

An Analysis of Resistance in the Context of Job Interview

Dr. Shashi Surana

Associate Professor
Department of English (Business Communication Studies)
Narsee Monjee College of Commerce & Economics
Mumbai, India

Abstract- Exposure influences resistance. This qualitative study analyzed resistance behaviour of participants in a job interview. A structured open-ended questionnaire was administered to a purposive sample from the niche population of Chartered Accountants. Thematic analyses and interpretation find that interviewers are concerted in their resistance, whereas candidates' resistance is confused.

Keywords: Job Interview; Resistance;

Review of Literature

Resistance is an individual's behavioural attempt at reasserting his lost freedom (Brehm, 1966). Individuals believe that in a given situation, they can choose behaviour/s to undertake; that they possess the ability to undertake certain behaviours; and that they possess the freedom to decide when and how they may behave. these beliefs make-up their freedom). Anything that obstructs free behaviours is seen as a threat (Brehm, 1966). In the context of organizations, Perceived Helplessness of Process (PHP) is a threat to individual's free behaviours (Knowles & Linn, 2004; 2021). Information that is illegitimate; that is inappropriate; and/or that highlights potential loss if disregarded is perceived as threat (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2017). Even persuasion that is in one's best interest but which is perceived as interfering with free behaviours is seen as a threat. Occurrence of persuasive content both early on and later in a message influences perception of threat. Threat motivates the individual to resist i.e. undertake behaviour/s that can preserve free behaviour (Brehm, 1966).

Resistance expresses itself as Anger followed-by Counter-argument (Dillard & Shen, 2005). The intertwined model (Dillard & Shen, 2005) has been widely validated for analyzing and/or predicting resistance behaviours. A resistance behaviour is rooted in the cognitive, affective/emotional, and/or the physiological dimensions of an individual's personality. (Dillard & Shen, 2005) identify concrete expression of reactance through the 3 dimensions.

Cognitive	Affective	Physiological
Counter-argument	Anger	Increased Heart-beat
Upgrading the Eliminated Alternative	Aggression	
Downgrading the Proposed Alternative	Hostility	
Disagreement	Uncomfort	
Deriding the Source of Threat		

According to the Inter-twined model, reactance is a 2-step process where Anger (Emotion) is followed-by Counter-argument (Negative Cognition). Extant literature finds that the model holds good even as the nature of reactance varies with motivation (Approach i.e. an attempt to restore lost freedom Vs. Avoidance i.e. withdrawing or accepting and rationalizing threat because of perceived incapability of self at reversing threat), culture (Individualistic Vs. Collectivistic), and experience of threat (Self Vs. Vicarious) (Steindl, Jonas, Sittenthaler, Traut-Mattausch, & Greenberg, 2015). The Inter-twined model is efficient because a certain combination of aspects of behaviour can take various forms. The recipient of a resistance behaviour may not always be able to identify all the forms of resistance behaviours that he confronts, but awareness of the intertwined model can alert him to the underlying cognitive, emotional, and/or physiological aspects of resistance that he must prepare against. Conversely, the recipient of resistance may be able to identify the form but not the underlying aspect that his own behaviour has upset.

resistance varies with the underlying emotional intensity. A threat is about potential loss of autonomy (Markus, 1983) and/or pain. Loss and pain can take infinite forms that crystallize as resistance behaviours, and emotional intensity distinguishes resistance into phases (Festinger, 1957). The 4 phases of resistance that move along a continuum include Reactance, Distrust, Scrutiny, and Inertia (Knowles & Linn, 2004; 2021).

1. Reactance

Anything that threatens an individual's choice alternatives triggers Affect (I don't like it) and Motivation (I won't do it) as response. This is reactance.

2. Distrust

When an individual suspects the motive underlying a proposal or when an individual is skeptical of information presented to him, it triggers Affect (I don't like it) and Cognition (I don't believe it). This is Distrust.

3. Scrutiny

The awareness that one is the target of influence triggers Cognition (I don't believe it) response that takes the forms of evaluation, expose, and countering weak aspect/s of proposal presented to self. This is scrutiny.

4. Inertia

When call for change is responded-to with inactivity instead of reactance, it frustrates the change intended. This is inertia.

(Rosenberg & Siegel, 2017)review the large body of theoretical and empirical studies on resistance. (Knowles & Linn, 2004; 2021)investigate the interaction of professionals with healthcare information systems. Individuals’ resistance is to anticipated threats from use of technology, which itself is passive. A job interview is an interaction between a job candidate and a prospective job giver i.e. employer. Both entities in this interaction are active participants. The present study aims to identify and analytically describe resistance behaviours of actors in a job interview.

Research Design

Definition

Resistance is a multi-dimensional and phased behavioural attempt aimed at reasserting one's lost freedom.

Research Method

(Dillard & Shen, 2005)reason that because reactance mostly is cognitive, self-report techniques make it (reactance) measurable. This study uses the purposive sampling technique for gathering qualitative data i.e. reflective narratives of experiences in a job interview. The sample is drawn from a niche population of students and qualified Chartered Accountants in India. After preliminary interaction, a structured open-ended questionnaire seeking reflective narratives of job interview experience was sent-out by E-mail to individuals -- who had been actors in a job interview as either candidate or interviewer/employer. A total of 14 valid responses including 08 candidates and 06 employers from different cities/towns in India are included in the analysis for this study. All respondents (candidates [C#] and employers [E#]) are assigned a unique alpha-numeric code for preserving confidentiality. Written reflections are subject to thematic analysis for teasing-out themes relating to resistance. Where applicable, these themes are placed under broader theme/s, and subsequently under categories. Later section/s of the paper detail the themes/categories, their analyses, and interpretations.

Research Questions

RQ-1. How may reactance behaviours be classified?

RQ-1A. What thematic categories subsume the numerous resistance behaviours?

RQ-1B. What behavioural dimensions constitute thematic categories of resistance?

RQ-2. What is the nature of resistance behaviours?

RQ-2A. Is Detracting from the source characteristic of the Scrutiny phase?

RQ-2B. Which phase of resistance is Employing a different choice alternative associated with?

RQ-2C. Is Direct resistance a characteristic of the Reactance phase?

Data Analysis

RQ-1. How may reactance behaviours be classified?

Resistance seeks to avert threat. (Surana, 2023) thematically analyzed and categorized threat perceived by actors in the context of job interview. The present study similarly thematically analyzes and categorizes resistance.

RQ-1A. What thematic categories subsume the numerous resistance behaviours?

Themes of resistance fall within 2 categories—Endure and Negotiate.

Endure: Themes within the category of Endure move along a continuum of being able to hold-on in the face of threat. 5 out of the 14 respondents undertake Endure as a behaviour of resistance. And, 4 out of these 5 respondents are candidates. Negotiate: 9 out of the 14 respondents employ Negotiate as category of resistance. Themes within the category of Negotiate are negative in orientation. Disagreement as a category seeks to convince the interaction partner to change his own position in favour of one’s held position. Showdown seeks not to win the interaction partner over, but to assault him for holding the position that he does. Showdown has the largest frequency (7) across all thematic categories of resistance. And, Showdown is employed almost equally by both Candidates (3) and Employers (4).

The Inter-twined model classifies resistance behaviours on the basis of their constituent dimensions-- Cognitive, Affective/Emotional, and Physiological (Steindl, Jonas, Sittenthaler, Traut-Mattausch, & Greenberg, 2015).

Cognitive	Affective	Physiological
Counter-argument	Anger	Increased Heart-beat
Upgrading the Eliminated Alternative	Aggression	
Downgrading the Proposed Alternative	Hostility	
Disagreement	Uncomfort	
Deriding the Source of Threat		

RQ-1B. What behavioural dimensions constitute thematic categories of resistance?

Endure as category of resistance essentially is made-up of the emotional dimension of behaviour. It rarely does have the physiological dimension, and never does have the cognitive component. In case of Candidates, Endure is expressed through Uncomfort and/or other forms of emotion. In case of employers, Endure is expressed through Anger.

Negotiate as category of resistance is made-up of the cognitive dimension of behaviour. It may (not) have the emotional dimension, and never does have the physiological dimension. In case of Candidates, the cognitive dimension takes the form of Counter-argument, while deriding and disagreement are forms of the cognitive dimension in case of employers.

RQ-2. What is the nature of resistance behaviours?

Resistance may be covert (Keen, 1981; Moreno, 1999). A behaviour of Indirect resistance is Detracting from the source of information i.e. making the source seem less good (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2017). Detracting from the source is here treated as a measure of Covert resistance. The description of Detracting from the source of information as an indirect behaviour of resistance is consistent with Evaluation in the Scrutiny phase of resistance.

RQ-2A. Is Detracting from the source characteristic of the Scrutiny phase?

Employers/Interviewers undertake covert resistance. 7 respondents – employers (5) and candidates (2) – employ Negotiate in the Scrutiny phase. Showdown is the concrete form, whose content is Detracting from the source – unfavourably judging the interaction partner against a held benchmark.

Resistance may be overt (Kim & Kankanhalli, 2009). Direct behaviour is where an individual undertakes the very action that is denied (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2017). A form of Direct behaviour of resistance is Rebuffing threat. Here, the individual resists by employing a different choice alternative to enhance the feeling of restoration (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2017).

RQ-2B. Which phase of resistance is Employing a different choice alternative associated with?

4 out of the 14 respondents employ Rebuffing behaviour – employment of a different choice alternative. 3 out of these 4 respondents are candidates. In 2 out of the 4 instances, Rebuffing is part of the Inertia phase. In 1 instance each, Rebuffing is part of the Reactance and Scrutiny phases.

Resistance may be direct i.e. undertaking the very action that is denied (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2017). The description of Direct resistance is consistent with the description of the Reactance phase.

RQ-2C. Is Direct resistance a characteristic of the Reactance phase?

5 out of the 14 respondents undertake Direct resistance. All these 5 respondents are Candidates. In case of 2 respondents each, Direct resistance occurs in the Reactance and Inertia phases. In case of 1 respondent, Direct resistance occurs in the Scrutiny phase.

Discussion and Future Research

1. Candidates

Overt Rebuffing (Different Choice Alternative) in the Inertia phase seeks to withstand threat and results in a continuum of Endurance.

2. Candidates

Counter-argument in the Reactance or the Scrutiny phase seeks to Negotiate and tends to result in a Showdown.

3. Employers

Deriding in the Scrutiny phase is Covert, seeks to Negotiate, and tends to result in a Showdown.

Candidates' resistance is confused. This disorientation in the nature of and phase of resistance is explained by the nature of threat that they confront (Surana, 2023). Candidates for a job interview deal with a complexity of threat. This complexity results from the simultaneity of uncertainty of the category of threat and of uncertainty of whether the threat relates to process or outcome.

Employers' resistance is concerted. This is explained by their having to confront threat that is predictable (Surana, 2023). The certainty of category of threat accompanied by a near certainty of it been related to PHP counters the nature of the threat category.

Findings lead to the working hypothesis: Exposure influences Resistance. Employers deal with a multiple of candidates for every position advertised. This number is likely larger than the number of interviews a single candidate can get to. Also, Accountancy is a technical domain and needs testing by a member of the community of accountants. By implication, interviewers have been on both sides of the table. If Resistance is learned, then does efficiency relate to scaffolding or to peripheral participation? Future research needs to investigate the working hypothesis and related research question/s.

REFERENCES:

1. Brehm, J. W. (1966). *A Theory of Psychological Reactance*. Academic Press.
2. Dillard, J. P., & Shen, L. (2005). On the Nature of Reactance and Its Role in Persuasive Health Communication. *Communication Monographs*, 72(2), 144-68. Retrieved 2023
3. Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA, USA: Stanford University Press. Retrieved 2022
4. Keen, P. W. (1981). Information Systems and Organizational Change. *Communications of the ACM*, 24(1), 24-33.
5. Kim, H. W., & Kankanhalli, A. (2009). Investigating User Resistance to Information Systems Implementation: A Status quo Bias Perspective. *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, 33(3), 567-82.
6. Knowles, E. S., & Linn, J. A. (2004; 2021). Alpha and Omega Strategies for Change. *Resistance & Persuasion*, 117.
7. Markus, M. L. (1983). Power, Politics, and MIS Implementation. *Communications of The ACM*, 26(6), 430-44. Retrieved 2023
8. Moreno, V. J. (1999). On The Social Implications of Organizational Re-engineering. *Information Technology and People*, 12(4), 359-88.
9. Rosenberg, B., & Siegel, J. T. (2017). A 50 Year Review of Psychological Reactance Theory. *Motivation Science*, 4(4), 281-300.
10. Steindl, C., Jonas, E., Sittenthaler, S., Traut-Mattausch, E., & Greenberg, J. (2015). Understanding Psychological Reactance: New Developments & Findings. *Z Psychol*, 223(4), 205-14. Retrieved 2023
11. Surana, S. (2023, May). Perception of Threat in the Context of A Job Interview: A Descriptive Study. *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research*, 8(5), 1382-85.

Appendix-01

Resistance: Themes Behaviours & Phases

Respondent	Resistance Theme	Resistance Category	resistance superordinate cognition	resistance cognitive form	resistance emotion form	resistance physiological form	phase reactance	phase distrust	phase scrutiny	phase inertia	Resistance covert i.e. Make source seem less good	Resistance overt direct rebuff i.e. Employ different choice alternative	Resistance rebuff i.e. Unkindly refusal
e3	Terminate	Endure	0	0	Anger	Terminate	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
c3	Block	Endure	0	0	Uncomfort	Other	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
c8	Drag	Endure	0	0	Uncomfort	Other	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
c12	Resign	Endure	0	0	Other	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
c9	Persist	Endure	0	0	Other	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
c13	Disagree	Negotiate	0	Counter	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
c7	Showdown	Negotiate	0	Counter	Other	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
c5	Showdown	Negotiate	0	Counter	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
e15	Disagree	Negotiate	Disagree	Counter	Agitated	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
e5	Showdown	Negotiate	Deride	Reprimand	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
e10	Showdown	Negotiate	Deride	Reprimand	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
e6	Showdown	Negotiate	Deride	Reprimand	Anger	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
e11	Showdown	Negotiate	Deride	Interrogate	Other	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
c4	Showdown	Negotiate	0	Counter	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0