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ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE RESISTANCE: EXPERIENCE FROM PUBLIC SECTOR

Abstract

The study described in the paper aimed to measure the level of resistance of public sector employees to organizational changes, in order to draw a conclusion on whether the level of resistance is a risk to the successful implementation of change or not. The differences between the resistance of several categories of employees were observed, depending on age, education and satisfaction with personal monthly income. In addition, the most important causes of resistance to change within the sample were determined, such as: lack of involvement of employees in the process of planning change, conviction of employees about non-existence of adequate rewards for the accomplishment of change and high levels of stress at work. The findings indicate that the level of change resistance in public sector is within moderate limits, which means that this issue needs further attention in planning and management of organizational change, but, on the other hand, the situation can not be characterized as highly risky for the process of change implementation. The paper also provides a brief theoretical overview of the most important findings in the field of organizational changes in the public sector.

Keywords

organizational change, public sector, motivation, resistance to change

1. Introduction

In the modern business environment, characterized by high level of uncertainty, dynamism and turbulence, change is the only constant. In these circumstances, the ability to adapt to change in the external, as well as initiating and implementing the necessary changes in the internal environment, are essential for the growth and development of organizations, both in private and public sector.

In Serbia, as in many other countries that were faced with the transition process, which began in the late twentieth century, it was necessary to perform a number of different organizational and other changes in the public sector. Public sector reform was one of the key preconditions for successful transition. There was a need to make public enterprises to some extent independent, to abolish monopolies and to improve public sector by rational organization of operations and changes in management style. Some of the planned changes are implemented more or less successfully, while others represent a plan for the future.

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To make the change possible, there has to exist an adequate level of knowledge and skills of managers leading the change. The literature discusses the various factors that influence the outcome of organizational change. Kotter (1995) dealt with the reasons why organizational change fail and identified eight of these various factors. Other authors have identified factors which lead to the success of organizational changes in public sector (Fernandez, Rainey, 2006), such as, inter alia, the construction of the internal support to change and overcoming the resistance of employees. Almost every organizational change requires that an employees change some of their routine operations, the way they perform their work and their behavior (Petković, Janićijević, Bogićević-Milikić, 2010: 562). Therefore, it is of great importance to understand the opinions and views of employees regarding organizational change in order develop the necessary tools to motivate employees to change, so that their resistance can be reduced to the lowest possible level.

The very important leader's role in the process of implementing organizational changes is related to overcoming resistance to changes, and it represents one of the most significant as well as most difficult tasks of a leader in the process of their implementation

Reducing change resistance is important because employees' reactions to change are considered critical for the success of change efforts (Van Dam et al. 2008). There is a huge consensus that a key factor in determining the success of any organizational change involves employees acceptance of it (Oreg and Berson 2011).

In this study, we will deal with measuring the degree of employee's resistance to organizational changes in public organizations in Kragujevac, in order to highlight the impact that their views have on the risk of the change implementation process. In addition, the focus was put on a wide set of variables that proved to be important for understanding resistance to change, such as: age of respondent, level of education, position in the organization, personal monthly income and satisfaction with personal monthly income.

2. Organizational change management

More and more organizations are engaged in multiple and ongoing-change events, such as the introduction of new top management teams, reorganizations or restructurings, downsizing, layoffs, and new strategic initiatives. The potential impacts of change on people working in organizations are significant: on the positive side, change can provide a wealth of opportunities for growth and development; but, on the negative side, there can be substantial costs to having to negotiate new relationships, skills and patterns of activity (Cartwright, Cooper, 1992; Kotter, 1995).

In order for changes to be successful and to lead to positive results, it is necessary to properly manage the process of their implementation by agents of change. Agent of change is the individual or group responsible for managing the changes actions. They may or may not be managers, the current employees in the organization, new employees or external consultants (Robbins, Judge, 2009:646).

There are different models of change management, all of which consist of certain interrelated activities that may be called phases or steps. Different authors recommend different steps in change management, which actually represent a kind of instructions or recommendations for managers who lead this process. According to (Kotter,1998), mentioned activities can be classified into ten groups:

Change initiaion - This is the phase where the management of the organization has to recognize the need for change, as well as their causes, to overcome inertia, make the decision to initiate change, choose an agent of change, define its tasks and to establish a productive relationship with him.

Diagnosis of the state of the organization and the causes of change - This is a group of activities in the process of change through which a state of organization and the reasons why change is necessary are determined. This group of activities is performed by the diagnostic model and includes data collection and analysis in order to determine the causes of changes.

Creating a vision and making a plan for new organization – The phase includes activities of planning the desired state of organization to which the change should lead. This module also includes the creation of a vision of the new organization, as well as its expansion throughout the organization.

Planning and organizing the proces of change – This step in the management of organizational change involves planning the flow of change, as well as the building of the structure which will support realization of change.

Motivation for change - Management to motivates employees to accept and implement change and raises the energy needed to successfully implement changes.

Change implementation - The sixth stage involves the implementation of a change in the strict sense. During this phase, managers perform changes in several cycles. They plan and implement initial success and support and accelerate the implementation of change.

Management of power structures and political processes – One group of activities must be commited to shaping the power structure in the organization which will, if not favor, then at least enable changes.

Management of personal transition – This group of activities is commited to work with people. During the implementation of change, management has to manage emotions and give support to personal transition of members of the organization. They have to provide training and counseling, and the largest possible participation of employees in changes. Most importantly, management has to reveal and overcome resistance to change.

Stabilization of change through their involvement in the organizational culture – During this phase, the implemented changes are being frozen, which means they are being included in the organizational climate and therefore becoming legitimate way of organizing and functioning of enterprise.

Monitoring and control of organizational change – The last stage in managing organizational change is to monitor, measure and control the effects of changes.

It is possible to single out two general objectives of organizational change. First, the planned change aims to increase the organization's ability to adapt to changes in the environment. Second, it seeks to change the behavior of employees. (Robbins, Judge, 2009:646). As each organizational change requires a change in employee behavior, it is of great importance to

ensure acceptance of change by employees, motivate them to actively participate in the change implementation, and reduce the change resistance, as much as possible.

3. Resistance to change

Employee motivation for change is an extremely important task without which it is not possible to successfully make organizational changes. They must be confident that the change will have a positive impact on themselves and their organization. Only then, the people will accept the changes and commit to its implementation. Managers who act as agents of change are largely responsible for the motivation of employees. They must apply the appropriate techniques and strategies of motivation, but above all, they must be personally motivated and willing to change in order to transfer their enthusiasm to the employees. The literature reveals two basic strategies to motivate employees to change (Janićijević, 2008:416):

1. ***Creating dissatisfaction with the current situation*** - Dissatisfaction with the current situation can be caused by various reasons, such as: informing about the real situation and prospects of the company; setting high standards of performance or disconfirmation of existing behavior and the development of a sense of guilt.
2. ***Development of positive expectations of change*** - Positive expectations of change can be created by the development of psychological security and expectations of gains from the change. It is necessary to create and present a vision of the new organization and to develop positive expectations of the new organization. Therefore, it is extremely important to apply the following techniques to motivate employees, such as: communication with employees, exposing objective information, teamwork, planning and control.

It is very important to perceive that resistance is a common phenomenon which follows all types of changes and it should be seen as a natural and inevitable occurrence (Robbins,1992,p.193). It is precisely resistance that can be a sign of something significant and unusual happening in a company, and if it is a case of radical, transformational moves which bring bigger changes, strong and often dramatic reactions should be expected.

When faced with changes for the first time, a common human reaction is fear. The reason for this is the fact that the change involves abandoning the status quo and the way in which the work was previously performed, and the acceptance of the unknown. Even when the change is positive, there is always a some sense of uncertainty. Hence, change agents are often faced with the problem that concerns not only low motivation, but also the active or passive resistance of employees to change.

In order for managers to successfully overcome the resistance, it is necessary to understand the cause of this resistance, as well as to develop the proper tactics by means of which this problem is solved.

The following four may be pointed out as the most important causes of change resistance (Kotter, Schlesinger, 2008:132-134):

1. ***Parochial self-interest*** – People think that they will lose something of value as a result of the change. In these cases, people focus on their own best interests and not on those of total organization.
2. ***Misunderstanding and lack of trust*** – People also resist change when they don't understand its implications and perceive that it might cost them much more than they will gain. Such situations often occur when trust is lacking between the person initiating the change and the employees.
3. ***Different assesments*** – Another common reason people resist organizational change is that they assess the situation differently from their managers or those initiating the change and see more costs than benefits resulting from change, not only for themselves but for their company as well.
4. ***Low tolerance for change*** – People also resist change because they fear they will not be able to develop new skills and behavior that will be required of them. All human beings are limited in their ability to change, with some people much more limited than others.

After the managers come to the knowledge of the cause of resistance, they must choose the right strategy for solving this problem. The strategy depends on many different factors, and each strategy has its positive and negative effects. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider the situation in which the organization is based, to collect the necessary information, to determine the causes of resistance and to assess whether employees have the power to resist change. In addition, the cost-benefit analysis must be conducted, in order to draw a conclusion whether it is profitable to apply a particular strategy. The following table shows the most commonly used methods or strategies for solving the problem of resistance to change.

Approach	Commonly used in situations	Advantages	Drawbacks
Education + communication	Where there is a lack of information or inaccurate information and analysis.	Once persuaded, people will often help with the implementation of change.	Can be very time consuming if lots of people are involved.
Participation + involvement	Where the initiators do not have all the information they need to design the change, and where others have considerable power to resist.	People who participate will be commited to implementing change, and any relevant information they have will be integrated into the change plan.	Can be very time consuming if participators design an inappropriate change.
Facilitation + support	Where people are resisting because of adjustment problems.	No other approach works as well with adjustment problems.	Can be time consuming, expensive, and still fail.
Negotiation + agreement	Where someone or some group will clearly lose out in change, and where the group has considerable power to resist.	Sometimes it is relatively easyway to avoid major resistance.	Can be too expensive in many cases if it alerts others to negotiate for

			compliance.
Manipulation + co-optation	Where other tactics will not work or are too expensive.	It can be a relatively quick and inexpensive solution to resistance problems.	Can lead to future problems if people feel manipulated.
Explicit + implicit coercion	Where speed is essential, and the change initiators possess considerable power.	It is speedy and can overcome any kind of resistance.	Can be risky if it leaves people mad at the initiators.

Table 1. *Methods for dealing with resistance to change*
Source: Kotter, P.J., Schlesinger, A.L., 2008:7

When we speak of Serbian companies and other organizations and institutions in the public sector, it is often assumed that the resistance of employees to organizational change is extremely high given that these organizations operated by habitual patterns over many years, relying on the bureaucracy. However, some research has shown that, despite the Serbian national culture is generally labeled as a culture with a low tolerance of change and uncertainty, 78% of employees in local companies have shown the will to engage in a process of organizational change, if they believe it will bring improvement for the company in which they work, and for themselves. (Šapić, Stojanović Aleksić, Erić, 2009: 410).

Research in 2007 showed similar results (Stojanovic -Aleksic, 2007). As the most important causes of resistance to changes, respondents have stated a lack of information regarding changes (62%), a fear of losing one's position in the company (20.3%), distrusting the leader in charge of changes (14.5%) and a lack of knowledge and competence to get involved in changes (3.2%). Therefore, the largest number of respondents opposes changes due to insufficient amount of information which is, in a sense, favorable for leaders of domestic companies as this kind of resistance can be easily overcome by better informing employees about all important aspects of changes. After all, informing represents one of the most significant strategies for overcoming resistance to changes, which was discussed in the paper.

4. Changes in the public sector

The public sector is part of the national economy, which includes the general government and nonfinancial enterprises controlled by the state (public companies) that are primarily engaged in commercial activities (Budget System Law).

The public sector is the institutional system of economic engagement of the state and it consists of different sub-sectors (Vigvari, Raićević, Brnjaš, 2003:23-24):

1. *Budget sub-sector* – which involves bureaucratic regulation of state authorities, whose activity takes place in a special system of rules and with direct political control by political parties and relevant ministries.
2. *State-owned enterprises* (public companies) sub-sector – which includes a number of enterprises, institutions, agencies, associations and other forms of organization of companies, established by the state or local governments, aimed at marketing, sale

and distribution of state's products and services, in order to meet the public needs of the population.

3. *Non-profit and non-governmental organizations and institutions sub-sector* – which includes a wide range of services, oriented to the promotion of democratization, the realization of the rights of various marginalized political, social, religious and other groups in the community, as well as education and training groups for inclusion in the socio-political system of a country.

Activities and functions of the state and its organs usually are directed towards satisfying the public's needs. It is important to note that there is a fundamental difference between the needs of the organization of public services and public administration. The public services are established exclusively to meet the needs of the whole community, but also every citizen, individually, within the following industries: farming, scientific, educational, health, social and other.

Public administration aims at the implementation of the legal provisions and bylaws adopted by the Parliament or the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Their function is prevention, counseling, and control, as well as the application of legally prescribed penal provisions against entities that do not comply with the statutory provisions.

The frequently asked question is whether it is possible to achieve efficiency in the process of organizational change in public organizations, on the same level as it is the case in private sector. Designed to hold organizations accountable for a broad range of objectives, there are many rules and procedures that lead to rigid bureaucratic structures that can inhibit effective organizational change in public sector. Such elements as civil service systems, inflexible reward systems, specialized and invariant job designs, highly formalized processes and procedures, and strict reporting requirements yield centralized, bureaucratic hierarchies and the highly political nature of public arena frequently lead to assumption that organizational changes are difficult to implement successfully in the public sector. (Robertson, Seneviratne, 1995: 548).

However, nowadays public organizations are increasingly switching to market-motivated way of doing business, which includes a focus on users. Consequently, they must carry out a series of changes in the organizational structure, such as downsizing, establishing new sectors, changes in the delegation of authority and coordination, and more. Transition countries, such as Serbia, are particularly interesting area for conducting these kind of research because the public sector in these countries is often the subject of criticism.

The importance of the public sector of the Republic of Serbia, with an estimated cca 700,000 employees, is reflected both in the redistribution of gross domestic product in taxes and public spending, and in the share of public investment of 15% of total investments (Arsic et al, 2010:143). The main characteristic of the public sector in Serbia is low efficiency and a high level of expenses, compared to the quality and scope of services that the sector provides. (Veselinović, 2014: 143).

Key problems in the functioning of the public sector of the Republic of Serbia are (Veselinović, 2014: 144):

- High costs of public administration and public services, in the form of the wage bill and their share in gross domestic product;
- A common practice of forming various government agencies and similar institutions,without prior assessment of the existing infrastructure and assessment whether there already exists an organization that conducts such activities or have the capacity to perform them;
- Irrational spending of budget funds by subsidizing inefficient public enterprises;
- Inefficient system of pension insurance, social security and health care, and education;
- Inefficient and bureaucratic administration that encourages the private sector to the informal economy.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia, attaches a special importance, within the economic reforms, to the measures directed towards public companies at all levels of government. Specific austerity measures are defined by the Program of measures for public sector reform (Program of Measures for Public Sector Reform, Ministry of Finance, Republic of Serbia, 2013:9-11):

1. *Introduction of rules in the operation of public companies* - the dominant direct impact on the work of state bodies of public enterprises, reduction of direct and indirect subsidies from the budget of the Republic, stricter control over the issuance of guarantees.

2. *Improving the control of the number of employees and wage bill in the public sector* - the establishment of the Public Registry of employees in the public sector, the transition to a centralized calculation of personal income of employees, determining the optimal number of employees, reduction of other additional and related costs to minimum.

3. *Structural reforms of the public sector* - the completion of the restructuring process in 179 companies in this status, increase efficiency, independence and transparency of public companies (consistent application of the Law on Public Enterprises, better tracking result of any work by introducing key performance indicators, corporatization and strengthening public-private partnerships) sale and / or withdrawal of capital in certain public of enterprises.

The World Bank uses Governance Indicators to evaluate how well certain states manages public sector. Based on all six indicators, Serbia is far below average compared to other countries in the region. (Veselinović, Milovanović, 2009:403). Hence, it is necessary to implement a series of organizational changes in the public sector in Serbia, some of which are listed above. Providing support and motivation of employees in public organizations and overcoming the resistance are some of the biggest challenges for managers.

Therefore, this study puts the focus on the opinion of employees in public sector on specific organizational changes that were implemented in their organizations. This provides a basis for measurement of the degree of change resistance and its impact on the success of the change implementation process. Research has been conducted in a number of public organizations on the territory of Kragujevac, as one of the largest cities in Serbia.

5. Empirical research

Bearing in mind the above identified problem area, the subject of this study will be: measurement of the degree of resistance to organizational changes in public sector institutions in the territory of Kragujevac, as well as its impact on the risk of the change implementation process.

Taking into consideration the defined problem area and formulation of the subject, the main goal of scientific research is gathering relevant data and information, that lead to precise and objective knowledge of the views and opinions of employees in the public sector in the territory of Kragujevac about organizational changes, their resistance, and it's impact on the outcome of the change implementation proces.

This set of basic goal helps define the following derived objectives:

- Examine the relationship between respondents' age and level of resistance to organizational change.
- Examine the relationship between the education level of the respondents and the degree of resistance to organizational change.
- Examine the relationship between employees' satisfaction with personal monthly income and level of resistance to organizational change.

In accordance with the defined subject, and according to the research objectives, the paper starts from the certain hypothesis, which will be tested.

Basic hypothesis (H0): Resistance to change is an important factor that affects the risk in organizational change implementation in the public sector.

Derived hypothesis (H1): The youngest employees will show a lower degree of resistance to organizational change.

Derived hypothesis (H2): Employees with higher level of education will show a lower degree of resistance to organizational change.

Derived hypothesis (H3): Employees who are more satisfied with personal monthly income will show a lower level of change resistance.

Methodology of research As a diagnostic tool, the CRS will be used to determine the overall resistance to an organizational change and its contribution to the risk of implementation failure. The Change Resistance Scale (CRS) (Conner, 2011) is designed to serve as an aid in dealing with the human aspects of an organization's adaptation to change. The CRS can be used in following situations:

- While organizational change is being considered or during initial planning.
- Before the change has been announced.
- Anytime after the announcement has been made.
- After project implementation is complete.

The Change Resistance Scale profiles people's perceptions of a specific change. It comprises 25 items that correspond to 25 primary ways people respond to organizational change. Each item is measured on a scale of 1 to 10 and repondents place a check mark above the number that best reflects their view of each of the following items.

In addition to this instrument, the qualitative analysis and comparison with the existing literature and scientific knowledge was used in this research.

The sample consisted of 72 respondents from six public organizations on the territory of Kragujevac, as one of the largest cities in Serbia. Of all respondents, 36 (50%) are male, while 36 (50%) are female. The following tables (Table 1, Table 2) show the structure of the sample by age and by level of education of the respondents. The largest percentage of respondents are between 39-49 years old (37.5%), while more than half of the respondents have a university level of education (54.2%).

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-27	7	9,7 %
28-38	24	33,3 %
39-49	27	37,5 %
> 50	14	19,4 %
Total	72	100,0 %

Table 2. *Age of the respondents*

Level of education	Frequency	Percent
University degree	39	54,2 %
College degree	12	16,7 %
Secondary education	16	22,2 %
Skilled worker	5	6,9 %
Total	72	100,0 %

Table 3. *Level of education of the respondents*

Employees from the following organizations were involved in the study:

- Electric Power Industry of Serbia - The company "CENTER" LTD Kragujevac
- Clinical Center Kragujevac
- Ministry of Finance – Tax Administration - Regional Center Kragujevac
- "Public Enterprise for the City Construction" Kragujevac
- Public Utility Company ,,City Market“ Kragujevac
- Public enterprise "Post Serbia" - a business unit of Kragujevac

The empirical data will be processed using the following softwares:

1. Microsoft Office Excel 2007 - Within this framework, various mathematical operations will be used in order to calculate the CRF in different categories.
2. The software package SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science), version 20.00 - Within this framework, the techniques of descriptive statistics will be used in order to describe the sample, as well as to observe relations between the analyzed variables.

Based on the survey results, the average Change Resistance Factor (CRF) for all respondents was 49.21 which implies an intermediate level of resistance. Intermediate level of resistance,

according to CRS, affects the formation of a moderate risk in the implementation of organizational changes. This means that the level of resistance to change should be taken as a significant factor in predicting the success or failure of the change implementation process in public sector in Kragujevac. Thus, target resistance will be a pivotal element in the project's outcome and, therefore, requires special attention and resources in the planning and execution of the implementation steps.

Table 4 provides some of the descriptive statistic indicators and other information about the dependent variable - the level of risk in the implementation of change, measured by CRF.

			Statistic	Std. Error
CRF		Mean	49,21	1,651
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	45,92	
		Upper Bound	52,50	
		5% Trimmed Mean	49,20	
		Median	49,80	
		Variance	196,273	
		Std. Deviation	14,010	
		Minimum	18	
		Maximum	79	
		Skewness	-,109	,283
		Kurtosis	-,612	,559

Table 4. *Descriptive statistical measures*

Among the results are the skewness and kurtosis, which describe the distribution of results within the two groups. The distribution is negatively skewed (-,109), ie most of the results are greater than the average value. On the other hand, the distribution is flatter than the normal (-,612). The average deviation of CRF of all respondents of the mean value is 14,010 points.

The results can also be observed depending on the organization in which employees work. In all six organizations surveyed, the average CRF is at the intermediate level and indicates a moderate level of risk for the implementation of organizational changes. Comparative review of the individual average CRF for each organization is given in the following chart (Chart 1). Employees in company "Center" have shown the highest level of resistance (CRF = 55.69), while the lowest factor has been recorded in "PE for the City Construction" (CRF = 39,24), which is somewhat logical, bearing in mind that only incremental changes have been implemented in this organization.

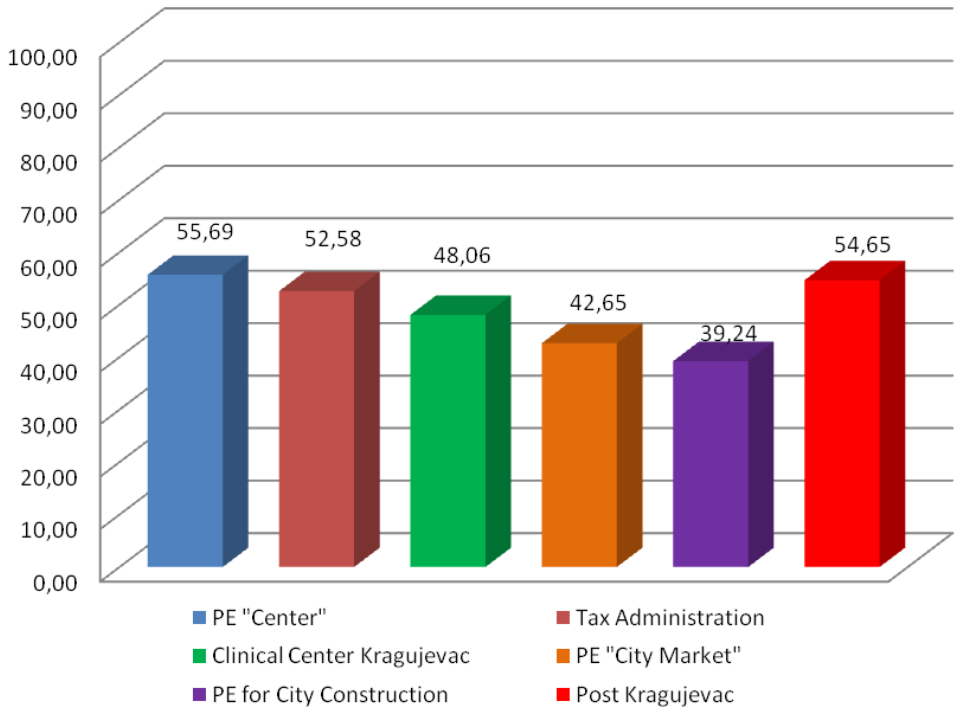

Chart 1. *Change resistance factor in public organizations in Kragujevac*

It was hypothesized that different control variables affect the level of resistance of public sector employees to organizational change, such as their age, education and satisfaction with personal monthly income. In order to come to conclusion about the way that each variable affects the level of resistance, average values of CRF for each of the observed categories were calculated. Some of the most significant results are shown below.

Although the results of all four age groups are within the moderate risk category (Chart 2), one of them particular stands out. This group includes respondents aged between 18 and 27 years, whose CRF is 40.86 which is significantly lower compared to older employees. This speaks about the lower level of resistance in the youngest group of employees, as was assumed in one of the hypotheses, ***hypothesis (H1)***.

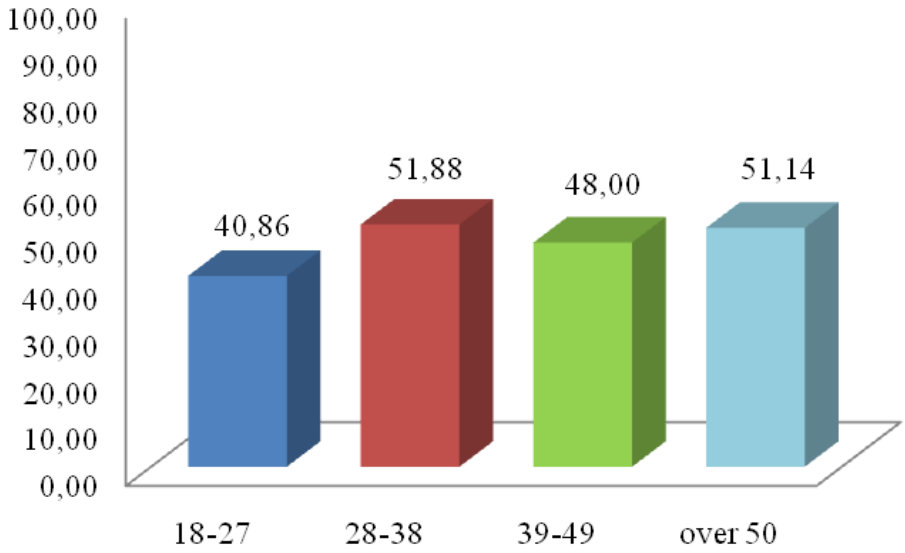

Chart 2. *The impact of age on the level of resistance to organizational change*

As for the education level of the respondents, this factor proved to be extremely important for the degree of resistance to organizational change. Specifically, employees with higher education (university degree) showed significantly lower levels of resistance in relation to qualified workers ***hypothesis (H2).*** Their average CRF is close to 43 (moderate risk), while CRF of respondents with the lowest level of education (skilled worker) reaches 67,04, indicating high risk in change implementation. There may be symptoms of resistance such as low morale, miscommunication, defensiveness, territoriality and hostility.

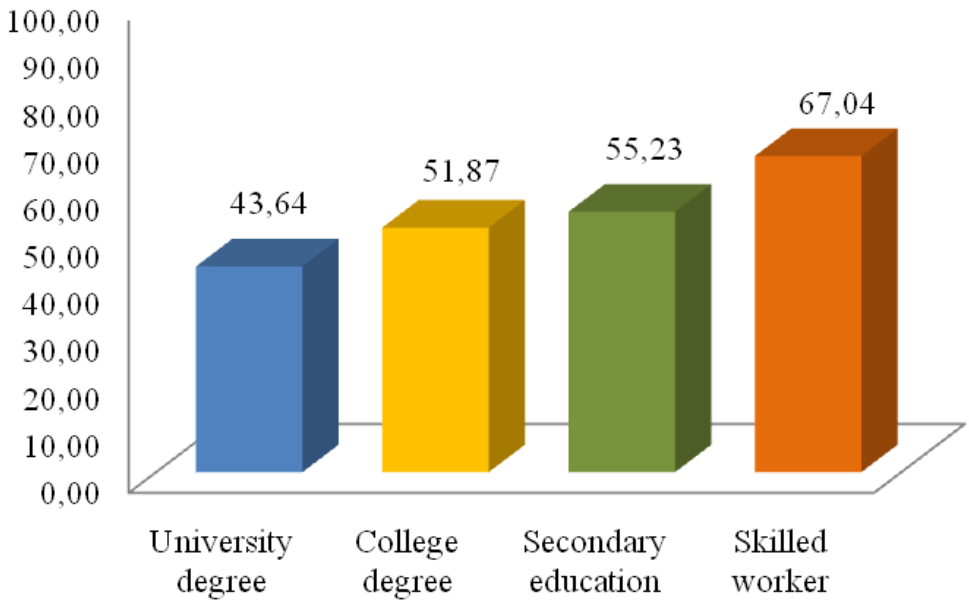

Chart 3. *The impact of education on the level of resistance to organizational change*

Based on Chart 4 it can be noted that employees who have declared themselves dissatisfied with personal monthly income have shown a higher level of resistance to organizational change (average CRF = 53.51) compared with the employees who have declared themselves satisfied with personal monthly income (average CRF = 42 , 02), ***hypothesis (H3)***. However, both values of CRF belong to the category of intermediate level of resistance that leads to moderate risk in change implementation. Thus, although dissatisfied respondents have shown higher resistance, the difference is not as high as one would perhaps assume.

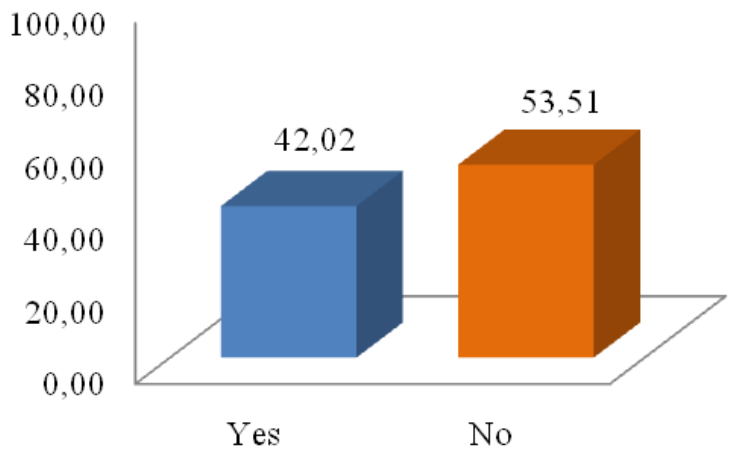

Chart 4. *The impact of satisfaction with monthly income at the change resistance level*

There are different reasons why there is a certain level of resistance among employees. Based on the survey, the three causes of resistance to change within the sample were set aside as the most important:

1) One of the most important cause of resistance is the *lack of involvement of employees in the process of planning change*. Asked “How involved have you been in the planning of this change"? even 47.2% of respondents gave a rating of 10, which means complete exclusion from the planning changes. Grades 6-9 were given by 20.9% of respondents, while only 8.3% reported a rank of 1 - meaning that they utterly agree with the statement “I have been involved in planning of this change". It is human nature for people to support what they have helped to create. If people do not believe that they have a significant degree of input into the planning of change, resistance usually increases.

2) Another important cause of resistance refers to the *conviction of employees of the non-existence of adequate reward for the accomplishment of specific change*. Asked “Do you believe that adequate rewards are being provided to accomplish this change"? only 1.4% gave the answer 1 which implies complete agreement with the statement “I believe that there are adequate rewards for accomplishing this change". Even 30.6% of responses are in the range 8-10, while 16.7% of them explicitly said they do not believe in the existence of adequate reward for the implementation of the change, giving a rating of 10 points. This result is logical considering the inflexible system of rewards in public sector.

3) *High levels of stress at work* could also be singled out as one of the major causes of resistance to organizational changes in the observed sample. When asked "How much stress

are you currently facing in your job", 61.1% of respondents gave grades in the range of 6-10, of whom 15.3% fully agreed with the statement "I am overly stressed or burdened by my current workload," giving a rating of 10 points. On the other hand, only 5.6% of respondents completely disagreed with the statement "I am not overly stressed or burdened by my current workload". As creators of CRS tools emphasize, when people are already busy and under stress, the additional pressure of a change may become too much for them to assimilate.

Limitations and recommendations for future research. The study has several limitations that could serve as opportunities for future research within the monitored area. First, it is possible to carry out more complex statistical analyzes in order to reach more precise conclusions about the relationship of certain variables. Second, study was conducted in a short period of time, exclusively on the territory of Kragujevac. It would be desirable for similar studies to be undertaken in successive time intervals, in order to anticipate progress in suppressing the resistance of employees to change. In addition, it is possible to extend the sample by including employees of public organizations in several major cities in Serbia. Finally, it would be valuable to repeat the study in the private sector. In this way, the level of resistance in these two sectors could be compared and the advantages and disadvantages of the process of change management in both sectors could be determined. The results of this study may be useful for identifying certain practices and solutions that have proven successful in the private sector and adapting them to public sector organizations.

6. Conclusion

Despite the existence of the usual assumptions about the high level of resistance to public sector employees to organizational changes, as well as the fact that the Serbian national culture is generally labeled as a culture with a low tolerance of change and uncertainty, we came to the conclusion that resistance is not at a level that would represent a distinct threat to the future success of the implementation of changes. The resistance is within the moderate boundaries, which does not mean that the additional attention during the planning and management of the change process is not needed. It is clear that the implementation of wide range of techniques and strategies for motivating employees to change represents a necessity in the future, in order to reduce the existing resistance to the lowest possible level. The study found that the youngest respondents, the ones with higher levels of educational attainment, as well as employees who are satisfied with their personal incomes, show lower resistance to change. Therefore, more attention must be paid to motivation of other categories of employees, such as people olders than 50 years and employees with lower levels of education. Bearing in mind that the key decisions about the level of personal monthly income are under the jurisdiction of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, managers in the public sector have a negligible impact on this factor. However, it is the application of certain forms of short-term earnings based on performance, such as bonuses and special prizes, which can serve to increase employee satisfaction with incomes, and reduce their resistance to change.

In addition, the contribution of this study is reflected in the obtaining of information about the dominant causes of resistance to organizational changes, such as: lack of involvement of employees in the process of planning change, conviction of employees of the non-existence

of adequate reward for the accomplishment of specific change and high levels of stress at work. Particular attention is drawn to second factor, which may be associated with the previously mentioned, dissatisfaction with personal income, all of which leads to an unambiguous conclusion about the need to intensify efforts in terms of building an adequate award system. Also, efforts for creating pleasant working conditions, good organizational communication and employee involvement in the planning process of change, by taking into account their opinions and suggestions are priorities in order to improve the change management process in the public sector.

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