



## **The Top Leadership Influence on the Implementation of Change Management Strategies in Family-Owned Supermarkets in Kenya: A Case Study of Quickmart Supermarket.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The role of senior management in creating and implementing change management strategies that can improve the performance and competitiveness of family-owned supermarkets and explore the challenges that family-owned supermarkets face when it comes to implementing change management strategies and how top leadership can overcome these challenges. This research is aimed to investigate the impact of top leadership on change management practices in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya, using a case study approach with Quickmart Supermarket. This study was anchored on a theoretical framework involving Kotter's 8 step change management model. The descriptive cross-sectional design was used. The target population for this study comprised of 240 management employees drawn from management levels 1 to 4. A focused study was done for regional managers, and face-to-face interviews were conducted for senior managers, in addition, questionnaires were used to collect data from the sampled employees. Validity tests were used to reduce threat to content validity while reliability tests were used to test consistent, and to ensure the results were free from bias. All the statistical analysis was done using SPSS. The findings obtained indicated that employees did not think that change communication was a key driver of effective change management unless there was communication of purpose, the vision of change, and benefit of change. According to the respondents, reward and performance-based culture was very important in the change management process. The study seeks to provide insights into how leadership can facilitate effective change management in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya, and how such businesses can leverage their unique strengths to achieve successful organizational change. The findings of this research will contribute to the existing literature on leadership, change management, and family-owned businesses, and offer practical recommendations for leaders and managers seeking to improve their change management capabilities in this context.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Change Management

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Change management is an essential component of organizational success, and effective leadership is critical to implementing change strategies. Njenga, (2016) examined the top leadership influence on the implementation of change management strategies in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya, using the case study of Quickmart Supermarket. The authors take a multi-level approach, exploring the impact of top leadership on change management at the global, continental, regional, and national levels. At the global level, the authors explore the impact of top leadership on the implementation of change management strategies in family-owned businesses. They highlight the importance of leadership in setting the vision for change, creating a culture of innovation, and fostering a sense of urgency. Their findings have important implications for family-owned businesses worldwide, providing valuable insights into the role of top leadership in change management. Family businesses constitute 80% of business enterprises in the United States of America contributing 50% of gross domestic product (GDP). Similarly, 60% to 70% of all SMEs in Europe are family businesses that generate between 45% and 65% (GDP). Family businesses represent 79% of all businesses in Germany that employ 44% of the working population. While 90% to 98% of businesses in Italy, India and Latin America are family businesses (Visser & Chiloane-Tsoka, 2014; Poza, 2014). Studies reveal 70% of family-owned businesses don't survive to the second generation while those that survive to the third and fourth generation are 12% and 3% respectively (Byrd & Megginson, 2013).

According to Cassia et al., (2012) family-owned businesses are a significant source of employment and economic growth. They examine the impact of top leadership on the implementation of change management strategies, highlighting the importance of leadership in fostering innovation, creating a shared vision, and building trust. Their findings have important implications for family-owned businesses across the African continent. According to Osisioma (2004) who examined the impact of top leadership on the implementation of change management strategies in the East African region, where family-owned businesses are an important component of the economy. They identify a number of key success factors, including effective leadership, clear communication, and employee involvement. These findings have important implications for family-owned businesses operating in the region (Wambui, 2022). Osisioma (2004) in his study which focus specifically on Kenya, where family-owned businesses are a significant source of employment

and economic growth. Using the case study of Quickmart Supermarket, the authors explore the impact of top leadership on the implementation of change management strategies. They identify a number of key factors that can contribute to successful change management, including effective leadership, clear communication, and employee involvement. Their findings have important implications for family-owned businesses in Kenya.

Keter C., (2014) states that top leadership plays a critical role in the implementation of change management strategies in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya. The authors' multi-level approach highlights the importance of effective top leadership strategies at the global, continental, regional, and national levels. Their findings have important implications for family-owned businesses worldwide, and provide practical insights that can be applied by companies seeking to improve their change management practices. By emphasizing the importance of effective top leadership in setting the vision for change, fostering innovation, and building trust, the authors provide a blueprint for family-owned businesses seeking to remain competitive in a rapidly changing business environment (Mugendi, 2021). In another study in Nigeria about family business, succession, and survival strategies Nwoye, Nwuke, & Onoyima (2020), studied three family business and they found out that the three businesses were sustained after a leadership transition from the founders. Their conceptual framework was based on transformational leadership theory.

Keter C., (2014) Studied change management and succession in family-owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi. The objective of the study was to establish the influence of change management and succession in family-owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi area. In his findings he noted that the change management adopted by family-owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi were quality leadership, long-term succession planning, open planning of leadership transfer, and effective communication between founders and succeeding generation and good management practice.

### ***1.2 Statement of the Problem***

Organizations must continually adapt new strategies to achieve a strategic fit with the ever-dynamic environmental changes. Managing change is a complex task, a fact many case studies and various literature consensually agree on. In a five-year study conducted by McKinsey consulting firm on organizations that underwent organizational change, out of 1536 companies surveyed only 38% of managers agreed the process succeeded. The challenge is more evident in surviving today's competitive environment since organizations are forced to quickly respond and adapt to survive the pressures of the external environmental forces (Hourmatallah & Khalis, 2019).

The livelihood of 85% of private sector employees globally depends on family business which is an important consideration that should attract more focus and attention in organizational and management literature mainstream studies (Cassia et al., 2012). Due to rapid changes in the technology space and global economy, development of new change capabilities is crucial to enable family-owned businesses survive the turbulent environments (Canterino, 2013). Sharmilee (2014) and Mlobeli (2018) indicate that family-owned businesses fail within 3-4 years of their existence and those which exist for more than 5 years barely survive the transition.

The Kenyan retail and wholesale sector was the 6<sup>th</sup> largest contributor to national Gross domestic product, contributing 7.9 % in 2021 recording a drop from previous year's 8.1 % (KNBS, 2022). The sector is one of the largest private employers of which supermarkets constitute a major segment of the sector (Wambui, 2022). The Kenya supermarket business environment landscape has witnessed rapid proliferation of small players, entrants of foreign firms, mergers and acquisitions of big and medium players. The retail industry in Kenya is largely dominated by family-owned and run business entities.

Mergers and acquisitions and rapid store expansion are some of the change initiatives Kenya supermarket retail players have engaged but failed to achieve desired growth objectives or resuscitate loss making streak. An example of a failed acquisition strategy in the Kenyan retail sector is the Choppies acquisition of Ukwala supermarket in 2016. The merger encountered turbulence and four years later, Choppies closed shop and exited the market (The East African, 2020). Retail chain Mulleys Supermarket, which is family owned announced the closure of five of its 10 branches, in a shock downsizing plan that saw hundreds of staff laid off in an ambitious expansion program that went the wrong way (Business Daily, Nov 2021). One of the problems that have plagued major supermarkets in Kenya is that they are a family ran businesses with little external oversight (Mugendi, 2021).

Several studies have been done in investigating change management in family-owned business firms. Carentinio and Cirella (2013) examined organizational transformations in an Italian family-owned business company. A study gap is the focus was not on Kenyan supermarkets. Otinda (2015) studied change management of a merger and acquisition at L'oreal a consumer company in the fast-moving goods sector, Daniel (2019) studied effect of change management on performance of firms in Nigeria, while Mwiriki (2015) studied strategic change management and performance of large supermarkets in Nairobi County, both studies focused on the effect of change management on performance. The mentioned studies reveal conceptual and context gaps that this study seemed to examine. This study will explore the top leadership influence on the implementation of change management strategies in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya: A Case Study of Quickmart Supermarket.

### ***1.3 Specific Objectives***

Analyze the top leadership influence on the implementation of change management strategies in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya: A Case Study of Quickmart Supermarket.

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## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The anchor theory guiding the study objectives is the Kotter eight step model explaining the phases a change process undergoes highlighting the importance of a leadership that creates urgency, shares the intended vision with employees while guiding them and anchoring the changes through sustained reinforced communication, alignment, and involvement of the entire organization's employees.

#### 2.1.1 Kotter 8 Step Model

The Kotter change management model, which outlines a sequence of eight steps for successful organizational change, serves as the foundation for this study. According to Kotter (1995), these steps involve creating a sense of urgency among leadership or change agents, forming a guiding coalition, defining a clear vision and strategy, communicating the change vision effectively, empowering broad-based action, generating and articulating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture to sustain the change.

The research study variables originate their relevance from Kotter's eight steps of change management. According to Kotter any change process must have a leadership committed towards facilitating the change process, a change leader/manager/agent that effectively guides the process by creating readiness for change adoption among the employees, through effective communication, top management support and employee involvement and enablement. The process outcome is aimed at reducing resistance to change and ensuring successful change adoption. The steps are meant to detach the organization from the current state, manage the transition process towards adopting the new change and reinforce the new change culture. The theory eight steps anchor and illuminates the guidance path of the study variables.

### 2.2 Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature review examined several studies conducted in change management as a practice in various sectors. The review examined findings from empirical studies which provided a guide to the study research framework and provided insights in addition to ones captured in the theoretical literature review.

#### 2.2.1 Top leadership and Effective Change Management

Ahmed (2016) conducted an empirical study on relationship between senior management support and performance of public sector projects in Pakistan. The study adopted a quantitative approach and utilized random sampling method on data collected in an online survey. Study respondents targeted were senior management, specifically project managers and directors. The data findings indicated all types of support from top management had a positive relational effect on projects performance. The recommendations where senior management support is critical in the public sector projects to enable performance improvement.

Canterina and Cirella (2013) studied organizational transformation in an Italian family-owned business. The focus of the study paper was on leading transformation in family-owned businesses. The study used a case study method with face-to-face interviews. The case study was a leading Italian fashion designer firm that had gone through a complex transformative process with a long history and strong family tradition. From the study, family firm-oriented characteristics had an effect on the nature of firm's transformation.

These characteristics include family-based management culture, family strong attachment and ties to the firm, decision making based on consensus orientation and perspective focus on the long term. These family firm characteristics were a hindrance or resource facilitator for transformation and important to consider in managing change. Secondly leadership played a crucial role in implementing and leading organizational transformations.

Kung'u (2019) conducted a study on a variety of leadership styles practiced in select Kenya counties and their effect on change management moderated by organization culture in. The result findings revealed that transformational leadership had a positive correlation with change management. Transactional leadership style had a positive correlation with change management. Transactional leadership is characterized by short time frames and helps achieve objectives in a quick efficient manner but on the flipside, it registers lower employee job satisfaction and commitment. Study findings revealed Laissez faire leadership had a negative correlation effect on change management.

The study recommends that more active leadership is necessary to get good results. Autocratic leadership was observed to hasten the change management process. It is best suited for changes that require brief periods. In addition, a leader can enforce compliance measures to stop resistance to change and enhance the change process. Democratic leadership positively influenced change management and the leadership style is useful when seeking opinions from the employees affected by the change. Organizational culture was the moderating variable and study findings revealed that county culture had a moderating influence on the leadership style effect on change management.

Keter (2014) studied the influence of change management and succession in family owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi area. The study used stratified sampling method in which 60 small and medium enterprises were selected for the study. The study findings revealed change management was adopted by the SMEs in order to be competitive in the market as changes have occurred in the business environment occasioned by technological advances, globalization, changing demographics, economic and political factors.

The change management practices that were adopted by the SMEs were found to be quality leadership, long term succession planning, open planning of leadership transfer, open and effective communication between the founders and succeeding generation and good management practices. The study found out that successful succession of family-owned businesses was affected by ability of successor, criteria for selecting the successor, conflict among family members, use of other mechanisms to decide the successor as opposed to merit and goals of family and business overlap.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between the change management practice determinant which are the study independent variable top leadership and its effect on the dependent variable which is organizational resistance to change.

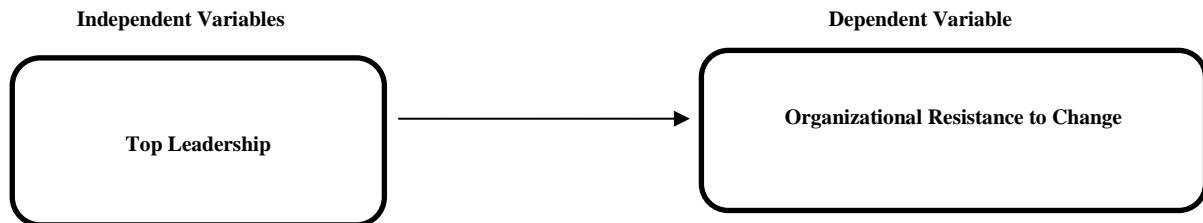


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed method research design. The mixed method was utilized in the interview guide and in questionnaire as research instruments. A descriptive cross sectional research design was used to define the occurrence of a phenomenon or to compare factors in an organization at a particular time. The descriptive cross-sectional design compares factors in an organization at a particular time as opposed to longitudinal designs where variables are studied over a period of time. (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

### 3.2 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised 240 management employees drawn from management levels 1 to 4, the senior most being level 1 in descending order to level 4. The four levels constitute the CEO, departmental heads, category section heads, branch managers and assistants and other middle management staff working in Quick mart Supermarket.

Table 1: Target Population

Rank	level 1	level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Totals
<b>Department</b>					
<b>Snr management</b>	4				4
<b>Finance</b>		1	38		39
<b>Commercial</b>		1	8	50	59
<b>Operations</b>		1	24	86	111
<b>Hr</b>		1	2	1	4
<b>IT</b>		1	7		8
<b>Audit</b>			1		1
<b>Compliance</b>			1		1
<b>Ehs</b>		1			1
<b>Marketing</b>			2	2	4
<b>Supplies</b>		1	6	1	8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>240</b>

Source - Retail Association of Kenya (RETRAK) October 2022

The study drew its sample from the population size of Quickmart Senior managers, departmental heads, senior and middle level managers since they were solely responsible for decisions concerning organizational change. The study used stratified random sampling techniques. Stratified random

sampling was used to select four strata namely, management levels one to four comprising of top leadership, executive committee, and head of departments or sections.

### 3.3 Sample Size

**Table 2: Sample Size Table**

<b>Rank level</b> <b>Department</b>	<b>level 1</b>	<b>level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Snr management</b>	4				4
<b>Finance</b>		1	23		24
<b>Commercial</b>		1	5	30	36
<b>Operations</b>		1	14	53	68
<b>Hr</b>		1	1	1	3
<b>IT</b>		1	4		5
<b>Audit</b>			1		1
<b>Compliance</b>			1		1
<b>Ehs</b>		1			1
<b>Marketing</b>			1	1	2
<b>Supplies</b>		1	3	1	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>150</b>

The researcher used a mixed method research design that involved an interview guide targeting the Senior management and the questionnaire targeting management levels one to four as the primary tools for data collection. The research made of focused group and interviews to collected data significant to the research questions. According to Nyumba et al., (2018), focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social challenges and issues.

The main objective was to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of Quickmart broader population. In addition, the interview guide contained semi-structured questions covering all the variables under this study. The questionnaire was also employed to obtain responses from the sample of respondents selected.

### 3.4 Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire is a research instrument that collects data from sample respondents, and its objective is to breakdown the research objectives into specific questions and answers to generate required research data (Kothari, 2010). The instrument assisted the researcher to maintain confidentiality and save time in collecting the large amount of data.

The questionnaire was structured in two parts namely, part A and part B. Part B consisted of four sections aligned with the independent and dependent variables and the questionnaire structure corresponding with the study objectives. A 5-point Likert scale evaluation from strongly agreed (SA) to strongly disagreed (SD) measured responses. Secondary data was obtained from the publications, online sources, library sources, annual reports, and policy documents. These supported the findings from primary data.

A focused study was conducted on 8 regional managers, and one-on-one interviews using the interview guide conducted for the CEO, Quickmart founders and other executive levels.

## 4. 0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics:

**Table 3: Top leadership influence on change adoption frequencies**

<b>The organization change leadership coalition building with influencers changes resistors, power centers in the organization influence change management effectiveness</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	15	10	10.4	10.4
	Neutral	9	6	6.3	16.7

	Agree	51	34	35.4	52.1
	Strongly agree	69	46	47.9	100
	Total	144	96	100	
Missing	System	6	6		
<b>Top leadership alignment with the workforce normally results in change management success</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	6	4	4.2	4.2
	Disagree	3	2	2.1	6.3
	Neutral	27	18	18.8	25
	Agree	60	40	41.7	66.7
	Strongly agree	45	30	31.3	97.9
	Total	141	94	100	
Missing	System	9	9		
<b>Top leadership motivation doesn't usually result in change management effectiveness</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	9	6	6.3	6.3
	Neutral	4	2	2.1	8.3
	Agree	57	38	39.6	47.9
	Strongly agree	75	50	52.1	100
	Total	145	96	100	
Missing	System	5	5		
<b>Sharing of the vision and benefits by the top leadership of organizational change makes me improve my negative attitude to new changes</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	2	2.1	2.1
	Neutral	12	8	8.3	10.4
	Agree	69	46	47.9	58.3
	Strongly agree	60	40	41.7	100
	Total	145	96	100	
Missing	System	5	5		
<b>Top leadership engagement and motivational support to employees during the change management process increases the effectiveness of managing resistance to change</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	12	12.2	12.2
	Disagree	45	30	30.6	42.9
	Neutral	33	22	22.4	65.3
	Agree	36	24	24.5	89.8
	Strongly agree	15	10	10.2	100
	Total	147	98	100	
Missing	System	3	3		
Total		150	100		

The findings showed that when the management builds coalition with change influencers, change resisters, and power centers in the organization chances of the adoption of the new changes would be effective. The study reveals that it is important for the top leadership to incorporate employees who wield

power to influence others into the change management practices. Also, the management must include the employees who show any resistance to change and even appoint them as change agents. The results were as follows; 10.4 % disagreed, 6.3 % were neutral 35.4% agreed, 47.9% strongly agreed. In addition, most of the participants agreed that the top leadership alignment with the workforce normally result in the success and effective change adoption.

The top leadership must strive to ensure the change goals are aligned with the goals of the employees as shown in the following results ,4.2% strongly disagreed, 2.1 % , disagreed, 18.8% were neutral. 41.7% agreed and 31.3% strongly agreed. Also 39.6 % agreed while 52.1% strongly disagreed that top leadership motivation does not usually result in change management effectiveness. There was a split as to whether top leadership motivation increased the chance of effective change adoption. This could have been because of the recent rapid expansion of the company, leading to Quickmart hiring many employees who had been not yet aligned to the values of Quickmart.

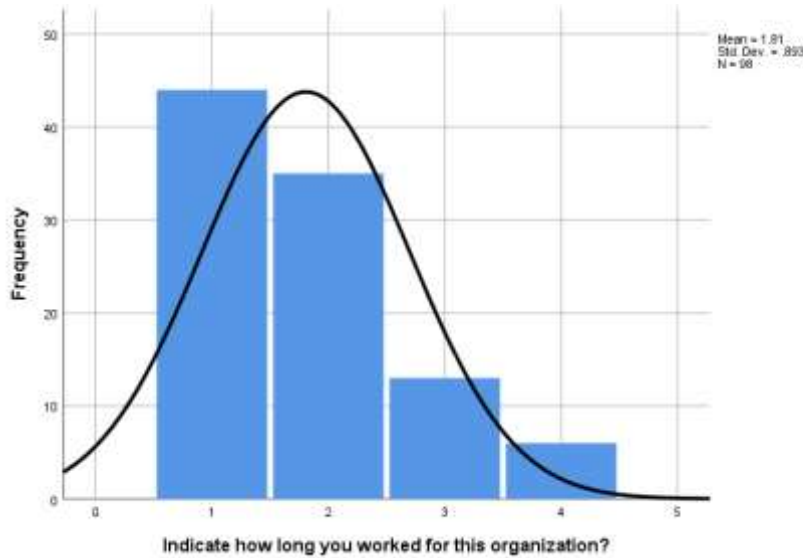


Figure 2: Histogram of working years

Table 4: Univariate Regression analysis duration of the Top Leadership in the organization

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Indicate how long you worked for this organization.					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Corrected Model</b>	178.957a	41	4.365	54.56	0
<b>Intercept</b>	387.736	1	387.736	4846.701	0
<b>TLQ1</b>	11.286	3	3.762	47.024	0
<b>TLQ2</b>	0	1	0	0	1
<b>TLQ3</b>	5.4	1	5.4	67.5	0
<b>TLQ4</b>	4.5	1	4.5	56.25	0
<b>TLQ5</b>	11.583	4	2.896	36.198	0

From the results, TLQ1(Top Leadership question 1),  $F(1) = 4846$ ,  $P < 0$ ,  $F(1) = 47.02$ ,  $p < 0$ ,  $F(1) = 67.5$ ,  $F(1) = 56.25$ ,  $p < 0$ , all the questions on top leadership except one were significant where the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significant which indicated that the time an individual had worked in the leadership position determined how they viewed the actions taken by top leadership to enhance effective adoption to change in leadership. The new hires seemed not to understand the effects of different types of leadership and therefore their responses were deemed unreliable.

## 5.0 SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Summary of findings

Organization changes leadership coalition building with influencers, change resisting opinion leaders, power centers in the organization influences change adoption effectiveness a research question whose response revealed 35.4% agreed, 47.9% strongly agreed. Majority of the participants, (41.7% agreed and 31.3% strongly agreed) that the top leadership alignment with the workforce normally results in the change adoption success. It is evident that the employees in Quickmart agreed that top leadership affected their extent of adapting to new changes and agreed that organizational culture affected the

adoption of new changes. The study findings validate Cummings Worley model that states change management success involves garnering political support, from employees and stakeholders to effectively implement new changes and minimize chances of resistance. Similarly, the findings relate to Kotter's change model premises that leadership is instrumental in creating a sense of urgency and a guiding coalition essential to facilitate an effective change management process.

### 5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study has found that top leadership plays a crucial role in implementing change management strategies in family-owned supermarkets in Kenya. The study focused on Quickmart Supermarket as a case study and found that proactive senior management can create and implement change management strategies that improve the performance and competitiveness of family-owned supermarkets. However, family-owned supermarkets face unique challenges such as resistance to change and lack of resources, which require innovative solutions from top leadership to overcome.

### 5.3 Recommendations

The top leadership needs to commit to driving strategic changes as well as it does operational changes. Strategic changes are wider in scope and have longer longevity. The changes are transformational and visionary, and therefore require heavy investments. Projects such as organizational culture are long-term in nature and therefore must be constant. To ensure that the organization does not lose momentum, the top leadership must consistently celebrate quick-wins. The top leadership at family-owned supermarkets should ensure it supports its employees in whichever manner that would facilitate quick adoption to change. For instance, they could be provided with adequate training and skill development programs that create a readiness for change culture in the organization.

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