FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS TO CHANGE ACCEPTANCE: A LEARNINGMANAGEMENT SYSTEM UTILIZATION IN THE LENS OF THE SELF- DETERMINATION THEORY

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ABSTRACT. *Organizational change is a critical aspect of any modern organization and is essential for continuous improvement and growth. However, it is often met with resistance, and many individuals may find it challenging to accept new systems or processes. To better understand the facilitators and barriers to change acceptance towards an LMS, the researchers draw on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the importance of autonomy-supportive environments, specifically on the three facets -understanding the rationale, feelings acknowledge, and having a choice. This study aims to investigate the views and experiences of University educators in the introduction and implementation of an LMS. The study purposely selected 12 university educators, and their narratives were thematically analyzed using the five steps of Castleberry & Nolen (2018): compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. The University educators' positive and negative views and experiences on introducing and implementing an LMS resulted in identifying facilitators and barriers to change acceptance. Facilitators are the factors that make change acceptance possible more smoothly, while barriers are the factors that hinder University educators' ability to accept change in the context of LMS utilization. Findings suggest facilitators and barriers to change acceptance have implications for organizations introducing change to their employees. University Administrators can address barriers such as implicit objectives, lack of empathy, and disengagement by promoting the facilitators. Organizations must be aware of the potential challenges that may arise when introducing new technologies. They must address these barriers to ensure employees can effectively utilize the technology and are self-determined.*

Keywords: Change acceptance, Change management, Organizational change,

1. INTRODUCTION

Change is inevitable and something dreaded by some because it is disruptive, but also widely accepted by others because it sparks growth in both personal and professional life [1]. Organizational change is a critical aspect of any modern organization and is essential for continuous improvement and development. Nevertheless, change is often met with resistance, and many individuals may find it challenging to accept new systems or processes. Organizations that effectively manage change are more likely to thrive and remain competitive [2].

According to the Self Determination Theory (SDT) [3], individuals are more likely to accept change when they feel a sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Human beings can become self-determined when their desire to have the skills needed for success (competence), their desire to experience a sense of belongingness to other people (relatedness), and the feeling of being in control of their behaviors and goals (autonomy) are fulfilled [4]. SDT suggests that when these three motivators are provided to humans, they are more likely to take actions that will help them achieve their goals [5].

One key aspect of SDT is the concept of autonomy support. SDT claims that people also need autonomy; in addition to benefiting from feeling effective in their behavior, people also benefit from experiencing a sense of choice and authorship in their behavior. In addition, Gagne and Deci [6] noted that autonomy support is an essential social-contextual factor for predicting internalization and, thus, autonomous behavior. The three facets of autonomy support proposed by Gagne et al. [7]) are understanding the rationale, feelings acknowledged, and having a choice. Understanding the rationale is the perceived understanding of the reasons for the organizational change. Feelings acknowledged is the

perceived acknowledgment of opinions and ideas in the change implementation process. Having a choice is the perceived personal control over the implemented change. These facets effectively increase employee motivation and engagement during times of change [8]. By providing employees with choices and opportunities to express their feelings and perspectives, organizations can create a more positive and supportive environment conducive to change acceptance. Further, employees who perceived to have received quality change communication were more open towardthe change.

In the context of universities, implementing a new learning management system (LMS) can be a significant change that requires educators' acceptance to be effective.

This study explores the facilitators and barriers to change acceptance of a learning management system among university educators. To better understand the factors that facilitate or bar change acceptance, the researchers draw on the Self- Determination Theory (SDT), emphasizing the importance of autonomy-supportive environments. In light of the significance of autonomy-support in change acceptance, this study aims to examine the views and experiences of university educators during the introduction and implementation of the LMS that eventually led to the use or non-use of the introduced change. This study will contribute to the existing literature onorganizational change and provide practical recommendations for managers and leaders by identifying the factors that facilitateor bar change acceptance. This study will likely provide insightsinto the most effective ways to support employees during timesof change and help organizations create a more positive environment that promotes acceptance of change. By doing so, organizations can better manage change and position themselves for success in today's fast-paced working environment.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design, Setting, and Participants

This study utilized a qualitative research design conducted in a state-run university in Southern Philippines that implemented a learning management system at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The researchers recruited 12 faculty members from all five colleges in one of its main campuses. The participants were users and non-users of the University LMS. The individuals who consented to participate in the interview were

purposely selected based on their ability to provide an in-depth narrative of their views and experiences on the introduction and implementation of the LMS. This non-random purposive technique was deemed appropriate since these samples are the best to address the research purpose, 10].

and a particular trait exists in a population [9]. Table 1 shows the profiling of the participants, which focused on their gender, years of teaching experience, employment status (regular, part-time, and contract of service), type of teaching load (undergraduate, graduate, or both), instructional setting (lecture, laboratory, or both) and use behavior towards the LMS. The university educators who participated were assigned number codes to preserve their anonymity. The first University educator who participated in the interview was given a code of UE1, and so on until the twelfth participant with UE12 as its code. This study adhered to the principles of data saturation. Samples of 12 may be cases where data saturation occurs among a relatively homogeneous population   [

Table 1. Profile of the Participants						
Code Name	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Employment Status	Type of Teaching Load	Instructional Setting	Use behavior towards the LMS
UE1	F	9	Regular	Both	Both	User
UE2	M	2	Part-time	Undergrad	Both	User
UE3	F	3	COS	Undergrad	Both	User
UE4	F	7	Regular	Both	Both	Non-User
UE5	M	3	Part-time	Undergrad	Both	User
UE6	F	2	COS	Undergrad	Lecture	User
UE7	F	6	Regular	Both	Lecture	Non-user
UE8	M	7	Regular	Undergrad	Both	Non-User
UE9	M	3	COS	Undergrad	Lecture	User
UE10	F	3	COS	Undergrad	Both	Non-user
UE11	F	16	Regular	Both	Both	Non-User
UE12	F	45	Part-time	Both	Lecture	Non-user

Table 2. Interview Protocol
Semi-Structured Interview Questions
Understanding the Rationale
Main Question: What are the reasons the University said for introducing and implementing the LMS?
Probing question: How was your reception towards these reasons?
Feelings Acknowledge
How did the administration consider your opinions, ideas, and worries in introducing and implementing the LMS?
Having a Choice
In what ways do you have a choice in introducing and implementing the LMS?

2.2 Research Instrument and Validity

The study employed an interview protocol (Table 2), a semi-structured interview guide, to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of educators' views and experiences on the introduction and implementation and their use and non-use of the LMS. There were three main questions and one probing question asked during the interview. The open-ended questions were faced validated by three experts (3 educators who have research experience in the field and who are potential research subjects). They validated whether the questions captured the topics under investigation and looked for common errors like confusing and leading questions. The

experts scribbled some notes on the questionnaire while doing the validation. After the validation, appropriate changes were made before the interview proper was done.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure

Participation was willfully done with no signs of force or coercion. The one-on-one interview was face-to-face to provide anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were allowed to answer in the language that they were most comfortable with to express their feelings and thoughts as precisely as they could. Participants' permission was solicited before any recording of the interview was done.

The qualitative data were thematically analyzed using the five steps of Castleberry & Nolen [11]: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding.

2.3a Compiling

Compiling was transcribing the responses using the process of intelligent verbatim transcription. This process is often used in written works to remove fillers and repetitions, irrelevant or off-topic sentences or conversations, pauses, and noises, aiming to create a concise, readable transcript reflecting the participants' voice and intended meaning [12]. Transcription was done by the researchers alone to be intimately familiar with the data, which helped in the other steps of the data analysis [11]. In cases when researchers worked independently, Morse [13] suggests that member

checking or participant validation is done to check for accuracy and resonance with their views and experiences. This technique also helps avoid researcher bias, wherein the researcher's voice dominates that of the participant [14]. Member checking was done by showing the final transcripts to the participants to validate, verify or assess the trustworthiness of the results [15].

2.3b Disassembling
Disassembling was done through the process of coding. Coding is assigning a word or phrase to segments of data [9] and capturing the essence of that data segment [16]. The researchers developed definitions for each code or group of codes and formed categories along the coding process. Categories are reduced and classified data grouped into meaningful, similar, or seemingly related codes [16]. Coding was performed through mixed approaches such as *In vivo coding* or using the participants' exact language to generate codes; *descriptive coding* that uses nouns to summarize data segments; *values coding* that focuses on conflicts, struggles, and power issues [16]. Data were also coded using the theoretical thematic analysis or deductive approach since it captured data relevant to the research objective [17]. The researchers processed a substantial amount of textual data with the help of Microsoft Excel, which is also as effective as other qualitative software programs [11,18]. A matrix was used to organize the interview

transcripts per question per facet investigated and the corresponding responses of each participant. A single column consisting of comments from all participants was generated. Separate columns for preliminary coding and re-coding were developed as the researchers read and re-read the transcripts. Another set of columns was added for categories as the coding process unfolded.

2.3c Reassembling
Reassembling was when the disassembled data were put back together within themes. The codes with which it is associated were put into context with each other to create categories and overall themes. A theme is an essential aspect of the data concerning the research objective, representing a patterned response or meaning within the data set [19]. Thematic hierarchy per facet investigated was made to visualize the relationships of the clustered similar codes to produce categories and analyze the restructured data at multiple levels. The categories provided the researcher with a view across the broad, thematic landscape of the data.

2.3c.1 Understanding the Rationale (UR)
In the Understanding the Rationale facet, the theme of Facilitators arose from the category of Explicit Objectives, which originated from the code continuity of teaching and learning. The theme of Barriers arose from the category of Implicit Objectives, which originated from the code beneficial to the University.

2.3c.2 Feelings Acknowledge (FA)
In the Feelings Acknowledge facet, the theme Facilitators arose from the category of Consultative, which originated from the code consultative and responsive. The theme Barriers arose from the category Lack of Empathy, which originated from the code, Lack of User Inputs.

2.3c.3 Having a Choice (HC)
In the Having a Choice facet, the theme Facilitators arose

from the category of Empowered, which originated from the codes' flexibility and customization and ownership and control. The theme of Barriers arose from the category of Disengagement, which originated from the codes' lack of choice, uncertainty, and confusion.

2.3d Interpreting
As part of interpreting, a thematic map, a visual representation of the themes, categories, and their relationships [19], was created **(Figure 1).** The elements in the thematic map were defined according to the themes and categories that resulted from the thematic analysis.

2.3 d Concluding
Concluding happened when the thematic analysis identified facilitators and barriers to change acceptance based on the views and experiences of the University educators.

2.4 Ethical Considerations
All phases of the research process have addressed ethical considerations, written permission, verbal and written consent, anonymity and confidentiality, voluntary participation, and withdrawal. In addition, the research process addressed recruitment strategies, identified participants, type of data to be collected, appropriate sample size, settings, identified recording methods, and data collection and analysis procedures.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
From the narratives of the interview participants, preliminary codes, codes, and categories were developed according to each facet of autonomy-support. The facilitators and barriers to change acceptance in this context were discussed and described, along with direct quotes from the narratives of the interview participants
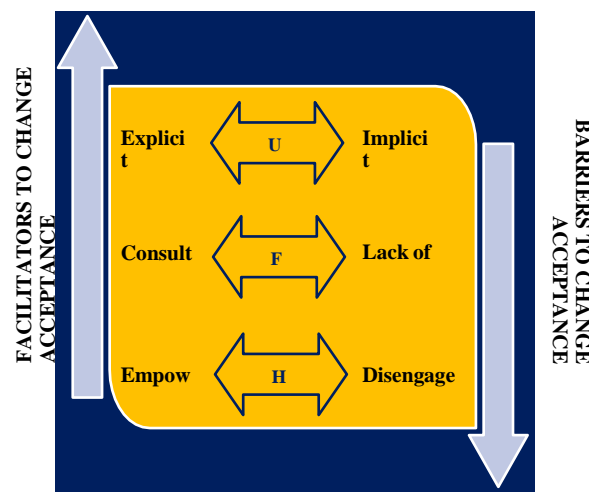

Figure 1. Overall Thematic Map for the Facilitators and Barriers to Change Acceptance of University Educators for an LMS

3.4 Theme 1: Facilitators to Change Acceptance
The Facilitators to Change Acceptance are the factors that make change acceptance possible more smoothly in the context of the University educators' Use of Behavior on the LMS. The positive views and experience of the University educators facilitate their LMS utilization. Facilitators to change acceptance were: Explicit Objectives, Consultative,

and Empowered.

3.4a Explicit Objectives

Explicit objectives provide a clear understanding of the purpose and benefits of using the LMS. Educators need to understand how the LMS aligns with the institution's goals and how it can enhance their teaching practices.

UE1: "In all honesty, the administration was not lacking in terms of giving information. They really wanted to help the teachers. They are doing their best so that the teachers' condition during online teaching will be uplifted and motivated to continue teaching despite the pandemic. But maybe because introducing something new like this is a process, it needs the right time for it to be successfully accepted by the teachers."

UE2: "The administration finds ways to continue education, despite the pandemic."

UE10: "To monitor faculty members if they are conducting classes during the pandemic."

Consultative

"Consultative" refers to involving educators in the decision-making process. Being consultative can be achieved by engaging educators in planning and implementation, seeking feedback, and addressing concerns. Involving educators in decision-making can make them feel valued and more willing to accept the change.

UE1: "Since there are many feedbacks like it is hard, tiresome, etc., as a result of surveys to different users, the administration conducted the training. They pay attention to this feedback and do something about it."

UE9: "Right after the training, there was an evaluation, and we were asked for our suggestions as users of the LMS."

UE11: "The concern granted was the request for another session."

3.4   b Empowered

"Empowered" gives educators a sense of ownership over the changes made. They felt control over the LMS because it is flexible and customizable. Empowering
educators to take ownership of the changes can help create a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

UE1:" I always feel that we have freedom in using the LMS because we can always choose what features to use. We are also given a choice if we want to integrate with other apps so that it can be fully utilized and won't be left unutilized."

UE2:" You have all the rights to access and edit your postings. I really feel that I own my page."

UE6: "I can give restrictions and have the liberty to choose what materials to upload."

3.5   Theme 2: Barriers to Change Acceptance

The Barriers to Change Acceptance are the factors that make change acceptance in the context of the University educators' Use Behavior on the LMS difficult. The negative views and experiences of the University educators bar their LMS utilization**.** Barriers to Change Acceptance were: Implicit Objectives, Lack of Empathy, and Disengagement.

3.5a Implicit Objectives

"Implicit objectives" refer to the lack of clarity regarding the LMS's purpose and benefits. If educators are not clear about the benefits of using the LMS, they are unwilling to adopt it.

UE1: "Also, it is a source of pride that the University is a Science and Technology University that was able to develop

its brand of LMS."

UE5: "Instead of getting a third party who will develop and maintain an LMS for the university, it is more advantageous to develop its own and save on budget."

UE7: "There was a hidden agenda for why the LMS was implemented. We were turned into a laboratory for the LMS to be marketed to others. They communicated the LMS but only to announce its implementation."

3.5b Lack of Empathy

A lack of empathy from the institution or the LMS provider can hinder change acceptance. "Lack of empathy" refers to when the University administrators or change managers do not understand or acknowledge the concerns and feedback of educators. It can hinder change acceptance because educators need to feel that their concerns and feedback are heard and addressed.

UE3: "Honestly, we were not asked about our ideas before the LMS was implemented. They just conducted training on how to use it."

UE5: "They did not solicit our opinions and ideas. They just trained us how to use it."

UE7: "It was just introduced because it will be implemented. It was not consultative. The information was all alien to me, which made me question its relevance to the present situation. Did the developers refer to the principles of project management? How did you conduct the situational analysis to come up with the design? You just created the design and forced it on the community."

UE10: "They did not solicit our opinions and suggestions for the LMS. It was just after the training that they asked. Our worries and concerns were only entertained right after we had already experienced the difficulties with the technical assistance of the office in charge of the LMS."

3.5c Disengagement

"Disengagement" from the change process can significantly hinder change acceptance. It refers to needing more motivation or involvement in the change process. If educators are not motivated or engaged in the process, they may be unwilling to adopt the LMS. A lack of choice or involvement in the decision-
making process and clarity over the changes made can cause disengagement.

UE8: "I have no choice because it was immediately implemented."

UE10: "No choice in the introduction and implementation. You can choose what features to use. However, it is too much for the faculty to handle."

UE11: "Were we given a choice? Hahaha. We were not forced to use it. We are just being encouraged to use it."

UE12: "Too many features to choose from. No choice in its introduction and implementation."

Change acceptance plays a crucial role in successfully implementing and utilizing the LMS. Individual members' reaction to organizational change is also a vital determinant of the successful implementation. The University educators' understanding of the rationale behind introducing and implementing the LMS is relevant to their self-determination in facilitating acceptance of the change. Effective group functioning can influence people's perception of an organizational goal. Developing and communicating shared

goals and managing change intensify responses in realizing the organization's mission and vision [20]. Effective communication and collaboration between the faculty and administration are essential to prioritize the needs and concernsof the faculty to ensure that the LMS is utilized to its fullest potential. In managing change effectively, empathy is crucial in addressing employees' emotional responses and concerns. The consultative ways of introducing and implementing the LMS can help address employees' concerns and improve their emotional response to change. [21]. In the context of LMS, it iscrucial to provide complete information and reasons behind introducing and implementing new technology. Moreover, offering some choice and acknowledging feelings about the introduced change can facilitate acceptance of the organizational change. Klaus et al. [22] stated that organizational change's success depends on objective and subjective dimensions. The objective dimension requires strategically aligning all change initiatives within an integrated overall concept. The subjective dimension involves understanding the relationship between the company's strategic goals and the planned change initiatives, which is necessary for understanding and acceptance among employees who are expected to put the change into practice. Furthermore, they concluded that a participatory and dialogue-oriented approach offers the possibility of closing knowledge gaps suitably and strengthening acceptance and confidence in the change initiatives of a company. Additionally, Schulz-Knappe et al.

[23], the study revealed that change communication variables (e.g., involvement, participation, and appreciation) explain the largest share of variance, indicating that transparent communication and including employees in the process result in positive attitudes toward change and support it.

4.   CONCLUSIONS

The University educators' positive and negative views and experiences on introducing and implementing an LMS resulted in two themes: Facilitators and Barriers. Explicit Objectives, Consultative, and Empowered facilitate the University educators' Use Behavior on the LMS. University educators alsoidentified Barriers such as Implicit Objectives, Lack of Empathy, and Disengagement. The recent investigation on change acceptance in an organization in the context of LMS utilization of University educators has provided a complete understanding of the factors considered facilitators and barriers to change acceptance. Findings suggest facilitators and barriers

to change acceptance have implications for organizations introducing change to their employees. Successful organizational change requires promoting these facilitators and addressing these barriers. These can ensure the University administrators and Change Managers successfully utilize LMS in the University in the coming years. University Administrators may address the barriers, such as implicit objectives, lack of empathy, and disengagement, by promoting the above facilitators. Organizations must be aware of the potential challenges that may arise when introducing new technologies. They must address these

barriers to ensure employees can effectively utilize the technology and are self-determined.

5.   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and foregoing conclusions, it is recommended that organizations' change managers create a supportive environment where educators feel that their concerns and feedback are heard and addressed. University educators may be consulted and empowered in the adoption process to ensure that the LMS aligns with their instructional objectives. It is further recommended to involve educators in decision-making and give them a sense of ownership over the changes made. Moreover, goals should be explicit to clearly understand the purpose and benefits of using the LMS.

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