# (CRP) CHANGE RESPONSE PROFILE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT MEASURING EMPLOYEE CONCERNS DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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## ABSTRACT

While every organization undergoes change, the practices that each of them employ vary. Change Response Profile (CRP) is an assessment that provides a sense of direction to the management, to make well-informed decisions about the vital interventions to minimize or completely eradicate resistance from the employees. The article highlights six concerns that an employee would have during the time of an organizational change, through which, 4 individual profiles have been derived. The result of this assessment is analyzed on an individual and organizational level, providing valuable inputs for the organization to create change management and engagement initiatives that align to the employees' concerns, thus bringing a quantified return on investment. This article also talks about the change related theories from the fields of psychology and management. Thus, an integration of all these theories supports the validity and relevance of CRP.

**KEYWORDS:** Change Management, Employee Concerns, Organizational Change, Psychological Assessments

## INTRODUCTION

The survival of organizations in the current world depends largely on their learning style. Challenging times, put organizations to test and the ones that thrive subsequently are those that adopt double loop learning (Argyris, 1977). Reactive measures to deal with errors or faults in the system are associated with single loop learning. Chris Argyris illustrates the differences in the learning styles through the example of a thermostat. Single loop learning involves taking corrective action to adjust the temperature based on how hot or cold the liquid is. If the thermostat had the ability to question itself about "whether it should be set at 68 degrees, it would be capable not only of detecting error, but of questioning the underlying policies and goals as well as its own program" (Argyris, 1977). This provides a comprehensive understanding of the situation, which is dealt with proactively.

A similar line of thought determines an organization's success through times of change and development. Changes could either be planned or unplanned. Various theories and models have been developed and proposed to tackle resistance from within the organization to ensure an effective intervention process. They are also beneficial in assessing change at a macro level where they reveal why change occurs, how it occurs and what happens during a change by representing their own ideologies through the explanations (Kezar, 2001). While the vast typologies of organizational change models include the categories of the life cycle, evolutionary, dialectical and teleological as proposed by Van de Ven and Poole (1995), two additional categories namely social cognition and cultural approaches to change have also been included. Teleological and evolutionary models focus on the nature of the change that takes place, such as either planned or

adaptive. Social cognition, dialectical and cultural models are more inclined towards the human process and change as mediated internally. Life cycle or developmental models emphasize systematic individual change.

According to the life cycle models, change is seen through stages and hence is progressive (Miller & Friesen, 1980). Social cognitive models keenly focused on how leaders shape the change process by tapping into how employees interpret and make sense of the change (Harris, 1996). Dialectical theory is based on the Hegelian assumption that organizations exist in a world of opposing and contradictory forces that compete with each other to gain control. When one of these opposing force gains enough power to confront the status quo, change is said to have occurred (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). These conflicting forces exist in a cyclical process of thesis and antithesis, and arriving at a synthesis when one overpowers the other, further leading to a new set of oppositions. Keeping these models in mind, the significant theories through which the proposed Change Response Profiles have been derived from change include the Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of development and Greiner's Phases of Organizational Growth.

Erikson's theory has an underlying theme that human evolve throughout their lifespan, unlike as proposed by Sigmund Freud, whose school of thought believes that an individual's personality is shaped mostly by his/her childhood experiences. Erikson's theory poses the various stages of change that individuals go through during their lifetime and the impact of these changes on their response to stimuli. The stages are as follows:

**Basic Trust v/s Mistrust**

The first stage from birth to 18 months is the formation of a basic sense of trust between the child and the caregiver. If the infant comes to expect that its needs will be met with some regularity (e.g. Fed when hungry), a foundation of trust will be formed. Lack of care of both physical and psychological needs by the caregiver; or a lack of a caregiver leads to mistrust of environment causing feelings of fear, anxiety and suspicion.

**Autonomy v/s Shame and Doubt**

Between the age of 18 to 36 months, the child wants to become independent by gaining control of his/her eliminate activities and forms feelings about his/her ability to do things. The parents are crucial in facilitating the development and use of skills for the child. An encouraging environment leads to a sense of self-worth and pride within the child. A sense of external control with a minimal assertion of choice and will by the child leads to a loss of self-esteem producing self-doubt and doubt in others.

**Initiative v/s Guilt**

Between 3-6 years, the child begins to deal with people and things around, exploring beyond himself/herself. Exploration and manipulation of the genitals become a source of pleasure. The child's initiative is reflected in the increasing number of questions asked as well as the ability to imagine a make-believe world. The caregivers' response and reactions influence the child's ability to either learn or initiate activities, enjoying achievement, or the inability to control newly developed power with a realization of potential failure leading to fear of punishment.

**Industry v/s Inferiority**

Between the age of 6 until puberty, the child is capable of developing deductive reasoning skills. Caregivers and teachers, who encourage the child to exercise his /her skills, will see the child gaining a sense of accomplishment. On the

other hand, the child develops a feeling of hopelessness, repeated frustration and failure leading to a sense of inferiority when the encouragement is absent.

**Identity v/s Role Confusion**

During adolescence, the onset of puberty results in bodily changes that may cause the adolescent to view himself/herself physically or as a potential adult along with the development of abstract reasoning. This helps the adolescents deal with abstractions such as justice, truth and identity in an attempt to develop a reasonably organized description of the self. He/she also begins to take responsibility for solving personal conflicts. If the process of trying and testing out roles results in no decision, the adolescent is likely to move into the next stage without a beginning or answers to questions about the self, leading to confusions about their personality.

**Intimacy v/s Isolation**

The period of young adulthood, usually shows individuals shaping their identity by sharing it with another person in an intimate relationship. The ability to share without the fear of losing one's identity brings about a commitment to others which may lead to procreation. The inability to do so leads to withdrawal from intimacy by isolating and alienating oneself from others.

**Generativity v/s Stagnation**

During the middle age, adults strive to create or nurture the things that outlast them and focus on the welfare of others, such as parents' concern towards their children. A feeling that individuals have accomplished in accordance to their ambition along with a caring nature makes them feel that they have made a mark in the world. Those, who fail to find a way to contribute, may feel disconnected or uninvolved with their community and society at large. A feeling of regret that one has not accomplished their leads to the 'mid-life' crisis.

**Ego integrity v/s Despair**

During the old age, reflecting and contemplating on one's life and how it has come to be takes up most of this stage. The individual's perception about his/her life being worthwhile leads to a sense of wholeness or unity in the life. This brings out the acceptance of one's life with the realization of the inevitability of death and a feeling of dignity and meaning in one's existence. On the contrary, a perception that the life has been a disorganized and meaningless array of events leads to a disappointment with one's life and a desperate fear of death.

While Erikson's theory describes the stages of changes that an individual goes through, L. E. Greiner's Growth Model initially described five growth phases in 1972, to which he later added a sixth phase. The start of each phase depicts a period of evolution with employees enjoying the new environment that is demonstrated with a steady growth. However, the end of each phase marks a revolutionary period of substantial turmoil and change. Handling this period is critical to the growth of the organization and determines its presence and existence. Below is each phase of Greiner's Curve along with the crisis that each phase leads to.

**Creativity Phase**

This phase defines the initial phase of the company, where the company is young and relatively small. A market is to be established and business owners communicate frequently with customers and react to their demands. Given that the

organization is fast growing, the founders find it difficult to run and manage the business simultaneously leading to a crisis of leadership. If the stage is managed and survived, the growth of strong leadership and direction drives the organization.

**Direction Phase**

This phase is characterized by clarity of strategy and a clear direction for the whole organization. As the organization develops further, there is a growing need to delegate power and decision-making to other levels in the organization. There may be power struggles between centralized information, decision sources and others in the organization. The problems that arise in this phase are to do with a lack of co-ordination where the organization can become fragmented and lack overall strategy.

**Delegation Phase**

This stage is marked by a decentralized structure, but the procedures and regulations still hold true, while accountability plays a key role. There is relative prosperity until top executives feel a loss of control marking the crisis of control. Attempts to regain control can threaten to stifle the growth and initiatives of the organization.

**Co-ordination Phase**

Formal planning procedures are established and communication networks are made more flexible. The organization is departmentalised to create line groups to monitor the workflow. The bureaucracy that entails may lead to resentment between the different tiers of management, leading to the crisis of red tape.

**Collaboration Phase**

The growth of the organization to a large size requires more flexible rather than a rigid approach. Reward schemes to incentivize teams and measures to improve team productivity with education programs are introduced. The organization has grown to the extent that a new strategy and mission is required leading to a crisis of identity.

**Alliance Phase**

The sixth stage was added by Greiner in 1998 to indicate the further growth of the company by forming alliances with other companies. The company can either deal with merging with other businesses or acquire or be acquired, all of which indicate that the crisis of identity is still bound to continue.

Erikson's theory of stages of development and Greiner Growth model both indicate that changes occur in phases. The conclusion derived from these theories is that employees go through predictable stages when a change is introduced in the organization. The similarity among these theories also shows that each stage or phase has its own conflicting forces of thesis and antithesis.

For an organization, it is important that the change derived from the individual conflicts as well as organizational crises are constructive. If not, a destructive synthesis of the conflict/crisis could permanently hinder the growth of the organization. While these theories describe conflicts that are external, cognitive dissonance depicts the internal conflicts an employee would face at the time of change. Hence, the Change Response Profile identifies these internal and external conflicts in the form of concerns that an employee would face and suggests how these concerns can be turned into productive and beneficial ways of overcoming resistance to promote organizational growth.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Changes lead to concerns of diverse nature within the minds of the employees. These concerns could be caused by external pressures such as competition due to other organizations or pressure from within due to the management's decisions. Change Response Profile (CRP) is a psychometric assessment that helps understand the stage of concern an employee or a group of employees are in, during the time of change. Knowing people's concerns will help in gathering the relevant information that can be provided at any time of the change process, which gives rise to four typical profiles people often have. The personal success of an organization depends on how well these concerns are tapped into to recognize and work through the stages of concern, thus accelerating the acceptance of the change.

## THE SIX STAGES OF CONCERNS ARE AS FOLLOWS

### Informants Concern
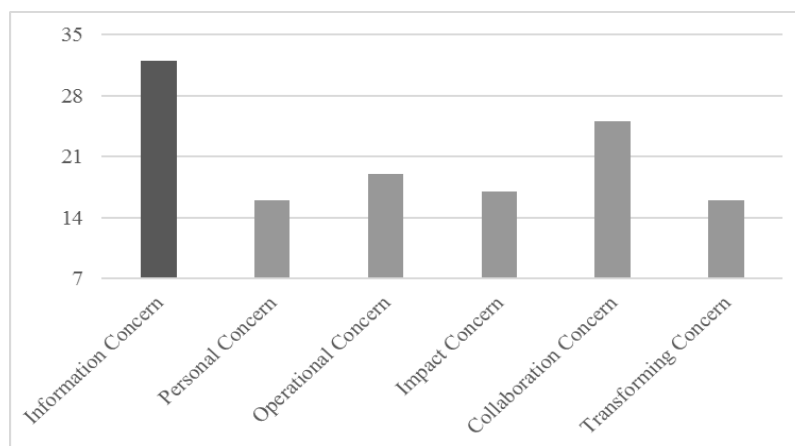


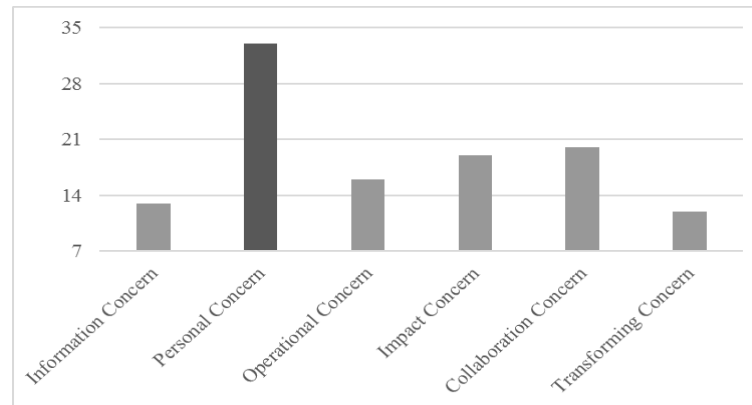**Figure 1: Graph Showing Individual Score on Information Concern**

At this stage, the employee is concerned about learning more about the change. The concerns do not focus on any aspect of the change and are general in nature. Questions that are likely to arise are similar to the statement "I've heard about the change, but I would like to have more information about it."

### Example

If a new technology is being installed in the organization, an information concerned employee is likely to ask questions about what the technology is, why it is being installed, who was it manufactured by, what all departments it is to be installed in, how many individuals would be using it, and so forth.

When the employee does not receive a satisfactory response, he/she would be doubtful about the authenticity of the technology installed, and is likely to avoid using the same. Thus, he/she may go back to conventional modes of operating, which may not bring in a return of investment.

### Personal Concern

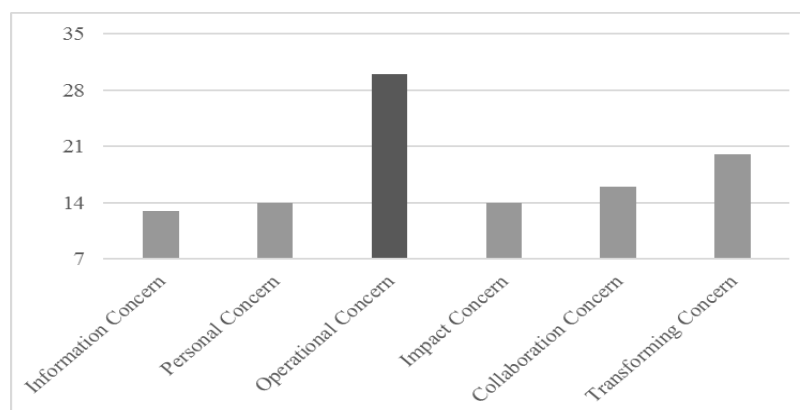**Figure 2: Graph Showing Individual Score on Personal Concern**

Employees at this stage, tend to perceive change as a personal threat. Their concerns reflect areas of their life at home, or another aspect of work that may be causing a great deal of personal discomfort and uncertainty. The thoughts that might arise resonate with questions such as "How am I going to be affected by the change? Will I have a job? Will my work change?"

**Example**

Continuing with the same example of technology instalment for all concerns, an employee with personal concerns is likely to be worried about how it is going to interfere with his/her work timings, would it increase or decrease the time spent in the office. If it increases, how would he/she travel through the peak hour traffic, how would reaching home late in turn affect the quality time he/she would spend with the family, etc.

An unsatisfactory fulfilment of personal concerns is most likely to provide doubts of continuing within the organization, because these individuals are concerned with maintaining a work-life balance. Their personal concerns are more intense than information an concern which overrides their learning about the change. This interferes with their objective thought process. Hence, their personal concerns must be reduced to build on a rational approach towards the same.

**Operational Concern**



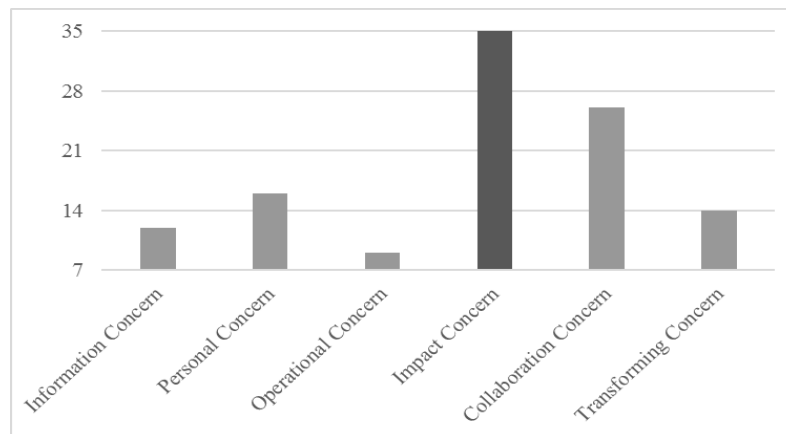**Figure 3: Graph Showing Individual Score on Operational Concern**

At this stage, employees are concerned with the coordination; logistics and the time it will take (or is taking) implement the change. These concerns become more intense with the first usage of the change and might involve thoughts such as "How is the change going to affect my daily tasks?"

**Example**

Employees with operational concerns ponder about, how the technology simplifies or complicates their usual routine tasks, whether it is eating into their time because of working with the new technology.

Failure to solve operational concerns can increase the transactional duties of employees. It has the potential to interfere with their self-development as well, since the time is lost in understanding the change and working around it. This could slow down their growth in the career as well as their personal front.

**Impact Concern**



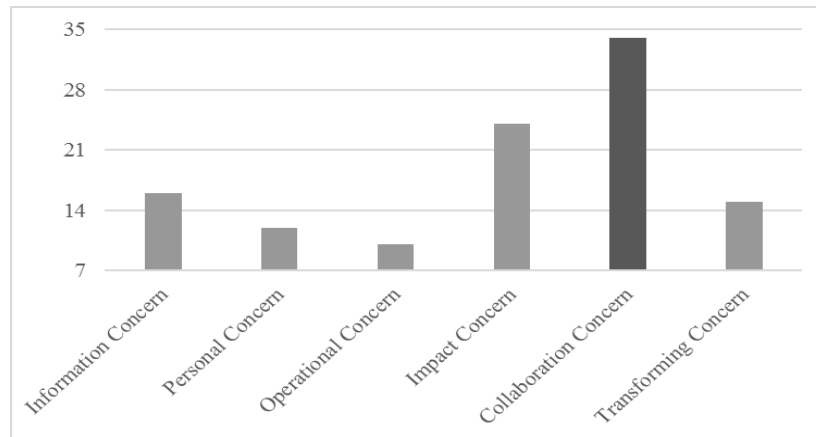**Figure 4: Graph Showing Individual Score on Impact Concern**

These concerns involve thoughts about how the change affects the members of the organization and how to increase its impact, mostly revolving around how it will impact one's own work group. Thoughts are likely to be similar to "What will the impact of the change be on our organization and/or department as a whole?"

**Example**

The impact concern of the new technology could be threefold: "how does it affect me, how does it affect the department, how does it affect the entire organization". The concerns revolve around whether the technology is going to support his/her work or entirely replace his/her job role. If this does replace the current role, would he/she be out of a job or transferred to another department?

Neglecting impact concerns would leave the employees with questions about their future in the organization. This is crucial for the management to understand, in order to identify the employees' areas of strengths to make best use of existing potential.

**Collaboration Concern**



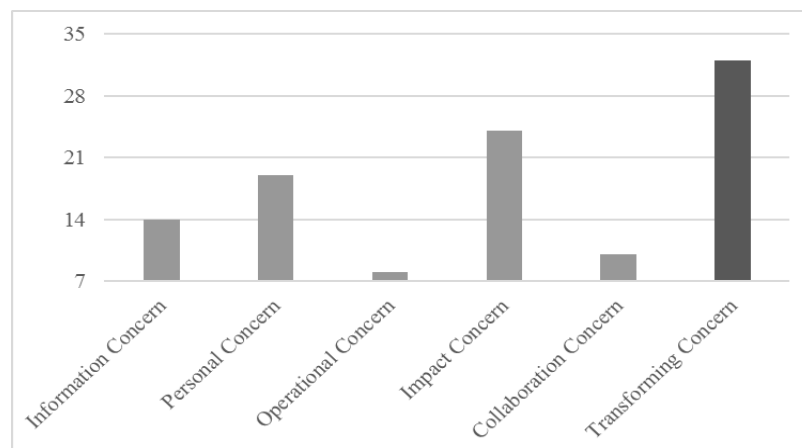**Figure 5: Graph Showing Individual Score on Collaboration Concern**

These concerns revolve around how the employee can share with others on steps to implement the change, and are usually eager to contribute information on how to make the change more effectively, which are also thoughts that are similar to what Team Leaders or Managers ponder over. They tend to question "How can I work with other people in the organization to make (the change) a reality in our organization / department?"

**Example**

The concerns that crop up in the minds of these individuals revolve around how easy or challenging it would be to work with a group to make the technology a success, whether it is necessary to work as a group or individually, and what measures could be taken to bring others to join hands to do the same.

This concern is highly crucial in the change management process. Failure to attend to this concern is an indication of fallout in the change. This concern has the potential to make or break the company, since an organization cannot exist without people and their collaboration.

**Transforming Concern**



**Figure 6: Graph Showing Individual Score on Transforming Concern**

Employees at this stage have definite ideas about the proposed or currently implemented change and usually go about considering it, making major changes or trying something completely different. Their thought is likely to be along the lines of "I think there's a better way of doing it (the change) than what's been introduced in the organization."

**Example**

These concerns revolve around experimenting with the technology, figuring out different ways of using the same, what additional tasks can be done with it, and so on. When these concerns are not satisfied, employees invariably stick to older methods, since they are unable to find new ways of going about it.

It must be noted that every employee is likely to have more than one concern and the graphs are only customized for comprehending the concept. The graph representation is bound to be different for each individual, and can reveal more than one higher concern. These results indicate that the organization has a targeted approach to tackle resistance, rather than a general change management intervention.

## METHODOLOGY

### Purpose

The aim of this assessment is to determine the concerns employees have when a change is implemented in their organization.

### Test Audience

CRP is targeted towards working individuals and is not restricted on the sector or the nature of the job.

### Applicability of the Assessment

Owing to the fluidity of the nature of the assessment in terms of the sector, it allows an organization of any size or structure to understand the employees' concerns and the potential reasons for their resistance. It helps organizations channelize their efforts on dealing with resistance with a strong data and hence derive a calculated outcome which defines an effective change management implementation.

### Quality of the Test Items and the Test Manual

The test items are easy to understand and are formulated using simple English language. They are relatively short and specific. The test material is durable and thus does not change across time.

### Nature of the Items

The test contains a total of 30 items that are characteristic of the concerns an employee faces, developed with the CRP model as a foundation. The responses to the items are solely based on the perception of each employee that is solely focused on the current situation. All the items measure the concern and are hence valid.

### Assessment Administrator Qualification

The user needs to have an average of 2 years work experience in managing people, or a PG in Psychology/Sociology or an MBA.

### Instructions for Test Takers

Please tick "0" on the scale, for those statements you believe completely irrelevant. Other statements may represent concerns you do have. For these statements, you should tick the numbers 1 through 7 on the scale as shown in the sample statement below.

**Sample Item**

In the following statements, the words "the change" or "this change" refers to a particular change being implemented in your organization.

Think of the change in terms of your own perceptions of what it involves. Please respond to each statement in terms of your present concerns about your involvement or potential involvement with the change being implemented in your organization.

**Please write the organizational change in the space given.**

The "change" in my organization is _____

**Below is a sample item:**

I am interested in learning more about this change.

| Irrelevant | Not true | | Slightly true | | Mostly true | Significantly true | Very true |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Scoring of the Test (For Paper and Pencil Only, the Scoring of online Test is Auto Generated)**

The scoring of the test is objective and standard; hence there is no disparity in scoring irrespective of the administrator scoring the results.

- The table below contains six columns.

- The numbers to the left of each blank line refer to the question number in the questionnaire.

- Please record your response to each question on the blank line to the right of each number.

- Continue until all the columns are filled.

- Add up the scores and write it in the space provided under each column.

|  | Information Concern | Personal Concern | Operational Concern | Impact Concern | Collaboration Concern | Transforming Concern |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 06. | 11. | 01. | 10. | 04. | 03. |
|  | 08. | 15. | 02. | 13. | 09. | 12. |
|  | 19. | 23. | 05. | 18. | 22. | 14. |
|  | 20. | 25. | 07. | 21. | 26. | 16. |
|  | 28. | 30. | 17. | 29. | 27. | 24. |
| Total |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Figure 7: Image shows the scoring pattern for CRP**

**Note:** The assessment will not be given in the paper-pencil format at any given time. It will only be an online test. The above information is given for knowledge of the instructions and how the scoring is done.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The scores were tabulated based on the scoring key to obtain a graph for each employee that creates an individual profile. Specifically, a Pareto chart, as illustrated below can be used to analyze the order of importance of the concerns. The minimum value for a concern is 7, and the maximum is 35.
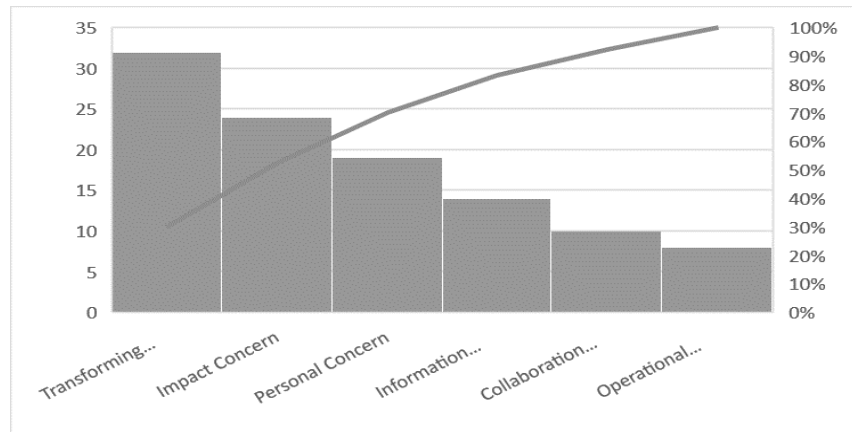


**Figure 8: Graph Showing Concerns In Descending Order Of Importance**

This helps the organization understand and work towards those concerns that are of significance to that specific employee. This mode is helpful, when the total number of employees is relatively small.

However, for larger organizations that accommodate hundreds and thousands of employees, individual analysis is exhausting as well as cumbersome. A group analysis can provide a larger focus, which can be understood based on the following case studies. Each case study is an example of how different organizational interventions reveal a different order of concerns, and what its implications are. Initially, the data are analyzed individually as two separate organizations undergoing change. A comparative analysis is drawn to show as an example, how the concerns could vary for the same change in the same organization with different demographics.

In order to do a group analysis, the raw scores of the participants from the organizations were converted into standardized scores (standard eight). Each individual's score was analyzed to select the primary concern (the highest score) followed by the secondary concern/s (consecutive highest number, multiple concerns can be selected if they are all of the same value). The overall primary and secondary scores are tabulated.

**Figure 9: Organization a's Group Analysis Graph**

For the above organization, the group analysis (Figure 9) indicates that the highest concern that the organization faces relates to collaboration, followed by personal, information, impact, transforming and operational concerns, in the same order. Highest concern in collaboration indicates that a majority of the group is worried about working with others to work through the change. The change initiative in this case brings up questions and uncertainties of their own role as well. While these employees are open to the change, they are also apprehensive about the team dynamics and co-ordination issues that might potentially crop up. However, the immediate secondary concern, we notice is that the employees are worried about how the change would impact their personal life and what aspect of the change would contribute to/ withhold their growth. This group is also interested in knowing the technicalities of the change, which could facilitate their need to suggest new ideas around it.

Operational concern stands with the least importance, indicating that the group feels that the change does not affect their daily operations. It must be noted that although operational and transforming concerns have the lowest scores, they still are of significance to those specific employees. Thus, resolving concerns with a strategic and targeted effort can bring down the resistance within the company. Moreover, a higher personal concern indicates that most of these employees would be willing to collaborate, provided their individual worries are satisfied. This is because personal concerns are still a threat, and bound to overtake collaboration when unresolved. Further, these concerns are directed towards the people rather than structural aspects, indicating that the changes in the systems, the financial investments, its impact on the external environment, etc. are mostly ignored.
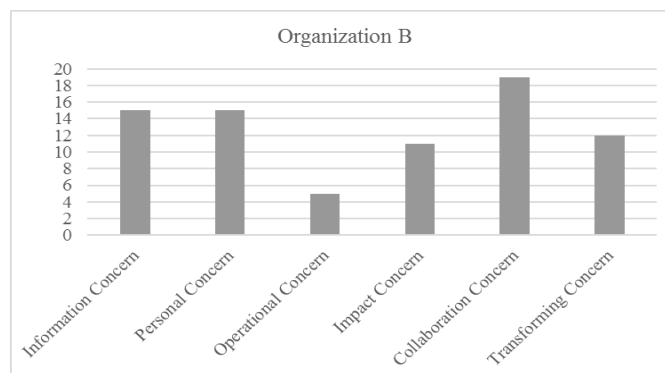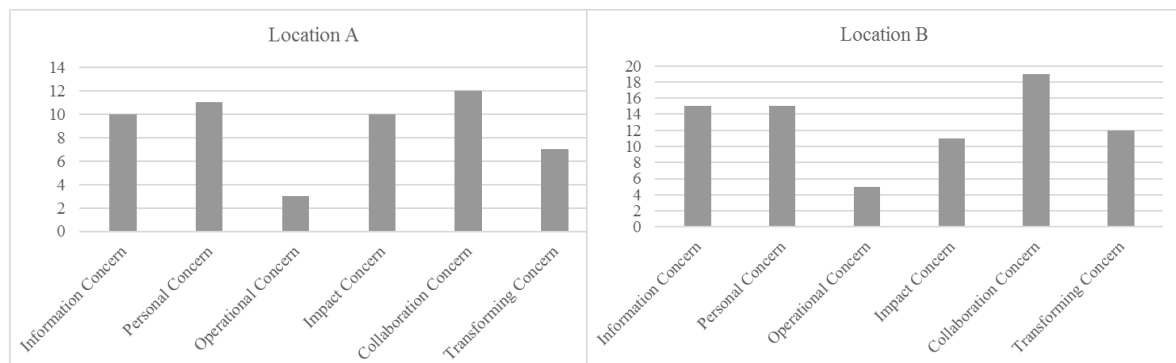


**Figure 10: Organization Bs Group Analysis Graph**

Figure 10 shows that the group from the second organization is anxious about the communication and coordination issues with the team, but are less worried about the interference of the change in their daily responsibilities indicating that the change introduced is likely to ease out routine work. However, the information and personal concerns are high, indicating that the group is also worried about how the change could affect them. Not receiving a detailed understanding about the need for the change, how it could intervene into their daily routines, etc. could make them feel that the change is irrelevant. Hence, although the group is willing to work towards acceptance, these two concerns may overtake the need for collaborating when they are unable making sense of it. This could lead to attrition. Transforming concern is relatively higher, indicating that the employees are looking towards making modifications, further indicating that they are not completely satisfied with the change. This could lead to a feeling of the change being unnecessary. The group is also seemingly worried about its effect on their team and their departments. Overall, higher values of the concerns indicate that the company is likely to face resistance from various directions proving to be problematic.

**Comparative Analysis**

Below are two graphs taken as an example to show how the same change process is likely to bring out different concerns, assuming that the sample sizes are equal. Here, two regional locations have been considered. However, this is applicable across multiple teams, departments, geographical locations, SBUs, etc. It is also useful during mergers and acquisitions to strategically approach the concerns of two different organizations coming together.



**Figure 11: Organization C's Group Analysis Graph for Location A and B**

In the current example, Organization C has almost similar concerns between the different regions. The change crops up doubts about everyone's willingness to participate in the change process, indicated by collaboration concern. Both the groups also show their apprehensions about its effect on their personal lives. Information concerning will bring out questions about the requirement of the change in the future, and are unaware of the technical workings of the change. Thus, they are curious to learn about it. Low operational concerns indicate that the groups believe that the change has a low interference in their daily routine and time management.

Figure 11 also indicates that impact concern is higher in Location B and lower at the other location. This could mean that at location B, the change is likely to have an effect on working and co-ordination with the colleagues/team members/ departments. Higher transforming concern too, at Location B indicates that the group questions the applicability of the change.

## CONCLUSIONS

CRP is a short assessment that entails an average of just 10-15 minutes of self-report. It helps in mapping the potential areas of concern that employees have towards the change that is implemented. Having a simplistic language with a general outlook, it is applicable to an organizational change of any nature. It provides a targeted manner of overcoming resistance rather than focusing on one general training which lacks clarity in outcome

## IMPLICATIONS

The article presents the different concerns an employee faces during a change process through the psychometric assessment, CRP. Just like human development, change process too occurs in stages. The process can be considered by taking the organization at large, as well as each employee; however, the article focuses on the human aspect of organizational change and how it affects both the individual and the organization. Each stage of concern that an employee faces indicates the reasons for internal resistance towards change.

The assessment provides various benefits. Firstly, organizations can undertake a targeted focus of intervention, by managing those concerns that employers require. Moreover, the assessment can be used to measure change at periodic intervals of the change to track progress, and derive whether the concerns are being met. Utilizing the assessments to conduct a pre-test and post-test after introducing a change management initiative can provide scientific data on the success of the same. Lastly, organizations can create engagement initiatives based on the responses to the assessment. It aids in aligning initiatives with the problems specific to the organization, thereby bringing about a return on investment.

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