderated mediation showed a significant difference in the conditional indirect effect for female gossipers ($W1$ (*Female Gossiper*) = .163, 95%CI [.001, .417]), supporting Hypothesis 8a (see also Model 5 - [Table 25](#)). As depicted in [Figure 24](#), gossip has a positive and significant effect on RTC for female participants ($p < .01$).

Lastly the researcher ran the same analysis for change-related fear and the analysis revealed that the conditional indirect effect of change-related fear on RTC through gossip was significant for female gossipers ($b = .178$, 95%CI [.050, .360]), but not significant for males. The index of moderated mediation showed a significant difference in the conditional indirect effect for female gossipers ($W1$ (*Female Gossiper*) = .200, 95%CI [.031, .432]), supporting Hypothesis 8b. [Figure 25](#) provides a visualisation of Hypothesis 8b.

Understanding Resistance to Large-scale Change

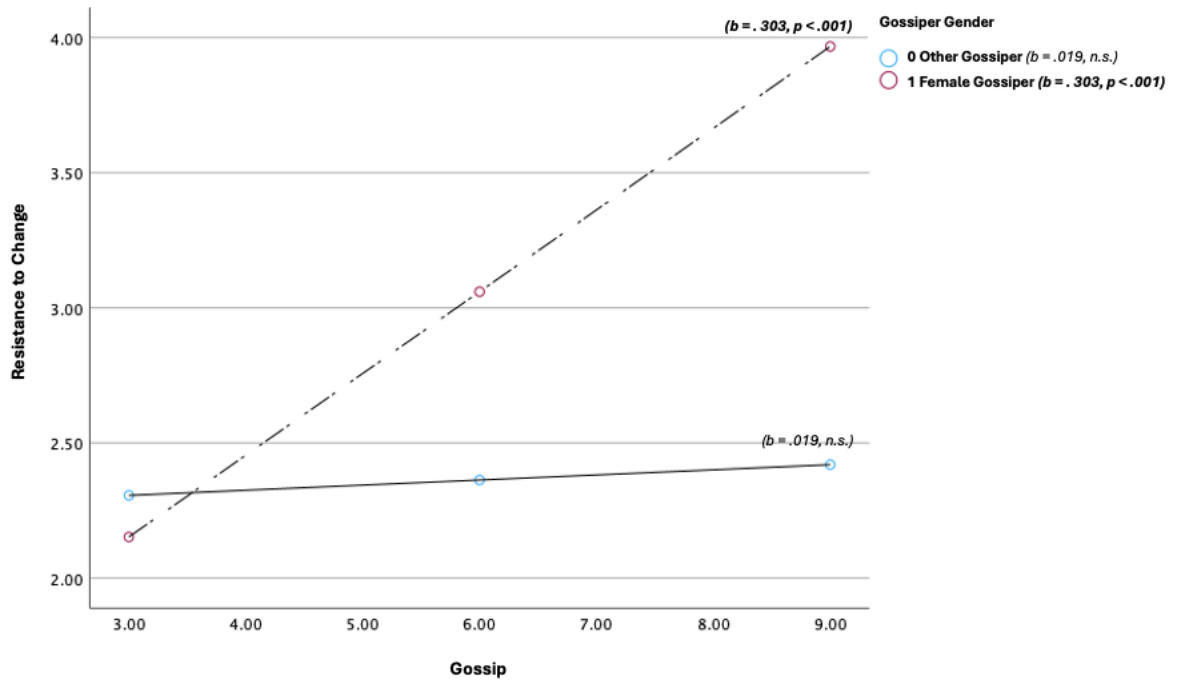


Figure 24. Study 4, Hypothesis 8a - Simple Slope from Hayes Process Macro Analysis for the Relationship between Gossip and RTC, Moderated by Gossiper's Gender where Change-related Anxiety was the Independent Variable)

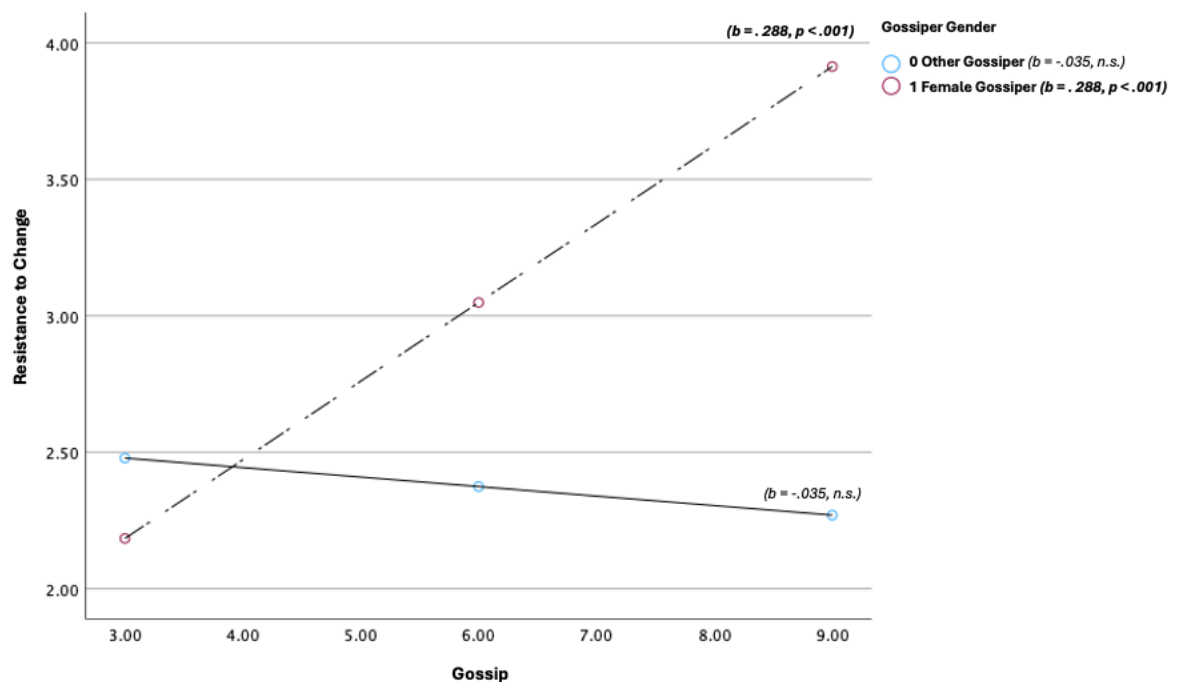


Figure 25. Study 4, Hypothesis 8b - Simple Slope from Hayes Process Macro Analysis for the Relationship between Gossip and RTC, Moderated by Gossiper's Gender where Change-related Fear was the Independent Variable)

3.6.4 Brief Discussion

The results replicated findings of Study 3 with a sample of participants from 100 different organisations, thus alleviating concerns of external validity due to conducting Study 3 in only one organisation, as well as responding to the replication crisis in social psychology and behavioural studies ([Shrout & Rodgers, 2018](#)). In [Table 26](#) the researcher provides a summary view of the hypotheses tested in Study 4, and a summary of the results and values. When compared with Study 3, the results were all supported at a 95% confidence interval ($p < .05$) and the researcher observed that the b value was higher for all hypothesis in Study 4 compared to Study 3.

However, they can neither conclude causality nor reverse causality. That is, it may be that individuals who resist the change are the ones who gossip more. To address these limitations, the researcher adds a number of suggestions for future researchers (see [section 3.10](#)).

Table 26: Study 4 Summary

Hypothesis	Path	Prediction	Hayes Process Macro Model	Result	Result
H5a	Anxiety → Gossip	↑ Gossip	Regression	Supported	$p < .01$; $b = .578^{**}$
H5b	Fear → Gossip	↑ Gossip	Regression	Supported	$p < .01$; $b = .614^{**}$
H6	Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	Regression	Supported	$p < .05$; $b = .194^*$
H7a	Anxiety → Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 4	Supported	Indirect Effect: ($b = .099$, 95%CI [.007, .239])
H7b	Fear → Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 4	Supported	Indirect Effect: ($b = .090$, 95%CI [.012, .214])
H8a	Anxiety → Gossip → RTC (Mod: Gender)	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 14	Supported	Index for Mod Med: ($W1$ (Female Gossiper) = .163, 95%CI [.001, .417])
H8b	Fear → Gossip → RTC (Mod: Gender)	↑ RTC	Hayes Process Macro Model 14	Supported	Index for Mod Med: ($W1$ (Female Gossiper) = .200, 95%CI [.031, .432])

3.7 Paper Two Summary

The researcher's theoretical model (see [Figure 21](#)) was based on the gossip sender who communicates information to a receiver about an absent target ([Dores Cruz, et al., 2021](#)) in the context of organisational change. The findings explain how gossip is triggered by anxiety, or fear, during large-scale organisational change and what its effects are on RTC based on the gossipers' gender.

As described, tested, and analysed in this thesis, when organisations go through large-scale change, there will be anxiety and fear from colleagues who believe, based on previous initiatives, that introducing new systems to their work will have negative impacts, such as redundancies (role reductions) or shifts of work to different locations ([Avey, et al., 2008](#); [Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011](#); [Grosser, et al., 2012](#); [Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2020](#)).

As an interviewee from Study 1 stated:

"There's a lot of fear especially when it comes to job security. People worry about how changes will impact their roles."

(Interviewee 3: Product Manager)

In Paper Two, evidence from three studies showed that direct cascaded communications from senior leadership are unlikely to be met with belief, as research ([Jimmieson, et al., 2004](#); [Lee & Barnes, 2021](#); [Narayan, 2023](#)) has shown that employee trust will be based on experience. Therefore, while communications from leaders to employees are needed and should be conducted, they are less likely to be consumed in a positive way by employees who have high levels of fear and anxiety ([Peng, et al., 2023](#); [Hodges, 2024](#)).

As highlighted in Paper One of this thesis, employee networks are not just based on the organisation's hierarchy, so organisations need to consider sources of information or leakage (via gossip) and how best to leverage these. This is because large-scale change managed through communication channels is too simplistic when organisations are trying to tackle employee behaviours ([Hon, et al., 2014](#); [Ouedraogo & Ouakouak, 2020](#); [Robbins & Karan, 2020](#)).

Therefore, utilising decentralised change networks can assist organisations in disseminating accurate information, as employees are more likely to trust information from other employees than leadership. Organisations need to find a way to 'seed' information about the interventions into the change network, who are likely to share these with other employees. For example, how does [organisation name] get the UK-based employees to understand the plan for deployment of interventions so that when they regularly collaborate with their US counterparts, they naturally rebuff any comments as they know what is true or not? Research from [Peng, et al., \(2023\)](#) has shown that this could feel more authentic and trusted due to the information coming from a peer relationship rather than leadership.

While not covered in this thesis, future researchers could try to answer the question: How do organisations expand change networks into other scenarios to drive positive motivation and handle negative sentiment, which drives resistance? Additionally, how do organisations use gossip about opportunities for improvements in day jobs and career opportunities to help drive morale in the team, as well as positive reinforcement around the actions of decision-makers?

Paper Two also focused on RTC, which is often described as the most potent form of inertia as it is driven by employees and their unwillingness to change out of fear

or potential loss of longstanding relationships (Ford, et al., 2008; Oreg & Berson, 2019; Morain & Aykens, 2023). Many literature sources also refer to resistance to change as psychological inertia (Hannan, 2005; Moradi, et al., 2021; Hubbart, 2023) or employee resistance to action (Vos & Rupert, 2018; Hodges, 2024). This cultural unwillingness to prioritise the organisation's best interest destroys any hope of improvement. Employees are cemented to current norms, fuelled by anxiety and a lack of psychological safety (Ellwardt, et al., 2012; Douglas, et al., 2023).

RTC can also be driven by political processes, where employees or external parties have a political impact on how the organisation reacts to change (Hempel, et al., 2012). Often referred to as bureaucratic red tape, political processes stifle innovation (Kotter, 1995; Peus, et al., 2009). Additionally, condoning individuals acting politically reduces trust and leads to demoralised employees (Ferreira & Cohen, 2008; Shin, et al., 2012; Vos & Rupert, 2018).

Lastly, Paper Two provided empirical evidence that anxiety and fear increase the level of gossip, which in turn increases RTC (Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7). There was also evidence that the relationship between gossip and RTC is moderated by gossiper's gender (Hypothesis 8), with female participants having a higher RTC after gossiping.

3.8 Contributions to Theory

Although research on workplace gossip is growing ([Foster, 2004](#); [Kakarika, et al., 2023](#); [Liu, et al., 2020](#)) and anecdotal evidence suggests that gossip is particularly prevalent during organisational change ([Larkin & Larkin, 1994](#); [Smeltzer, 1991](#); [Robbins & Karan, 2020](#); [Shimoni, 2017](#)), understanding of how it unfolds during organisational change is limited. Advancing the recent literature on this phenomenon ([Dores Cruz, et al., 2021](#)), the researcher contextualised gossip in organisational change.

The researcher assumed that organisational change elicits anxiety or fear, and responses in the qualitative exploratory study confirmed this assumption. The researcher's main prediction was that gossip operates as a coping mechanism in times of change-related anxiety or change-related fear. The researcher's findings from two field studies supported this prediction. The researcher found that employees engage in gossip as a reaction to their anxiety or fear during organisational change. Despite studies showing that gossip is triggered by the motivation to vent emotions ([Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012](#)) such as frustration ([Spacks, 1985](#)), there is a lack of clarity in the literature as to why employees engage in gossip. This study thus contributes to the literature on the antecedents of gossip. The researcher's findings also contribute to the literature of organisational change by helping to address the lack of empirical research into gossip is a reaction of employees who experience anxiety or fear during organisational change.

In addition, the researcher contributes to the literature on the effects of gossip in organisations. Contrary to studies showing that gossip is helpful for groups, for example because it increases cooperation (see following research for examples ([Wu,](#)

[et al., 2016a; Wu, et al., 2016b](#))), during periods of large-scale organisational change it can increase resistance to change, especially for females. This thesis is in line with other studies showing the detrimental effects of gossip, such as its relationship with aggression, which could be aggressive speech or aggressive behaviour between colleagues ([McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002; Hess & Hagen, 2006](#)). However, the researcher urges scholars and organisations to spend more time delving deeper into the transformation and organisational change phenomenon in an attempt to better understand how gossip can affect important organisational behaviours and gender differences inherent in such workplace reactions of change-related fear and anxiety.

3.9 Practical Implications

This thesis highlighted ten interventions (see [section 1.6](#)) deployed to try to change a multinational organisation's success; however, understanding gossip as a complex behaviour in times of change is crucial in developing targeted interventions and strategies to effectively manage change within organisations. As described in the Introduction (see [section 1](#)), the multinational organisation did not utilise such insights, meaning some interventions were received with resistance. Organisations and employees must recognise that change-related anxiety and change-related fear may contribute to gossip behaviour. Leaders need to be mindful of the importance of emotions, gossip and resistance so that they can engage with employees in an empathetic and considerate manner. This thesis, along with findings from other researchers ([Amarantou, et al., 2017](#); [Burton, et al., 2019](#); [Nowak, 2023](#); [Vardaman, et al., 2023](#); [Walk, 2023](#)) highlights the impact of managing RTC to achieve greater organisational change adoption. Leaders need to consistently review and monitor their employees' levels of emotions through frequent engagement and open communication ([Yuan & Van Knippenberg, 2022](#); [de Vries & de Vries, 2023](#); [Warrick, 2023](#)).

The researcher draws seven implications for practitioners from the results of this thesis. First, promoting a positive and open *communication* environment may foster a more adaptive and receptive response which may reduce anxiety or fear. In turn, employee's discussions may reduce RTC.

As one interviewee mentioned:

“[I was] fed up with changes happening with no real clear explanation of how this will benefit the teams”.

(Interviewee 5: Engineering Manager)

This quote and the findings from this thesis emphasise the importance of organisations clearly explaining the benefits before and during the implementation of changes, in a structured and thoughtful way, so that they can reduce RTC.

This study emphasises the importance of fostering better communication during periods of transformation so that employees are better equipped to deal with the impending change. One practical suggestion is for organisations to make feedback easily accessible via online or physical forums, such as an online ‘Always Listening’ feedback form that employees can complete ([Jensen, et al., 2013](#)). While feedback is essential during organisational change, employees are often afraid to provide it because they might be targeted for speaking out ([Alharbi, 2022](#); [Boothby, et al., 2023](#)).

If organisations want to increase the amount of *feedback* they need to consider anonymising feedback and providing a psychologically safe environment where each employee feels they are heard, as one interviewee mentioned:

“Embracing a mindset shift is crucial for successful change management. The ‘why’ behind the change should be clearly communicated to the team [to reduce resistance]. And can only be achieved with an open feedback environment where I can provide my view and I’m taken seriously.”

(Interviewee 2: Data Engineer)

Third, this thesis provides a nuanced understanding of how gossip manifests during organisational change, and particularly how it is driven by emotions of change-related anxiety and change-related fear. By understanding these *emotional dynamics*, organisations can better anticipate and manage gossip as a natural response to upheaval which should mitigate gossip's potential negative impact on employee morale and organisational culture. This insight will help organisations understand what change management strategies need to be deployed to reduce RTC. Knowing what employees will do during large-scale organisational change is often difficult. Still, this thesis provides some essential building blocks that can help organisations understand that by increasing their communication at the beginning of the change, they can increase the level of change adoption by reducing RTC.

Fourth, by including *gender* in the hypothesised model (see [Figure 21](#)), the researcher highlighted that organisations should pay greater attention when deciding what type of organisational change should be deployed, including messaging and diversity, to cater for all genders. While this may seem more challenging in the current environment that rightly demands equal opportunities ([Agócs, 1997](#); [Bradley, et al., 2001](#); [Baber & Tucker, 2006](#); [Eckhaus & Ben-Hador, 2019](#)), organisations need to respect each gender.

Fifth, organisations that can showcase a culture that embraces organisational change by starting with a clear understanding of the facets that impact organisational change (such as gossip and RTC) and then apply coherent plans, for example Meeting Effectiveness (see [Intervention 1.6.8](#)), will be able to support their employees and ultimately drive better outcomes.

Sixth, as highlighted by [Shin, et al., \(2012, p. 732\)](#), “*when change is under way, employees with a high level of psychological resilience are likely to experience more positive emotions than will employees with a low level of psychological resilience*”. Furthermore, when employees view large-scale organisational change more positively (e.g., with lower anxiety or fear), they tend to react to organisational change more favourably with less RTC. Organisations that are able to understand employee emotions are able to reduce employee resistance by creating a culture that engages and interacts with employees more frequently. This combination of increased employee engagement and resilience, helping organisations maintain levels of engagement despite the uncertainty of upcoming large-scale changes ([Amarantou, et al., 2017](#); [Hubbart, 2023](#)).

Seventh, an often-forgotten impact of large-scale organisational change are the *ethical considerations* of deploying large-scale change to multiple regions and cultures (for example deploying change to 23 countries). By acknowledging the potential negative consequences of gossip on organisational culture this thesis encourages ethical and country reflection for managers, leaders and employees. As highlighted in the Interventions related to Values and Behaviours (see [section 1.6.6](#)), organisations can use the findings from this thesis to cultivate a culture of respect, transparency and trust, which should facilitate healthier interpersonal dynamics between employees and mitigate gossip-driven conflicts by promoting greater equality.

3.10 Limitations and Further Research Directions

The researcher's two critical incidents studies (Study 3 and Study 4) allowed for reporting both positive and negative gossip. However, the participants reported mainly negative gossip. The latter is in line with reviews of anthropological and sociological studies ([Bergmann, 1993](#)), which show that the most common topics of gossip include behavioural inconsistencies and socially unacceptable behaviour, character flaws, mistakes, misfortunes, and failures.

As one of the interviewees in the exploratory qualitative study mentioned,

“Loss is more powerful than the joy of gaining something new for many people”

(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director).

Although this work controlled for gossip valence (see [section 3.5.2.5](#)) in the two studies, the researcher encourages future studies to disentangle the effects of positive and negative gossip to better understand the phenomenon in organisational contexts.

This thesis' limitations present exciting opportunities for future research. Based on Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping theory ([Lazarus & Folkman, 1984](#)), the researcher argued that gossip is an emotional reaction to a major workplace event, i.e., organisational change, and tested gossip as an outcome of anxiety or fear. Although the researcher's rationale was based on a coping explanation, the finding that gossip behaviour increases RTC is consistent with research suggesting that people often fail to self-regulate ([Baumeister, et al., 1994](#)). The study design in this thesis did not allow testing of such self-regulation failure or venting as an alternative reaction to change-related anxiety or change-related fear. In other words, it may be that employees gossip not to self-regulate but rather to vent. As one of the interviewees described this,

“I wanted to vent about another colleague failing to deliver on a task”

(Interviewee 10: Payroll Administrator).

Future research is needed to test such alternative explanations as well as other emotional mechanisms such as negative affect.

The finding of Study 3 that gossip increases RTC may be explained by a selection bias, whereby participants who were particularly resistant to change opted to participate in the critical incident study. However, supplementary analysis revealed that there were no significant differences between respondents to the incident and non-respondents in terms of change-related anxiety or change-related fear. Additionally, by conducting Study 4 the researcher attempted to reduce this limitation. Yet, the researcher encourages future research to rule out such possibility.

Another limitation is that the researcher did not examine in detail the friendship levels between the gossip sender and the recipient, which may increase their exchange of gossip (Foster, 2004; Grosser, et al., 2010; Watson, 2012). While gossiping may also facilitate friendship (Ellwardt, et al., 2012), this study did not measure or control for it. However, the researcher controlled for the tenure of the relationship between the gossip sender and the recipient. This is because the length of the relationship between the gossip sender and recipient might affect the level of comfort and openness in sharing gossip (Kim, et al., 2019; Outlaw & Baer, 2022). However, future research may more explicitly study the role of friendship and gossip during change. While writing this thesis, the researcher acknowledges that for both practice and theory, understanding friendship levels between the gossiping employees (gossip sender and recipient) is crucial because the nature and frequency of the gossip exchange could significantly influence the strength of their relationship (Grosser, et al., 2012; Sun, et al., 2023). For

example, if the employees are close friends they often have a greater level of trust and therefore they may share gossip more freely and frequently, which potentially affects the type of gossip shared. Therefore, future research could delve into these dynamics to determine how varying levels of friendship impact emotions, gossip and RTC. Future researchers could use a friendship five-point Likert scale similar to [Haiyan & Zhang \(2021\)](#): 0) “I have never heard the name”; 1) “I heard about the person but had no personal interaction with her/him”; 2) “I have met the person a few times but he/she is not a friend of mine”; 3) “The person is a friend of mine”; and 4) “The person is one of my best friends”. Furthermore, literature has suggested that gossiping plays a role in building and nurturing friendship by building trust, creating bonds and a sense of belonging among employees ([Lee & Barnes, 2021](#); [Sun, et al., 2023](#); [Greenslade-Yeats, et al., 2024](#)).

Building on the limitation of friendship levels, the researcher did not measure friendship groups and how they can influence organisation change and emotions. [Vardaman, et al., \(2023\)](#) highlighted that friendship groups’ perception of change can influence collective performance, behaviours and communication.

For Paper 2, the relatively small sample sizes in Study 3 (115 participants) and Study 4 (100 participants) may limit the statistical power of the analyses, reducing the likelihood of detecting true effects when they exist, particularly if the effects are small or moderate ([Memon, et al., 2020](#)). This was highlighted by conducting sensitivity analysis that showed that Studies 3 ($F^2 = .18$) and 4 ($F^2 = .21$) are powered to detect medium and large effects, but may fail to detect small effects ([Brysbaert & Stevens, 2018](#)). Moreover this could result in failing to identify meaningful, small effect, relationships between variables even though they may be present, thus potentially

undermining the reliability and generalisability of the findings. As described in the limitations section from Paper 1 ([section 2.10](#)); by expanding the sample to over 500, future researchers can provide further validation for their findings ([Baruch, 1999](#)). Furthermore, a larger sample size, or in this case, larger sample sizes for both studies, could minimise this limitation by providing greater statistical power ([Button, et al., 2013](#); [George & Mallery, 2021](#)) that would afford future researchers the opportunity to conduct SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) using Mplus that would allow for model estimation and analysis of multiple dependent variables ([Kelloway, 2014](#); [Zhang, et al., 2021](#)). The researcher selected Hayes Process Macro with bootstrapping because there was only one DV (RTC), and IVs were measured separately, and therefore, SEM may not have been an adequate method as this thesis wasn't testing parallel models ([Hayes, 2022](#); [Heck, et al., 2022](#)). Future researchers may include multiple DVs (e.g., RTC and performance) and use SEM instead of Hayes Process Macro.

The researcher did not prove causality or reverse causality, and therefore, future researchers could build on this work by conducting an experiment. Following research by [Marzillier and Davey \(2005\)](#) and [Mayer, et al., \(1995\)](#) future researchers could use music to induce emotions of fear and anxiety and then ask participants specific questions based upon a change-related scenario. In addition, future researchers could build on this research by considering other observable behavioural variables related to gossip, such as a colleague's intent to share information, the level of turnover, or organisational justice ([Michelson, et al., 2010](#); [Rehman, et al., 2021](#); [Sun, et al., 2023](#)). By extending this research to these variables, future researchers will be able to increase both practical relevance (e.g., understanding RTC from different angles) for

organisation and academia, as well as increasing explanatory power (Vos & Rupert, 2018; Warrick, 2023).

While the Interview Structure (Appendix A, section 6.1) incorporated open-ended questions, such as “How did you feel when the changes were taking place?” and “What are your perceptions of the changes that have occurred in the organisation between the two time periods [June 2022 and June 2023]?”, which allowed interviewees to express their experiences more freely; several subsequent (follow on) questions were more leading. For example, in the gossip section of the Interview Structure, the researcher included prompts like “Did you feel anxious in the past 12 months, when considering the changes?” and “Did you feel uncertain in the past 12 months, when considering the changes?”, which could have primed interviewees to focus on specific negative emotions (Lune & Berg, 2017; King, et al., 2019; Cairns-Lee, et al., 2022). This potentially created a “demand effect” (Mummolo & Peterson, 2019, p. 518), encouraging responses that aligned with the constructs already under investigation, such as anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. Research has shown that closed questions could be useful for targeting phenomena, especially when other open-end questions are included (Arnon & Reichel, 2009; Mummolo & Peterson, 2019).

Another limitation is that the researcher didn’t include other theories that could provide insights into the wider phenomena of emotions and behaviour. For example, future researchers could review and analyse Attribution theory, which is a theory that examines how employees interpret the causes of events and behaviours (Heider, 2013; Weiner, 1985; Yao & Siegel, 2021). While not measured in this thesis, further researchers could enrich their analysis by exploring the receiver’s attribution process, how they interpret the motives behind the gossipers’ behaviour and form judgements

about the fairness of the change agent. Likewise, gossip arising from attributions of injustice or uncontrollable change may be more negatively valenced and widely disseminated, increasing RTC (Martinko, et al., 2011; Saba, et al., 2024).

The researcher acknowledges that endogeneity remains a potential concern in this thesis. While steps were taken to control for confounding variables (see Supplementary Analysis ([section 6.5.9](#)) for details), a two-stage least squares (2SLS) approach using an instrumental variable, which influences the dependent variable but is uncorrelated with the independent variables, was not employed (Papies, et al., 2017; Sande & Ghosh, 2018; Hill, et al., 2021). Future research could apply techniques (“Road map”) based by Bascle (2008, p. 287), for example, using STATA, to more robustly address potential endogeneity issues and enhance causal inference.

Furthermore, the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the term change may be perceived as different. Across Paper One and Paper Two organisational change is defined and measured in varied ways, for example structural change, or new process implementation, which might lead to inconsistencies that complicate cross-study comparisons and theoretical coherence (Darlington & Hayes, 2017). However, this thesis does not fully distinguish between *organisational change* as the specific interventions (see [section 1.6](#)), or *change context*, which refers to the broader situational factors surrounding the change (e.g., sector). This distinction is important, as the context in which a change occurs can significantly shape employee perceptions, emotional responses, and behaviours, independently of the change itself. Future researchers could refer to change context throughout to accommodate variation in the terms used, while conserving conceptual continuity (Weick, 2009; Pullen & Ferreira, 2017; Hodges, 2021).

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Finally, the researcher's model is at the episodic level. However, responses may vary over time. Therefore, the researcher encourages longitudinal research that examines these outcomes over time.

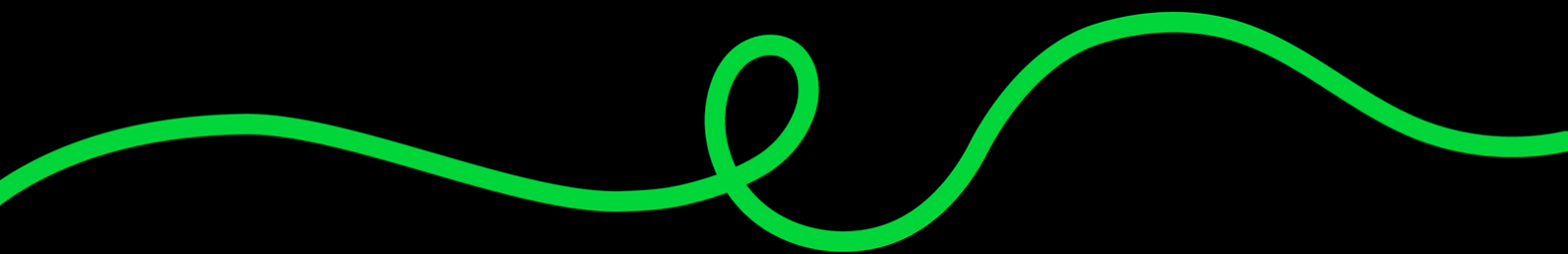
Overall, organisations striving for more productive work environments by creating psychologically safe, high-performing teams can use the insights from this multi-method (qualitative and quantitative) thesis to contextualise the gossip and RTC dynamics.

3.11 Conclusion

Organisations are able to address change more effectively when they work to improve their understanding of how emotions, such as change-related anxiety and change-related fear, impact gossip and RTC. By addressing organisational change more effectively, organisations will be able to create a better environment for employees that ensures employees feel heard.

**“The only way to make sense out of
change is to embrace it
wholeheartedly.”**

Maya Angelou



4 Summary and Conclusion

Organisations spend vast amounts of money and time deploying change initiatives to achieve key outcomes but often face employee resistance (Ford, et al., 2008; Morain & Aykens, 2023; Andersen & Johansen, 2024). The final section of this thesis provides a summary of the key findings and a detailed conclusion on resistance to change in large companies dealing with such transitions. In the last subsection (see [section 4.1](#)), this thesis shares ethical considerations for conducting credible research. This thesis aims to provide a deeper understanding of what makes someone resist change.

Statements by three interviewees highlight common rationales for resisting change,

“I make decisions and resist change all the time based upon the person leading the change and what’s in it for me.”

(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)

“Sometimes people don't like the person who is applying that change onto them.”

(Interviewee 12: Product Programme Manager)

“When you bring someone from outside, someone who is coming [in] as a stranger... If you're coming in and you're a little bit too strong... I think people do freak out a little bit. They then don't do what is asked by that person.”

(Interviewee 11: Portfolio Director)

As discussed in this thesis, the literature on PRTC is mixed (Lin & Germain, 2003; Kunze, et al., 2013; Le Mens, et al., 2015; Huvaj & Johnson, 2019; Malhotra, et al.,

2022). There is one school of thought which holds that decentralisation will reduce PRTC (Fiedler, et al., 1996; Argyres & Silverman, 2004; Andrews, et al., 2009; Eva, et al., 2021; Altamimi, et al., 2023). However, this is not true in every case. Other literature shows that decentralisation increases PRTC (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013; Haag, 2014; Grant, 2014; Giæver & Smollan, 2015; Felipe, et al., 2016; Burton, et al., 2019; Altamimi, et al., 2023). This thesis, therefore, tested and analysed three critical aspects of resistance to change.

First, a longitudinal study investigates the published view that decentralisation decreases PRTC in larger organisations if country culture factors, such as power distance, are included in the approach. In low power distance country cultures, resistance is reduced even further. Similarly, for country cultures that are more individualistic rather than collectivistic, this thesis shows that, over time, resistance is reduced even further. However, further research is needed to investigate the exact relationship between PRTC and the number of agile external experts hired to support the transformation efforts.

Second, the researcher delved into the phenomena of emotions, gossip and resistance to change. Within this study, it was clear that emotions lead to gossip. When employees have a heightened level of change-related fear or anxiety, their level of gossip increases, and that, in turn, increases their level of RTC. Furthermore, it was found that the link between gossip and resistance to change is moderated by gender. This study was built on previous research demonstrating that female employees may have a greater level of resistance during large-scale change after engaging in gossip (Agócs, 1997; Shahbaz, et al., 2020). This is an essential finding for theory and practice

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because it emphasises the importance of adapting an organisational change plan to fit the profile of employees instead of keeping it generic, as one size does not fit all.

Third, did [organisation name] understand the antecedents of RTC? To answer this question, this thesis focused on both organisational-driven and individual-driven response perspectives to understand how organisations can thrive by deploying key transformation initiatives (i.e., interventions) that reduce resistance and facilitate a greater likelihood of achieving business outcomes. From the researcher's viewpoint, the key for practitioners is to devise specific interventions (by thinking big and delivering small, frequent changes) to help organisations and their employees embrace change, thereby fostering innovation, resilience and long-term success. For academia, the literature reviews (see [section 2.1](#) and [section 3.1](#)) and quantitative studies (see [section 2.3.2](#) and [section 3.5](#)) have highlighted the importance of understanding the underpinnings and antecedents of resistance to change. Furthermore, this will aid academics to develop frameworks and change strategies that facilitate a more adaptable mindset when deploying large-scale organisational change.

The conclusions of this research are summarised as seven theoretical and practical recommendations for organisations undergoing transformation:

First, organisations need to emphasise and engage stakeholders in organisational change as early as possible and ensure they increase the frequency of engagement and communication. As highlighted in [Intervention 1: Brand Re-launch](#) (see [section 1.6](#)), **real-time and adaptive communication** will drive more effective employee engagement ([Hodges, 2024; Lee & Lalwani, 2024](#)). This engagement should then lead to more carefully implemented changes, which minimise the level of

resistance to change and lead to organisational changes that are more sustainable. Although engaging employees in generic ways is fundamental, practitioners must also tailor their engagement to involve stakeholders at all levels. This starts by creating dynamic change plans that outline clear objectives and address the key challenges that employees and leaders might face as they go through transformational change (Lyu, et al., 2024). Organisations that effectively communicate and adapt to evolving environments often remain competitive and achieve long-term success (Hon, et al., 2014; de Vries & de Vries, 2023).

Furthermore, [section 1.6.3.3](#) covered ethical considerations which should prompt organisations to adopt more ethical communication practices that uphold integrity, fairness and respect for employee dignity. Both the analysis and the interview discussions (see [section 3.4](#)) clearly show that organisations will be more successful in the long term if they can harness gossip as a potential catalyst for constructive dialogue and collaboration, thereby promoting a culture of trust and accountability rather than allowing it to undermine organisational harmony (Chung, et al., 2017; Kiran & Tripathi, 2018; Lee & Barnes, 2021; Kakarika, et al., 2021; Andersen & Johansen, 2024).

As highlighted in this thesis, a way to minimise the impact of negative gossip is to have continuous engagement with employees that involves providing them with the correct information that is truthful and practical. Furthermore, this thesis highlighted that communicating through the right channels for that employee group is also important. As showcased in this thesis, communication is not enough, and organisations must create opportunities and make space for employees to have discussions and provide feedback. Where feedback is provided, it needs to be

actioned. Research by [Castañer & Oliveira \(2020\)](#), and [Hodges \(2024\)](#) has shown that for organisations to be successful, they need to use storytelling as a way of bringing the change to life in a relatable way.

Second, organisations often turn to resistance to change as the cause of project failure ([Iriarte & Bayona, 2020](#); [Herz & Krezdorn, 2022](#)). However, ***instead of blaming resistance to change***, organisations should spend more time understanding the mindset and behaviours of their employees in order to cultivate a culture that leads to automatic behavioural buy-in from the start of any new transformation. As highlighted in Intervention 4: Values and Behaviours (see [section 1.6.6](#)), values and behaviours are essential to creating a holistic approach to change management so that employees understand what is expected of them and feel part of the change journey ([Hofstede, 2001](#); [Ihzaturrahma & Kusumawati, 2021](#); [Lee & Lalwani, 2024](#)). In the second paper, the researcher developed a theoretical model (see [Figure 21](#)) that tested two emotions, namely, change-related fear and anxiety. This research highlighted how behaviours manifest due to the introduction of large-scale organisational change. Furthermore, this thesis showed that gossip plays an important role as employees try to find a way to cope with organisational change.

This thesis then suggested a model for creating sustainable organisational change when decentralising organisational structures (see [section 2](#)). By targeting organisational structures (e.g., decentralisation) and increasing empowerment (decentralising decision-making), organisations are more likely to harness cultural change by showcasing their values and behaviours ([Wu, et al., 2016b](#); [van der Meulen, et al., 2020](#); [Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022](#); [Morain & Aykens, 2023](#)). Having these values and behaviours as part of daily routines means that employees are less likely to shift back

to their old ways before the transformation is complete. However, behaviours alone are not enough, and organisations need to empower their teams.

Third, utilising Kanter's Empowerment Theory, this thesis tested and then confirmed that removal of centralised control structures, and replacing these with decentralised structures, can lead to a reduction in PRTC. Organisations that **empower employees** to make decisions and drive organisational change are able to create a culture that places importance on achieving progress, rather than striving for perfection with every decision (Nowak, 2023). Creating a culture of continuous learning and adaptability affords each employee an opportunity to increase their knowledge and develop new skills. As highlighted in Intervention 5: Neuroscience and Agility Training (see [section 1.6.7](#)), employees valued the amount of learning they received. One of the interviewees stated,

“Embracing a mindset shift is crucial for successful change management. The 'why' behind the change should be clearly communicated to the team [to reduce resistance]. And can only be achieved with an open feedback environment where I can provide my view and I'm taken seriously.”

(Interviewee 2: Data Engineer)

Encouraging employee involvement in change initiatives through structured forums such as workshops and hackathons is integral to fostering a culture of innovation and ownership (Gunkel, et al., 2016; Herz & Krezdorn, 2022). Moreover, by making these meetings and ceremonies more visible within the organisation's meeting calendar and cultural fabric, organisations empower employees to contribute ideas in which they feel personally invested.

From a different viewpoint, does changing an organisation's structure drive behavioural change? Based upon the interventions described in [section 1.6](#), it is important to ensure that organisations are structured correctly. This research provided empirical evidence, and verbatims from interviews, to demonstrate that decentralisation can reduce PRTC. However, organisations must not be complacent and expect that this single dimension of organisational structure is all they should consider. For organisations to be successful, they need to consider behavioural change as well as structural change. The findings from paper two provide further empirical evidence that, while structure is important (as empirically researched in Paper One), potential benefits from restructuring may not be achieved if organisations do not also consider the roles played by emotions and behaviours. The findings from Paper Two show that, even though the organisation under question had decentralised its structure, resistance increased because closer attention was not given to the emotional and behavioural factors that have a major influence on employees.

Fourth, for global organisations to make the most of regional advantages, they need to ***tailor any change strategy*** to measures that are equally important to customers, partners and employees. For example, as highlighted in the first paper, country culture (based on Hofstede ([Hofstede, 2011](#))) positively impacts PRTC. Understanding how low power distance reduces PRTC means that organisations should adapt their change plans to a country's culture. This manifests with each employee feeling that the change is tailored to their background and needs, which in turn increases their level of engagement and desire for the change to succeed ([Alharbi, 2022](#); [Bäcklander, 2022](#); [Hodges, 2024](#)).

Fifth, as described by [Da Ros, et al., \(2023\)](#), organisations need to change the **way they transform** to keep up with market trends and competitors. The first step in effective transformation is for organisations is to break down multiyear transformation programmes into prioritised interventions (as articulated in [section 1.6](#)) and to deploy these interventions iteratively. This concept is often referred to as continuous transformation. It enables organisations to plan strategically, usually in a 12- or 24-month horizon, and to deliver transformation in smaller pieces, usually every 3 to 6 months.

Leaders and employees must be equipped with tools, frameworks and techniques to manage both the structural and emotional aspects of change. Their actions are crucial in addressing employee concerns, providing support, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability ([Grant, 2014; Boothby, et al., 2023](#)). [Figure 26](#) summarises the key elements highlighted in this thesis. It recommends that employees need to understand the cycle of transformational change ([Hodges, 2024, p. 238](#)) and embed behavioural thinking in large-scale organisational change.

Understanding Resistance to Large-scale Change

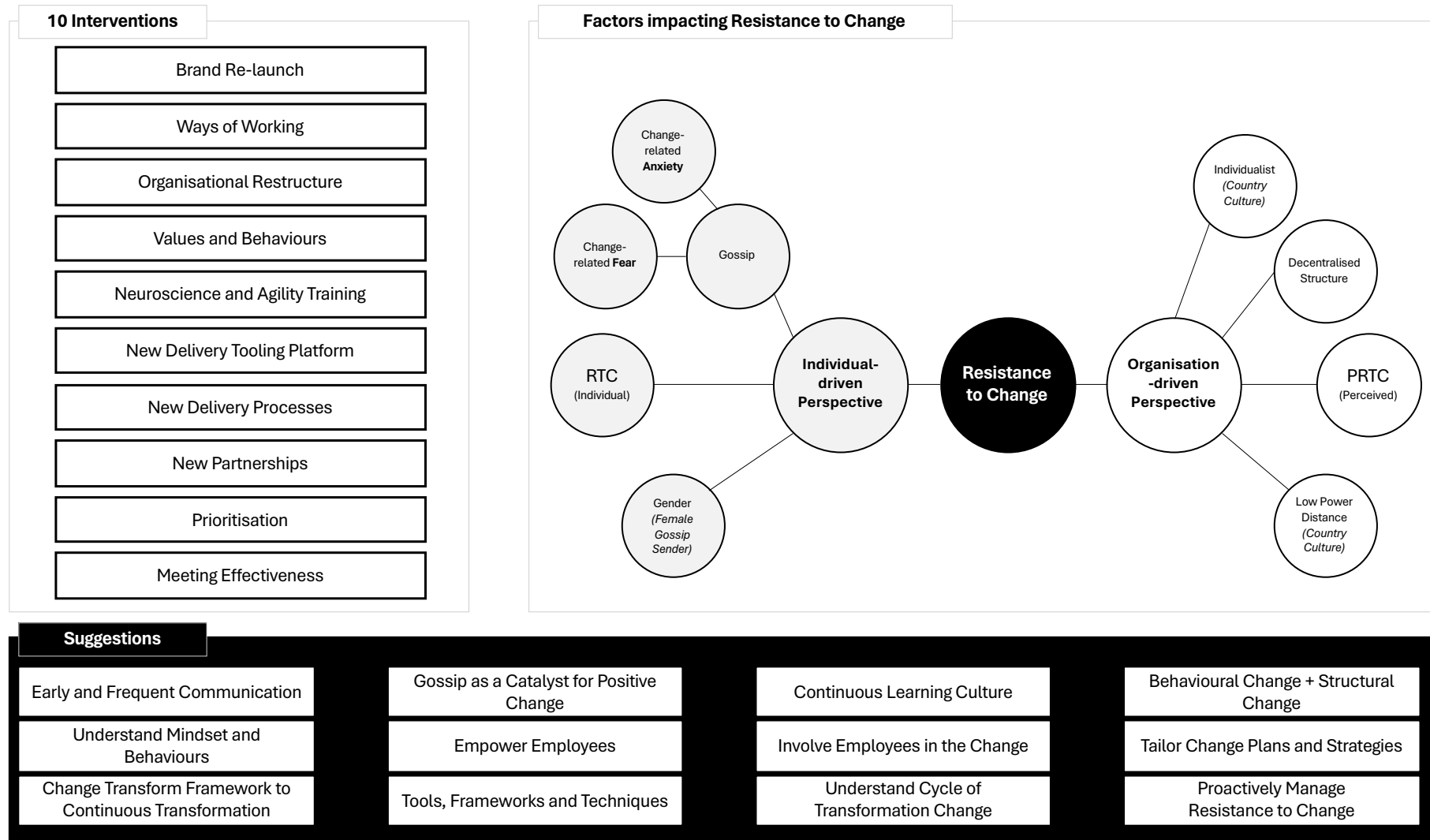


Figure 26. Summary of Key Factors Impacting Resistance to Change

Sixth, organisations going through large-scale change need to be **more proactive when managing resistance to change**. This thesis has highlighted the importance of empathetic leadership and inclusive communication as means to cultivating an environment where employees feel heard, valued and informed (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Baumeister, et al., 2007; Kiran & Tripathi, 2018). Organisations that proactively communicate with employees have a greater likelihood of mitigating the negative repercussions of gossiping behaviour. Thereby creating a workforce that is more resilient in the face of continuous change.

Finally, this thesis advances theoretical and practical insights into employee resistance to change by offering practical recommendations for organisational leaders and employees to be successful. By embracing the insights and suggestions provided in this thesis, organisations can navigate change more effectively by strengthening employee empowerment and engagement while fostering a workplace culture that thrives amidst an evolving landscape filled with complexity, uncertainty and the introduction of new technology, such as AI (Aguinis, et al., 2024). Effective organisational change management involves strategic planning, clear communication and careful implementation of large-scale organisational change (interventions) to minimise resistance and ensure this change is sustainable and beneficial (Hodges, 2024; Lee & Lalwani, 2024).

4.1 Ethical Considerations

Issues of anonymity are increased when conducting research in a single organisation. Therefore, review and approval were required prior to commencement and any questions that could be used to identify employees (e.g., Job Title) were removed after pre-tests. Ethics approval was received as low risk (reference: DUBS-2022-04-11T15:10:36-ttzh25 (see [Figure 27](#))).

First, *informed consent* from participants before answering questionnaires, interviews or experiments is essential. Participants or interviewees must be aware of the study details, what data will be collected, how it will be used, and their rights. They must be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time (particularly important during the interviews/experiments).

Second, the researcher had to uphold participants' *confidentiality* when collecting data and when storing data. This required protection of personal information and keeping all information secure, password protected and not disclosed to any third parties. Due to the nature of this study, where the researcher shared information with leaders across the organisation, that he was associated with, for various teams to implement remediation, the researcher ensured that confidentiality was upheld with every discussion. Where a finding was for less than ten employees in a specific function with 20 or fewer employees, the researcher removed those findings before sharing.

Third, when collecting data using questionnaires it is essential that participants' privacy is protected. This was extremely important with this research as the author was collecting data of participants views in interviews as well as questionnaires.

Fourth, *data protection* laws and regulations needed consideration when collecting, storing, and using participants' data. Because the data was collected from 23 different countries, the researcher had to review all the laws and regulations and speak with the multinational organisation's Legal team to understand if anything needed to be included or excluded. The researcher kept all data secure under password protection and not in MS Forms, which followed [organisation name]'s guidelines.

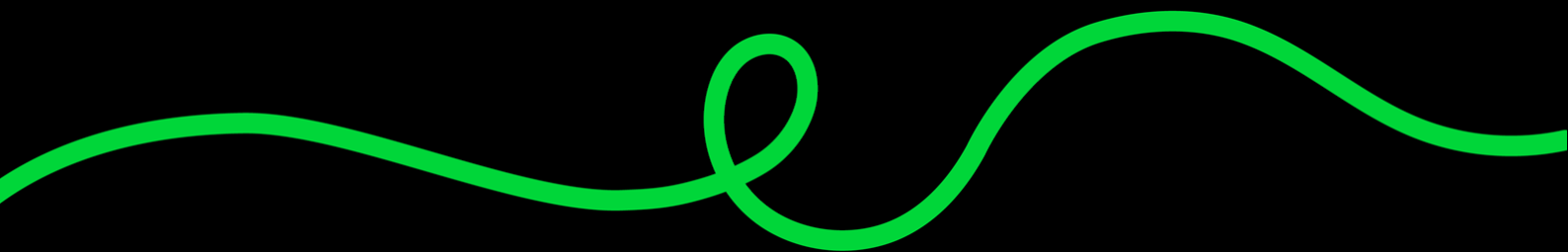
Fifth, participants were given a *debrief* at the end of each study, which explained the purpose of the research, what data was collected, and what the findings were. Where quotes are used from interviews, express permission needed to be received from the interviewees.

Sixth, the researcher had to understand and define the *risks and benefits* of the research to ensure that participants understood how the purpose and focus of the research, and answering the questionnaires, might relate to them. Therefore, during the creation of the questionnaire, the researcher spoke with both his supervisors to carefully consider how including certain questions (e.g., about gender or location or gossip) in this research could impact employees at an individual level and ensure that any risks were minimised. This included understanding what type of matching could be used that maintained anonymity.

Lastly, the researcher had to ensure that careful consideration was taken when matching between T1 (June 2022) and T2 (June 2023). This is because it is important to ensure that participants fully consented to both questionnaires. Furthermore, matching between the time windows could not use anything that might identify the employee.

**“If you change the way
you look at things,
the things you look at change.”**

Dr Wayne Dyer



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6 Appendices

Table 27. Terminology

Term	Definition
AM	Agile Methodologies
AME	Africa, Middle East
APAC	Asia Pacific (including Australia)
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
DV	Dependent Variable
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
IV	Independent Variable
MS	Microsoft
NA	North America
OA	Organisational Agility
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PDM	Project Delivery Methodologies
PM	Project Management
PMO	Project Management Office
PRTC	Perceived Resistance to Change
RTC	Resistance to Change
UKI	The United Kingdom and Ireland
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VP	Vice President

6.1 Appendix A: Interview Structure

The interviews followed the structure mentioned below. The list below includes all the potential questions. The researcher decided during the interviews which questions were most appropriate based on the interviewee's responses.

Duration: 30 – 60 Minutes

Format: Microsoft Teams

Introduction (2.5 minutes)

- Greet the participant and introduce myself – to be known as the author (role at [Organisation Name] (VP Business Transformation) and highlight my role doing my DBA).
- Explain the purpose of the study and the overall topics you'll be discussing.
- Emphasise the confidential and voluntary nature of their participation. Also stress that the interview is anonymous, and the colleagues name will not be included in any of the research, report or thesis.
- Explain that to be selected for the interview they have replied to an email asking for volunteers and they responded accepting to be involved in the interviews.
- Check with the participant if they want to have their camera or not.
- Obtain their consent to record the interview. If they are not willing to have the interview recorded, highlight that the author will be continually writing notes throughout.
- Mention that at any point of the interview they can stop and request that all answers are deleted.
- Mention how the interview data will be stored and used.

Understanding Resistance to Large-scale Change

- Explain the next steps and if the participant has any questions after, what they will need to do to contact the author.
- Highlight that there are two parts to the interview. The first part is related to organisational structures and the second is on informal communications.
- **For all groups:** Confirm that they have not answered the first questionnaire in June 2022 and June 2023.
- **For Group 1 only:** Highlight that the author does not know **what** the participant answered in either of the questionnaires as they were confidential and not linked. Also highlight that the following interview will not be linked either.

Background and Demographics (2.5 minutes)

- Ask the participant to provide some brief background information about their role at the multinational organisation, experience, and which part of organisation they currently work in (e.g., function).
- Gather demographic details, such as their position, years in the organisation, location, and any relevant experience with organisational changes.

General opening questions:

- How did you feel when the changes were taking place?
- What are your perceptions of the changes that have occurred in the organisation between the two time periods?

Decentralised Structure (10 minutes)

- Do you like working in a flat structure?
- Do you like working in a hierarchical structure?
- Why do you or don't you like working in a flat structure?

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- Why do you or don't you like working in a hierarchical structure?
- How do you feel when working in a flat structure?
- How do you feel when working in a hierarchical structure?
- Does having more power, in flatter structures, make you feel that it is easier to accept change?
- Does having less power, in hierarchical structures, make you feel that it is easier to accept change?
- What changes, if any, have influenced how decisions are made, responsibilities are distributed, or teams are structured?
- In what ways have these changes impacted our organisation's ability to respond to challenges and changes?
- In what ways have these changes impacted your ability to respond to challenges and changes?

Agile Experts (5 minutes)

- What happens when you have an expert brought in for a piece of work or change?
- How do you feel?
 - Is it imposing?
 - Is it helpful?
 - Do you feel relieved?

Regional Culture (5 minutes)

- What regional culture do you identify with?
- Do you feel that your regional culture is more individualist?

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- Based upon your regional culture, how does it make you feel working in a flat structure?

Gossip (10 minutes)

- Do you think people gossip in our organisation?
- Do you think gossip increased when we went through the change in the past 12 months?
- Did you feel anxious in the past 12 months, when considering the changes?
- Did you feel uncertain in the past 12 months, when considering the changes?
- Did you feel anything else in the past 12 months, when considering the changes?
- Do you think that other colleagues in our organisation gossip?
- Why do you think they gossip?
- Did you gossip when going through the changes?
- Why did you gossip?
- Which colleagues did you gossip with? (lower, same level or higher in the organisation).
- What happens when you gossip with more powerful colleagues? (how do you feel)?
- Does it make you feel more powerful when gossiping with those higher in the organisation?

Resistance to Change (5 minutes)

Notes: *Start by asking the participant about their perception of the changes that have occurred in [the organisation] between the two time periods (June 2022 and June 2023). Explore if they believe resistance to change has increased, and if so, why this is the case, contrary to expectations.*

- What changes have you been involved during June 2022 and June 2023. How successful have these changes been? What has helped make them successful? What has got in the way of their success?
- How much did you resist the change in the past 12 months?
- *Sample Questions:*
 - How would you describe the changes that have taken place in our organisation between June 2022 and June 2023?
 - In your opinion, what has been the reaction to change? How has resistance to change been shown? What has driven the resistance to the changes?
 - Can you share any specific incidents or factors that might have contributed to this increase in resistance? What factors have contributed to resistance?

Reflection and Closing (5 minutes)

- What else would you like to add that would be of benefit to my study?
- Give the participant a chance to reflect on the interview and provide any additional insights.
- Ask if they have any questions or comments about the study.
- Thank them for their time and participation.
- Reiterate the confidentiality of their responses and remind them of the next steps in the study.

6.2 Appendix B: Questionnaire

The questionnaire sent at Time 1 (June 2022) and Time 2 (June 2023) followed the structure mentioned below.

What's the Questionnaire about?

Hi All,

Firstly thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. As part of our purpose at [Organisation Name] to knock down barriers so that everyone can thrive, the Business Transformation team are collecting data to understand the factors which impact [Organisation Name's] organisational agility, resistance to change and delivery focus in times of change (including the effects of informal discussions). This will be done by gathering data from our key stakeholders that deliver projects, programmes, squads, product releases and change initiatives at [Organisation Name].

Purpose: This research is essential as it will provide a framework for all project professionals and colleagues at [Organisation Name] who are striving towards organisational agility and require some clear guidance. It will also help [Organisation Name] understand what factors will help improve our delivery of transformation initiatives and change. This research will also be anonymised and used as part of my Durham University Doctoral Dissertation.

Focus: The research is primarily focused on project and product deliveries (projects, programmes, initiatives and squads) at [Organisation Name]. However, it does go further to understand how colleagues communicate informally to support delivery of

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change.

Time to complete: The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Results: The results from this questionnaire will help us improve how we deliver transformation and change at [Organisation Name]. By empathising with, and understanding the views of our colleagues, we will be able to simplify our processes and increase agility.

Amazon vouchers draw for completed questionnaires: after completing the questionnaire you will have an opportunity to be entered into a draw for one of ten £50 (or local equivalent) Amazon vouchers.

Anonymous data: no personal data (e.g., name or email address) that can identify any [Organisation Name] colleagues will be used/captured in this questionnaire. All data will be anonymised. Requests for results, and inclusion in the Amazon Voucher draw, will be kept separate from the main questionnaire and only used for sharing results and including you in the voucher draw.

Data Usage: Used in line with data processing and ethics policies for [Organisation Name] and Durham University.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Many thanks,

Carlos Pullen-Ferreira

VP Business Transformation

Introductory Information

1. Which country are you based in? *

Please select a country from the dropdown list: UKI (United Kingdom and Ireland), North America (Canada, United States of America), Southern Europe (e.g., France), Central Europe (e.g., Germany), Iberia (e.g., Portugal or Spain) APAC (Asia Pacific), AME (Africa, Middle East), Other [*Note: The researcher included all locations that the organisation operates in*].

2. What is your nationality? *

Please select a country from the dropdown list: UKI (United Kingdom, Ireland), North America (Canada, United States of America), Southern Europe (e.g., France), Central Europe (e.g., Germany), Iberia (e.g., Portugal or Spain) APAC (Asia Pacific), AME (Africa, Middle East), Other.

3. Approximately how many years have you been at the organisation? *

Please select one of the options: < 1 year; 1 - 5 years; 6 to 10 years; 11 to 15 years; and >15 years.

4. Are you a manager? * Please select one of the options: Yes; No.

5. What is your gender? * Please select one of the options: Female; Male; Non-binary; or Prefer not to say.

6. What is your highest level of education completed? * Please select one of the options: None; High School; Diploma or equivalent; University (Undergraduate); University (Postgraduate).

7. What is your age range? *

Please select one of the options: Under 18 years old; 18 to 25 years old; 26 to 40 years old; 41 to 55 years old; Above 55 years old.

8. Which function do you work in? *

(For help finding your function, please go to [Organisation Name] [System Name] and view your Function under your details). Please select one of the options: Business Transformation; Central Data; Commercial Operations; Communications; Customer Operations; ESG; Facilities; Finance; General Management; Global Information Security; Go to Market; IT; Legal; Marketing; Partners & Alliances; People; Procurement; Product; Property; [Organisation Name] Foundation; Sales; Security Services.

Team Information

Note: Your team is your sub-function within [Organisation Name]. For example: within the Business Transformation function, a Project Manager would be in the Transformation Delivery team (sub-function) - this may vary across teams.

9. How many employees are currently in your team? * Please select one of the

options: Less than 5; 5-9; 10 – 14; 15 – 20; Greater than 20.

10. How many colleagues are not line managers in your team? * Please select

one of the options: Less than 5; 5-9; 10 – 14; 15 – 20; Greater than 20.

11. How many colleagues are line managers in your team? * Please select one

of the options: Less than 5; 5-9; 10 – 14; 15 – 20; Greater than 20.

12. How many extremal Agile Experts are in your team? * Please select one of

the options: Less than 5; 5-9; 10 – 14; 15 – 20; Greater than 20.

13. Approximately how many years has your team been within the organisation

(in its current structure and make up)? * Please select one of the options: less than 1 year; 1 year; 2 years; 3 years; greater than 3 years.

14. Which regions are your team based in? * Please select one of the options: UKI

(United Kingdom and Ireland); North America; Southern Europe (e.g., France); Central Europe (e.g., Germany); Iberia (e.g., Portugal and Spain); APAC (Asia Pacific); AME (Africa, Middle East). [Participants were able to select more than one option].

15. Which option best describes the Delivery Methodology most frequently

used in your team? * Note: Agile refers to Agile Methods, e.g., Scrum, Kanban, SaFe. Please select one of the following options: Fully Waterfall; Partly Waterfall; Hybrid (Mix of Waterfall and Agile); Partly Agile; Fully Agile; Don't know what Delivery Methodology we use in my team.

Change Information

The following section focuses on questions related to change. Please answer them based upon your experiences at [Organisation Name].

16. Please rate the following statements from Strongly Disagree to Strongly

Agree, with one answer per statement. *

1. [The organisation's] employees are afraid of any organisational change
2. [The organisation's] employees are defensive about any organisational change
3. [The organisation's] employees feel anxious when recalling past experiences of change
4. [The organisation's] employees like the organisation's current processes and do not like change

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5. [The organisation's] employees supported the organisational changes
6. [Organisation Name] will continue to use existing processes because customer/supplier do not use new systems
7. [Organisation Name] will continue to use existing processes because of high financial costs are required to change the processes with new systems
8. [Organisation Name] will continue to use existing processes because much time has been spent learning them
9. [Organisation Name] will continue to use existing processes because customers/suppliers do not like receiving new information
10. Over the past 12 months, I felt afraid of organisational change
11. Over the past 12 months, I felt defensive about any organisational change
12. Over the past 12 months, I felt anxious when recalling past experiences of change
13. I like [Organisation Name] current processes and do not like change
14. [Organisation Name] changes too frequently and doesn't allow time for changes to embed
15. [Organisation Name] colleagues have change fatigue

Organisational Agility (Part 1)

The following section focuses on questions related to organisational agility. Please answer them based upon your experiences at [Organisation Name].

17. Please rate the following statements from **Strongly Disagree** to **Strongly**

Agree, with one answer per statement *

- a. [Organisation Name] colleagues are highly interdependent on other team members.

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- b. From the beginning of any piece of work, all stakeholders feel that they own the piece of work together.
- c. I am responsible for my own quality.
- d. We are willing to provide solutions to problems faced by other team members
- e. A sense of collective ownership is present at [Organisation Name].
- f. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in identifying customer needs.
- g. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in tailoring products/services to customer needs.
- h. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in identifying customer groups not served by [Organisation Name].
- i. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in responding to customer service requests.
- j. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in providing information to customers.
- k. A sense of customer responsiveness is present at [Organisation Name]
- l. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in delivering internal processes.
- m. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in sharing information across different functions.
- n. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in enhancing business process flexibility.
- o. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in increasing the speed of product delivery.
- p. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in increasing the speed of delivering activities/initiatives.

Organisational Agility (Part 2)

The following section focuses on questions related to organisational agility. Please answer them based upon your experiences at [Organisation Name].

16. Please rate the following statements from **Strongly Disagree** to **Strongly**

Agree, with one answer per statement. *

- q. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in increasing the speed of responding to business opportunities and threats.
- r. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in identifying new markets.
- s. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in entering new markets.
- t. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in redefining the scope of its business.
- u. [Organisation Name] is in the top 3 organisations in its industry in responding to competitors product and service strategies.
- v. A sense of strategic flexibility is present at [Organisation Name].

Project Delivery Organisation Culture

The following section focuses on questions related to the Project Delivery organisation culture. Please answer them based upon your experiences at [Organisation Name].

17. Please rate the following statements from **Strongly Disagree** to **Strongly**

Agree, with one answer per statement. *

- a. [Organisation Name] colleagues are free to communicate and interact with each other to deliver initiatives.

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- b. [Organisation Name] colleagues can make decisions without asking their manager for permission.
- c. [The organisation's] strategy is usually made by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – [CEO Name].
- d. [The organisation's] strategy is usually made by the Corporate Management Team (or Executive Leadership Team (ELT)).
- e. [The organisation's] employees feel empowered by having input in the formulation of strategies.
- f. [The organisation's] structure can be described as flat as employees input to decisions that directly affect them.
- g. [Organisation Name] doesn't recruit and retain colleagues with monetary rewards only.
- h. [Organisation Name] recruits and retains colleagues with opportunities for challenging work and professional development.
- i. [Organisation Name] doesn't recruit and retain colleagues with a strong emotional bond to [Organisation Name] and its existing colleagues.
- j. [Organisation Name] has a culture of experimentation.
- k. [Organisation Name] selects colleagues for their specific skills to perform well-defined and immediately needed tasks effectively.
- l. [Organisation Name] selects colleagues for their potential to perform effectively on a number of projects/initiatives.
- m. [Organisation Name] doesn't select colleagues for their values and organisational fit only.
- n. Work within [Organisation Name] is not coordinated and controlled through formal rules, systems, and procedures.

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- o. Work within [Organisation Name] is not coordinated and controlled through direct oversight.
- p. Work within [Organisation Name] is coordinated and controlled through informal mechanisms (peers or organisational culture).

[Organisation Name] Projects in the Past 12 Months

The following section focuses on questions related to Projects and Programmes that [Organisation Name] colleagues delivered in the past 12 months. These Project and Programmes were also referred to as Change Initiatives, Transformation Initiatives or Interventions within [Organisation Name]. Please answer them based upon your experiences at [Organisation Name].

18. Please rate how each of the change initiatives mentioned below helped

[Organisation Name] or you achieve key outcomes. *

- a. The Brand launch in 2022.
- b. [Organisation Name] revised Values and Behaviours.
- c. [Organisation Name] restructure.
- d. Launching Squad Ways of Working.
- e. Launching Meeting Effectiveness.
- f. Launching Project Delivery tooling.
- g. Training or Masterclasses on Neuroscience and Agility.
- h. Launching New Partnerships with [Organisation Names].
- i. Conducting [Organisation Name]-wide Prioritisation.

19. Considering the changes we have been through at [Organisation Name]

over the past twelve months. Please answer the following from your

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perspective from **Strongly Disagree** to **Strongly Agree**, with one answer per statement. *

- j. Thinking about the changes made me scared
- k. Thinking about the changes made me worried
- l. The changes made me feel less safe in my role
- m. The changes made me feel uncertain
- n. The changes reduced my trust in [Organisation Name]
- o. Overall, I felt concerned about the changes
- p. The changes made me feel proud of [Organisation Name]
- q. The changes made me feel nervous
- r. The changes made me feel apprehensive
- s. The changes made me feel unsettled
- t. The changes made me feel anxious
- u. I have not been able to predict how things would go
- v. Over the past 12 months, I felt afraid of organisational change

Informal Discussions During Periods of Change

The following section focuses on questions related to informal discussions or gossip during projects or periods of change at [Organisation Name]. Please answer them based upon your experiences at [Organisation Name].

Think back over the last six months during the changes at [organisation name] when you informally talked about organisational change to one of your colleagues. That is, take a moment to think of an incident when you informally talked to your colleague about a colleague who was not present.

1. **Have you experienced such behaviour during the past 6 months at work?**

* Yes; No

2. Please write a two or three sentence description of the gossip you shared with your colleague.
3. When you think back on the discussion with your colleague, what do you think was the cause of your discussion (why did you engage in informal discussion)?

Your thoughts on Informal Discussions During Periods of Change

In the questions that follow, we will refer to the colleague you had an informal discussion with as **YOUR COLLEAGUE**

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, How would you rate the communication you described? 0 = Not at all serious and 10 = Extremely serious
2. How long have you worked with your colleague? < 1 year; 1 year; 2 years; 3 years; >3 years
3. Which of the following options best describes the hierarchical level of your colleague? Please select one option: My colleague and I have equivalent hierarchical level; My colleague has higher hierarchical level than me; My colleague has lower hierarchical level than me
4. Thinking on the informal discussion you had with that your colleague during the past twelve months, please rate the extent to which you felt each of the following (from not at all to extremely). Happy; Proud; Relieved; Indifferent; Worried; Uncertain; Anxious; Excited; Mad; Frustrated
5. Following the informal discussion with the colleague, did you pass the information on to others? Yes No

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6. If yes, to whom? Another colleague in my team; Another colleague outside of my team; My manager; A peer; A leader higher than me in [Organisation Name] hierarchy Someone outside of [Organisation Name]
7. If yes, what information did you share related to the project or change?
8. Thinking about the changes at [Organisation Name] and about the informal discussion with your colleague, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:
 - a. I presented my objections regarding the changes to management
 - b. I spoke rather highly of the changes to others
 - c. I looked for ways to prevent the changes from taking place
 - d. I emailed other colleagues about the changes
 - e. I voiced my complaints about the change to my colleagues
 - f. I supported the changes

Behaviour While Delivering Projects

1. Please rate the following statements from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, with one answer per statement. *
- a. During Projects at [Organisation Name] I talk with others about other colleague's mistakes.
- b. During Projects at [Organisation Name] I talk about other colleague's poor performance.
- c. During Projects at [Organisation Name] I talk about other colleague's failures.

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- d. During Projects at [Organisation Name] I talk about the bad things that happen to other colleagues.
- e. During Projects at [Organisation Name] I talk about the successes of other colleagues.

Any Other Questions

- 1. Do you want to add any comments regarding informal discussions/gossip at [Organisation Name] or anything else about this questionnaire?

Thank you

If you would like to receive a summary of the results (in 2023) and also be entered into the draw for one of ten £50 (or local equivalent) Amazon vouchers, please use the following link (<https://forms.office.com/>) to enter your email address.

Note: Email address data will be stored separately from other questionnaire responses and not linked to previous responses.

Note 2: For those that have completed the first and second questionnaire AND entered your email address in the link above then you will be entered into a draw for one of five £100 (or local equivalent) Amazon vouchers.

6.3 Appendix C: Ethics Approval

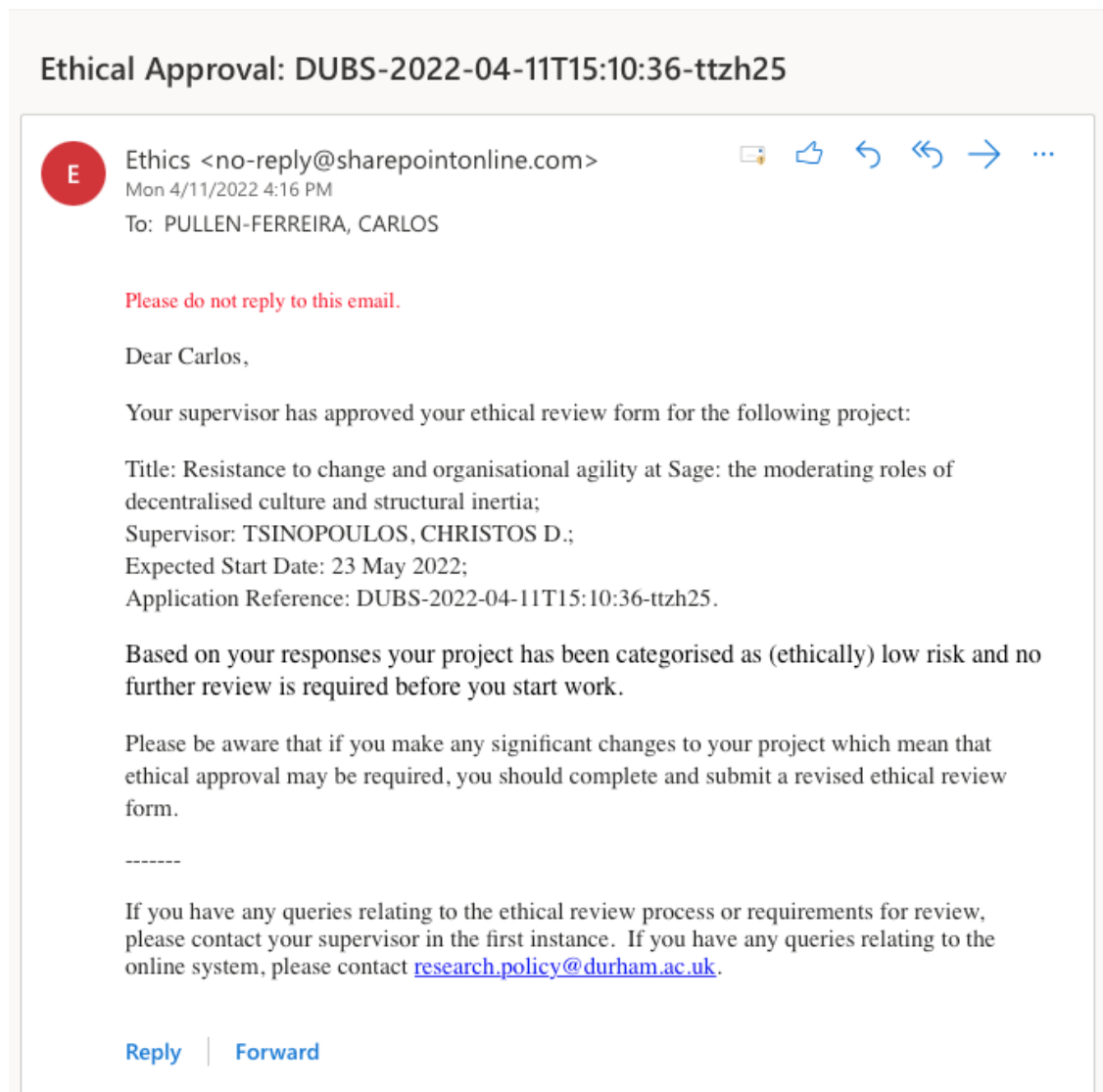


Figure 27. Ethics Approval for Research

6.4 Appendix D: Multicollinearity Results

Table 28: VIF and Durbin Watson Summary

Hypothesis	Path	Prediction	VIF	Durbin Watson	Result
H1	DS → PRTC (Mod: Time)	↓ PRTC	1.468	1.807	Within Thresholds
H2	DS → PRTC (Mod: Indi & Time)	↓ PRTC	3.610	1.808	Within Thresholds
H3	DS → PRTC (Mod: Low PD & Time)	↓ PRTC	3.674	1.786	Within Thresholds
H4	DS → PRTC (Mod: Experts & Time)	↓ PRTC	3.647	1.900	Within Thresholds
H5a	Anxiety → Gossip	↑ Gossip	1.643	2.240	Within Thresholds
H5b	Fear → Gossip	↑ Gossip	1.527	2.245	Within Thresholds
H6	Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	1.335	2.228	Within Thresholds
H7a	Anxiety → Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	1.221	1.995	Within Thresholds
H7b	Fear → Gossip → RTC	↑ RTC	1.299	2.092	Within Thresholds
H8a	Anxiety → Gossip → RTC (Mod: Gender)	↑ RTC	1.759	2.071	Within Thresholds
H8b	Fear → Gossip → RTC (Mod: Gender)	↑ RTC	1.666	2.100	Within Thresholds

6.5 Appendix E: Supplementary Analysis

The Supplementary Analysis appendix will cover analysis of the theoretical model without control variables, and without impotent control variables. In addition, the researcher includes a subsection that contains the syntax used in Hayes Process Macro. Lastly, the researcher covers alternative models and other tests (e.g., difference in respondents and non-respondents to change-related anxiety).

6.5.1 Paper 1 Supplementary Analysis (No Control Variables)

Firstly, the researcher tested Hypothesis 1 to Hypothesis 4 (see [section 2.2](#) for details) *without control variables* and results were similar to the outcomes for Paper 1 (e.g., whether the hypothesis was supported or not was identical). Based upon research from [Becker \(2005, p. 286\)](#), recommendation 11 states that results should be run and reported with and without control variables, the researcher has included the following subsection without control variables.

To support consistency on reporting results, the researcher adopted the same framework and, in some cases, the same wording as per the analysis with control variables ([section 2.6](#), [section 3.5.4](#), and [section 3.6.3](#)).

As per the analysis in [section 2.6](#), the researcher used Hayes Process Macro (Model 1) to test the moderating effect of time between decentralised structure and PRTC *without control variables* (see results in [Table 29](#) and [Table 30](#), and visualised in [Figure 28](#)). Results were similar to tests with control variables, with the findings supporting Hypothesis 1.

Table 29. Supplementary Analysis - Hypothesis 1 (No Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	.183
Moderator	
Interventions (Time)	1.16**
Interaction	
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 1)	-.442**
R^2	.240***
ΔR^2	.038
F	19.31
N = 388.	
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.	

Table 30. Results of Conditional Effects for Hypothesis 1 (No Controls)

Decentralised Structure to PRTC					
<i>Moderator</i>		<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>BootULCI</i>
Interventions (Time)	T1	-.258	.000	-.406	-.111
Interventions (Time)	T2	-.700	.000	-.832	-.568

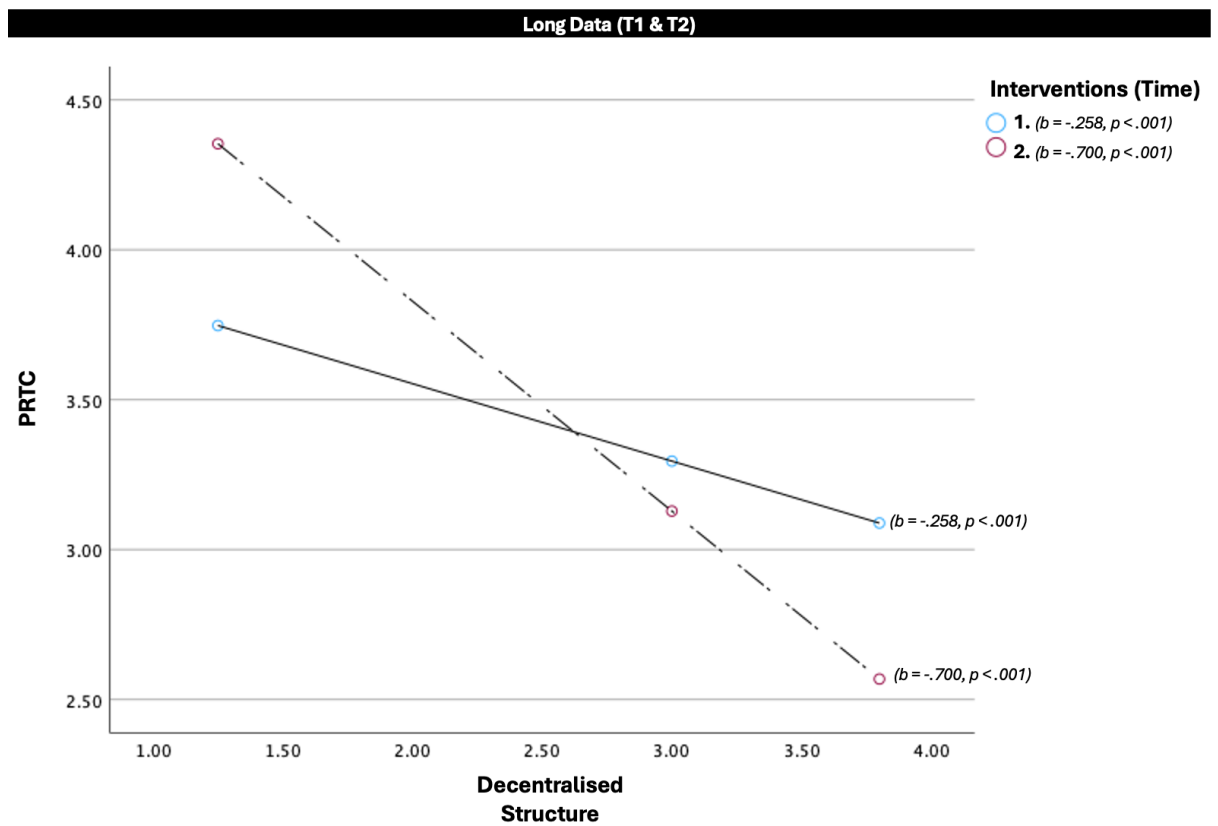


Figure 28. Hypothesis 1 - Effects of Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Controls)

Next the researcher tested Hypothesis 2 *without control variables*. The results provide evidence that the time-moderated relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC is further moderated by individualistic country culture, supporting Hypothesis 2. Results are presented in [Table 31](#) and [Table 32](#), and visualised in [Figure 29](#).

Table 31. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 2 (No Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)		coeff
		PRTC
Independent variable		
Decentralised Structure		.065
Moderator		
Individualistic Culture		-.558
Interventions (Time)		-.056
Interaction		
DS x Individualistic Culture (Int 1)		.290
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)		-.002
Individualistic Culture x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)		1.88**
DS x Individualistic Culture x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)		-.698**
R^2		.366
ΔR^2		.017
F		10.013

Table 32. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 2 (No Control Variables)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change						
<i>Moderator 1:</i>	<i>Moderator 2:</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>BootULCI</i>	
<i>Individualistic Culture</i>	<i>Time</i>					
Collectivist (0)	T1	.064	.686	-.246	.373	
Collectivist (0)	T2	.062	.579	-.157	.281	
Individualist (1)	T1	-.343	.000	-.494	-.173	
Individualist (1)	T2	-1.04	.000	-1.19	-.896	

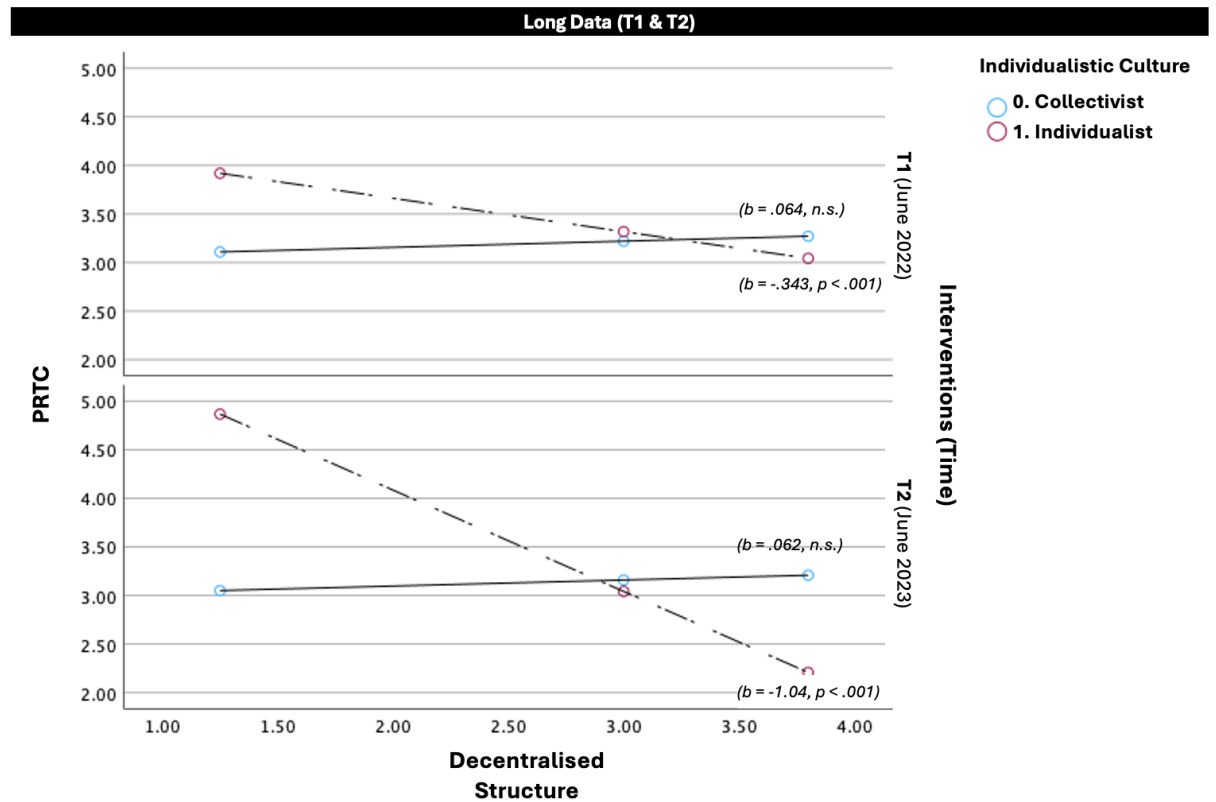


Figure 29. Hypothesis 2 - Effects of Individualistic Culture and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Control Variables)

Next the researcher tested Hypothesis 3 *without control variables* and the results were the same as Hypothesis 3 with control variables. Results are presented in [Table 33](#) and [Table 34](#), and visualised in [Figure 30](#), which support Hypothesis 3.

Table 33. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 3 (No Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	-.054
Moderator	
High Power Distance	-3.60**
Interventions (Time)	.703
Interaction	
DS x High Power Distance (Int 1)	1.21**
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	-.286
High Power Distance x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	2.34**
DS x High Power Distance x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	-.818**
R^2	.513
ΔR^2	.020
F	10.153
N = 388.	
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.	

Table 34. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 3 (No Control Variables)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change					
Moderator 1: High Power Distance	Moderation 2: Time	Effect	p	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low Power Distance (0)	T1	-.341	.000	-.504	-.178
Low Power Distance (0)	T2	-.627	.000	-.771	-.483
High Power Distance (1)	T1	.052	.756	-.278	.382
High Power Distance (1)	T2	-1.05	.000	-1.37	-.738

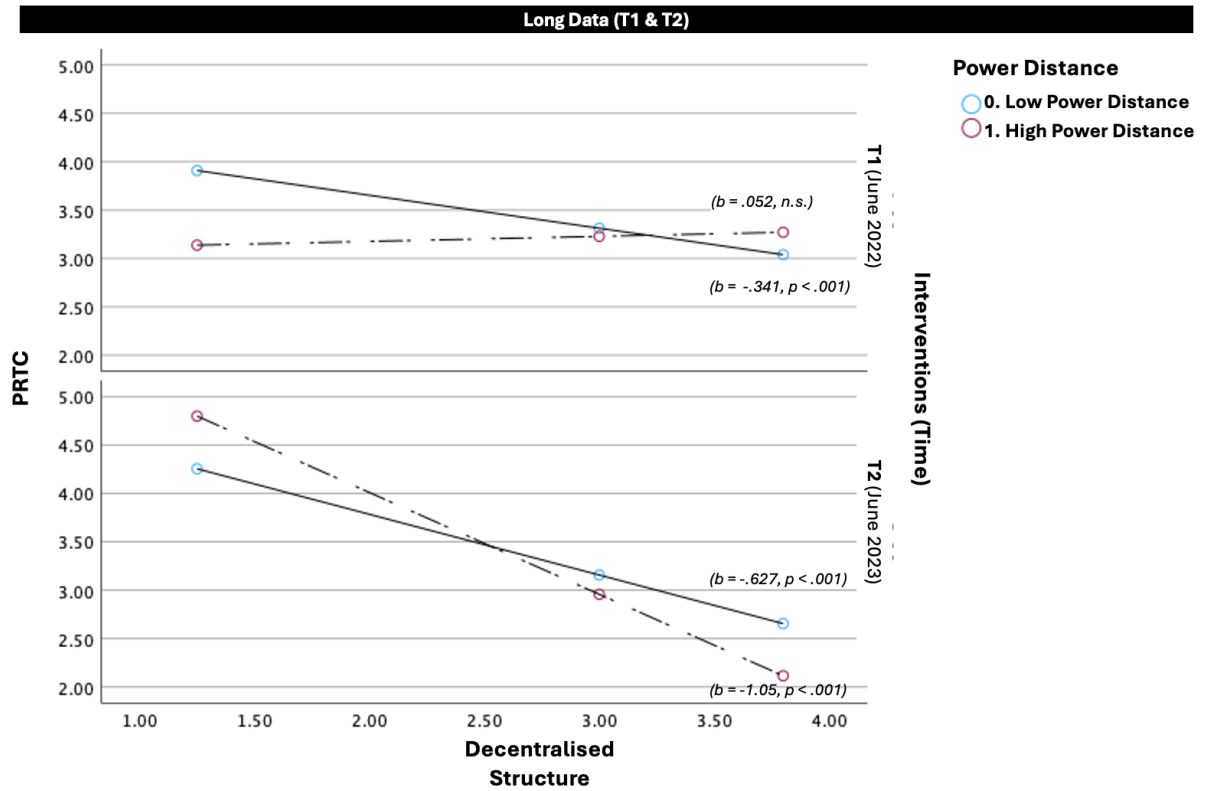


Figure 30. Hypothesis 3 - Effects of Power Distance and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Control Variables)

Next the researcher tested Hypothesis 4 *without control variables* and the results were the same as Hypothesis 4 with control variables. Results are presented in [Table 35](#) and

[Table 36](#), and [Figure 31](#). Moreover, because this was a longitudinal study, the main focus is on interaction term four (X*W*Z), which had a p value of .0798; which shows very weak evidence that the null hypothesis does not hold. Therefore, these findings do not support H4 (at a $p < .05$ level).

Table 35. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 4 (No Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	.547*
Moderator	
Agile Experts Squared	.203***
Interventions (Time)	2.00***
Interaction	
DS x Agile Experts Squared (Int 1)	-.047
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	-.567***
Agile Experts Squared x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	-.120***
DS x Agile Experts Squared x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	.020
R^2	.323
ΔR^2	.006
F	3.084

N = 388.

* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

Notes:

Table 36. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 4 (No Control Variables)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change					
Moderator 1: Agile Experts Squared	Moderator 2: Time	Effect	p	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low Level (1)	T1	-.046	.624	-.231	.139
Low Level (1)	T2	-.443	.000	-.676	-.321
High Level (16)	T1	-.593	.000	-.638	-.248
High Level (16)	T2	-.686	.000	-.868	-.503

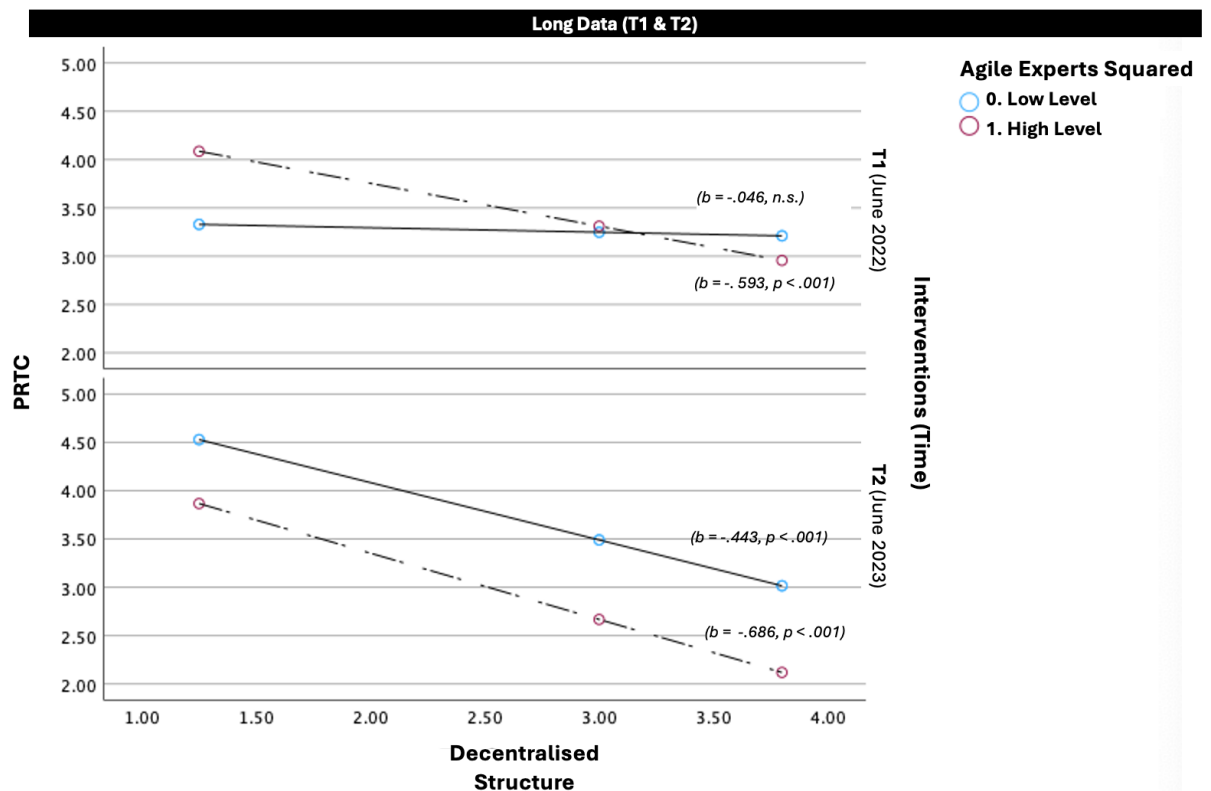


Figure 31. Hypothesis 4 - Effects of Agile Experts and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Control Variables)

6.5.2 Paper 1 Supplementary Analysis (No Impotent Control Variables)

Firstly, the researcher tested Hypothesis 1 to Hypothesis 4 (see [section 2.2](#) for details) *without impotent control variables* and results were similar to the outcomes with control variables (e.g., whether the hypothesis was supported or not). Based upon research from [Becker \(2005, p. 286\)](#), recommendation 2 states that control variables that are not correlated with the dependent variable should be excluded from the analysis as a way of checking if the uncorrelated variables have an impact on the analysis.

For this subsection, the research only included Country, Manager and Methodology as these control variables were correlated with PRTC (see [Table 4](#) for correlations).

As per the analysis in [section 2.6](#), the researcher used Hayes Process Macro (Model 1) to test the moderating effect of time between decentralised structure and PRTC *without impotent control variables* (see results in

[Table 37](#) and [Table 38](#), and visualised in [Figure 32](#)). Results were similar with the findings supporting Hypothesis 1 and are identical to results with controls and without controls.

Table 37. Supplementary Analysis - Hypothesis 1 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Control variables	
Country	.063
Managerial Status	.188
Delivery Methodology	-.234***
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	.058
Moderator	
Interventions (Time)	.919**
Interaction	
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 1)	-.290**
<i>R</i> ²	.285***
ΔR^2	.014
<i>F</i>	7.65
N = 388.	
* <i>p</i> < .05 level; ** <i>p</i> < .01 level; *** <i>p</i> < .001 level.	

Table 38. Results of Conditional Effects for Hypothesis 1 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Decentralised Structure to PRTC				
<i>Moderator</i>		<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>
Interventions (Time)	T1	-.231	.002	-.377
Interventions (Time)	T2	-.520	.000	-.668
				<i>BootULCI</i>
				-.085
				-.371

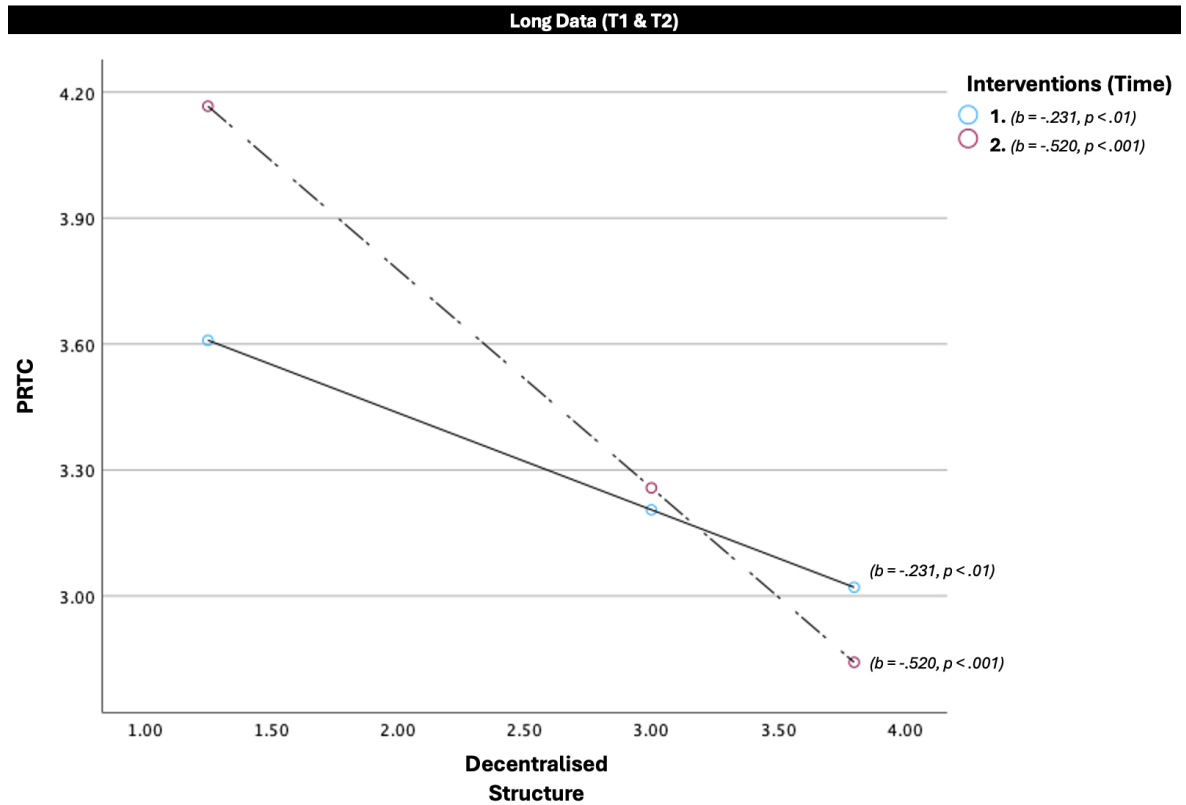


Figure 32. Hypothesis 1 - Effects of Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Impotent Control Variables)

Next the researcher tested Hypothesis 2 *without impotent control variables*.

The results provide evidence that the time-moderated relationship between decentralised structure and PRTC is further moderated by individualistic country culture, supporting Hypothesis 2. Results are presented in [Table 39](#) and [Table 40](#), and visualised in [Figure 33](#).

Table 39. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 2 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Control variables	
Country	.053
Managerial Status	.002
Delivery Methodology	-.201***
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	-.041
Moderator	
Individualistic Culture	-.417
Interventions (Time)	-.340
Interaction	
DS x Individualistic Culture (Int 1)	.247
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	.103
Individualistic Culture x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	1.739**
DS x Individualistic Culture x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	-.648**
R^2	.394
ΔR^2	.014
F	8.823

Table 40. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 2 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change						
<i>Moderator 1:</i> <i>Individualistic Culture</i>	<i>Moderator 2:</i> <i>Time</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>BootULCI</i>	
Collectivist (0)	T1	.062	.688	-.243	.367	
Collectivist (0)	T2	.165	.144	-.057	.387	
Individualist (1)	T1	-.338	.000	-.490	-.187	
Individualist (1)	T2	-.883	.000	-1.049	-.718	

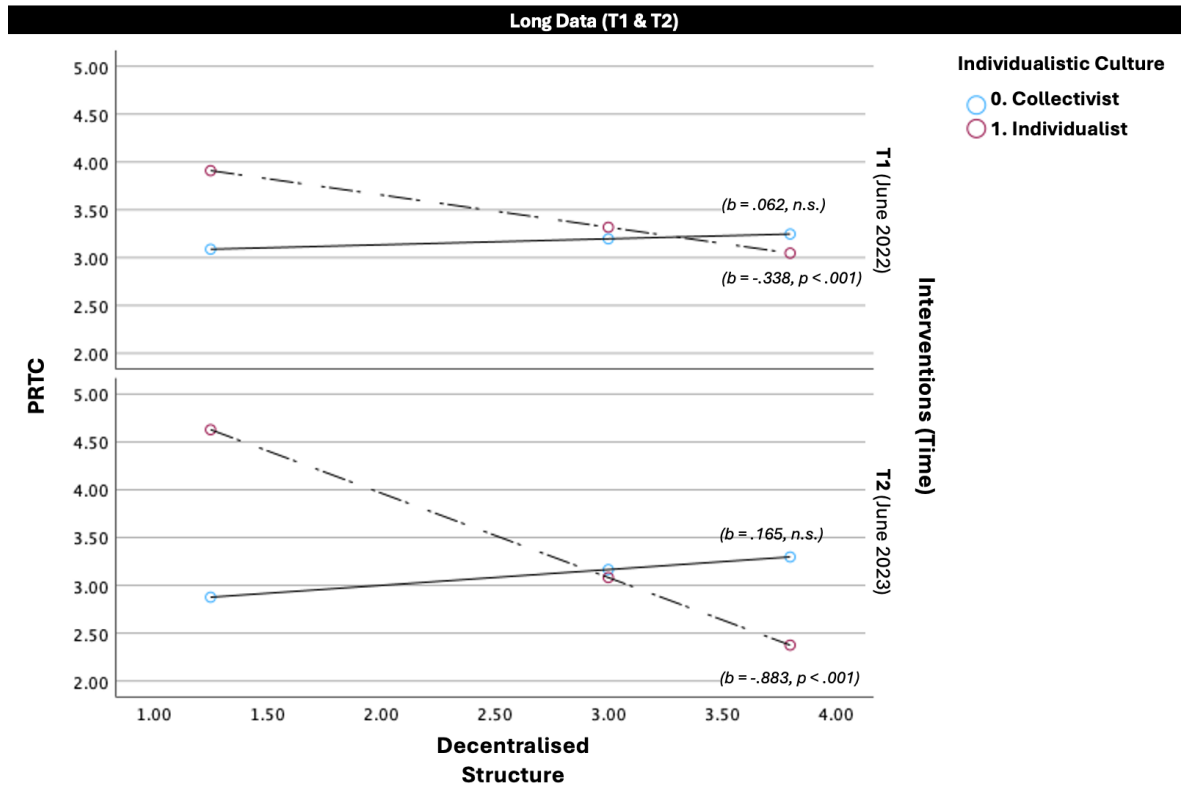


Figure 33. Hypothesis 2 - Effects of Individualistic Culture and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Impotent Control Variables)

Next the researcher tested Hypothesis 3 *without impotent control variables* and the results were the same as Hypothesis 3 with control variables. Results are presented in [Table 41](#) and [Table 42](#), and visualised in [Figure 34](#), which support Hypothesis 3 without control variables.

Table 41. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 3 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Control variables	
Country	.031
Managerial Status	.192
Delivery Methodology	-.222***
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	-.151
Moderator	
High Power Distance	-3.219**
Interventions (Time)	.527
Interaction	
DS x High Power Distance (Int 1)	1.121**
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	-.158
High Power Distance x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	2.124**
DS x High Power Distance x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	-.748**
R^2	.302
ΔR^2	.016
F	8.758
N = 388.	
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.	

Table 42. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 3 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change					
<i>Moderator 1: High Power Distance</i>	<i>Moderation 2: Time</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>BootULCI</i>
Low Power Distance (0)	T1	-.308	.000	-.472	-.145
Low Power Distance (0)	T2	-.466	.000	-.623	-.309
High Power Distance (1)	T1	.064	.698	-.259	.387
High Power Distance (1)	T2	-.842	.000	-1.166	-.518

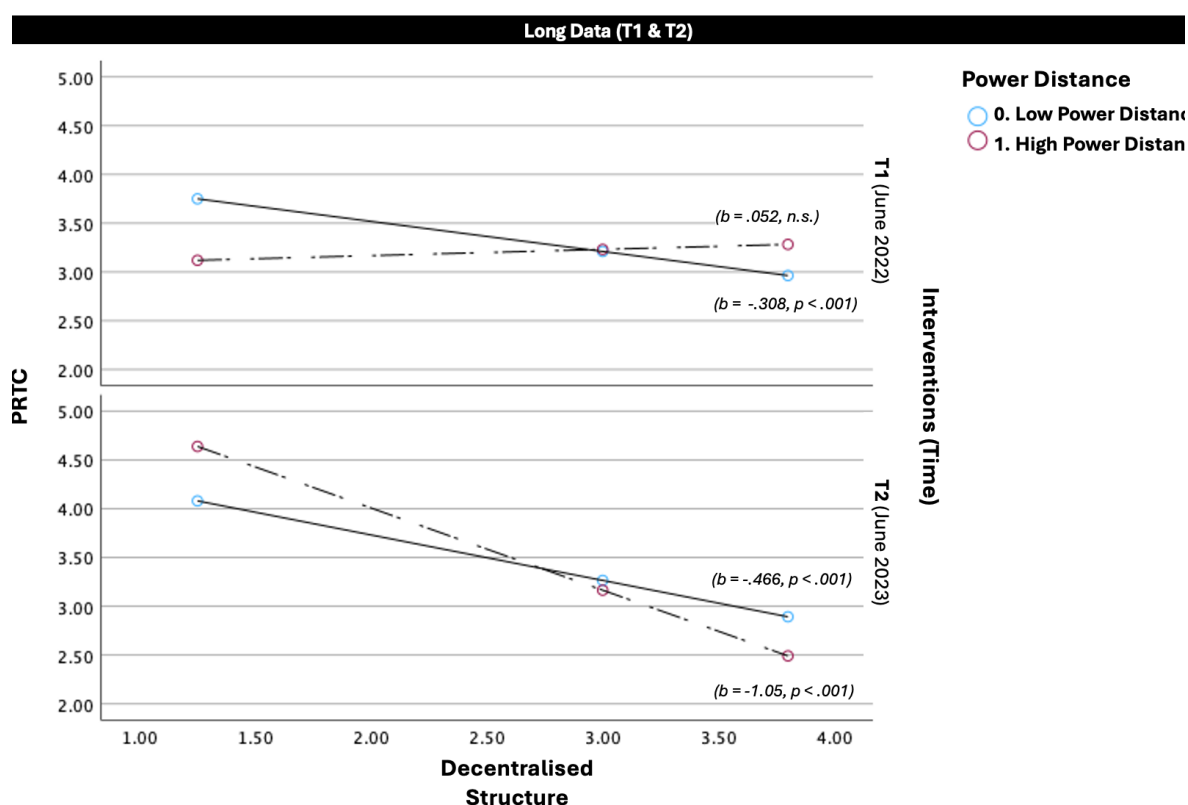


Figure 34. Hypothesis 3 - Effects of Power Distance and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Impotent Control Variables)

Next the researcher tested Hypothesis 4 *without impotent control variables* and the results were the same as Hypothesis 4 with control variables. Results are presented in [Table 43](#) and [Table 44](#), and visualised in [Figure 35](#). Moreover, because this was a longitudinal study, the main focus is on interaction term four ($X*W*Z$), which had a p value of .0758; which shows very weak evidence that the null hypothesis does not hold. Therefore, these findings do not support H4 (at a $p < .05$ level).

Table 43. Results of Hayes Process Macro Analysis (Model 3) for Hypothesis 4 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Long Data (T1 & T2)	coeff PRTC
Control variables	
Country	-.002
Managerial Status	.184
Delivery Methodology	-.147**
Independent variable	
Decentralised Structure	.477*
Moderator	
Agile Experts Squared	.193***
Interventions (Time)	1.888***
Interaction	
DS x Agile Experts Squared (Int 1)	-.045**
DS x Interventions (Time) (Int 2)	-.489***
Agile Experts Squared x Interventions (Time) (Int 3)	-.113***
DS x Agile Experts Squared x Interventions (Time) (Int 4)	.021
R^2	.341
ΔR^2	.006
F	3.171

N = 388.

* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

Notes:

Table 44. Results of Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators for Hypothesis 4 (No Impotent Control Variables)

Decentralised Structure to Resistance to change					
Moderator 1: Agile Experts Squared	Moderator 2: Time	Effect	p	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low Level (1)	T1	-.036	.703	-.222	.150
Low Level (1)	T2	-.504	.000	-.678	-.330
High Level (16)	T1	-.406	.000	-.601	-.211
High Level (16)	T2	-.564	.000	-.760	-.368

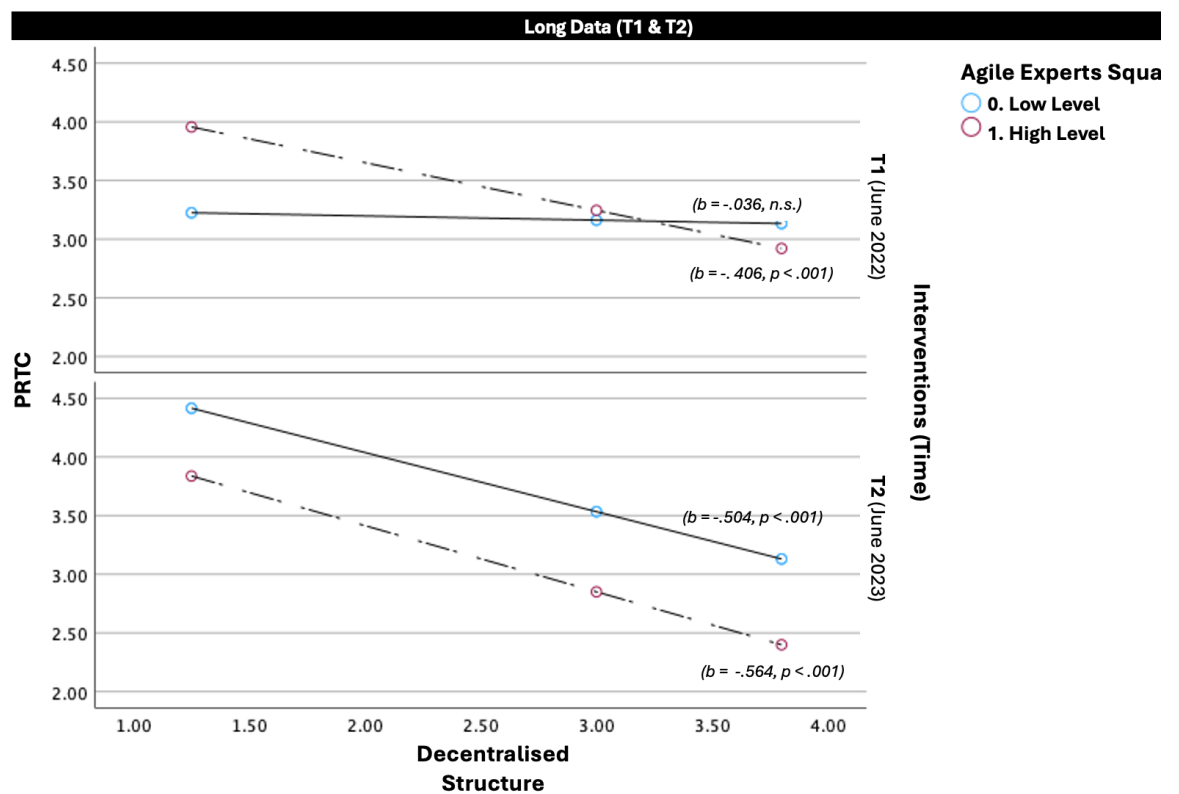


Figure 35. Hypothesis 4 - Effects of Agile Experts and Interventions (Time) on the Relationship between Decentralisation and PRTC (No Impotent Control Variables)

6.5.3 Paper 2 Supplementary Analysis (No Control Variables)

The researcher tested Hypothesis 5 to Hypothesis 8 (see [section 3.2](#) for details) *without control variables* and results were similar.

6.5.3.1 Study 3 (No Control Variables)

As shown in [Table 45](#), results of hierarchical regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between change-related anxiety and gossip ($b = .413$; $p < .01$), supporting H5a (see Model 2). Change-related fear and gossip was also statistically significant ($b = .298$; $p < .01$), supporting H5b (see Model 3). The researcher next examined the relationship between gossip and resistance to change (RTC). Results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .169$; $p < .01$), supporting H6 (see Model 5). Lastly, results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .208$; $p < .01$), supporting H8 (see Model 6).

Table 45. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Hypotheses 5 to 8 (Study 3 – No Control Variables)

	Gossip			RTC		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6^
Moderator variable						
Gossiper's gender	-.454	-.709	-.554	-.361	-.231	-1.592**
Independent variables						
Change-related anxiety		.413**		.139*	.075	.076
Change-related fear			.298**	.033	-.008	.018
Gossip					.169**	.035
Interaction						
Gossip X Gossiper's gender						.208**
R^2	.10	.095	.050	.067	.186	.232
F	1.132	5.874	2.969	2.652	6.273	6.576
ΔR^2		.085	.040	.067	.119	.046
ΔF		10.521	4.769	2.652	16.055	6.528
N = 115.						
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.)						

The researcher ran mediation analysis with Hayes Process Macro, Model 4, which revealed that change-related anxiety has a significant indirect effect on RTC through gossip ($b = .066$, 95%CI [.016, .135]). The total effect of change-related anxiety on RTC was positive and significant ($b = .123$, $p < .05$; 95%CI [.006, .240]). Finally, the researcher found that the indirect effect of change-related fear on RTC via gossip was also significant ($b = .053$, 95%CI [.007, .105]). These findings (see [Table 46](#)) suggest that gossip mediates the relationship between change-related anxiety or change-related fear and RTC, supporting H7a and H7b.

Table 46. Total and Indirect Effects for Hypothesis 7a and 7b (Study 3 – No Control Variables)

Total effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	p	LLCI	ULCI
Gossip	.123	.039	.006	.240

Indirect effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC			
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Gossip	.066	.016	.135

Indirect effect of Change-related Fear on RTC			
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Gossip	.053	.007	.105

6.5.3.1 Study 4 (No Control Variables)

As shown in [Table 47](#), results of hierarchical regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between change-related anxiety and gossip ($b = .670$; $p < .001$), supporting H5a (see Model 2). Change-related fear and gossip was also statistically significant ($b = .524$; $p < .01$), supporting H5b (see Model 3). The researcher next examined the relationship between gossip and resistance to change (RTC). Results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .276$; $p < .01$), supporting H6 (see Model 5). Results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .273$; $p < .01$), supporting H8 (see Model 6).

Table 47. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Hypotheses 5 to 8 (Study 3 – No Control Variables)

	Gossip			RTC		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6^
Moderator variable						
Gossiper's gender	.139	.108	.055	.613	.607	-1.029
Independent variables						
Change-related anxiety		.670***		.207	.151	.093
Change-related fear			.524**	.331**	.106	.281
Gossip					.276**	-.032
Interaction						
Gossip X Gossiper's gender						.273**
R^2	.001	.115	.189	.202	.230	.284
F	.063	6.328	7.471	8.114	7.093	7.470
ΔR^2		.115	.074	.202	.028	.054
ΔF		12.586	8.745	8.114	3.417	7.146
N = 115.						
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.)						

The researcher ran mediation analysis with Hayes Process Macro, Model 4, which revealed that change-related anxiety has a significant indirect effect on RTC through gossip ($b = .102$, 95%CI [.016, .241]). The total effect of change-related anxiety on RTC was positive and significant ($b = .298$, $p < .05$; 95%CI [.080, .517]). Finally, the researcher found that the indirect effect of change-related fear on RTC via gossip was also significant ($b = .084$, 95%CI [.011, .187]). These findings (see [Table 48](#)**Table 46**) suggest that gossip mediates the relationship between change-related anxiety or change-related fear and RTC, supporting H7a and H7b.

Table 48. Total and Indirect Effects for Hypothesis 7a and 7b (Study 3 – No Control Variables)

Total effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Gossip	.298	.008	.080	.517
Indirect effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Gossip	.102	.016	.241	
Indirect effect of Change-related Fear on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Gossip	.084	.011	.187	

6.5.4 Paper 2 Supplementary Analysis (No Impotent Control Variables)

The researcher tested Hypothesis 5 to Hypothesis 8 (see [section 3.2](#) for details) *without impotent control variables* and results were similar. For Paper 2, the only control variable that correlated with RTC was Tendency to Gossip, therefore for the analysis below this was the only control variable that was included.

6.5.4.1 Study 3 (No Impotent Control Variables)

As shown in [Table 49](#), results of hierarchical regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between change-related anxiety and gossip ($b = .422$; $p < .01$), supporting H5a (see Model 2). Change-related fear and gossip was also statistically significant ($b = .294$; $p < .01$), supporting H5b (see Model 3). The researcher next examined the relationship between gossip and resistance to change (RTC). Results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .159$; $p < .001$), supporting H6 (see Model 5). Results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .235$; $p < .01$), supporting H8 (see Model 6).

Table 49. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Hypotheses 5 to 8 (Study 3 – No Impotent Control Variables)

	Gossip			RTC		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6^
Control variables						
Tendency to gossip	.143	.175	.143	.192**	.167*	.190*
Moderator variable						
Gossiper's gender	-.455	-.717	-.455	-.368	-.244	-1.785**
Independent variables						
Change-related anxiety		.422**		.150*	.088	.091
Change-related fear			.294**	.026	-.012	.017
Gossip					.159***	.006
Interaction						
Gossip X Gossiper's gender						.235**

The researcher ran mediation analysis with Hayes Process Macro, Model 4, which revealed that change-related anxiety has a significant indirect effect on RTC through gossip ($b = .063$, 95%CI [.014, .130]). The total effect of change-related anxiety on RTC was positive and significant ($b = .132$, $p < .05$; 95%CI [.018, .246]). Finally, the researcher found that the indirect effect of change-related fear on RTC via gossip was also significant ($b = .049$, 95%CI [.006, .098]). These findings (see [Table 50](#)) suggest that gossip mediates the relationship between change-related anxiety or change-related fear and RTC, supporting H7a and H7b.

Table 50. Total and Indirect Effects for Hypothesis 7a and 7b (Study 3 – No Impotent Control Variables)

Total effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Gossip	.132	.024	.018	.246
Indirect effect of Change-related Anxiety on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Gossip	.063	.014	.130	
Indirect effect of Change-related Fear on RTC				
Mediator	Effect	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Gossip	.049	.006	.098	

6.5.4.1 Study 4 (No Impotent Control Variables)

For Study 4 all the control variables were impotent (uncorrelated with the dependent variable), therefore no further analysis was required for impotent control variables.

6.5.5 Hayes Process Macro Syntax

The researcher used the following syntax in Hayes Process Macro version 4.2 (Hayes, 2022) to run analysis in SPSS. Below are three examples which include control variables and are specifically seeded (e.g., seed = 12345) to avoid results changing.

Study 1: process y=PRTC/x=DSC/cov= C_Age C_EduLev C_Cntry C_Mngr C_OrgTenC_MethodC_Gender/model=1/intprobe=.10/conf=95/boot=5000/seed=12345/total=1.

Study 2: process y=RTC/x=CR_Anxx/m=CR_Gosp/cov=C_AgeRng C_Gender C_LocUKI C_LocUS C_Edu C_Mngr C_Tenure C_GP_Val C_GCR C_GCSC C_TenRel C_T2G C_BsRsis/model=4/intprobe=.10/conf=95/boot=5000/seed=12345/total=1.

Study 3: process y=RTC/x=CR_Anxx/m=CR_Gosp/cov=C_AgeRng C_Gender C_LocUKI C_LocUS C_Edu C_Mngr C_Tenure C_GP_Val C_GCR C_GCSC C_TenRel C_T2G/model=4/intprobe=.10/conf=95/boot=5000/seed=12345/total=1.

Below are three examples which exclude control variables and are specifically seeded to avoid results changing.

Study1:processy=PRTC/x=DSC/model=1/intprobe=.10/conf=95/boot=5000/seed=12345/total=1.

Study2:processy=RTC/x=CR_Anxx/m=CR_Gosp//model=4/intprobe=.10/conf=95/boot=5000/seed=12345/total=1.

Study3:processy=RTC/x=CR_Anxx/m=CR_Gosp/model=4/intprobe=.10/conf=95/boot=5000/seed=12345/total=1.

6.5.6 Testing Alternative Variables

6.5.6.1 *Gossip Valence as a Moderator (Study 3)*

The researcher tested if gossip valence could be a moderator, instead of gossiper's gender. The researcher used Hayes Process Macro, Model 14, and the results for change-related anxiety were positive for the conditional indirect effect ($b = .097$, 95%CI[.022, .201]), however, the index of moderated mediation wasn't significant (*Gossip Valence* = .054, 95%CI[-.049, .188]). The results for change-related fear were similar to those for change-related anxiety, with positive results for the conditional indirect effect ($b = .075$, 95%CI[.019, .147]), however, the index of moderated mediation wasn't significant (*Gossip Valence* = .043, 95%CI[-.028, .149]). Therefore, results were not significant.

6.5.6.2 *Gossip Valence as a Moderator (Study 4)*

The researcher tested if gossip valence could be a moderator, instead of gossiper's gender. The researcher used Hayes Process Macro, Model 14, and the results for change-related anxiety were positive for the conditional indirect effect ($b = .091$, 95%CI[.002, .244]), however, the index of moderated mediation wasn't significant (*Gossip Valence* = -.028, 95%CI[-.234, .155]). Change-related fear had a conditional indirect effect ($b = .051$, 95%CI[-.043, .147]), and an index of moderated mediation (*Gossip Valence* = -.125, 95%CI[-.378, .032]). Therefore, results were not significant.

6.5.6.3 Change-related Uncertainty or Worry as an IV

The researcher tested if change-related uncertainty could be an independent variable, instead of change-related anxiety or fear. As shown in [Table 51](#), results of hierarchical regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between change-related uncertainty and gossip ($b = .296$; $p < .05$), supporting alternative H5a (see Model 2). Change-related worry and gossip was also statistically significant ($b = .261$; $p < .05$), supporting alternative H5b (see Model 3). The researcher next examined the relationship between gossip and resistance to change (RTC) within this alternative model. Results revealed a significant positive relationship ($b = .157$; $p < .001$), supporting alternative H6 (see Model 5). Results also revealed a significant positive relationship for the moderation effect of Gossiper's gender ($b = .163$; $p < .05$), supporting alternative H8 (see Model 6). The analysis below was conducted on Study 3.

Table 51. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Uncertainty and Worry (Study 3 – No Control Variables)

	Gossip			RTC		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Moderator variable						
Gossiper's gender	-.454	-.500	-.603	-.313	-.219	-1.269*
Independent variables						
Change-related uncertainty		.296*		.314***	.265***	.244***
Change-related worry			.261*	.002	-.039	-.053
Gossip					.157***	.059
Interaction						
Gossip X Gossiper's gender						.163*
R^2	.010	.045	.082	.203	.310	.338
F	1.132	2.655	3.290	9.424	12.355	11.140
ΔR^2		.035	.036	.203	.107	.028
ΔF		4.146	4.400	9.424	17.059	4.643
N = 115.						
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.)						

6.5.6.4 Alternative RTC measures

Next, the researcher also ran the same model with two alternative single-item measures of RTC (“I supported the change” (reverse scored); see [Tyler \(1999\)](#) and “I voiced my concerns about the changes”), and results were similar to the theoretical model for Paper Two ([Figure 21. Paper Two Hypothesised Model](#)).

The researcher examined the relationship between gossip and an alternate RTC (Supported (Reverse Scored)) within this alternative model. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between gossip and the alternate RTC ($b = .234$; $p < .001$), supporting H6 (see Model 2). Results also revealed a significant positive relationship for the moderation effect of Gossiper’s gender ($b = .258$; $p < .05$), supporting H8 (see Model 3). The analysis below ([Table 52](#)) was conducted on Study 3.

Table 52. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Supported (Reverse Scored) to measure RTC (Study 3 – No Control Variables)

	Supported (Reverse Scored)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Moderator variable			
Gossiper’s gender	-.410	-.229	-1.920*
Independent variables			
Change-related anxiety	.191*	.102	.103
Change-related fear	.045	-.012	.020
Gossip		.234***	.068
Interaction			
Gossip X Gossiper’s gender			.258*
R^2	.061	.182	.220
F	2.385	6.133	6.160
ΔR^2		.122	.038
ΔF		16.388	5.304
N = 115.			
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.)			

The researcher next examined the relationship between gossip and an alternate RTC (Voiced my concerns) within this alternative model. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between gossip and the alternate RTC ($b = .183$; $p < .001$), supporting H6 (see Model 2). Results also revealed a significant positive relationship for the moderation effect of Gossiper's gender ($b = .305$; $p < .01$), supporting H8 (see Model 3). The analysis below ([Table 53](#)) was conducted on Study 3.

Table 53. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Voiced my Concern to measure RTC (Study 3 – No Control Variables)

	Voiced my Concern		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Moderator variable			
Gossiper's gender	-.538*	-.397	-2.396***
Independent variables			
Change-related anxiety	.143	.073	.075
Change-related fear	-.016	-.061	-.022
Gossip		.183***	-.014
Interaction			
Gossip X Gossiper's gender			.305**
R^2	.065	.160	.228
F	2.571	12.501	9.586
ΔR^2		.095	.068
ΔF		12.501	9.586
N = 115.			
* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.)			

6.5.7 Respondents and Non-respondents (Anxiety and Fear)

The researcher tested the difference between respondents to the incident and non-respondents. The researcher used Independent Sample T-tests in SPSS and the results revealed no statistically significant difference in change-related anxiety between respondents and non-respondents, $t(254) = -1.418$, $p = .158$. The effect size was very small (Cohen's $d = -.178$), suggesting minimal practical difference between the groups. See [Table 54](#) for details. The researcher repeated this test for change-related fear. Again there was no statistically significant difference in change-related fear between respondents and non-respondents, $t(254) = -1.242$, $p = .215$. The effect size was very small (Cohen's $d = -.156$), suggesting minimal practical difference between the groups. These findings indicate that both groups (respondents and non-respondents) experienced similar levels of change-related anxiety and fear (see [Table 55](#) for details).

Table 54. Results of Independent Sample T-tests for Non-respondents versus Respondents for Change-related Anxiety (Study 3)

Response Status	Change-related Anxiety Group Comparison						
	N	Mean	Std. Dev	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Non Responses	141	3.715	1.570	-1.418	254	.158	-.178
Responses	115	4.000	1.641				

* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

Table 55. Results of Independent Sample T-tests for Non-respondents versus Respondents for Change-related Fear (Study 3)

Response Status	Change-related Fear Group Comparison						
	N	Mean	Std. Dev	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Non Responses	141	4.085	1.466	-1.242	254	.215	-.156
Responses	115	4.235	1.550				

* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

6.5.8 CFA Model Analysis

The researcher conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) within SPSS and utilised a purpose built Microsoft Excel file that compared Chi-square difference tests. This was achieved by conducting Factor Analysis in SPSS, where adding additional factors didn't result in any additional improvements in fit. The Maximum likelihood method was used, with the researcher selecting the fixed number of factors to extract, the comparison is shown in [Table 56](#). The researcher started with a single factor model and then added additional values to see the changes in fit. The researcher also added and removed variables to assess the best model fit. To conduct this, the researcher used chi-square differences, RMSEA, CFI and RMSEA change (where an RMSEA change equal or greater than .02 is substantial) ([Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012](#)).

The analysis indicated that the four factor model, which included change-related anxiety, change-related fear, gossip and RTC, offered the best fit. In contrast, models that collapsed constructs, such as combining gossip and change-related anxiety, demonstrated a poorer fit.

Table 56. CFA Model Analysis

Factor	Chi-square	df	p-value	RMSEA	RMSEA Change	CFI	Fit Evaluation	Interpretation
1	155.10	80	.000	.09		.825	Very Poor Fit	Worst overall fit: very high RMSEA, very low CFI.
2	140.21	79	.000	.08	.006	.842	Poor Fit	High RMSEA, low CFI. Significant χ^2 suggests misfit.
3	135.40	76	.000	.08	.001	.850	Poor Fit	Both RMSEA and CFI fall outside acceptable ranges.
4	97.58	73	.029	.05	.018	.935	Good Fit	Best fitting model: low RMSEA, high CFI. Despite significant χ^2 , fit is acceptable.

Notes:

- **N = 115**
- **RMSEA change:** .02 or > .02 = substantial change; .01 to .019 = marginal change (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012)
- **RMSEA rage:** 0 - .05 = close fit; 0.51 - .08 = acceptable fit; .081 - .10 = marginal fit; > .10 = poor fit (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012)

6.5.9 Endogeneity Description

The researcher tried to pay particular attention to capturing structural and contextual factors that could confound key relationships within the hypothesised model (for example, how team composition, which may include team size or managerial status, impacts the variables in the hypothesised model). Research by [Bascle \(2008\)](#) highlighted that endogeneity arises when an explanatory variable is correlated with the error term in the hypothesised model, often due to omitted variables or measurement error. In this research context, it was important to control for characteristics that might influence both the independent variables (e.g., decentralisation from Paper One) and the dependent outcomes (e.g., resistance to change), to strengthen internal validity ([Papies, et al., 2017](#); [Sande & Ghosh, 2018](#); [Hill, et al., 2021](#)). This was further iterated by [Bascle \(2008, p. 290\)](#) who stated that, “[t]he omitted variables bias is said to be the most commonly encountered problem in social and behavioural sciences”. Therefore, based on these assumptions, the researcher consulting with his former primary supervisor in early 2022 (Christos), reviewed literature ([Vella, 1998](#); [Hamilton & Nickerson, 2003](#); [Sande & Ghosh, 2018](#); [Hill, et al., 2021](#)), so that the researcher added questions to the questionnaire that may be factors that are unobservable but also affect resistance to change.

To attempt to address endogeneity, the researcher included the following questions in the questionnaire (see [section 6.2](#), Appendix B: Questionnaire): Questions 1 to 5 (individual characteristics), Questions 9 to 11 (team composition), and Questions 13 to 15 (team context and processes). Questions 1 to 5 gathered personal demographic and experiential data, such as tenure, role, and education, which could shape perceptions independently of organisational factors. Questions 9

to 11 provided information on team size, hierarchical structure, and managerial density, which are critical for understanding the social and structural environment in which the respondent operates. Questions 13 to 15 capture the team's age, geographical distribution, and delivery methodology, offering insight into contextual variables that could moderate or confound key relationships. For example, from the list of questions, the researcher selected: Age, Education Level, Country, Managerial Status, Organisation Tenure, Delivery Methodology, Gender, Team Size, and Team Age as control variables for Study 2 (see [section 2.4.3](#)). These types of variables offer valuable exogenous variation that helps account for unobserved heterogeneity across respondents ([Hill, et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, by including these questions/factors into the analysis, the researcher was better able to understand how organisational practices and culture might affect how employees think and act, while trying to reduce the chances of getting misleading or inaccurate results ([Vella, 1998](#); [Bascle, 2008](#)). Nonetheless, the researcher acknowledges that endogeneity remains a potential concern in this thesis. While steps were taken to control for confounding variables, a two-stage least squares (2SLS) approach using an instrumental variable, which influences the dependent variable but is uncorrelated with the independent variables, was not employed ([Papies, et al., 2017](#); [Sande & Ghosh, 2018](#); [Hill, et al., 2021](#)). Future research could apply such techniques ("Road map") based by [Bascle \(2008, p. 287\)](#), for example, using STATA, to more robustly address potential endogeneity issues and enhance causal inference.

6.5.10 Power Distance and Individualism T-tests (with PRTC)

The researcher tested the difference between low power distance and high power distance, in relation to PRTC. The researcher used Independent Sample T-tests in SPSS and the results revealed no statistically significant difference in PRTC between respondents classed as individualistic and respondents classed as collectivist, $t(386) = -.912, p = .362$. The effect size was very small (Cohen's $d = -.123$), suggesting minimal practical difference between the groups. See [Table 57](#) for details. The researcher repeated this test for power distance country culture. Again there was no statistically significant difference PRTC between respondents classed as low power distance and respondents classed as high power distance, $t(386) = .585, p = .559$. The effect size was very small (Cohen's $d = .082$), suggesting minimal practical difference between the groups. These findings indicate that both groups experienced similar levels of resistance to change (see [Table 58](#) for details).

Table 57. Results of Independent Sample T-tests for Collectivist versus Individualist for PRTC (Study 2)

	PRTC Group Comparison						Cohen's d
	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	p	
Collectivist	66	3.174	1.148	-.912	386	.362	-.123
Individualist	322	3.332	1.253				

* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

Table 58. Results of Independent Sample T-tests for Low power distance versus High power distance for PRTC (Study 2)

Power Distance	PRTC Group Comparison						Cohen's d
	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	p	
Low power Distance	327	3.322	1.272	.585	386	.559	.082
High power Distance	61	3.217	1.340				

* $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$ level; *** $p < .001$ level.

**“Change will *not* come if we wait
for some other person or some
other time.**

**We are the ones we've been waiting
for.**

We are the change that we seek.”

Barack Obama

