Gordon Institute of Business Science
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Change readiness in the context of a pandemic.

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Abstract

The business environment is changing at a rapid pace with the latest instance of rapid change being the COVID-19 pandemic. The business environment constantly undergoes change to enable organisations to respond to increased global competition, adapt to market conditions, and adjust for technological advancements. Despite the advancement of literature by academia and management consulting the failure rate of organisational change management remains high.

Purpose and methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate what change readiness initiatives change agents use in addressing organisational change and how these measures are applied to instances of rapid change. This will progress change management literature by expanding on current change readiness models by viewing them in the context of rapid change.

This research study was guided by an interpretivism philosophy that explained what change readiness measures deployed by change agents to organisational change in a rapidly changing environment. Data was collected from change agents across seven industries in South Africa using 13 semi-structured interviews.

Findings and implications

The study found that change agents did apply change readiness measures during instances of rapid change. These measures were similar to those used during normal change instances and change agents relied on these change readiness measures to bring about organisational change in response to instances of rapid change. This finding was grounded with a sense of empathy that change agents showed towards change members. This implied that role change of agents needs to be understanding of change members when implementing organisational change.

Keywords

Readiness for change, organisational change, rapid change, components of change readiness, COVID-19

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Research Problem.

1.1 Research Problem

The business environment is changing at a rapid pace (Mitra, Gaur, & Giacosa, 2019). For this, leaders must be aware of the changes in their organisations and be prepared to implement effective change management strategies (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Mitra et al., 2019). These changes are due to increased global competition, market conditions and the advancement of technology (Imran, Rehman, Aslam & Bilal, 2016). The transformation process is challenging and complex for which managers are expected to deliver successful change (Imran et al., 2016).

Smith. (2005) defines organisational change management as the progression of moving to a new and different state and is a constant for organisations. A large part of organisational change is about managing the people aspect of the process. With the increased pace of change in the business environment, organisations are being challenged to create capacity for change due to technological advancements, increased competition, and anticipated change (Vakola, 2013). As result of the challenges faced regarding organisational change management there is a high failure rate (Burnes, 2004).

A recent instance that created a volatile business environment was the COVID-19 pandemic that descended on the globe in March 2020 (Singh, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, as named by the WHO, is a life-threatening infectious disease and a public health problem due to its high rate of infection, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome the coronavirus or SARS-COV2 has caused disruption in every life for people around the globe (SanJuan-Reyes, Gomez-Olivan, & Islas-Flores, 2021). As at sixth September 2021, more than 220 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been recorded, and more than 4.5 million deaths have been reported (Organization World Health, n.d.).

Transmission of the coronavirus is most likely via person to person and through the contact of contaminated surfaces through drops that are expelled when sneezing or coughing (SanJuan-Reyes et al., 2021). In addition, the coronavirus is spread by inhaling coronavirus droplets in the air as well as through touching an infected person

(Singh, 2020). To reduce the transmission of the coronavirus, social distancing, lockdown, restricting large gatherings and increased testing have been used (SanJuan-Reyes et al., 2021; Gautam & Hens, 2020). Organisational change is required globally as social distancing has forced people to work remotely, from their homes(Singh, 2020 ; Dubey et al., 2020).

Apart from the social impact of the pandemic, businesses have been affected by the pandemic as the OECD reported their expectation for global growth to decrease down to 2.4% from 2.9% and cautioned that it could drop to 1.5% a pre- COVID-19 level (Singh, 2020). Corroborating the subdued global economic status, the IMF had predicted global growth of 3.4% before the pandemic was declared. Post declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic projections were also revised downwards (Singh, 2020). The effects of these projections result in companies needing to implement changes within their organisations at a rapid pace to adjust to market conditions Mitra et al., 2019).

To manage the changes required in the business environment there has been a development of change models that are based on managing change under stable conditions where there is an element of certainty and predictability (Burnes, 2004; Smith, 2005). Change readiness is integrated in change initiatives and is an important part of change efforts (Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris, 2007; Attaran, 2000). This study aims to assess if these measures can be used during instances of rapid change.

Choi & Ruona (2011) has defined change readiness as organisational members beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent of the change required and the capacity of the organisation to effect the change.

(Burnes, 2004). Cited that there are gaps between literature and practice based on the high failure rate of change efforts. The gaps in literature and the basis on which organisational change management models are based (stable environment, certainty and predictability) has led the researcher to investigate organisational change management in a rapidly changing environment. For the purposes of this study, organisational change management will be limited to readiness for change as readiness for change plays a vital role in the successful implementation of change through tackling motivation for change, ensuring proper communication of change benefits related to staff growth and ensuring sufficient resources are available for implementation of the change (Mitra et al., 2019).

In summary the problem is the rapidly changing business environment of which the COVID-19 pandemic is an example of. This problem translated into a research problem is, how is change readiness applied in the context of rapid change. This research problem was derived from the high change failure rate that the business community experiences. From an academic view the research problem was derived by accessing change readiness in the context of a rapidly changing environment.

1.2 Purpose of this research

Given the high failure rate of change (Imran et al., 2016), the purpose of this study is to progress change management literature by expanding on current change readiness models by viewing them in the context of rapid change. This will be achieved by investigating how traditional change readiness principles are applied in instances of rapid change by performing in-depth interviews with managers or change agents on traditional change readiness related to normal change that was applied to change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to:

1. Understand change readiness initiatives that are carried out by managers or change agents.
2. Add relevance to the current change readiness models by understanding how these models were used instances of rapid change. This will be achieved by using COVID-19 as a rapid change instance.
3. Isolate the limitations of traditional change readiness models used during rapid change instances.

1.3 Research Aims

The aim of this study is to understand how managers deploy change readiness activities to adapt to change that businesses face, in the South African context, in a rapidly changing environment. Using the COVID-19 pandemic the study seeks to investigate what activities do managers use during instances of rapid change to prepare their work force for the rapidly changing environment. With this knowledge the study aims to provide managers with insight on what change levers could be considered when preparing and implementing rapid change. Lastly the study aims to add to literature on change readiness by expanding on the relevance of components of change readiness during times of rapid change. In this instance the components of change readiness refers to messaging around the proposed change, interpersonal and social dynamics of organisational members, influence strategies exerted by change agents change agent attributes and measurement Indicators related to change readiness (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder,1993).

1.4 Research Scope

The research will be conducted with senior managers in South Africa who have dealt with change management within large organisations. Specifically, managers from large organisations that experience rapid change caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The deliberate use of larger organisations in South Africa elevates the study as larger companies in South Africa make up two-thirds of the South Africa's total company turnover (Statistics South Africa, n.d.). Managers in organisations used as part of this study have undergone change in the past 12 to 24 months. The study will take place at a macro level within an organisation (Caldwell, 2013).

To meet the aims of this study a qualitative approach has been followed. This will allow for an in-depth understanding of how change readiness measures are deployed, and the considerations taken by managers when applying their judgements in deploying change readiness measures. A qualitative study is also well suited to extract insights from managers on change readiness measures and recommendations that they consider effective. The study will take place with multiple organisations across different industries however small and medium sized enterprises, state owned organisations and not for profit organisations will not be considered for the purpose of this study.

1.5 Theoretical implications of the study.

1.5. 1 Literature

Historically in literature there has been work done on organisational change dating back to 1947 in the form of Lewin's basic change model. Subsequently, change models developed containing similar underlying principles. At the core these change principals are useful for planned change within a stable planned environment (Burnes, 2004). However, this study investigates the possibility of using the same change readiness components used for normal planned change to instances where there is a rapid change in the environment.

1.5.2 Business

The business environment is changing at an increased rate due to global competition, technological advancements, and market conditions (Imran et al., 2016). The results of this study will assist managers and businesses in understanding what components of change readiness to be used when there are instances of rapid change.

1.6 Structure of the study.

Chapter 1 introduces the topic of change readiness and provides reasons for the further investigation by placing the topic in the context of a rapidly changing business environment and theoretical environment. In doing so the chapter explains why the business environment is changing at a rapid pace and uses the COVID-19 pandemic as a recent instance of rapid change. Further on in the chapter the research objectives are defined, and the scope of the investigation are outlined.

Chapter 2 documents the results from a literature review that was conducted by the researcher by defining what change readiness is according to literature. Then, elaborating on the importance of change readiness and models used to manage the change. Lastly, the chapter will end by positioning the gap in literature and in the business environment that the study aims to address.

Chapter 3 notes the research questions that will be used to address the study's objectives

Chapter 4 presents the methodology and process followed in collating data that was used in answering the research questions from chapter three. This chapter provides a detailed description of research design, the population considered for the study, sampling methods, unit of analysis and the instruments used to collect data required for the study. The chapter further provides detail on how the data is processed and analysed.

Chapter 5 reports the results of the study that is based on the data collated from participants The results are presented according to each research question.

Chapter 6 The findings in chapter five are compared with the literature, as described in chapter two, this is done to see whether the findings support, extend or contradict the extant literature documented in chapter two.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter of the study that summarises the results of the study. The chapter also outlines the limitations of the study and recommends future research directions in the field.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In introducing change readiness this chapter will introduce the concept by defining what change readiness is according to literature. After understanding the concept, the location of change readiness will be outlined. Thereafter the importance of change readiness and models used to manage the phenomenon will be explored. To complete the understating of change readiness challenges on the concepts will be considered in the context of rapid change. Finally, the chapter will provide a summary of the definition of change readiness, the importance of change readiness, the models that were evaluated in literature, challenges noted on change readiness. The chapter will end by positioning the gap in literature and in the business environment that the study aims to address.

2.2 Definition

For this study change readiness is defined as activities that are carried out before a change initiative is implemented by change agents or those in charge of change initiatives. These initiatives are carried out to align staff within an organisation to adapt to a specific change as required by businesses.

Change readiness has been described as a comprehensive attitude that is influenced simultaneously by what is being changed (content), how it is being implemented (process), the conditions under which the change is occurring (context) and the characteristics of those being asked to change (individuals) involved (Holt et al., 2007). Consistent with this definition (Armenakis & Harris, 2009), has defined change readiness as a cognitive precursor to resist or support change by change targets. Expanding on the definition above (Buick, Blackman, O' Donnel, O'Flynn, & West, 2015) clarified, change readiness as organisational members' beliefs, attitudes and intentions in relation to the extent of change required in an organisation and the capacity of the organisation to effect the necessary change this was further supported by (Choi & Ruona, 2011). This is further supported by Smith. (2005) who explained that a large part of organisational change is about managing the people aspects of that process

Change readiness is an integral part of the planning phase that addresses resources required for change initiation. Personnel reform required at an individual and group level also forms part of change readiness that is required for the implementation of change in the planning phase (Imran et al., 2016 ; Caldwell, 2013).

From the definition used for the study there is an indication that there are phases to a change process, change readiness which forms part of the initial phase. The readiness phase, which is the first phase, organisational members prepare for change and ideally become supporters of the change. The second phase, adoption, is when the change is implemented, and organisational members adopt the new systems and new ways of working. This adoption period is a trial period. As a result, the change can be subject to regression. Institutionalisation is the third phase. This results from efforts to maintain the adoption period and reinforce changes until they become the norm (Armenakis & Harris, 2002).

Organisational change has been classified into two categories in terms of the tempo of at which organisational change occurs. The first classification of organisational change is a continuous change, that is constant change to improve processes and procedures through patterns of limitless modifications with the emphasis being on long-run adaptability. The second category is episodic change and assumes that an organisation is moving away from its equilibrium state during change. The occurrence of episodic change is infrequent, sporadic and intentional that is driven by the external environment and is necessary for organisations to adapt to the environment. Episodic change is inward-focused, creates complacency and routines and exhibits defensive behaviour in organisational members that results in short-lived benefits to the organisation. (Weik & Quinn, 1999 ;Todnem By, 2005).

Organisational change can be approached in three ways, namely, directed change, planned change and guided change. Guided change comes from within the organisation that is guided by the organisation members' commitment and contribution towards the organisation. Planned and directed are common in that change is directed by top management and relies on compliance authority. The difference between planned change and directed change is that the former is approached with a plan to achieve a clearly defined end goal and the latter is where there is a clearly defined end goal however there is no clear process in reaching the goal (Kerber & Buono, 2005).

Narrowed down to the scope of this study, change readiness was explained as members of an organisations' beliefs, attitudes and intentions that are related to Lewin's model of unfreezing that aimed to evaluate the required change and the organisation's capacity to implement such change (Armenakis et al., 1993a). Investigating organisational members beliefs, attitudes and intentions will aid in meeting the objectives of this study. The investigation will be done through established change models that encapsulates organisational members beliefs, attitudes and intentions.

2.3 Importance of change readiness

Management of change within an organisation is critical to the organisation's survival and success. Change readiness will allow the organisation to adapt to the environment (Imran et al., 2016).

For organisations to survive, they need to adapt to their environment through an adaptive process that encapsulates their systems and processes, transformation processes, resources in the organisation and dynamic capabilities (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). Placed in the context of a fast-changing environment, adaptive capacity is the process that allows for continuous learning that leads to innovation that results in change. Organisations with adaptive capacity can respond to the changing environment (Tejeiro Koller, 2016). Uhl-Bien & Arena. (2017) recommended developing dynamic capabilities associated with adaptation, leaders create a learning environment and increase collaboration within the organisation resulting in adaptive capacity.

High performing organisations can anticipate, respond, and adapt to changing circumstances. This is key as the speed, scale and importance of organisational change (Buick et al., 2015). To be able to adapt to the changing environment, organisations are being challenged to create capacity for change due to technological advancements, increased competition and anticipated change (Vakola, 2013).

In achieving change, readiness is one of the most important aspects of employees' initial support for a change effort (Holt et al., 2007). Readiness for change plays a vital role in the successful implementation of change through tackling motivation for change, ensuring proper communication of change benefits related to staff growth and ensuring sufficient resources are available for implementation of the change (Mitra et al., 2019).

For organisations to be able to adapt to the changing environment it is vital for organisations to have the ability to change at a rapid pace. This study aims to investigate the role that readiness plays in instances of rapid change.

2.4 Location of change within an organisation

Rafferty et al. (2013), highlighted that change initiatives are carried out at multiple levels within an organisation. These initiatives are influenced by individuals' cognitions and affects that are translated into workgroups due to social interactions and collaboration in teams. Therefore, the organisations' stance on change readiness will emerge from group change capabilities, performance, behaviours, and attitudes within an organisation.

Change readiness is a mindset that exists among employees during change implementation of organisational changes. Change readiness comprises the beliefs, the attitudes and intentions of change target members regarding the need for and capability of implementing organisational change (Vakola, 2013).

Caldwell. (2013), extended the location of change readiness to a micro-level, meso-level and macro-level. Micro-level or individual readiness to change is where the change members have an optimistic attitude that can be translated into a willingness to support and confidence in the initiative succeeding. Meso-level or group readiness to change is based on mutual perceptions and beliefs that change is necessary and the organisation that can cope with change effectively to realise benefits from the change. Another consideration are the factors that force organisations to change. These forces are usually viewed as either internal or external to the organisation. The view that employees have of the force causing the need for change influences their attribution for the change. These types of attributions suggest boundary conditions to the application of readiness themes (Caldwell, 2013).

This study will focus on change readiness at a macro-level readiness as at a macro level, organisational readiness to change will be supported by a high level of individual and group readiness to change (Caldwell, 2013). Investigating at a macro level allows the study to provide a holistic view on change readiness in the context of a rapid environment.

2.5 Change readiness models

As a result, much attention has been placed on the topic from academia and practice. A significant number of studies have been published on organisation change management whereby models have been developed to understand the building blocks of the topic (Vakola, 2013). However, there is still a high rate of change failure with 70% of change efforts failing (Vakola, 2013). The reported high failure rate could be even higher in an environment when there is rapid change and organisations don't prepare for such change. Caldwell. (2013) suggested the success of specific change initiatives depends on the health of an organisation and the ability to renew itself in order to adapt to the environment.

Rafferty et al. (2013) found that 90% of work related to change is carried out on change readiness. These authors also found that change readiness is a dominant attitude towards the successful implementation of change. With the high rate of change failure there has been a significant amount of research done on change readiness that resulted in the development of change models. Most change management models can be reconciled to the basic “unfreeze”, “move”, and “refreeze” model developed by Lewin in his study of field force theory in social science and is the grounding of change management literature (Burnes, 2004).

These models are placed in the context of anticipating and planning for change. The gap that this study intends to fill for both businesses and literature is that the pace of change has increased, yet there have not been revisions to change readiness models that cater for rapid change (Burnes, 2004). This is important for both businesses and theory as change readiness is a significant portion of a change initiative (Holt et al., 2007).

Lewin's three-step model of change had classified change as pre-implementation, execution and post-implementation for which knowledge is needed at each aspect. For pre-implementation, knowledge is required to reduce cynicism. At the execution phase, core knowledge of change is required. Finally, at the post-implementation phase, understanding is required to deal with post-implementation issues that might arise due to the implemented change (Imran et al., 2016). It has been argued that his model is basic and lacks relevance in an environment that is changing rapidly. As this model is a basis on which recent change readiness models were built off, Lewin's model will be used in this study to evaluate change readiness during instances of rapid change.

An integrated readiness model developed by (Armenakis et al., 1993b) encompasses significant factors that need to be considered to ensure change readiness in an organisation. The major components making up the change readiness model are messaging, interpersonal and social dynamics, influence strategies, change agent attributes and measurement. Based on the presence and recognition of the author in literature this model will be used in investigating change readiness in a rapidly changing environment (Imran et al., 2016).

2.5.1 Components of change readiness -The message

The message is used as a primary mechanism for creating change readiness that aims to address the need for the change through discrepancy and efficacy of the change parties affected by the change. The discrepancy aspect of the message is used to communicate the need for the change and to create the belief the change is required. This is done by outlining the current situation and justifying the appropriateness of the necessary change. To minimise counterproductive behaviour, the change agent should build confidence in organisation members by reassuring them the organisation has the capacity to affect the required change by reassuring members of the efficacy from individual and collective effort (Armenakis et al., 1993b). From the description of this component the change agent can implement the insight during instances of rapid change or instances of normal planned change. This study will set out to investigate if change agents are able to use these insights during instances of rapid change.

2.5.2 Components of change readiness -Interpersonal and social dynamics

Readiness involves convincing and obtaining the support of a collection of socially interacting individuals based on their beliefs, attitudes and intentions according to the change message that addresses discrepancy and efficacy. Social dynamics theories, individual differences theory, social differentiation theory and social relationship theory are relied on by managers to ensure that the organisation is ready for change either individually or as a collective (Armenakis et al., 1993b).

Extending on attitudes that individuals have towards change readiness a study carried out by Choi & Ruona. (2011), it was discovered that employees who experience normative re-educative change strategies in a learning culture created by the organisation have a higher level of readiness. Further literature points to learning increasing the level of readiness for change that aids in effective change management implementation (Imran et al., 2016).

2.5.3 Components of change readiness -Influence strategies

As the change agent is required to effect change among social actors, the change agent should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of persuasive communication, external information management and active participation. Persuasive communication adds to the symbolic commitment and urgency of the change required. Persuasive communication can be in an in-person or written format that aims to communicate the discrepancy and efficacy of the change message effectively. In managing external information, the change agent can use credible third-party reports to substantiate the change message. Finally, to generate active participation, the change agent should manage opportunities for organisational members to be exposed to information (Armenakis et al., 1993b).

2.5.4 Components of change readiness -Change agent attributes

The efficacy of the change message is dependent on the change agent. Thus, attributes of credibility, trustworthiness, sincerity, and expertise of the change agent are drawn upon by a member of the organisation. A change agent with a good reputation that is built up over time among organisational members will result in more influential readiness creating messaging (Armenakis et al., 1993b). This component does not cater for instances of rapid change where there changes agent has not had time to build up a reputation with staff.

2.5.5 Components of change readiness -Readiness assessment

Readiness assessments are to be used for the purpose of discovery and confirmation of the organisations change readiness. This can be carried out by questionnaires; qualitative research should be carried out in fluid and dynamic contexts. Other components of change readiness for a change agent to consider when implementing change readiness efforts include unplanned media information, existing organisational conditions and the significance of the change effort (Armenakis et al., 1993b).

2.5.6 Components of change readiness -Typology of readiness programmes

Based on the urgency of the change, change agents might make use of some and not all components described in the model to ensure an effective change readiness effort (Armenakis et al., 1993b).

Where it is observed there is low readiness and low urgency, it is recommended that an aggressive program be followed as organisational members are not ready for change with sufficient time to create readiness. Conversely, where there is high readiness and low urgency, a maintenance programme should be adopted. A threat could arise in the form of readiness warning before the change is implemented. (Armenakis et al., 1993b).

In instances of low readiness and high urgency, a crisis program should be implemented by taking drastic measures by intensifying persuasive communication. Conversely, when there is high readiness and high urgency, a quick response program should be implemented. Readiness energy should be maintained as change unfolds through rich, persuasive communication. (Armenakis et al., 1993b).

The components of the Armenakis change readiness model is underpinned by the following six themes (Caldwell, 2013):

1. Beliefs that cause an individual’s motivation to leave the old and embrace the new way.
2. Active participation from individuals in identifying and developing the changes needed.

3. Solutions to problems they deal with directly. The work of change agents is to correctly analyse the problem.
4. Proactive programs by change agents to shape the change participant's five beliefs about change.
5. Ability to persuade participants about the change.
6. Provide and assessment and feedback process.

Subsequently the readiness model developed was reiterated by (Armenakis & Harris, 2009) into a model that better depicted individual cognitions as readiness for changing social phenomena that are shaped by the readiness of others. The model focused on the five fundamental change beliefs which are perceived attributes of change agents, global and local influencers and the importance of the change message to the change recipients (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). The elements of this revised model have been reconciled back to the components of the original model created by (Armenakis et al., 1993b). The reiteration has expanded to considering the conditions in the internal and external environment in terms of capability however the pace of change has not been considered (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). The reiteration has been depicted in figure 1. This model has been used to understand how the core components of the change readiness model integrates.

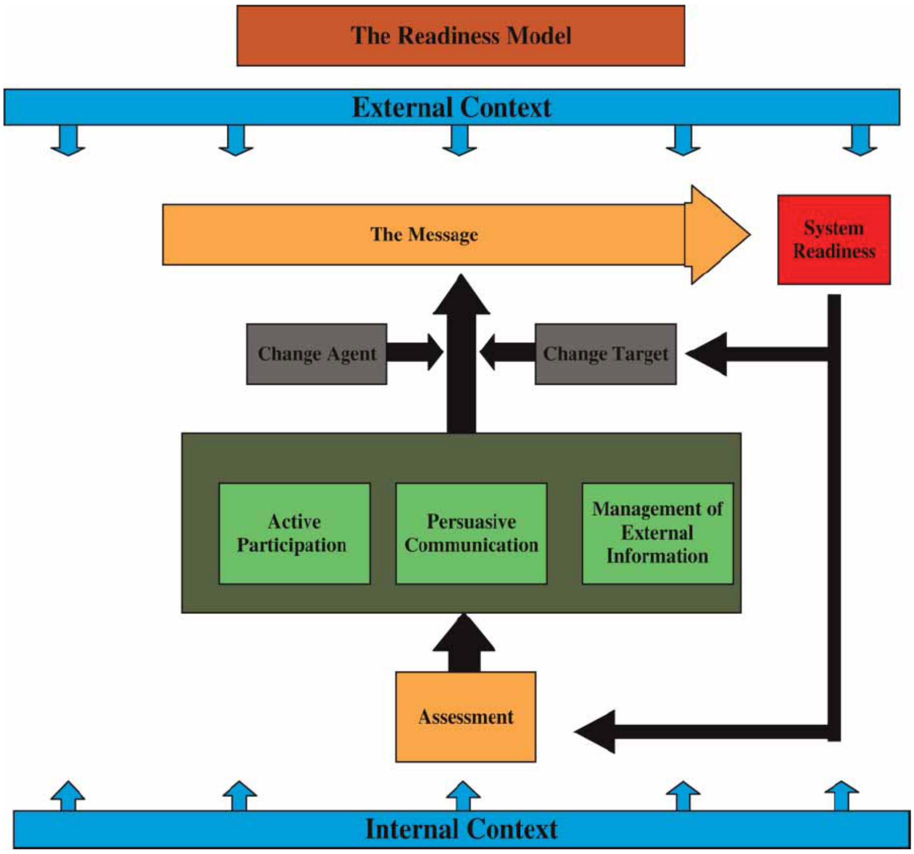

Figure 1 The Armenakis readiness model

Source: (Armenakis & Harris, 2009 p.171)

The components making up (Armenakis et al., 1993b) change readiness model are messaging, interpersonal and social dynamics, influence strategies, change agent attributes and measurement is placed in the context of having been afforded the time to plan for the implementation of these readiness activities. A gap that this study aims to investigate is how relevant are readiness measures to an instance of rapid change. The need for investigating this paradigm is due to the fast-paced change that currently exists in the business environment (Imran, Bilal, Aslam, & Rahman, 2017).

Kotter's eight-step change model includes establishing a sense of urgency, forming a powerful guiding coalition, creating a vision, communicating the vision, empowering others to act on the vision, consolidating improvements and producing more change and institutionalising new approaches (Kotter, 2007). This model has been corroborated by other researchers that concur the most significant steps are creating a sense of necessity and urgency for change, conveying the change message and ensuring participation and involvement in the change process and providing anchoring points and a base for the achievement of change (Smith, 2005).

2.5.7 Kotter’s eight step change model-Establish a sense of urgency

A transformation programme requires the cooperation of many individuals and sometimes, we misjudge how hard it can be to move individuals out of their comfort zones. The demands on leadership are high as change requires creating a new system. Convincing at least 75% of managers that present circumstances are riskier than the unknown is vital. This is done by reviewing competitive and market realities for possible crises and unexploited opportunities (Kotter, 2007).

Kurt Lewin advocated bringing about a deliberate "emotional stir up" to "break open the shell of complacency and self-righteousness" in organisations to create a need and urgency for change (Smith, 2005 p. 409). Continuous improvement strategies and total quality management techniques and similar often lack a sense of urgency and high impact results (Attaran, 2000).

2.5.8 Kotter’s eight step change model-Form a powerful guiding coalition

A powerful leadership coalition is required to drive successful transformation programs. The coalition will grow over time and should consist of influential members in terms of information and expertise, job titles, relationships and reputations. This coalition works together to assess the organisations' problems and opportunities and builds a shared commitment to the transformation program (Kotter, 2007).

Leadership has been studied and theories have been devised from many different approaches and objectives and noted that behaviour of individual workers is primarily influenced by who they directly report to. Manager could use transactional leadership by using extrinsic factors to exchange something of value with individuals for compliant behaviours the leader desires of the worker. Transformational leadership cultivates in the worker intrinsic factors of meaning, purpose or enjoyment resulting in the workers' commitment to the targeted behaviour (Caldwell, 2013).

2.5.9 Kotter's eight step change model-Create a vision

A vision explains the direction the organisation needs to move towards. Creating a vision that is easy to communicate and appeals to various stakeholders is critical. It provides the structure to support the transformation program so that it adds up in a meaningful way. The coalition creates this vision, and after much deliberation and thinking, strategies are developed to achieve that vision (Kotter, 2007).

2.5.10 Kotter's eight step change model-Communicate the vision

Communication channels should be used to get the message across incorporating well thought out messages on the transformation program in routine discussions, performance discussions and operational meetings. The leadership coalition should live the example and consciously try to become a symbol of the new system. Communication in both word and deed make for a powerful combination to apply in this step (Kotter, 2007).

When communicating with staff, an essential element in establishing trust with staff is communicating about planned changes and involving them in considering options and making decisions. The message should include the need for the change, the type of changes to be made and the organisations' ability to effect change. The messages must be practical and authentic, and the communication must occur early in the change process, preferably before the change begins (Smith, 2005).

Providing anchoring points by building a base for change creates a base on which changes can be built upon in building readiness for change. Helping people clearly see their role in the change effort can build confidence and commitment to the change. Training, team building and role modelling from leaders are influential tools in the process of achieving a shift to a change-ready organisational culture (Smith, 2005).

Expanding on communication Imran et al. (2016), found that knowledge management strategies adopted by change agents that included both personalisation and codification are helpful to establish change readiness and have a direct impact on successful change implementation. Personalisation and codification strategies deployed in the pre-implementation phase reduces employee cynicism regarding the organisational change (Mitra et al., 2019 ; Imran et al., 2017).

The personalisation strategy of communication uses a people-to-people method for the exchange of knowledge. The codification strategy of communication uses people-to-document and a document-to-people strategy (Imran et al., 2017).

Armenakis & Harris. (2002) highlights the importance of communication of the change message as communication supports the coordination of the three change phases by providing the structure and framework for creating readiness and the motivation to adopt and institutionalise the change. However equally important in communication is understanding concepts from the viewpoint of the receiver of the message. To understand this due consideration needs to be given to discrepancy, efficacy, appropriateness, principal support and personal valence of the message (Armenakis & Harris, 2002).

Efficacy refers to sentiments around confidence in one's ability to succeed. Appropriateness entails convincing others of the appropriateness of the change. Principal support is a change component that communicates there are resources and commitment to supporting the change effort. Finally, personal valence addresses the fairness of the change and how people are treated (Armenakis & Harris, 2002 ; Caldwell, 2013). Armenakis & Harris. (2002), have recommended three strategies to convey a change message:

1. Persuasive communication is primarily verbal communication methods with the change agent in direct communication. Methods such as speeches, newsletters, memos and annual reports are used.
2. Active participation has three forms: enactive mastery, which gradually builds abilities and knowledge through continuous participation and practice, vicarious learning, which involves observation and learning from others and finally involvement in decision making.
3. The management of information refers to utilising internal and external sources to provide information about the change.

2.5.11 Kotter's eight step change model-Empower others to act on the vision

Transformation programs involve large numbers of people as the process progresses. Having more people involved results in a more successful outcome. This encourages employees to develop new ideas and try new approaches and provide leadership aligned with the overall vision. Most organisations do not have the energy or time to remove all obstacles, but the most significant obstacles must be addressed and removed. It is important to empower others and sustain the credibility of the change effort (Kotter, 2007).

2.5.12 Kotter's eight step change model- Plan for and create short term wins

Transformation takes time and requires short term goals to meet and celebrate to keep the momentum going. Commitments to meet short term goals also helps keep the urgency level up and forces analytical thinking. On the other hand, not having short term goals and not actively meeting them leads to many people giving up on the change effort. Change agents need to look for ways to obtain clear performance improvements, establish annual goals, achieve those objectives, and reward people. These wins also boost the credibility of the change effort (Kotter, 2007).

2.5.13 Kotter's eight step change model- Consolidate improvements and produce more change

Transformation programs take time and until changes are embedded into a company's culture (which can take up to 10 years), new approaches are delicate and can regress. Using the credibility gained by short term wins to deal with more significant problems can produce more wins. Leaders should pay attention to who is hired, promoted and how people are developed, focusing on who can implement the vision (Kotter, 2007).

2.5.14 Kotter's eight step change model-Institutionalise new approaches

Until new systems are rooted in social norms and shared values in an organisation, they are subject to regression as soon as the pressure for change is removed. To avoid this, managers or change agents need to define and communicate the connections between new behaviours, systems and corporate success showing how these changes have helped improve performance. The organisation needs to ensure that effort and time is put into the next generation of top management so they can personify the new approach. (Kotter, 2007).

Kotter's eight step change model has clearly defined stages of a change process. Readiness is housed in the pre-implementation phase that entails creating urgency for the change, powerful coalitions, creating a vision, communicating the vision, and empowering others to act. This forms a corroborating reference point that will be used in the study to understand change readiness in the context of rapid change.

To summarize the components of the change models explained above, the significant models have been tabulated below. The selection criteria for the significant models were based on historical influence found in literature, depth of the models presented, quality of the literature presented by the authors and relevance of the models currently being used.

Table 1 Summary of change models

Phase	Lewin	Kotter	Armenakis
Readiness/ pre-implementation	Unfreeze	Establishing a sense of urgency	The message
		Forming a powerful guiding coalition	Interpersonal and social dynamics
		Creating vision	Influence strategies
		Communicating a vision	Change attributes
		Empowering others to act on the vision	Readiness assessment
			Organsational conditions
			Significance of change effort
Execution	Move	Planning for and creating short term wins	
Post implementation	Refreeze	Consolidating improvement and producing still more change	
		Institutionalising new approaches	

Source: Adapted from Armenakis et al., 1993a ; Kotter, 2007 ; Burnes, 2004.

2.6 Challenges of change readiness

To fully understand the concept of change readiness it is useful to understand the challenges on the topic. This will guide the study in understanding the implications of change readiness in the context of rapid change. Key challenges noted on readiness for change include staff resistance to change, training, leadership, lack of planning and organisational capability.

Generally, employees resist change because they do not want to unlearn what they are currently doing and learn what is required. This makes creating readiness for change a difficult task (Imran et al., 2016). Not assessing organisational and individual change readiness may result in managers spending considerable time and effort dealing with resistance to change (Smith, 2005). Vakola. (2013) further noted that failure is usually linked to not providing for an effective unfreezing process before attempting a change induction.

Adding to resistance to change are organisational change cynicism, employees' perceptions about the change, change agents' knowledge of change efforts, and their communication strategies. The dynamic orientation of an organisation also shows to have an impact on change (Imran et al., 2016). Armenakis et al. (1993b) has noted that there is importance in distinguishing change readiness and change resistance to change and cautioned that, framing the concept of change readiness is appropriate for managers and change agents who drive the change. Resistance to change is appropriate to managers who play a role in monitoring change.

Within organisational capability rests challenges related to change readiness include, failure to cope with employee resistance to the change effort, failure to assign the organisations best team of the strongest employees from all relevant departments to lead the change, misunderstanding and misapplication of the change concept, organisations do not ensuring ensure that there is a clear understanding of what the a reengineering process is and a lack of testing that help in verifying implementation plans and functions as a means to gain support from other parts of the organisation (Attaran, 2000).

Buick et al. (2015) noted organisations do recognise that organisational adaptability to change as fundamental to a successful change effort, but issues still do emerge relating to organisational ability to adapt to shifting circumstances. Alignment between strategies, in group goals and individual goals are poor leaving employees with no clear correlation between their roles and the organisation's objectives. A high-level plan with clear priorities matched to resources is vital. Employees must be able to understand this plan and connect their roles to it so that they are able to understand how their roles relate to it. Alignment was significant for successful employee motivation, performance, and their commitment to adapt to change. The messages around what the changes were and why they are happening are vital to communicating employee performance (Buick et al., 2015).

Additional barriers include management support, flexibility in the change initiative, communication, training, misunderstanding of the initiative and testing of the process (Attaran, 2000). There is a lack of resources and support training at all stages, and the training must be seen as an ongoing undertaking (Attaran, 2000).

Sometimes negative responses to organisational changes are caused by leaders who do not understand the importance of communicating the change message consistently. This message conveys the nature of the change and sets up the sentiments that influence how people respond to the change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Poor top management support and involvement include a lack of commitment from management for the necessary time, money and resources required for a successful change effort. Lack of flexibility arises when the context changes, however, the organisational structure remains the same. The structure of the organisation must be transformed to facilitate collaboration and to remove cross-functional barriers between departments. Lack of effective organisational communication whereby the communication plan lacks feedback loops for employees to air concerns must be in place from day one (Attaran, 2000).

In the context of rapid change these challenges can increase the occurrence of the high failure rate that change experiences today.

2.7 Conclusion

Based on a review of literature, the findings of which have been presented above change readiness is activities that are carried out before a change initiative is implemented. These initiatives are directed at the work force of the company by change agents or those in charge of change initiatives. In its simplest form, the definition of change readiness can be regarded as a cognitive precursor to resist or support change that is an important phase of the change initiation (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). This is corroborated by (Choi & Ruona, 2011) who defined change readiness as organisational member's beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and intentions regarding the extent of the change and the organisation's ability to effect such change.

Change readiness is a significant and important component of change initiatives (Holt et al., 2007). Being a significant component of change initiatives, the importance of change readiness has been amplified by the high failure rate of change initiatives (Imran et al., 2016).

As noted by the high failure rate, managers or change agents face major challenges when implementing change. Major challenges in change readiness include training of staff, inflexible change initiatives, communication lack of system testing and employee resistance (Attaran, 2000).

To address the challenges associated with change, there are change readiness models that exist in literature that help managers better understand the concepts of change readiness. For this study three change models will be used to investigate the concept of change readiness in the context of a rapidly changing environment. The overall gap that the study aims to fill is the relevance of traditional readiness activities in the context of a rapidly changing environment. This is useful in the context of change management models being positioned in an environment that allows for extensive planning in the change process (Burnes, 2004).

Chapter 3: Research Questions

3.1 Introduction

This qualitative study sets out to understand how managers deploy change readiness activities to adapt to changes that businesses in South Africa face in a rapidly changing environment. Using the COVID-19 pandemic as a reference point the study seeks to investigate what activities do managers use during instances of rapid change to prepare the work force for change. Three research questions were developed.

3.2 Research Questions

3.2.1 Research Question 1: How do senior managers in South Africa prepare for change and what approach and methodology is applied for change readiness during normal instances of change?

3.2.2 Research question 2: What change readiness measures did senior managers deploy to prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic specifically and when were these measures implemented?

What level of importance do senior managers assign to change readiness?

- What structure do managers put into place to promote change readiness at large companies in South Africa and where within the organisation are these initiatives implemented?
- What initiatives were deployed for change readiness and when were these measures deployed?
- What factors do senior managers consider important when assessing and responding to change readiness?
- How do managers measure organizational readiness?
- When do senior managers affect change readiness efforts concerning a change phenomenon?
- How consistently does a senior manager implement change readiness measures?

3.2.3 Research Question 3: Were change readiness measures deployed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic effective and what recommendations are there for senior management related change that occurs rapidly due to changes in the environment?

This research question aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of what change readiness initiatives were effective in response to the change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and areas that managers can improve when dealing with change during a pandemic.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Purpose of research design

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a change in the environment that organisations operate in (Singh, 2020). Changing environments, technological advancements and increased global competition are the main reasons that organisations carry out change efforts (Kerber & Buono, 2005). Change is a challenging transformational process that managers are expected to deliver on (Kotter, 2007).

This change was brought about rapidly by factors such as multiple enforced lockdowns and the need for social distancing. The research study followed an exploratory research design where qualitative data collection techniques were deployed to obtain views from the managers of large organisations on change readiness. This research study aimed to provide new insights through semi-structured interviews used on managers to understand the initiatives deployed for change readiness and their views of enablers and barriers experienced during the pandemic (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The nature of qualitative research often involves an exploratory and inductive approach (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2017). An exploratory study allows for a detailed analysis of research questions (Patton, 2001). Further, qualitative research allows the study of a phenomenon in natural settings and allows for sense-making (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Deep analysis of the research questions would allow for further research on this topic (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.2 Philosophy

The research design process begins with philosophical assumptions the researcher must consider during the design phase of the research (Gorard, 2017). The philosophy of research is a conceptual framework that explains the main ideas and decisions that are made in carrying out a research project. It helps to understand the purpose of research and how it fits within the wider context with a clearer purpose (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2011). Research philosophy is defined as knowledge development and the nature of that knowledge in relation to the research being conducted (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The philosophical stance of research impacted on how the research was carried out, how it was conceptualized and how data was collected and analysed. The methodological choices were based on the role of existing theory in the field, building on or creating new theory, the inductive approach to be followed, the structure of the research and the role of the researcher (Carson et al., 2011b).

This research study was guided by an interpretivism philosophy that explains differences between humans and their role as social actors (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The Interpretivism philosophy is ideal for this study which explored the insights from managers at large organisations on readiness for change. Instead of trying to analyse causal relationships through statistical analysis, interpretivism seeks to understand reality by taking on a personal process (Carson et al., 2011b).

Interpretivism has many different research directions. Interpretivism theories have a different emphasis on the researcher's core beliefs, what the researcher is looking for, the meaning and understanding of facts and methods of collecting data. In positivism, the researcher is independent and in interpretivism the researcher is more involved when compared to positivism. In the positivism paradigm, the sample sizes are large where existing theories are tested and in interpretivism, sample sizes are smaller where theories are generated or built upon. Interpretivists place a high emphasis on the researcher’s role in the process of the research study. This emphasis is often referred to as the human instrument. Being an instrument in the research study requires the researcher’s background to be explained in the study (Carson et al., 2011b).

In terms of the interpretivist paradigm, studies generally make few explicit assumptions regarding the relationships between sets of relationships. This approach can impose a self-conscious bias which may result in the collection of incoherently complex observations that are impossible to interpret (Carson et al., 2011b).

The interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to examine phenomena of change in the context COVID-19 and to develop an understanding of what was happening under those conditions. This process involved considering the various realities, managers perspectives and the researcher’s involvement. The researcher's experience provided an idea of the research area in which managers worked. This knowledge and experience informed the manager structured the problem statement.

4.3 Approach selected

An inductive approach has been maintained through the research study. An inductive approach involves the building of knowledge from data collected (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Induction is also a process that involves drawing on the data collected by observing the world around us. It allows for the reflection of existing theoretical and empirical theories to be formulated to explain the past and predict the future (Carson et al., 2011b). The induction approach argues empirical statements and generalisations should be derived from data. Induction is associated with naturalism and qualitative research. In induction, researchers use a series of cases to identify patterns in data to come up with a statement or statements that are based on a particular concept or idea. This method can reveal new knowledge and conclusions. In qualitative research, induction has also been referred to as the process of uncovering patterns or concepts from the interactions among the participants. (Brianna L, 2018).

An inductive approach offers more flexibility to allow changes to the research emphasis (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). It is suited to this research study because it is exploratory and might require pivoting as new information comes to the fore.

4.4 Methodological choices

The aim of the study was to capture and describe various details of people's lives and perspectives. The research study therefore followed a qualitative approach (Durdella, 2020). This methodological choice allowed the researcher to collate a rich data set (Barbour, 2018a).

4.5 Strategy

Different strategies are suitable during different study phases based on their suitability in answering the research questions and objectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The case study strategy grounds this research study with deviations considered for meeting the research study objectives. The case study approach also aligned with these research study objectives which aimed to build on theory and examine the dynamics present among managers. (Eisenhardt, 1989). In addition, the case study strategy is aligned with the interpretivist philosophy (Creswell, Hannson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007).

4.6 Time horizon

A cross-sectional research design is a study of a research topic at a point in time (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Due to the timeframe allocation to complete this study, the appropriate time horizon was cross-sectional in research design. The interviews were conducted to explore readiness at a point in time when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. Participants were asked in interviews to share their retrospective experiences on change readiness that were used to manage the change brought about by COVID-19. Follow-ups with the participants of this study were sought for clarification and not for reporting on subsequent events.

4.7 Population

The population is the complete set of group members and represents the total number of managers in South Africa across all industries working in large organisations (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). To address the aim of the study that sought to investigate managers at large organisations readiness to change experienced during COVID-19, large organisations and managers have been defined.

Large organisations in South Africa contribute over two-thirds of total company turnover in the country (Statistics South Africa, n.d.). The researcher therefore deemed it appropriate to focus on managers at larger organisations as their insights would provide substance to the research based on their impact on the South Africa economy.

4.8 Unit of analysis

A unit of analysis has been defined as the level at which the research is conducted (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). To investigate the level of readiness, it was determined by the researcher that managers at large organisations based in South Africa pre, and post COVID-19 would form the unit of analysis for this research study. Hence, the research study was at the level of the individual.

The unit of analysis is only as accurate as its level of generalization. If the goal is to draw conclusions about managers perceptions on change brought about by COVID-19, the unit of analysis is therefore managers and not companies (Keller, 2012).

4.9 Sampling method and size

A sample is a subgroup of the whole population. Collecting data from a sample versus the entire population was required as it was impossible to collect data for the entire population given the time constraints the researcher had to complete the research study. This approach also allowed the researcher time to meet other aspects of the research study and not only data collection (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

A sampling frame is a complete list of all population members (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). To establish a sampling frame, the researcher attempted to extract a report from the Department of Labour's website identifying all managers in South Africa. Unfortunately, this report was not available. As such, the researcher could not establish a list of managers that worked in South Africa or obtain a complete list of managers that worked in large organisations within South Africa. The researcher was therefore unable to obtain a sampling frame.

Based on not having a sampling frame, the researcher was unable to apply any probability sampling techniques. Probability sampling techniques are a host of deployed techniques to select a random sample from a complete list (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). A probability sampling technique selects all participants from a list of potential participants in a target population. However, if the method is not possible to create a complete list, then it cannot be used. Non-probability sampling was therefore used (Saunders & Townsend, 2019).

Non-probability sampling allows for sampling techniques to be deployed where sampling frames are not available. This sampling method does not allow for a sample to be selected at random. Non-probability sampling techniques can be used in qualitative research. There are four types that are often used in quantitative research namely, purposive, volunteer, haphazard and quota sampling. Purposive techniques are usually used in qualitative research to identify potential participants. These techniques are very challenging to use as they involve the selection of a small number of individuals who may be useful to answer a research question (Saunders & Townsend, 2019).

Homogeneous and heterogeneous sampling techniques involve selecting a small group of participants. In heterogeneous sampling, the goal is to find individuals that meet the requirements to provide the maximum variation in the data. In contrast, purposive homogeneous sampling requires the researcher to use judgement to identify a particular group and choose participants. The data collected from these participants are likely to be similar (Saunders & Townsend, 2019).

The technique used in non-probability sampling was purposive sampling in which the researcher's judgement was used to select the sample members based on reasons and premises (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The researcher had applied a purposive sampling technique to recruit managers across a variety of industries which included construction, retail, professional services, and manufacturing. The selection of managers was based on their roles in companies to execute change readiness initiatives. In addition, the researcher used his personal network to recruit managers in large organisations for this research study.

In determining the sample size, the researcher had taken guidance from Saunders and Lewis. (2012) who recommended that a sample size of fifteen to sixteen interviews would be deemed sufficient for a qualitative study published in a top-rated journal. However, for homogenous samples, four to twelve interviews are deemed sufficient provided data saturation is reached. Based on this recommendation, the researcher conducted 13 interviews, noting that data saturation was met and the research questions were answered. Data saturation is reached when additional data collected provides fewer new insights into the research objectives or answers the research questions (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Therefore, to achieve data saturation on a heterogeneous population, a sample size of 15 is recommended, and for homogenous populations, a sample size of approximately 10 is sufficient (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). Qualitative studies should not be limited to the number of individuals participating in the study, rather the value of qualitative research comes from insightful and rich findings therefore a sample size of 13 was justified after data saturation was met.

4.10 Measurement instrument

For primary data collection, the measurement instrument that guided the semi-structured interviews was an interview guide. Semi-structured interviews are a method of data collection in which the researcher probes specific themes. The predetermined questions varied based on new information obtained during the interview sessions. Additional questions were also probed. (Saunders & Lewis, 2017).

Many researchers use interviews as their sole method of data generation. For instance, narrative inquiry focuses on uncovering the meaning of events and how they occur. This approach is acceptable to learn about participant's perspectives. People tend to represent themselves differently in interviews depending on how they are perceived by others. This is a key challenge for researchers as it highlights the complexity of how knowledge about social worlds is constructed. For researchers who are trying to represent how participants experience the world and their experiences, interviewing is a method used to extract data from participants (Roulston & Choi, 2018a).

For this research study, the researcher considered semi-structured interviews to be appropriate to gain rich data from participants on readiness in the context of rapid change. Semi-structured interviews provide reliable, comparable qualitative data that the researcher used in this research study. The research study required an in-depth understanding, knowledge and insights from respondents fulfilled by semi-structured interviews. In addition to the suitability of semi-structured interviews to this research study, semi-structured interviews provided flexibility to the discussion, allowed respondents to answer in their own way and allowed new content to be included in the interview (Myres, 2021). A semi-structured interview guide is typically used to balance the dynamics of an interview and the various questions that are tied to a study's research framework (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2015). A semi-structured interview guide helps the researcher organize and follow work while leaving room for spontaneity. It allows the researcher to plan for what will happen in the field (Durdella, 2020b). Formulating an interview guide helped the researcher formulate questions that stimulated descriptions of the topics that were asked during the interview

(Roulston & Choi, 2018b). To expose unanticipated data and information related to this research study, the researcher expended a mixture of open-ended and closed questions followed by probing questions (Newcomer et al., 2015).

The researcher relied on a standardized way to see and interpret events by using an interview guide. Doing so allowed the researcher to get a better understanding of how managers prepared their work force for changes about by the COVID-19 pandemic. A flexible instrument, the interview guide worked well for fieldwork allowing the researcher to lead conversations with participants without interrupting their natural interactions (Durdella, 2020b). Based on this method's suitability and advantages, the researcher guided the interview based on predetermined questions and themes that needed to be answered by the managers at large organisations in South Africa. Refer to appendix 9,2 of this document for a draft of the interview guide.

Readiness for change is an essential component of change (Holt et al., 2007). Kotter's eight-step model of change management, the Armenakis change model and Lewin's model of change that hinges on change readiness outlines steps to be followed for effective change to occur. This literature was leveraged to explore the measures taken for change readiness to understand steps that large organizations take to prepare for change.

4.11 Data gathering process

Mono method data collection using semi structured interviews allowed the researcher to obtain insights into key social actors in large organisations. Further, to answer the complex research questions, the research study required in-depth answers from the qualitative mono method. This methodological choice catered for the short time allocated for this research study to be completed.

The researcher used his professional network to arrange interviews with managers of large organisations in South Africa. Interviews were planned for forty to ninety minutes per interview. The researcher performed fifteen interviews after which data saturation was achieved as the same information was repeated by different participants. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, interviews occurred online via a Go-To Meeting platform which was the primary channel. Researchers commonly use a variety of digital recording devices to record audio-record interviews. Most of the time, this equipment is used for training purposes. Before interviews began, the researcher thoroughly tested the equipment used for recording interviews. This step helped prepare for the technical aspects of the interview (Roulston & Choi, 2018b).

The researcher aimed to create a relaxed and informal environment during the meeting to ensure the participants were comfortable with sharing their views and experiences related to their organisation's readiness for change during the COVID-19 pandemic (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Good interviewing practice involves preparing and demonstrating respect for the people interviewed. It is also about developing interview guides that are insightful and contain fewer open-ended questions as well as the ability to use follow-up questions that are longer and more detailed. To conduct interviews effectively, researchers need to consider several key issues. These include how interviewers can build trust with participants, what questions are asked and how participants can talk about what is important to them (Roulston & Choi, 2018b).

After obtaining the participants' consent for the interview, the researcher asked probing questions and requested clarity when more detail was required from the respondents. The researcher guided the interview and ensured questions and themes on the checklist were addressed by the participant (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Jacob and Furgerson. (2012) recommended protocols to be followed in an interview for a qualitative study. These protocols include keeping open-ended questions broad and expansive and being prepared to revise the interview protocol during the interview. These recommendations are beneficial when adding questions to the interview guide based on the respondent's information.

Before embarking on official interviews for this research study, the researcher performed a pilot test with colleagues to ensure respondents understood the questions and that the required data would be obtained. The pilot test also alerted the researcher to any issues that might have arisen during an interview and indicated how long the interviews would last (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Each interview was preceded by an interview checklist. This checklist was used once the interview had been completed and amended when there was a need for further inquiry (Lee & Saunders, 2019a). To ensure quality of the data being gathered the researcher maintained a reflective journal documenting salient points of the interview process.

The researcher used the reflection points from each interview to improve the process and quality of the data extracted from subsequent interviews.

4.12 Analysis approach

The researcher analysed the data using an inductive analysis approach. This approach is suited to interviews that answer open-ended questions. The researcher developed themes from the interviews conducted. The emergence of these themes originated from the researcher being immersed in the data collected and started by developing codes from the data that will be refined into themes. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The researcher used ATLAS ti as a preferred computer-aided qualitative data analysis software where data went through two rounds of data analysis before themes were developed and placed into categories developed from existing theory (Saldana, 2013).

4.13 Quality controls

The research study had been assessed for credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Credibility testing ensured the data had been documented appropriately. To ensure credibility, the researcher used a process of reconciling the data from the transcripts back to the interviews recorded (Roulston, 2010).

In ensuring that the study could be replicated and that the study was dependable the researcher made the research process accessible, transparent and documented in a detailed manner for the study to be replicated by others (Roulston, 2010). To ensure the confirmability of data required, the researcher had documented an audit trail through detailed notes giving context and rationale for all methodological decisions (Houghton et al., 2013). Transferability of the research study was achieved as sufficient documentation was intended to provide the reader with information to make informed decisions regarding the research study's context (Houghton et al., 2013).

4.14 Research Ethics

Before the research study was carried out, the researcher obtained formal ethical approval from the institution concerned. This approval was granted for a variety of reasons such as the rights of the subjects of the research study and the rights of the collaborators. What was likely to be regarded as ethical or unethical was set out in a set of guidelines or statements of research. Most codes of practice are written in abstract terms and are focused on preventing misconduct (Lee & Saunders, 2019b). Participants of this research study were informed their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. The participant had given authorisation that a third party could transcribe electronic recordings of discussions held from the interview (Roulston & Choi, 2018b). The participants were assured the data recorded would be treated confidentially and anonymously without identifiers used in place of their names and organisations that they belong to. A signed confirmation from the participants acknowledged all the above.

4.15 Limitations

The study followed a mono method of qualitative methodology that was not robust enough to test the findings through a quantitative study (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Due to the time constraints imposed in completing this research study, it was not possible to perform a mixed methodical study. A qualitative, exploratory research design was followed for data collected during the research study that was not verified by a quantitative study thus limiting the uses of the findings. Nevertheless, the research study's findings suggested broad themes and relationships that existed.

Building theory from cases that may yield complex theory may also result in unique theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). This research study followed a cross-sectional time horizon approach which provided a snapshot of the readiness for change and change at a point in time. Additional value can be obtained from performing a longitudinal study demonstrating the evolution of readiness for change and change, given that change is a continuous process.

The study followed a mono method methodology that sought to fill a gap in the literature that existed on manager’s change readiness during rapid, unexpected change. Given the limited time frame allowed for the research study, data triangulation was not possible.

The subjective nature of a qualitative study can be affected by both the interviewer and the interviewee biases (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This bias could have been influenced by the researcher's expectations and the information gathered during the interviews (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The researcher tried to avoid biases being included into the study by asking interviewees to speak openly and without being pressured. This minimised the likelihood of participants providing unreliable information.

While many researchers glorified the capacity of qualitative research to produce rich data sets, some of them also admitted their data was not very forthcoming or expansive. This can be attributed to various perceived shortcomings such as the lack of answers to certain questions or the inability to collect data related to key concerns (Barbour, 2018b).

The use of a virtual platform (Go-To Meet) to conduct interviewees did not allow the researcher to read body language of participants the researcher is used to. Another limitation that has been identity in the process of carryout interviews was the limited experience of the researcher in carrying out interviews.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the virtual interviews held with participants for this research study. These results were obtained in an aim to answer the research questions presented in chapter three. The findings were analysed using context analysis that intended to add structure to the data obtained from the thirteen interviews held. Adding structure to the data allowed the researcher to understand the meaning, importance and concepts of the data gathered. Having the data structured also allowed the researcher to explore patterns and themes that emerged from the data. The research questions in chapter three were open ended resulting in the participants answering the same questions in a different manner. This further emphasised the need to have the data structured to analyse the data in a robust manner. The text data was condensed into first and second order analysis and subsequently grouped into themes related to the respective research questions. This enabled the researcher to gain meaningful insight from the unstructured data.

5.2 Description of the Sample

This explorative study engaged thirteen managers in South African companies that are exposed to change initiatives in their respective organisations. These managers were senior in their role within their organisations and thus best placed to provide insight on change readiness experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. To elevate the significance of this research study, the organisations these managers belonged to were large corporates in South Africa consisting of a workforce of more than 500 staff members including contractors.

Managers across seven industries were selected using the researchers' network as displayed in table two. This demonstrated that viewpoints on change readiness were collected from a wide range of industries, however homogeneity was maintained in that the participants in the sample selected were all senior managers.

Table 2 Summary of Participants used on the study

Participant	Department	Industry	Approximate Number of Employees in the Company	Age of Organisation
1	Finance	Pharmaceuticals	400	30 Years +
2	Admin	Logistics	1500	40 Years+
3	Call Centre	Logistics	1500	40 Years+
4	Business Development	Logistics	500	20 Years +
5	IT	Consulting	600	10 Years +
6	HR	Consulting	800	50 Years +
7	Finance	Pharmaceuticals	450	30 Years +
8	IT	Financial Services	1800	50 Years +
9	Admin	Pharmaceuticals	420	30 Years +
10	Operations	Chemicals	600	40 Years+
11	Finance	FMGC	10000	50 Years +
12	Finance	Consulting	2100	50 Years +
13	Operations	Mining	4000	10 Years +

Source: Authors own

There was a total of 118 codes created from the raw data collected from participants. To analyse the raw data a process of coding was used to group similar concepts together before themes were created out of the data. A total of 118 codes were created from the data during the analysis process. New codes evident in the raw data started tapering down from the sixth participant as noted in the graph below. There were no new codes identified from the 13th interview. Considering the reducing average number of new codes identified from the sixth participant that reduced to no new codes from the last participant, data saturation was reached in the data collected.

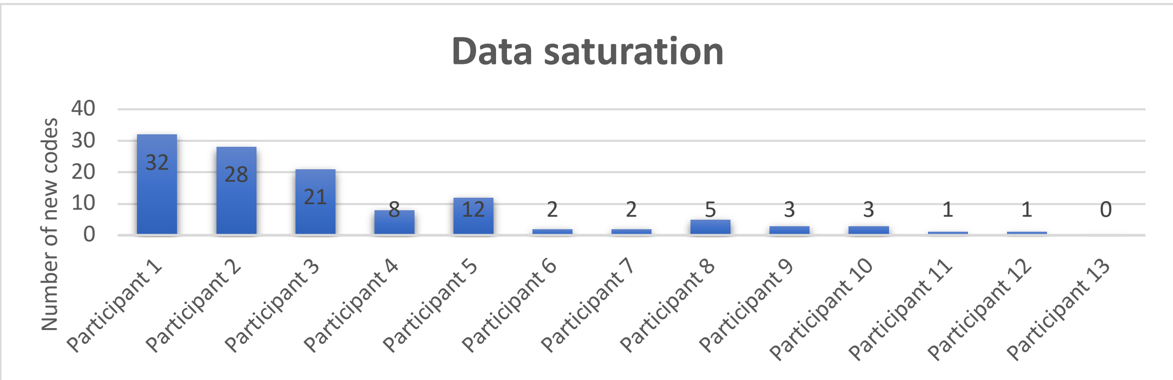

Figure 2 Data saturation graph

Source: Authors own

5.3 Research Question Results

5.3.1 Research question 1

The purpose of this question was to understand how senior managers prepare for change. Of interest to the research study was the participant's approach to change readiness and what initiatives were deployed by senior managers in preparing staff for change. To place this within context and refresh the participants memory, participants were asked to recall instances of change that took place in the past twelve to twenty-four months except preparation related to the COVID- 19 pandemic. When conducting interviews with participants, the researcher expected all the participants to share insight based on an existing recognised change model. The researcher did not expect most of the participants to be familiar with existing, recognised change management models however, the participants did deploy some constructs of recognised models.

The table below presents a summary of the themes that were analysed to answer the research question.

Table 3 Research question 1: data themes

First order analysis	**Second order analysis**	**Third order analysis**
Staff have information	Information sharing	Communication
Everyone is aware of the end goal	Alignment to strategy	
Selling as what's in it for staff	Benefit for staff	
Make it simple to understand	The message	
Directing staff to what is required	Creating a vision for staff	Leadership
Staff looks to someone	Leadership	
Does the company have resources?	Company infrastructure	Capability
Being open minded on different ways of doing things	Innovation	
Can staff carry out change	Staff skill set for required	
Walking the journey with staff	Support offered to staff	
Have people behind the process	Staff buy in	People
Trust of the person delivering the message	Change agent	
Feedback from staff could provide ideas	Staffs input	

Need to ensure staff can carry out the activities	Staff training	
Motivating staff to get the best out of them	Understanding staff	
Working together and sharing information across departments	Collaboration	Barriers for Change
Focus is on change itself and not planning for it	Planning for Change	
People do not want to change the ways things are done	Resistance to change	

Source: Authors own

5.3.1.1 Communication

Most participants understood the importance of communication in change initiatives. Participants had a strong appreciation related to the need for communication with staff members regarding change and used communication channels to relay change messages to staff members. This allowed participants to share information amongst their teams.

“And then, communicating my understanding of the change to ensure that they understand the why behind the change, communicating what that change is, and then ensuring that everyone is equipped to manage changes in processes” (Participant 2)

“An open communication model would be the first important thing when carrying out a change activity.” (Participant 3)

Through communication, participants aligned the change initiative with the organisation’s strategy and goals. This meant that staff are able recognise the direction of the change and be able to relate it to something familiar to them.

“So, yes, it will relate to certain long-term goals for the organisation” (Participant 7).

“And, if we go back to what our strategic goals are, you will know part of what our principles are and what changes are coming from our core pillars, that is to make sure that we can deliver quality and also” (Participant 6).

As part of communication participants expressed the importance of the clarity of the message being relayed on to staff. The message needed to be understood by the change agent before it was shared with staff. The message being relayed to staff needed to be consistent and easily understood by staff.

“Everyone needs to be aware of the priorities that must be communicated in a unified manner” (Participant 6).

“So, you've got you've got to be very clear on what is going to be your final objective” (Participant 7).

To obtain employee buy-in into change initiatives, participants sighted the need to communicate benefits of the change to employees. This is on the premise the change initiative would be more easily accepted by employees if there was a personal benefit to them both materially and personally.

“And how does that vision align with their vision that they have at the end of the day? possibly the most important thing is, let's just call it job security and sell it.
” (Participant 3).

“People ask questions, what are the benefits? How will it help them out with what are here for?” (Participant 3).

5.3.1.2 Leadership

Participants reflected on the role of leadership in change readiness activities. The importance of the role of leadership was clear in the process, both from a responsibility perspective as well as articulating the end goal to staff. Participants viewed the vision being directed down from the highest structures in the organisation.

“So, part of the business strategic plan and in terms of goal setting from our Exco down to the operating board that further filters down to do the senior managers, that obviously control the business” (Participant 13).

“Creating a vision, sharing that vision, taking feedback from the staff is probably the most part of change readiness measures that needs to be carried out” (Participant 12).

Leadership’s intentions and aspirations on the future direction of the organisation are translated to staff by their actions, thus their guidance on change events is relied on my staff members

“With a new CIO, the focus was a lot on digital and agile” (Participant 12).

“And I suppose, just having good leadership and then the mindset of the leaders. If you have leadership that are not open to change it or not, reactive, or proactive, I should say, and in dealing with change, I do think it can be an issue.” (Participant 6).

Participants considered the capability of staff in effecting the change activity as part of change readiness. This was done to understand whether staff could carry out the required change in process and what support the participants would need to give staff members to cope with the change initiative.

“But also, people need support when they are doing this new process to ensure that they're doing it correctly (Participant 2).

“You know, from a management perspective, we are close to the teams in terms of the entire process, the environment created is one of, you're not alone, you don’t sit alone in the position, you not working alone, and you are not going to be accountable alone. It’s more of a team in a group effort where we will help each other learning the process” (Participant 4).

5.3.1.3 Capability

Participants included an assessment of organisational capability in their change readiness measures this assessment was done on both the organisation’s capability and that of the staff members. This process is carried out to ensure the change process can be carried out with the current structure or if there needs to be any further amends that need to be made from a staffing or supporting infrastructure perspective.

“We have those things in place- computer systems, people's ability to access our SAP system and that sort of things are all in place. If we had a strike, we have documentation in place on how we deal with that special situation” (Participant 3).

“From a technology point of view, from an IT perspective, I think, technology is something that really was an enabler in order for us to actually achieve to change” (Participant 6).

Innovation also plays a role in change readiness. Participants leveraged the use of technology in their planning procedures. During the planning process, the participants considered alternative ways of doing this to meet the objective that had been set out by the required change.

“So, you’ve got to be open to new things, new ideas, new developments that happens in order for you to be successful in your organization” (Participant 13).

5.3.1.4 People

A common aspect that came across from most participants during the interviews was a recognition to focus on staff. The focus on staff was on a deeper level in terms of staff input to the change initiative, staff understanding of the change, obtaining staff buy-in to the change initiative and training that staff required. When preparing for change, working on the “people element” is vital as this is a strong pillar that needs to be well secured to withstand the turbulence that will be brought about by the change initiative.

In obtaining staff input on the change initiative, the approach usually taken is engagement with staff from the bottom of the organisation upwards. The engagement allows participants to be exposed to new ideas that would come from staff members. Engaging with staff members also allowed staff to give their views on the change initiative thus creating a link for them to the change initiative. The staff’s attachment to the change initiative could create their buy-in to the change.

“Larger changes need a combined approach where people from bottom were involved in the change. A consultative process, engaging with people for ideas gets you buy in” (Participant 2).

“So that's basically just giving them the lay of the land and getting them to be part of that discussion and then to close the loop on it constantly through what we call retrospectives” (Participant 5).

“Once it becomes pitching, it takes away the element of shock, surprise, denial and resistance. As you know, that's, often, you will find that people resist change. However, if you build up to it, and you don't just drop it, on them. I have found helps” (Participant 11).

Part of change readiness procedures include ensuring that the appropriate level of training is rolled out to staff members. This is essential in equipping them with the required skill and knowledge in carrying out the change initiative. Training offered as part of the change readiness process is not the only aspect that will ensure successful change as participants have noted that consideration needs to be given to the willingness and attitude of staff.

“And then, once that's done, we then start installing or implementing this new technology that we want to implement. We train the people on this new piece of equipment, and then we'd let them go” (Participant 10).

“So, I think what's important for me that is, to try and pick up where, if the person is prepared to make a change, after they are, after they are employed within your organization, then definitely training with a willingness, and so on, and so forth” (Participant 7).

A further aspect to creating buy-in to the change initiative by staff members is ensuring they understand the change. When staff are informed in the planning phase there are no unexpected surprises that arise later in the process that could result in resistance by the workforce. Understanding the nature of the change is beyond that of only staff understanding the change but also that of managers and change agents understanding the change.

“I think understanding the reason why there is a change is very important. I think when people understand the reasons why processes are changing and the benefits that it's going to bring, whether it's immediate or long-term, people are more inclined to accept that change” (Participant 2).

“To understand the change and be able to share it with staff questions that you need to answer are what are the risks involved with this change? What mitigations are in place? Are people trained for this new change? And how are people prepared to adopt this? (Participant 11).

5.3.1.5 Barriers of Change

Participants have noted barriers to successful change initiatives as the lack of collaboration between staff members. This could take the form of not sharing information between staff or leadership, not sharing information that hampers the team’s ability to collaborate. This could be a result of the dynamics within the team and the leadership style of the team. Participants note a lack of a bond between people in their respective teams that hinders change initiatives.

“So, for me, an integral part of the process is the person's attitude and whether they willing to learn and be part of your team. You know you find team members that become a family and you all work together to achieve the goals that you have in place” (Participant 7).

“Not giving people enough information about the change. The inability to listen to people's concern about the change. Because I believe if you present the change, and people obviously will have feedback” (Participant 11).

Change readiness has been considered by some participants as barriers to successful change initiatives, however, other participants do not consider change readiness as the most significant barrier. Rather participants consider a lack of understanding the change initiative as the biggest stumbling block in change management.

“It's also around not planning appropriately, you know, not understanding impacts of what the change can bring about and understanding cost or what does change mean” (Participant 6).

As shared by the participants, resistance to change as a barrier for change is centred on staff. Staff are resistant to change as they are used to carrying out an activity in a certain manner and a different process could mean additional work for them. This is further extended to the effort and attitude of management towards each change initiative.

“And I suppose just having good leadership, and the mindset of the leaders, if you have leadership that are not open to change, I do think it can be an issue” (Participant 6).

Table 4 Research question 1: additional quotes

THEME	QUOTATION
Communication	“The direction that the organization is going, the direction that the powers within the organization want to take it, and therefore, the need for us to start preparing it”.
Leadership	“You know, I guess, it's very much how the change message is filtered down from your leadership from global leadership, from regional leadership and down the line within the company”. “Global would communicate, this is where you are as a region, or as a country, this is where we need to be, and we foresee that you are going to be on the map for implementation at that specific time, it's now for you to then connect with the IT infrastructure team and your people to take this forward”.
Capability	“But it's also something job innovation that also draws people to their current roles”. “As an example, you can just invoke a business continuity plan until the hierarchy structure has actually agreed. In terms of the staff actually knowing who those people actually are and their capabilities”.
	“So, there are the changes that are managed through a procedure and then we've got something called plan task observations, which, which is where a supervisor comes

People	and observes that the people understand and execute this procedure the way they are supposed to”. “Because ultimately again, if you if you go down to the lower levels, these are the people that is actually doing the work that's actually going to drive the change. If you don't number one, have their buying in it will be difficult to roll it out without support”.
Barriers for Change	“Um, and, you know, sometimes we are changing from very simple processes to very like onerous processes. And you'll find that there's a lot of resistance from people because it means more work”.

Source: Adapted from interviews held

5.3.1.6 Conclusion

It is clear in the responses received from participants that participants relied on communication, leadership, organisational capability, and people as change readiness measures to be implemented. Through all the change readiness activities, participants considered the impact that it would have on people management. Further consideration was given to staff perceptions of the change readiness activity. A sub theme that contributed to the communication, leadership and people component was a sense of honesty and transparency that participants exercised when managing staff.

These components of readiness measures covered the basis of their change initiatives, however, participants still faced barriers in their change activities. Some participants noted that in their respective organisations, change readiness measures are not always implemented due to the size of the change initiative being small. Other participants have shared that there is a lack of planning in their work environment.

5.3.2 Research question 2

The second research question was aimed at understanding what change readiness measures participants used to prepare staff for the change that was brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the pandemic unfolded at a rapid pace, this provided the researcher with an opportunity to gain further insight into the effect of time on change readiness measures. During the interviews, the researcher probed for understanding regarding how change readiness measures were different when being used for normal planned change initiatives and that of rapid change initiatives.

Due to the situation that unfolded and business priorities, there was no opportunity for managers to prepare for the pandemic ahead of time.

The table below presents a summary of the themes that were analysed to answer the research question.

Table 5 Research question 2: data themes

First order analysis	Second order analysis	Third order analysis
Getting staff on board to the new environment	Staff Buy in	People
Training staff how to manage in the new environment.	Learning and staff upskilling	
The new environment was a shock to everyone and affected staff in different ways.	Understanding staff and staff well-being.	
Widely publicized change in the environment	Government/ Media intervention in communicating the message	External Communication
Legislation enacted to change behaviour		
Readiness measures were in a reactive manner	Approach to planning	Nature of planning
Extent of planning measures	Depth of measure implemented	
Success and failure of readiness measures	Result of readiness measures	
The environment was uncertain, and fluid thus challenged change initiative	Uncertainty	Challenges
Ensuring follow thought	Enforcing Compliance	
Significant change in way of engaging	Lack of face to Face	
COVID- 19 change was rapid	Pace of Change	

Source: Authors own

5.3.2.1 People

During the COVID- 19 pandemic, participants experienced buy-in from staff into the change initiative that needed to be affected. Buy in from staff members were important to the process as staff were the ones responsible for carrying out operational activities. Participants noted that making staff part of the process afforded them an opportunity for their voices to be heard and taking feedback from them. This resulted in staff having a feeling that they are part of the change initiative. Through the process, staff were also being upskilled by interaction interactions that they would not have been exposed to under normal circumstances.

“To get buy in, people are needed in the process, and they need to understand. They will have input and have in a vested interest in the change. They will have a sense of accomplishment and they can point out stuff to you” (Participant 3)

“So, as part of the response team, we had our unions, which are basically representing the workforce, they would take suggestions from their members, and they would share those suggestions in the response team” (Participant 10).

When managing readiness for change during the COVID- 19 pandemic, participants shared a strong sense of learning that took place during that period. Due to the novelty of the pandemic, COVID-19 presented a learning opportunity to both the manager and staff perspective. Managers started questioning the status quo of how the company normally operated and learnt more about them.

“Furthermore, it gave them the liberty to learn new ways of carrying out their work duties, basically get into new systems to utilize. So, the staff got exposure to different ways of doing stuff” (Participant 8).

“We spent our money more efficiently because suddenly, you've got less sales, and you question, do we need to buy that? does the business need this right now?” (Participant 9).

“The secret to driving success is to start with the people because they're the ones doing the work. They're the ones that have got intimate knowledge of their little space. As soon as you make them aware of that fact, you know suddenly it brings in all sorts of other things, like a place of belonging and pride etc.
But out of all of this, I think people have been very resilient in very tough times because I look at our own business.” (Participant 12).

“So, it's something we discussed with my team, and we said look we need to have regular sessions of discussing complicated issues so whenever we discuss technical issues, we can involve, as much of that team has been possible keeping in mind that they still have other work to carry out” (Participant 6).

During COVID- 19, managers leaned towards their staff's needs in managing change that was required. This entailed considering their personal circumstances and how their work life fit around their personal life. At a deeper level, participants ensured that their staff's wellbeing was being maintained.

"…. also, then understand people's limitations in terms of being able to work on their own" (Participant 4).

"Working at home, remotely, being in lockdown, being in a house the whole day, our clerks did not have social interaction A lot of people didn't anticipate how different people would react, and I think the mental health thing was something we needed to address" (Participant 6).

During the pandemic, participants relied on staff input for implementing change in the way their respective businesses were run. This included listening to views from the work force to understand if there were alternative ways of meeting the companies' objectives under conditions that were not experienced before. Participants recognised that managing the transition into an alternative work environment presented a learning for both staff and managers involved.

"And this COVID-19 response team would then come up with these ideas of how to deal with the issues that we pick up on a daily basis" (Participant 10).

"We tried to present the change to staff by using what is called the bottom-up approach. This meant we involved people from the ground up, and that's something that somehow makes people feel like they created, and they share additional ideas of how the goal can be achieved. This process requires that you must have the humility to see and accept the flaws within your ideas that you want to implement" (Participant 10).

A key aspect of readiness measures during the pandemic noted from the interviews held showed that managers considered their staff's health and safety as a priority and to even went as far as elevating their staff well-being on the same platform as that of other business priorities. The tone picked up from participants during interviews held was that of genuine concern for their staff not as a resource, rather from a personal view.

“So, I think we identified what the central problems of COVID-19 was and there were two things, the health and safety of all our people and ourselves, as well as business continuity” (Participant 3).

“I mean, I remember sitting and watching Cyril on TV when he announced the lock down, the first thing that came to mind was our responsibility in terms of the safety of our personnel” (Participant 12).

5.3.2.2 External Communication

Participants considered that the media coverage on the COVID- 19 pandemic and the steps taken by the South African government had aided their communication efforts with staff. The media had fully reported on the conditions that existed in South African and internationally that had made staff aware of the dangers that the pandemic created, both. Both health and safety dangers and that to the livelihoods of people. Government legislated laws also assisted the companies in changing the behaviour of staff as this was enforced by both managers and the government.

“First of all, you know when the government lays down the law and says, we're locking down. Those are definite enablers to changing people’s behaviours and to keep our operation operational and to minimize the infection rate” (Participant 10).

“If there was absolutely no indication from outside sources that this thing was happening, and we suddenly, went on to the shop floor and said, hey, everybody, put a mask, people will be totally confused. So of course, the external information means our jobs a lot easier” (Participant 3).

“And unfortunately, in these circumstances, we needed to actually lean on the site of what was legal and what was illegal. In a public environment, not wearing a mask was illegal thus at work the same principals applied” (Participant 13).

5.3.2.3 Nature of planning

Readiness measures were mostly implemented in a reactive manner as the pandemic had settled quite rapidly in South Africa. Participants did not expect the pace at which they would have to change their operating models or what the future model would look like. Participants shared that this was different to normal change initiatives that they were part of where there was sufficient time allocated for planning.

“There's little that you can do as a senior manager for a team, in a large organization, until the organization reacts to wherever the change is. As a senior manager, you are guided by positions taken by the organisation, and the speed at which the organisations take action” (Participant 2).

“This wasn't something we could see as COVID- 19 just landed on our table in March last year. The central questions that we ask ourselves is what's the risk here?” (Participant 3).

Most participants considered their change efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic a success. Based on their objectives that they had set out to achieve, one being prioritising the health and safety of staff and secondly, ensuring business continuity during the pandemic. Ensuring business continuity impacted on the livelihoods of staff members as their source of income would be certain and sustainable. Successful change management initiatives were not singled out to a specific activity in an organisation, rather there were multiple facets that contributed to success in different organisations.

“Readiness measures in the form of communication, taking staffs input and providing them with the necessary support hit the spot, I think we did an excellent job. What we did, how we acted. Let us call this, some micro planning touches I mean, we had people here on the phone, planning with our taxi drivers to transport our staff” (Participant 3).

“To be honest, I think we really went in hard on planning processes, we over did it, our biggest fear in the operation was that we would have a big outbreak on the mine to the point where we cannot meet our customer’s needs that the country relied on for electricity” (Participant 10).

Some participants shared that their change activity was not successful as their objectives were not met. They cited a lack of planning as the circumstances were uncertain and they did not have a vision to plan towards. Others felt that the pace at which the change was required to be in place was not possible as their entire business model would need to be changed in a short space of time.

“Our planning was not extensive as we did don’t understand the circumstances. (Participant 1).

“I don't think very extensively, in terms of readiness, because from a change readiness point of view, it's basically saying, you need to adapt existing procedures and policies to adapt to a sudden change in your business model that might be for the short term” (Participant 6).

“To be honest, we could have gone one step further in terms of protection of people so if I take my environment as an example where we lost staff members” (Participant 13).

5.3.2.4 Challenges

Managing change during COVID- 19 posed challenges to participants, notably the uncertainty and pace of the required change and change in methods of interacting.
Due to the dynamics of the situation that COVID- 19 had brought about, participants felt a sense of uncertainty as the pandemic unfolded. Uncertainty was increased due to the flow of information and the volatile business conditions at the time.

“You know, things weren't as cohesive as they were when we were in the office. You know, it was a different dynamic also dealing with the change and having a very low workload because of the uncertainty that COVID-19 brought to our business…” (Participant2).

“So, I feel like with COVID, because everyone was uncertain, it made us panic, because it was a bit of a panic mode in terms of preparing for the change. It was more about for us the effect on our business objectives. So as much as yes, we do not want to see people dying from this if it hit us in a big way, we would not fulfil our contractual agreements” (Participant 10).

“We were very cautious from a planning perspective, because of the uncertainty and the impact on people as well” (Participant 8).

“At the time the restrictions were introduced, we're still going through the final phase of our terminal construction that meant no movement was allowed that caused confusion throughout our organisation as we were still classified as construction and could not work during that period. So, we're not considered to be essential and thus we were not able to operate as we thought we would as essential service providers…” (Participant 11).

“….in the news and the problem with the news is often part of the news is right and the other half is lot of crap you know false, and every second guy is now an expert and opens up blog to inform everyone. This spread of wrong information created challenges on the ground” (Participant 13).

The laws that were enacted by the government posed a compliance challenge that participants needed to manage within their respective organisations. This entailed participants policing their staff to ensure compliance.

“You know we had to force the change so that people don't stand next to each other when they packed the box ……….” (Participant 12).

“You know in the initial first couple of months, we had to police the individuals into following the guidelines” (Participant 13).

The pandemic required that society observes social distancing and people should not crowd unnecessarily. This meant that people needed to work at a distance from their colleagues either from home or at the office where seating was prescribed to be at a distance. Participants needed to adjust the way they manage their team under these new environments.

“I think first, because everyone was working from home and in our field, we deal mostly with hands-on, it was difficult to change our model to remote desktop assistance” (Participant 1).

“...you have to send them a message via teams, wait for them to respond. You know things weren't as cohesive as they were when we were in the office” (Participant 2).

“So that was the big factor was around being a being a very traditional company, I would say, a manual face to face, type business, and bring in my skills from previous companies, in banking, and things like that, to start providing these products and services on digital channels” (Participant 5).

“It just took the business at the back end to the next level and COVID negatively impacted the demand side of our business we started suffering with market shares and stuff like that because people weren't going out a lot. So, if you're not going out, you're not buying fragrances” (Participant 9).

“And these are people that are project based and they used to be on sites, and you know” (Participant 11).

“Working from home, working from the office in terms of the operation, it was a little bit more challenging because sometimes people work in close proximity” (Participant 10).

Participants needed to react to the change in environment at a rapid pace. This meant that they needed to prepare for change initiatives that were based on risks that presented them to their respective organisations and implement measures in a haste. At times, change measures that were implemented were not a complete set of measures implemented under a normal change initiative.

“I think the difference is the speed and robustness over how we've done it, I think because it's such a big change and the potential impact it could have had on the business. The speed and force with which we rollout change was a lot quicker than what we normally do” (Participant 6).

“We were forced to work quicker than we would have normally with less time to plan. I think that's one of the reasons why we cut out some change activities” (Participant 8).

Table 6 Research Question 2: additional quotes

THEME	QUOTATION
People	“…….. knowing that there's different levels of, you know, social economic, individuals impacted differently. You know, simple things like a desk and a chair at home to be able to work” “So, in terms of actually preplanning for change, documentation, communication, understanding, or getting the individuals to understand how to react, when it comes due to rapid change, that could be useful” “And that's constantly upscaling yourself and training and learning, regardless of what you're doing, what you actually training your mind to do is to respond to change” “We needed to train people on how you push back, and here's how you manage work-life balance and, to prevent burnout. And here's how you need to balance it and guys, please respect other people space, respect mothers at home” “And it's not just one person coming up with a good idea obviously it's a team effort across the entire business” “Um, we started rolling out, mental health talks, regular sessions with the whole of our division to get an understand of how the clerks and managers were doing” “The company has been amazing with regards to looking after people, keeping the people safe”
External communication	“So, I think one of the greatest learnings is that communication is vital” “…the medical team would take the WHO releases and then dumb it down for us, so that the most basic supervisor, can just know, Step one, step two, Step three. And these would be documented and shared

	with all the supervisors. And then they would just read it so the message cascades in a simple way, throughout the organization as a unified message”
Nature of planning	“It was a combination there were some things that worked and worked well, the insurance industry is heavily regulated in its own right, there were some things that we had to roll out in terms of regulation and then there was other things that each business unit was allowed to sort of solve as they saw fit…” “We're not prepared at that time, if you look at the industrial wide in terms of support for the staff, support for our customers, other companies introduced something called COVID bonus “ “Umm, so we were set up and done, probably within a week it was done exceptionally fast”
Challenges	“Just in terms of another barrier, I think just because dealing with this pandemic was so new to everyone, it was the unknown and I guess that was the barrier. I guess, you know, we were trying to put together solutions as we went along, so just dealing with the unknown was a barrier” “When we started to understand it the lock down levels are starting to drop. I think the biggest thing was now keeping the controls in place and enforcing them. But with a workforce that was starting to relax under the COVID controls this was difficult for us” “I think I think it was definitely a lot more fast track”

Source: Adapted from interviews held

5.3.2.4 Conclusion

Based on the interviews held, it was clear participants did not expect the sudden change that was brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Change readiness initiatives that were implemented to react to the external environment were carried out in haste and in uncertain conditions. After reflecting, most participants considered their effort a success as business objectives were met with the revised operating models and the safety for the majority of their staff was maintained during the period. It must be noted that the business objectives that were set during the initial 18 months of COVID-19 pandemic were a regression of previous performance levels. As most participants shared, when planning for the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations operated in survival mode under restricted legislative conditions as such the dept of change readiness activities were limited due to time constraints and uncertainty in the environment.

Participants were clear that change readiness was staff centric. Participants showed a genuine concern for their staff wellbeing in terms of their health and safety and their livelihoods. Prioritising staff needs were placed ahead of business objectives. Participants shared that when preparing staff for the change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic they were more empathetic towards their staff.

Feedback from participants leaned a lot on empathy towards staff. This could be because the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with death and other rapid change instances might not have such risks associated with them, thus participants would have responded differently.

Participants noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic governments intervention and the media's intervention from a communication perspective assisted in making staff aware of the seriousness of the pandemic and the need to change. Apart from government communication with the public at large regarding the pandemic, the South African government instituted laws that provided a framework to drive employees behaviour.

While organisations were operating in survival mode participants had been more inclusive of all their staff that can be linked to responsible leadership theory that is outside the scope of this study.

5.3.3 Research question 3

The third research question strived to understand the value of change readiness measures deployed by managers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research question also pursued further recommendations that managers had in dealing with rapid change in an uncertain environment. These recommendations would be valuable to other managers when managing rapid change and contribute to literature as a reference point when conducting empirical research on rapid change in an uncertain environment.

The table below presents a summary of the themes that were analysed to answer the research question.

Table 7 Research question 3: data themes

First order analysis	Second order analysis	Third order analysis
Openness and honest in communication	Transparency	Communication
Clear communication during planning phase	Constant communication will all in the company	
General Communication to All		
Assessing the company's ability to effect change, does the company have the necessary resources	Infrastructure	Organisational Capacity
Being open to different ways of doing things by incorporating technology.	Innovation	
Proving staff with the necessary equipment to effect the change	Tools of the Trade	
Stay calm during the storm, present calm to the staff	Not to Panic	Leadership
Staff looked to leadership to lead the way.	Leadership to provide guidance and caring for staff	
Ensuring that staff can perform	Training	People
Caring and understanding staff during the change	Emotional and mental Support	
Ensuring the team is aligned to the goal	Link team to purpose	
Ensure that staff are valued	Make team part of the journey	

Source: Authors Own

5.3.3.1 Communication

During rapid change, participants noted clear, transparent communication with staff at the planning stage was important in obtaining their support regarding the change initiative. The message delivered to staff should be consistent and understandable to staff.

"So, you need to talk from one mouth, be transparent, example, yes, we are putting on our masks now, but should there be further changes in regulation, we will come back to you. We do, those necessary adjustments and people then understand that we are in a changing environment" (Participant 10).

“It's the transparency openness with the processes that we put in place, some could work from home and others who could not work from home their department heads communicated with them” (Participant 11).

When communicating with staff, the message can be translated using other means of communication channels. This must be done to ensure that all the staff are able to understand the reason for the change and the requirement from them in changing their behaviour. Participants acknowledged the role of the change agent in the process.

“So, as you walk around the mine, we see a lot of signage around the usage of masks, social distancing and sanitizing. So, we use a lot of signage very visual. This is back up with a something called a safety bulletin that comes out every morning containing safety information” (Participant 10).

“Make sure there's alignment, planning, communication, and care about the people, you need to make sure that they are lined up and that they understand.
Make sure you communicate with them, if there's anything, people will probably tell me I overcommunicate but at other overcommunicate than under communicate” (Participant 9).

“People must not underestimate the role of a supervisor within an operation like this, because they're the ones directly working with the staff on the ground. So, if you don't inform your first line supervisors, you will never be able to get the buy in from staff. So, make sure that you constantly communicate, that’s the first thing get everyone involved, communication is one thing, but make it visual and explain to it in simple terms” (Participant 12).

5.3.3.2 Organisation Capacity

When implementing change rapidly, managers should be aware of the capability of the organisation from an infrastructure perspective. This would assist in understanding if the organisation needed to ramp up to a change effort or if the organisation has the capability to implement a change initiative. Technology or the use thereof is another consideration that participants have noted as an enabler in planning for rapid change. As part of the change process, participants reflect on innovation that occurred in the process. Managers need to be open minded and open to alternatives in achieving the goals that the change initiative has set out to achieve.

“I think audit firms are more well equipped, or to deal with this kind of change because we already work remotely, or I'd say they're not office bound They normally try and work remotely at clients” (Participant 6).

“So COVID-19 taught us a lot, it changed the game in terms of even having floorspace you know, saving costs. It's just widened the way we think” (Participant 1).

“Microsoft team has made a massive difference to the way we could react and work as a team” (Participant 6).

“So, we know what other tools are needed in terms of working from home, that can attract success of these projects, the question we are asking is what other kind tools we can use and other types of staff roles you need for a team to be able to get this done” (Participant 5).

Participants noted that a valuable exercise would be to perform scenario analysis as part of the business continuity plan and plan for unexpected scenarios that could occur. This process will ensure that managers have an idea of how to react in the eventuality that a phenomenon occurs, or managers will be able to react to a situation similar in nature to that that has been included within the scenario analysis exercise.

“If you don't plan for eventualities that might occur then you have to scramble late nights and figure out that you could have seen coming down the line and had some exposure to it” (Participant 5).

“I would recommend revising your MOC’s to make it look more robust, add more eventualities, and I'm hoping that you would have covered something around instant changes and events” (Participant 11).

“We adjusted our playbook so if this happens then we need to do this and added more scenarios that we have planned to respond to. Example the riots in Durban we were able to adjust in an afternoon by diverting all KZN orders to Lea Glen and we flew the stock into the region or courier with FG armed escorts” (Participant 12).

5.3.3.3 Leadership

The focus on leadership during rapid change increased as staff looked to leadership for guidance. In this instance, staff also looked at leadership to lead on the change initiative thus when leading during rapid change, participants have recommended that a sense of calm is exhibited by leadership.

“From both the operations perspective and our client perspective there were significant changes that was happening that impacted us we had to prioritize as such. But what we do not is sort of call a state of emergency” (Participant 4).

“So, think we took a very cautionary reaction and what we needed to do in terms of a managing expenses. Part of it was us audit partners taking pay cuts that was not communicated throughout the organisation. Initially, it was communicated to the directors only to manage panic from the staff” (Participant 6).

What was important from that perspective is relying on my superiors and having that kind of support system for one to basically execute the changes” (Participant 8).

“…. show face and make the teams feel we are part of this, and we are going through this change with them. We not just locked up in our homes and we were sending them out there” (Participant 11).

5.3.3.4 People Focus

During rapid change, as part of the readiness measures, participants noted staff training, linking staff to change initiative, and providing staff with support are key. These activities are to be concentrated on as part of normal readiness measures that exist. Due to the time frames that might be available to managers, it might not be possible to extensively carry out all the change readiness measures.

Staff training, linking staff to change initiative and providing staff with support would enable managers to obtain support from staff that will be responsible for carrying out the change.

“When you come back from leave, you need to go through induction and extra training was done on COVID-19 rules” (Participant 10).

“We had individuals from the National Centre of Communicable Diseases come through to our environment to actually educate the staff……” (Participant 13).

“I think that's because it boils down to the leadership and how open and transparent, they are when leaders not truly care for the people” (Participant 1).

“We got somebody from outside to just to, train us on issues of empathy and sympathy and managing in times of crisis. So, when we are dealing with our teams we should not be as hard as it wouldn't be in normal situations” (Participant 11).

“I think for me linking your-self and team to purpose, keeping the team connected the purpose….” (Participant 1).

“So, you've got to understand the reasoning behind what needs to be done. Then explain to your staff we need to do this because it's not happening like that. If we do not do it, they will have certain dire consequences that will be detrimental to our business and to us as people itself” (Participant 7).

Table 8 Research Question 3: additional quotes

THEME	QUOTATION
Communication	“……and the reason I say that is because we had what we call safety stand on sessions, where people including leadership who were infected and survived told their stories and you know by them opening up and telling people what they experienced, I think it's saved lives because you know you think about people's stories even when you're at home” “…. it’s about planning and communication, constant communication, constant feedback, communication is key”

	"I want to say transparency again using it a bit differently. In the sense that we were very honest with our teams about we do not know what we are doing. We are learning as we go along, and we were open to feedback from the ground as we were implementing things that we did not have a clue about at times. So, transparency in leaderships vulnerability." "You know working from home, we learnt different ways of interacting with the business, different ways of engaging with our clients and the business"
Organisational Capacity	"We have those things in place computer systems, people's ability to access our SAP system and that sort of things is all of that in place. If we had a strike, we have documentation in place on how we deal with that special situation" "You know look at Checkers and what they've done, no one needs to go into their stores. Now they've got 60/60 and that thing works like a bomber" "Our efficiency in terms of projects, implementations tools like Microsoft Teams literally increased 3 to 5 times more than prior to COVID-19" "Microsoft team has made a massive difference to the way we could react and work as a team"
Leadership	"We leaned on directors of the companies' addressing groups of staff that seemed to become a little bit resistant" "And I think very important is as a leader in such a situation you always need to be the first one out there with the people and to lead from the front" "…always turn around in calm then stick to the facts and jump to conclusion" "…. also, to prevent the panic when that actually starts top to happen"
People	"…number two, is because of the downside of COVID the company started suffering a lot of burnouts, because all of a sudden, people want respecting boundaries, because you leave the office at five and when working from home those rituals weren't there and we need to support staff on creating boundaries"

	"…but you got to support the people you can't be focused on the business goal only and expect people to come up with everything and bring everything"

Source: Adapted from interviews held

5.3.3.5 Conclusion

Most recommendations offered by participants are directed at obtaining employee buy in. This demonstrates the importance of employee buy-in in change initiatives. Participants leaned towards eliminating employee resistance to change by obtaining employee buy in. This could be due to the participant strategy of eliminating stubborn time-consuming barriers and focusing on the change as the environment will be evolving at a rapid pace.

Based on experience of implementing change initiatives, participants have shared their recommendations that can be used for rapid change. It must be noted that although themes were extracted from the responses received from participants, the environments envisaged by participants could have differed. Thus, the recommendations offered in this section might be applicable to a wider variety of change environments that could experience rapid change.

Participants recommended in instances of rapid change, transparent communication with staff was important. Communication should be structured in such a way that employees are able to understand the message. Getting feedback from staff that aids in the understanding process for change agents. Participants have also identified communication as important during instances of normal change with the viewpoint of directing and aligning staff to the change.

Participants recommended ensuring that companies have the available infrastructure to manage business disruptions that are brought about by rapid change. Infrastructure that is required for rapid change related to technological advancements in the form of virtual collaboration platforms. This recommendation is the same as currently being practiced during normal change initiatives.

During instances of rapid change participants recommended that leadership through the change was important and the need for leadership to remain calm during the disruption that is brought about by the change. It was explained that staff looked at leadership for guidance and comfort during this period. During instances of normal change, the viewpoint of leadership was to provide direction to staff by setting and measuring goals. The difference is that during instances of rapid change leadership is looked at as a guiding figure as opposed to an autocratic figure directing staff during normal instances of change.

Participants recommended that staff wellbeing during instances of rapid change was important and a specific focus on their mental well-being during this period. This differs from instances of normal change that focuses on staff to obtain their buy-in to change.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study was to investigate how managers prepared for changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and what recommendations managers could share for rapid change. This insight is based on the managers' practice of change readiness activities under normal conditions. In chapter five, the findings based on interviews held were presented according to the research questions derived from chapter 3. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss, analyse and interpret the significance of the findings from chapter 5. Analysis and interpretation will be conducted based on what has been documented in the past literature on change readiness.

6.2 Research question 1

The purpose of this research question was to understand how managers prepare for change under normal circumstances where change is planned. It is valuable to understand if there are any alterations to their methodology of preparing for change under circumstances that require rapid change. The broad themes from the results of the research study from chapter five encapsulates management's focus on communication, capability, leadership and people.

6.2.1 Communication

Results from the interviews held demonstrated that participants resonated with the role communication played in implementing change initiative. Participants believed that clear communication with staff was key for them to understand the change initiative and that resulted in obtaining staff buy-in to the change initiative. For change under normal planned conditions, participants noted the need for staff to have information on the envisaged change. In doing so participants noted that staff needed to be made aware of the current scenario to better understand the reason for the change initiative. Providing staff with the required information enabled staff to understand the end goal regarding the change initiative that ensured staff were aligned to the strategy. When communicating with staff, participants had noted communication mediums used to relay the message to staff should be in a manner that is simple and easy to understand. Communication mediums used should be understandable to staff. This would entail, at times, using pictures or animations to get the message across. There is a need to create an easy, communicable message to the stakeholders involved to add structure and support to the transformation process (Kotter, 2007).

Kotter's eight step model further requires the manager to create an urgency for the change initiative. This requirement is consistent with Kurt Lewin's work where, in the unfreezing phase, there is a need to "create an emotional stir up" to create urgency around change (Smith, 2005 p 409). The participants did not weigh heavy on urgency when communicating with staff but rather concentrated on sharing information and ensuring the information being shared was aligned to the end goal being chased. A lack of creating urgency has been cited to impact change initiatives results change failure(Attaran, 2000).

The results of the research study showed there was a general perception from managers regarding the personal benefit of the change initiative to staff. Participants felt the benefit to staff should be well communicated for staff to buy into the change and thus support the change initiative. This position is aligned with Holt who had cited the most influential readiness factors were a belief that change was necessary, belief that change could be implemented and belief the proposed change would be beneficial to the individual (Holt et al., 2007).

Communicating and offering personal benefit of material value to staff on the change initiative is a form of transactional leadership that is a form of leadership that is deployed when preparing for change as part of change readiness (Caldwell, 2013). This leadership style has limitations when considering the dimensions of employee satisfaction as employees might not find job satisfaction in extrinsic factors.

6.2.2 Leadership

Results from this research study demonstrated that leadership creates and communicates the vision to the staff as staff wanted to know exactly what is required to be done directly from leadership. A component of Kotter's eight step model is to build a powerful guiding coalition that assesses the problem and opportunities of the change. These leaders in an organsation should build commitment to the change initiative with all staff members (Kotter, 2007).

Developing dynamic capabilities associated with adaptation in leaders in an organisation result in learning and collaboration in an organisation (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). Further results from the study demonstrated the leadership stance on change in an organisation is vital in setting the tone for change that employees are exposed to. Contrasting results from the research study revealed managers deem collaboration across the organisation as a challenge when implementing change under normal conditions. This challenge stems from a lack of working together across departments and not sharing information. In this context, leadership in organisations should not limit their role to directing change in silos but rather have a view across the business. The different roles expected of leadership (management) in a change initiative could attribute to the challenges that are faced by managers during change.

In the readiness model developed by (Armenakis & Harris, 2009), the importance of a change agent having attributes of credibility, sincerity and trustworthiness to deliver the change message is emphasized. Although the change agent might have these characteristics, results of this research study have shown staff might not still receive the message as compared to when leadership with senior titles and a good reputation themselves deliver the message. Senior leadership communication with staff leads to less resistance from staff. The findings of the research study were consistent with Kotter's eight step model which required powerful leadership to consist of influential leaders with expertise, senior job titles, good relationships and reputations in the organisation (Kotter, 2007). The view of leadership with seniority and a good reputation communicating and directing change initiatives with staff is corroborated by (Kerber & Buono, 2005) under change instances that are planned (Kerber & Buono, 2005).

A limitation noted in the managers use of change models are not all foundational principles are applied when preparing for change. It should be noted that change readiness models are not one size fits all. As noted in the finding of this research study, managers have different variations and understanding of what change readiness models are. These variations of change readiness models are based on companies' change strategies that managers have encountered in their current role and in prior roles at other organisations.

Managers might not be aware of all tools available to them from recognised change models in literature. Literature has noted barriers for change directed at staff are a lack of management support, flexibility in the change initiative, communication, and training (Attaran, 2000). There is no consideration that when preparing for change, managers are left to their own judgement in determining what measures to deploy. (Armenakis & Harris, 2009) concurred that, based on the urgency of the change initiative, change agents might make use of some of the change readiness components and not necessarily all of them. This could be the reason for the high failure rate of change initiatives.

6.2.3 Capability

As part of a changing environment where managers experience changes continuously, this type of environment leads to innovation through continuous learning. This was confirmed by participants during interviews held. Innovation stems from a process where an organisation adapts to its environment by transforming its systems and processes and adapting its resources to the environment (Tejeiro Koller, 2016). Participants have noted as part of their readiness process there should be an understanding of the organisation's infrastructure and how that will facilitate the change initiative.

As part of planning for change initiatives, participants stressed the need for assessing the organisation's infrastructure to support the change. The assessment consisted of analysing the company's existing and required infrastructure to facilitate that change initiative. Participants leaned heavily on technology to provide the required infrastructure their organisation required to implement change. The assessment of infrastructure in an organisation before a change initiative assists staff in understanding their roles in the planned change as employees understand the role the organisation infrastructure will contribute towards the change and the effort required from them (Buick et al., 2015). Evaluation of the organisation's infrastructure has a consequence on the perceptions by staff of the organisation's ability to effect the change (Choi & Ruona, 2011). In Kotter's eight step model, change agents are required to reassure staff the entity has the infrastructure to effect the required change (Kotter, 2007).

6.2.4 People

The people aspect within an organisation is another theme that participants relied on for change readiness. This theme centred on reaching out to employees to obtain buy in from staff to the change initiative. (Smith, 2005) confirmed a large part of organisational change is intertwined with managing the people aspect of the process. Components of the people theme that participants have shared include the role of the change agent in capturing staff's input to the change initiative training offered to staff and understanding staff at a deeper level. Participants acknowledge the requirement for staff to buy into the change initiatives that is for the benefit of the company or for personal benefit. This finding is consistent with part of Holt's findings that cited influential readiness factors were organisational valence and personal valence (Holt et al., 2007).

Participants noted the usefulness of training staff to enable them to carry out the change initiative. This is carried out to ensure that staff understand and can perform the new process the change initiative requires. Providing adequate training and support to staff at all stages of the change initiative has been mentioned as a weakness in successful change programmes (Attaran, 2000).

As part of obtaining buy-in from staff, participants considered understanding staff at a deeper level that is beyond their capabilities of adapting to the change initiative. Participants noted that to obtain buy-in from staff understanding them on a deeper, more personal level aids in understanding how to motivate them. As managers would understand their personal values, triggers of motivation, and circumstances. This practice is consistent with the readiness model developed by Armenakis that provides for an assessment of interpersonal and social dynamics that involves obtaining support of socially interacting individuals based on their beliefs, attitudes and intention (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

As depicted in the diagram below, managers use their judgement in applying change readiness measures and don't necessarily focus on all components of change readiness. This is due to the nature of the change initiatives they are implementing and the circumstances under which they operate. The top row of the diagram shown illustrates the change readiness components used by managers during instances of normal change. The second-row lists change readiness components listing the Armenakis change model. The figure below highlights that managers do not consider the impact of external media communications on staff members when preparing for change initiatives.

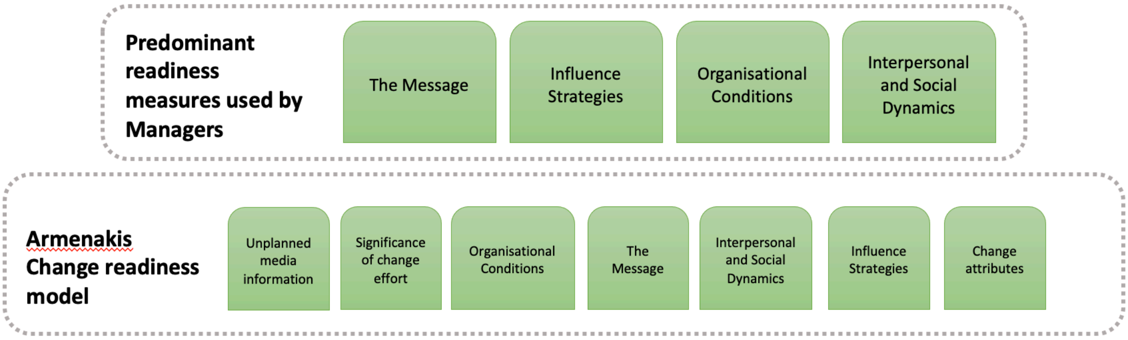

Figure 3 Research question 1: change readiness components used by managers

Source: Adapted from Armenakis et al., 1993a.

Proposition 1: Managers are aware of change readiness principles; however, they do not deploy all of them for normal change initiatives. Managers apply their judgement in choosing the respective measures to deploy and do not consider the impact of external messaging on staff members.

6.3 Research question 2

The research question aimed to understand how managers planned for change that took place at a rapid pace. The COVID-19 pandemic provided the researcher with an ideal opportunity to explore how managers deal with rapid change. At the time of performing the interviews with participants, the COVID-19 pandemic was a recent event that had a significant impact globally, thus making it easier for participants to recall their readiness activities. The principal themes that came through from interviews held with participants were a focus on people, communication, depth of activities and challenges that were faced during the period.

Feedback from participants revealed the impact of COVID-19 on their business was significant and resulted in major changes needing to be made. These changes resulted in businesses changing their business models in some shape or form. It was further noted changes that needed to be implemented to deal with the alternative trading condition required managers to implement change initiatives at a rapid pace. Change that moves an organisation away from their equilibrium state and is brought about by the external environment is defined as episodic change (Weik & Quinn, 1999). Episodic change or discontinuous change that occurs sporadically is considered to have short lived benefits and it is recommended that continuous change effort rather be implemented to entrench behaviour (By, 2005). Responses received from participants noted that changes in responses to episodic or discontinuous change had short term benefit. In the instance of the COVID-19 pandemic, continuous change efforts would not have been possible as the participants in the research study confirmed the pandemic unfolded rather suddenly in their respective organisations.

Based on the findings from participants, the roll out of the change initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic were blended between guided change and planned change. The former is an instance of change which is guided by the members of the organisation and the latter related to when change is directed by top management and relies on compliance and authority. During this period, managers obtained staff buy-in by being more understanding of staff wellbeing and training them to ensure they would be able to adapt to the changed environment. This resulted in staff being able to contribute to the change effort by taking into consideration their input in more effective ways of carrying out activities.

Participants experienced a challenge in enforcing compliance to protocols put into place by both the government and their respective companies. This was due to initiating a behavioural change in staff at a rapid pace almost in an instance. A contributing factor to the challenges experienced was the uncertain environment that existed due to revisions to lock down levels and what the impact of the pandemic would have in future.

The Armenakis readiness model relies on individual difference theory and social difference theory to support the interpersonal and social dynamics component of the readiness model (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Participants all confirmed employee wellbeing guided their change initiatives and extended them to show more empathy towards their staff during the period. As noted from the interviews, the reasons were two-fold, one being genuine concern for employees due to the dangers that the pandemic had brought about and secondly, staff wellbeing was elevated as participants were reliant on staff being in good health (physically and mentally) to continue business operations. This observation contrasts with the change that would have occurred under normal planned change conditions that prioritise obtaining buy in from staff.

The importance of training and up-skilling staff during this period was emphasised by participants as staff needed to learn new ways of working and new ways of interacting with each other. Training is not part of the readiness models that have been used in this research study. Training on the related change remains an important aspect in literature although noted as a barrier to change (Attaran, 2000).

In getting the message across, participants acknowledged the role played by the media in creating urgency for the change that was required in their current working conditions. This messaging was further supported by legislative frameworks that were put into place by the government. Although staff were well informed about the environment, participants generally reiterated the message to their staff to ensure compliance. While repeating the message from the external environment, participants were not used to the opportunity to tailor the narrative to their context. Used in the readiness model, Armenakis and Harris formalised three strategies to convey messages related to change being persuasive communication, active participation and the management of information (Armenakis & Harris, 2002).

Within the context of the COVID-19 environment, persuasive communication had limited face-to-face interaction when delivering the message. Participants had found this to be a challenge as they were unable to interrupt the listeners for reactions. Face to face interaction was limited by legislative guidelines put into place to ensure social distancing. Active participation was limited to change agents observing staff and their output.

As this was an unexpected change, COVID-19 presented the opportunity of high urgency and low readiness according to the Armenakis typology of readiness programmes (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). In a high urgency and low readiness environment, drastic measures are required to be implemented and intensifying persuasive communication. Drastic measures were implemented as most participants had confirmed there was a change to their business model in some way.

This was true for organisations that worked remotely prior to the pandemic as their stakeholders moved to a remote working environment.

Participants noted the limitations of persuasive communication from management as the traditional face to face approach was limited in occurrence and participation. The narrative around the change in the environment was written by the media and governments legislation. This most assisted managers in getting their message across to staff as the media and government communication informed staff of the change required and created urgency for the change initiative (Kotter, 2007).

Consistent with the Armenakis recommendation was that not all the change readiness components need to be deployed when preparing for change and the initiatives undertaken is determined by the context of the change.

As depicted in the figure below, managers used their judgement in applying change readiness measures to manage the change required for the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation of change readiness measures were determined by the environment and the pace of the pandemic Based on the change in environment there has been a change in the amount of change readiness activities initiated and the depth of the measures instituted.

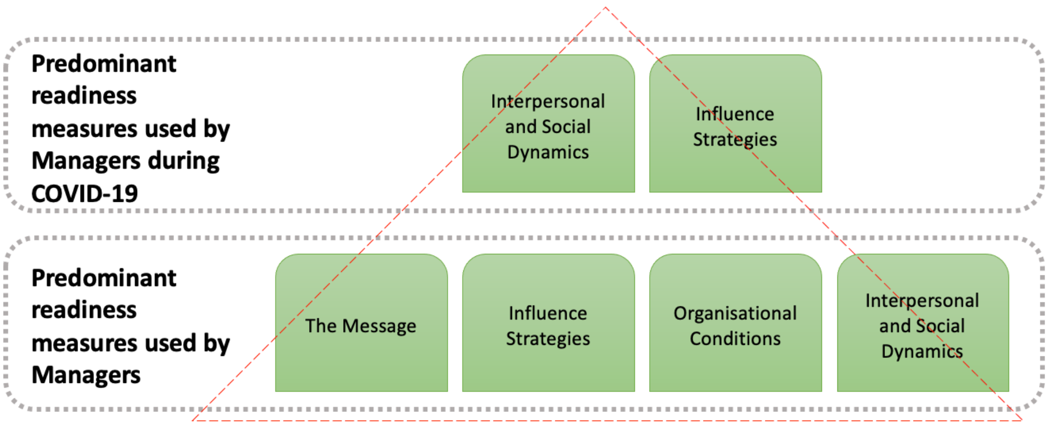

Figure 4 Research question 2: change readiness components during COVID-19

Source: Adapted from Armenakis et al., 1993a.

Proposition 2: For the COVID-19 pandemic, managers deployed less readiness measures both in depth and number of initiatives. Managers relied on external messaging that is not considered by managers during instances of normal change. Mangers approached staff in a more empathic fashion when carrying out readiness activities.

6.4 Research question 3

As demonstrated in research question one, participants have knowledge regarding change management and the components that make up change readiness. These managers have gone through a rapid change instance that was the genesis of research question two. As such, research question three aimed to seek recommendations from participants in achieving change readiness during instances of rapid change. Themes that emerged from participants' recommendations consisted of communication, organisational capacity, leadership and people.

The participant recommendations for rapid change were clear and transparent communication with staff members. This ensured staff understood the change initiative and will be in position to provide feedback on the change initiative. Clear communication also aids in staff buy-in into the change initiative as they are aware of what is required from them. Kotters eight step change model concurs with this recommendation in that credible communication goes a long way to capture the hearts of stakeholders (Kotter, 2007). This is further corroborated by Smith' s view that messages must be easily understood and authentic (Smith, 2005). Participants noted that there should be constant communication with all members in the organisation. Participants relied on external intervention in the form of government and the media to inform staff about the urgency of the situation and the need for the change this is consistent with (Armenakis & Harris, 2009), who found that external communication also plays a role in change readiness.

Organisational capacity in the form of infrastructure, innovation and providing staff with the required tools to complete their tasks have been endorsed by participants for instances of rapid change. Assessing whether the company has the necessary infrastructure in place to be able to effect the change is critical. To ensure the company has the required infrastructure, participants have recommended frequent assessments on the company's infrastructure be carried out. The results of these assessments should be analysed in conjunction with the business continuity plan that is scenario based and gaps should be covered to ensure that unexpected shocks can be absorbed by the entity. This is consistent with the readiness change model by Armenakis that requires readiness assessments should be carried out to understand the company's change readiness. Readiness assessments should be carried out in dynamic and fluid conditions (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

Participants have highlighted the need to have innovative capacity as part of the team when dealing with rapid change as part of building organisational capacity. Adaptive capacity is a process of continuous learning that leads to innovation o Koller, 2016).

Participants noted the temperament of leadership during rapid change instances.
It was clear from participants that during instances of rapid change, leadership should remain calm and not panic. Panic should not be displayed as staff looked to leadership for stability during these periods of change. Reconciling this recommendation to current change readiness models in place leads to the Armenakis change readiness model, Kotter's eight step change model and Caldwell's change readiness model. Kotter's eight step change model refers to leadership building a powerful guiding coalition that will grow overtime in terms of information, expertise, job titles, relationships and reputations (Kotter, 2007). Through his growth phase, to attain reputational equity. personal traits will be observed by staff that will include an observation of leadership's temperament.

Caldwell cited staff are directly influenced by their line managers and managers have only two alternatives to influence staff that is via transactional leadership or transformational leadership. In his change readiness model, Caldwell looked at change agents in the context of leadership and recommended change agents implement proactive change programs that change participant beliefs about change (Caldwell, 2013). There is no direct correlation to the leadership's temperament in this change readiness model. The same is true for the Armenakis change readiness model.

Leadership's role in guiding staff and showing empathy during instances of rapid change had been recommended by the participants. This was consistent with literature of change agent responsibilities. (Armenakis & Harris, 2009) requires that the change agents should have attributes of credibility, trustworthiness, sincerity, and expertise.

Coming through strongly in this research study is the softer people element and had been recommended by participants for rapid change related to clear communication that is supported by linking staff with the goal of the change initiative which was helpful in obtaining their buy in to the change. Buy in from staff is further solidified when they are part of the change journey. As part of this process, personal valence regarding the change initiative influences staff member's motivations and intentions to embrace the new (Caldwell, 2013).

Ensuring that staff can perform under the new conditions required them to be trained on the new method of operation. Apart from the support offered from a training perspective, participants felt that emotional and mental support should be offered to staff to ensure their well-being during the change initiative. This is supported in Armenakis change readiness model.

As depicted in the figure below, participants recommended applying communication ensuring organisational capacity, leadership and a focus on people behind the change during instances of rapid change.

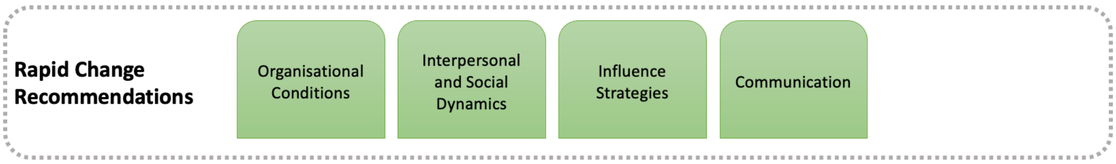

Figure 5 Research question 3: change readiness components recommended

Source: Adapted from Armenakis et al., 1993a.

Proposition 3: Key areas of change readiness for rapid change include communication, considering organisational conditions, influence strategies and leveraging of interpersonal and social dynamics.

6.5 Conclusion

The general trend of managing change during the COVID-19 pandemic was emphasised by leveraging interpersonal and social dynamics and communication. The same participants have recommended for change readiness related to rapid change, one must enforce the following initiatives that is, leverage interpersonal and social dynamics, consider organisational conditions for change, apply influence strategies and communication. Although there are commonalities in interpersonal and social dynamics and communication between change readiness related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recommendations for rapid change shared by the participants, the perspectives of these change readiness components are different when comparing what was practised during the COVID-19 pandemic and their recommendations.

On the face of it, this seems incomplete in what participants shared that worked during the COVID-19 pandemic and recommendations they left the research study with. This is because when the researcher asked for recommendations related to change readiness for rapid change, participants were afforded the freedom to articulate their views on what the ideal readiness activities would be and not constricted to what was used for the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the recommendations shared by the participants can be relied upon as there was diversity in the participants thought process and not confined to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In conclusion to this research study in dealing with rapid change instances, normal change readiness measures can be used as demonstrated by the participants' actual usage during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are commonalities in these initiatives, however the application will be different based on the environment.

As depicted in the diagram, a model has been developed demonstrating that, as time decreases to implement change readiness activities, the number of initiatives also decreases. This change readiness activities stem from the Armenakis change readiness model and is adapted to an environment that requires rapid change to be managed. For this research study that used the COVID-19 pandemic as a phenomenon representing a rapid change event, participants used influence strategies and interpersonal and social dynamic components to prepare for change, however their recommendations included more components in the form of having more empathy for staff. This implied that managers could use change readiness measures at their discretion when implementing change readiness for rapid change. This is consistent with the intrinsic principle of the Armenakis change readiness model that leaves flexibility with managers to apply change readiness components based on their environment. The model developed also provides the manager with the options of choosing between communication, influence strategies, organisational conditions, interpersonal and social dynamics as this has been recommended by managers themselves that apply change models across multiple industries.

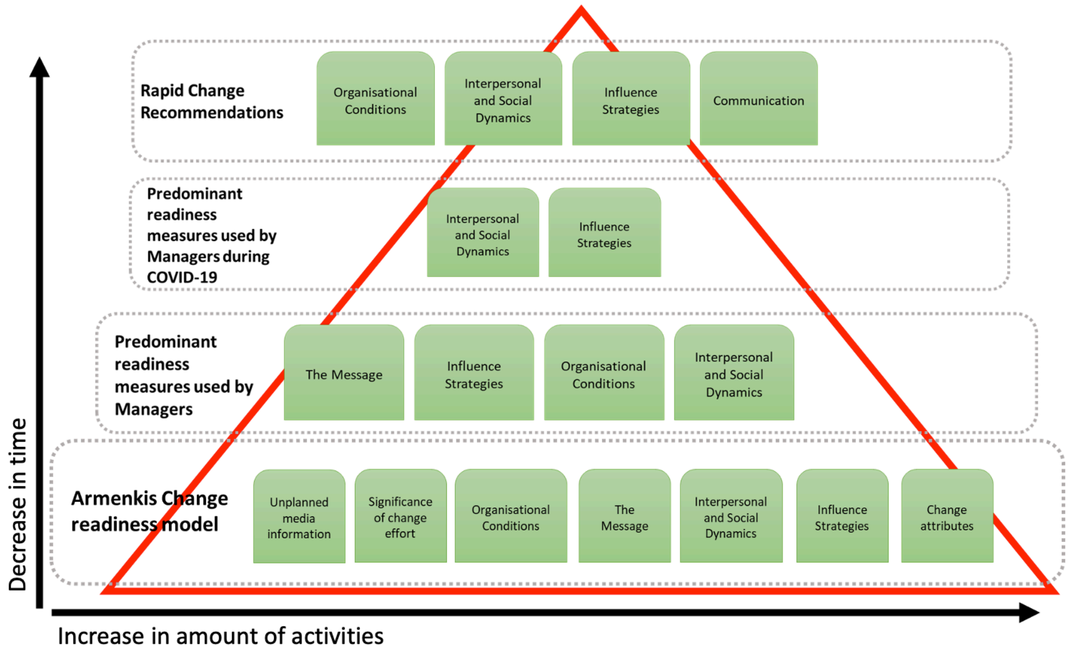

Figure 6 Summary of change readiness components used across different instances of change

Source: Adapted from Armenakis et al., 1993a.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to draw on the conclusions from chapter six that will be used to outline contributions the research study has made to managers that are required to manage rapid change. To amplify the context of the conclusions in chapter six, limitations of this research study are also outlined. The chapter will also provide insight for stakeholders involved in change management after which recommendations on future research directions will be explained.

7.2 Conclusions

7.2.1 Research question 1

The purpose of this research question was to understand how managers prepare for change under normal circumstances where change is planned. Specifically, an investigation into what change readiness initiatives are used, why these initiatives are used and how they are used.

Themes from the results of the research study were management's focus on communication, organisational conditions, influence strategies, interpersonal and social dynamics. These change readiness components form part of Armenakis's change readiness model that are related to both the Kotter's eight step change model.

In practice, managers use their judgement in applying change readiness measures and don't necessarily focus on all components of change readiness as prescribed by any one change readiness model. This is due to the nature of the change initiatives they are implementing and the circumstances under which they operate.

Proposition 1: Managers are aware of change readiness principles; however, they do not deploy all of them for normal change initiatives. Managers apply their judgement in choosing the respective measures to deploy and do not consider the impact of external messaging on staff members.

7.2.2 Research question 2

The research question aimed to understand how managers planned for change that took place at a rapid pace. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic was an ideal opportunity to explore how managers dealt with rapid change. The aspect of rapid change is important in that the pace of change in the business environment has increased significantly for the company to keep up with changing market conditions, dynamic technologies and global competition (Vakola, 2013).

The principal themes that came through from interviews held with managers focused on interpersonal and social dynamics, communication, depth of activities and challenges that were faced during the period. From the challenges faced, managers took away key learnings from the experience in that they valued a planned approach to change much more.

In applying change readiness measures to manage change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of readiness measures was determined by the environment and the pace of the pandemic. This meant that managers implemented a limited amount of change readiness measures as noted in the change readiness model. Managers concentrated on influence strategies and interpersonal and social dynamics.

As part influence strategies manager relied on external communication from the media and messaging from the South African government. With the flow of information from the government and the media, managers felt that it was easier for them to communicate the change message to staff as they understood the problem. External communication also creates urgency around the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic and that helps managers get their change message across to their respective staff members (Kotter, 2007; Armenakis et al., 1993a). Internal communication and engagement with staff continued under different conditions when compared to normal change preparation. Managers had to interact with their staff with the use of technology via virtual platforms. For some managers this way of engagement took a while to get used to as posed a challenge. Other managers found this as an advantage to their business.

In addressing staff interpersonal and social dynamics, managers managed their staff during this period with empathy as managers were concerned of their staff's wellbeing. The empathic approach was different to the change readiness implementation during normal conditions.

Proposition 2: For the COVID-19 pandemic, managers deployed less readiness measures both in depth and number of initiatives. Managers relied on external messaging that is not considered by managers during instances of normal change. Mangers approached staff in a more empathic fashion when carrying out readiness activities.

7.2.3 Research question 3

The research question sought practical recommendations from managers in achieving change readiness during instances of rapid change.

Recommendations for instances of rapid change shared by managers included communication, organisational condition, influence strategies, interpersonal and social dynamics. Elements of these components are found in all change readiness models investigated for the purpose of this research study. This is an extension of current literature on the following components:

- During the COVID-19 pandemic communication from government assisted managers in delivering their change message to their staff members. This is as staff member were well informed on the dangers that the pandemic was associated with. Messaging from the government also helped managers in creating the urgency for the change required.
- Addressing staff interpersonal and social dynamics managers handled their work force with empathy. This approach ensured that all staff members were brought along the change journey that resulted in a successful implementation as noted by participants of the study.

Proposition 3: Key areas of change readiness for rapid change include communication, considering organisational conditions, influence strategies and leveraging of interpersonal and social dynamics.

Using these recommendations, the researcher developed a model based on practical insight from managers across various industries and in different positions within their respective organisations depicting the amount of change readiness activities reduce when implementing rapid change.

7.3 Contribution of the study

The research study added a new perspective to literature by demonstrating the managers in South Africa relied on traditional change readiness initiatives to prepare for changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic although the environment was different compared to when they used traditional change readiness initiatives under normal circumstances. Managers used existing change readiness initiatives although the focus was more towards the wellbeing of employees representing an extension on current frameworks used. This included more empathy towards employee's needs during that period that ensured that all staff members were able to be part of the change journey with the company. This adds to the durability of these change readiness components found in different change readiness models as they have been tested in an extreme environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research study provided guidance to managers when confronted with rapid change based on recommendations received by managers.

The study further added a model to demonstrate that when managing rapid change, the Armenakis change model can be used. From the change readiness model, influence strategies and consideration of staff interpersonal and social dynamic should be focused by managers. Extending on current literature during instances of rapid change managers need to be more empathetic towards staff members. This is because of the disruption that impacts staff. Another aspect that this study highlighted is the need for managers to consider the mental health of staff members during instances of rapid change. In addition to the results from the study, the study recommends that managers should focus on communication and organisational conditions when dealing with instances of rapid change.

7.4 Implications for Stakeholders

7.4.1 Managers

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated pandemics can happen unexpectedly. Periodically, there are huge shocks to the business world in the form of the internet DOT com bubble, the financial crisis in 2008 and now a call for action to climate change. After these shocks, the business environment must implement change initiatives to find alternative ways of operating. For some, these events bring about an instant change and for others, the effect of the shock descends on them sometime later allowing them more time to understand the nature of the phenomenon. Literature has also acknowledged the increased pace of change that the businesses face today (Imran et al., 2016). For this manager's need to be equipped in managing instances of change that occur at a rapid pace. The findings of this research study can assist managers when planning for change that occurs at a rapid pace.

7.4.2 Policy makers within organisations

The findings of this research study can assist policy makers in organisations in understanding what components of change readiness can be used when drafting policy to deal with rapid change. Additionally, policy makers can better understand the context of these components of change readiness from the findings of this research study that reconciled literature into current practice from managers.

7.4.3 Government

This research study had demonstrated that in an instance of rapid change i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic, managers relied on the government to assist with the communication of the change in the environment. This assisted managers in that staff were more informed of the change in environment and thus were better able to adopt the change measures that were implemented by the respective organisations. Governments leadership and communication during instances of rapid change or a pandemic important to bring about the required change.

7.5 Research Limitations

The research study obtained views from managers across different industries who worked across different disciplines within their respective organisation. The exploration of the research study was at a micro level as these managers were based in one province in one country. The research study had therefore not been substantiated across different provinces or in other countries.

The sample consisted of managers across different industries. This could limit the validity of the recommendations derived from the participants as different industries are set up to operate in a certain manner. A further limitation to the results is that the researcher was not experienced in carrying out investigative interviews thus respondents' personal biases might have impacted the results of this study.
The study followed a mono method qualitative methodology that was not robust enough to test the findings through a quantitative study that would allow for the to be generalised across all instances of rapid change.

The study followed a cross-sectional time horizon approach which provided a snapshot of the readiness for change at a point in time when the COVID-19 pandemic started. Additional value could have been obtained from a longitudinal study where various instances of rapid change occurred. This would have allowed the researcher to substantiate the finds through identifying trends.

The study followed a mono method methodology that sought to fill a gap in the literature that existed on managers' change readiness during rapid, unexpected change. Given the limited time frame allowed for the research study, data triangulation was not possible.

The use of a virtual platform (Go-To Meet) to conduct interviewees did not allow the researcher to read body language of participants the researcher is used to. Another limitation that has been identified in the process of carryout interviews was the limited experience of the researcher in carrying out interviews.

7.6 Recommendations for future research

Overall findings of this research study have written the narrative that, as the pace of change increases, the depth and number of readiness activities decrease. Literature supports the view that components of change readiness are to be applied based on the environment and urgency of the change (Armenakis et al., 1993a). Literature has also confirmed the high failure rate of change initiatives (Vakola, 2013). Aligned to this, further research needs to be done in understanding the exact cause of change failure with answers to the questions of (a) could the failure rate be due to the ineffectiveness of the change process or (b) could the failure be a result of management judgement in applying change readiness components for change. Overall findings of this study have written the narrative that as the pace of change increases the depth and number of readiness activities decrease. Literature supports the view that components of change readiness can be relied on based on the environment and urgency of the change (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Literature has also confirmed the high failure rate of change indicatives (Imran et al., 2016). Aligned to this further research needs to be done in understanding the exact cause of change failure. Could the failure rate be due to the ineffectiveness of the change process or could the failure be a result of management judgement in applying change readiness components for change.

Similarly, Armenakis et al. (1993a) managers do not have to use all change readiness components and readiness components should be deployed based on the environment. Further research needs to be carried out to understand how managers select change readiness principles and the methodology they use to select the appropriate principles that is required for their respective situation. This research study would be valued by academia who have built and reiterated change models dating back to 1947 and yet there is still such a high failure rate of change initiatives.

As noted from the results of research question two during instances of rapid change, in this study the COVID-19 pandemic senior managers prioritised employee's wellbeing. This could be further explored in the context of responsible leadership stakeholder approach during a pandemic.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Letter of informed consent

Dear Madam/ Sir,

I am a MBA student at Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) and completing a research project that is a compulsory component in completing an MBA.

I am conducting research on managers change readiness at large organisations and the way change you managed change at your organisation during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. I wish to learn more about change readiness initiatives that were deployed and any recommendations that you have regarding initiatives that worked.

I would appreciate your participation in this study that will require 45 minutes to 60 minutes of your time for a face to face/ virtual interview. The interview will be kept strictly confidential and no personal information and organisational information will be used in the write up of the final report. The interview will be semi-structured and an in-depth interview that will be arranged at a suitable time for you. Your permission is requested to record the interview. All data shared during the interview will be stored without personal and organisational identifiers to maintain confidentiality. At your request a copy of the research report will be shared with you. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.

Should have concerns please reach out to my supervisor or my-self, our details have been shared below.

By signing below, you the participant of the study of sound mind, confirm that you are eighteen years or older hereby give consent to participate in the study.

Signature of the participant: ___________________ Date 09 October 2021

Signature of the researcher: __________________ Date 09 October 2021

Researcher
Avesh Ajoodha
Email: 20807637@mygibs.co.za

Research Supervisor
Phillip Maxton
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9.2 Interview Guide

Section 1: Introduction
How long has your company been in operation?
What are your geographical areas of focus?
What is the approximate headcount at your organization?
How often have you as a manager experienced a change in the past 12- 24 months, and what were they and describe the instances?
Generally, how is change viewed at your organization and you as a manager how do view change ?
Section 2: How do senior managers at large companies in South Africa prepare for change, what approach and methodology are applied for change readiness?
Are senior managers aware of the change models that exist?
How is change readiness viewed by senior managers?
How do senior managers at large companies prepare for change?
How do managers classify change?
What measures do senior managers have in place to adapt to continuous change, if any?
How do managers respond to significant changes in both the internal and external environment?
How do senior managers identify change? Both internal and external triggers to be captured?
What do senior managers consider enablers and barriers to change?
Section 3: What change readiness measures did senior managers at large organizations deploy to prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic specifically, and when were these measures implemented?
How did senior managers prepare for change that was brought about by COVID-19
When were change readiness activities initiated?
How extensive were change readiness measures?
How were change initiatives related to COVID-19 different to change initiatives rolled out during planned change?
To what extent were these measures rolled out in your organization (directors/ managers/ general staff) ?
What was the success of the change initiatives?

Related to COVID-19 What do senior managers consider enablers and barriers to change?
Section 4: Were change readiness measures deployed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic effective, and what recommendations are there for senior management related change that occurs rapidly?
What recommendations do you have when preparing for change that occurs in an instant?
Why are these recommendations important?
Have you experienced such recommendations before?
Based on the environment, do you think that these recommendations are practical to implement and why?
What learnings can managers take away from COVID-19

9.3 Ethics Clearance

Ethical Clearance Approved

MR

Masters Research <MastersResearch@gibs.co.za>

To: 20807636@mygibs.co.za; **Cc:** Masters Research

EthicalClearanceRe...
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You replied to this message on 2021/10/04, 09:34.

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

Ethical Clearance Approved

Dear Avesh Ajoodha,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Ethical Clearance Form

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.