

Managing Organizational Change: The role of Middle Managers' Stories and Emotional Reflexivity

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Abstract

Previous studies have increasingly emphasised on the important roles of middle managers' emotions in ensuring successful organisational change implementation. However, earlier research rarely focuses on middle managers' emotional reflexivity during organisational change. The lack of awareness in practicing emotional reflexivity during change can affect middle managers' work life quality where they can experience emotional vulnerability, workplace isolation and high sense of inadequacies. Using Communicative constitution of organisations the Montreal School (CCO TMS) as the theoretical underpinning, this research was conducted to study the emotional reflexivity of middle managers in a Malaysian organisation during organisational change. A qualitative methodology using semi-structured in-depth interviews was being carried to study about the targeted phenomenon and thirty middle managers from different departments in a Malaysian manufacturing aerospace component organisation has participated in this study. The analysis of the data generated seven emotional organisational change stories which were anxious, fear, anger, grief, hope, happy and gratitude. Those stories also generated the respondents' emotional reflexivity dimensions which were self-consciousness, self-control and motivation. This research highlights the importance of listening to middle managers' stories because it exposes the reasons for their acceptance and resistance towards change initiatives. It also highlights the importance for middle managers to instil emotional reflexivity skills in their work life as it helps them to understand and adapt to their organisation's change programmes effectively. Lastly, this research also contributes to the enrichment of literature in the areas of CCO TMS theory, emotional reflexivity, organisational stories, as well as organisational change.

Keywords: Emotions, emotional reflexivity, middle managers, organisational change, stories

Abstrak

Kajian lepas menekankan kepentingan pengurusan emosi dalam kalangan pengurusan pertengahan demi menjayakan program perubahan organisasi. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian terdahulu tidak memberikan fokus kepada reflektiviti emosi di kalangan pengurus pertengahan semasa perubahan organisasi. Kekurangan kesedaran dalam mempraktikkan reflektiviti emosi semasa perubahan organisasi boleh menjejaskan kualiti kehidupan kerja pengurus pertengahan di mana mereka lebih cenderung untuk mengalami ketidakstabilan emosi, terisolasi di tempat kerja, dan kurang beryakinan dalam menyiapkan tugas harian. Dengan menggunakan "Communicative constitution of organisations the Montreal School" (CCO TMS) sebagai teori, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji reflektiviti emosi kumpulan pengurus pertengahan semasa perubahan organisasi. Kajian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dan tiga puluh pengurus pertengahan dari jabatan berbeza dalam organisasi komponen aeroangkasa pembuatan Malaysia telah ditemubual. Analisis data menunjukkan terdapat tujuh cerita beremosi mengenai perubahan organisasi iaitu cemas, takut, marah, dukacita, harapan, gembira dan syukur. Cerita-cerita tersebut kemudiannya membentuk dimensi reflektiviti emosi para responden iaitu kesedaran diri, kawalan diri dan motivasi. Kajian ini menunjukkan kepentingan mendengar cerita Kumpulan pengurus pertengahan kerana ia memberitahu sebab-sebab penerimaan dan penentangan kumpulan pengurus pertengahan terhadap inisiatif perubahan organisasi. Kajian ini turut menyerlahkan kepentingan bagi pengurus pertengahan untuk mempraktikkan kemahiran reflektiviti emosi dalam kehidupan kerja mereka kerana ia membantu mereka memahami dan menyesuaikan diri dengan program perubahan organisasi mereka dengan berkesan. Akhir sekali, kajian ini juga menyumbang kepada penambahan ilmu dalam teori CCO TMS, reflektiviti emosi, cerita di dalam organisasi, serta perubahan organisasi.

Kata kunci: Cerita, emosi, pengurus pertengahan, perubahan organisasi, reflektiviti emosi

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Organisational change is an effort performed by organisation leaders to move the organisation from its current condition to a better state (Cameron & Green, 2019). It introduces new ideas and alters previous ordered plans, rules policies and routines so that the organisation improve business performances and effectiveness (Lewis, 2019). Since organisational change brings new practices, it causes middle managers to be worried as it contradicts to what they use to do. In other words, change leads middle managers to step out from their comfort zones, and having to relearn and obey the new policies, rules and procedures can make them to feel uncomfortable (Daniel, 2019), anxious (Oreg & Berson, 2019), angry and depress (Mattar, 2020).

Rather than leaders and supporting employees, organisational change affects middle managers the most. During change, they live in an exhausting world (Erickson et al., 2021) because as middle managers, they are responsible to execute the change plan and at the same time they are also feeling afraid and insecure about the new environment. Middle managers are expected to reflect and manage their emotions professionally (Vyatkin et al., 2019) because they must behave in a way that is best for their own selves, their team, and the entire organisation. Due to this, organisational researchers such as Hibbert et al. (2022) and Hamilton (2020) have suggested one of the ways middle managers handle impacts of organisational change on their emotions is through emotional reflexivity. By having the ability to reflex their conscious and unconscious emotions during workplace crisis (Holmes & Thompson, 2023) such as organisational change, it influences the way middle managers perceive and analyse change events and shape the way they comprehend and engages with the new organisational realities. Emotional reflexivity helps them to transform their current feelings and behaviours which later lead them to support organisational change activities (Harikkala-Laihin, 2022). Cunliffe and Ivaldi (2021) suggest researchers should use dialogue and conversational styles to initiate and understand research participant's emotional reflexivity. Hence, this research uses middle managers' conversations to understand the studied phenomenon. This decision can also be supported with Holmes et al. (2021) who identified dialogues or conversations shared by the participants enable the researchers to learn about their emotional reflexivity experiences. After all, conversations are communication activities that are conducted by middle managers all the time, so it would not difficult since they are already familiar with the concept.

Despite of its importance, there is little attempt made by scholars in understanding emotional reflexivity (Olson et al., 2021; Talha et al., 2020). Earlier studies on emotions focus on the influence of emotions in digital economy and leadership (Kupiek, 2020), emotional intelligence (Cherry, 2021) and emotional health (Majcen et al., 2022) rather than emotional reflexivity (Holmes & McKenzie, 2019; Muhr et al., 2019). Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill this gap. Besides, previous studies on emotional reflexivity itself tend to focus on the role of emotional reflexivity in gender issues (Waling, 2019), immigrants' issues (Osbaldiston et al., 2020) and health issues (Adeagbo, 2021). Limited studies have been done to search how emotional reflexivity plays important role during organisational change, especially on how emotional reflexivity is usually practised in Malaysians organisations and what stories middle managers told during organisational change period. This research chooses manufacturing industry because it is one of the sectors that face continuous and difficult change due to the rise and fall of market demands (Wijethilake et al., 2023) and rapid series changes has affected organisational stakeholders' emotions (Linville & Onosu, 2023). Hence it is important for them to embed emotional reflexivity in their work life. Besides, manufacturing industry is the second-largest contributor to Malaysia's income (Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal, 2022) and it can be concluded that the manufacturing organisations give a high impact on Malaysia' economy. Increasing the awareness on this area can help to drive organisational progress and improve middle managers' quality of life and professional living standards.

Based on all of the earlier statements, the overall aim of this research is to explore middle managers' conversations; to study the stories narrated by the middle managers during organisational change period. By listening to middle managers' conversations (stories) on emotional reflexivity during organisational change, it clarifies how change processes could be improved to meet middle managers' well-being better and it offers leaders the opportunities to better understand the factors behind their middle managers' actions which will be useful to smoothen change implementations.

■ 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organisational Change and Emotions

Organisational change is a process of renewing organisation's missions, visions, operational activities and capabilities in order to fulfil the needs of their internal and external stakeholders (Maisyura et al., 2022). It is a tool to transform one or more areas inside an organisation such as adoption of innovative technology or new job roles, qualifications, and responsibilities. Organisational change occurs because the organisations need to increase its productivities and efficiencies. In a much recent work, organisational change is the movement of an organisation away from its current condition toward some anticipated future state to increase organisation's effectiveness (Lunenber, 2020).

Organisational change is a frequent practice at any organisations regardless of its size, age, and sectors. As the organisation's surrounding environment evolves, leaders must make changes to their operations, strategies and tactical plans, policies, and procedures so that they can survive and meet the current demands from their stakeholders (Fitriasari, 2020). Organisations who are rigid, not flexible and refuse to meet changing markets' demands will not survive in its environment. This is supported with by Brown and Harvey (2021)'s stand where change improves organisation's stability hence ensure organisational growth and survival in its environment. Organisational change is important because it helps middle managers to increase work performance (Muhamad et al., 2023) and flourish work motivations (Islam, 2023) which eventually makes their organisation to endure in times of crisis (Kusa et al., 2022). However, regardless of its purposes, studies have proven that one common effect from organisational change is it causes its participants to face positive and/or negative emotions which influence their acceptance or rejection to change initiatives (Schneider et al., 2021)

Notwithstanding whether changes are major or minor, it poses positive and negative emotional disturbances to those who are affected by it (Meske & Junglas, 2021). Middle managers who are open-minded and flexible to change feels hopeful, optimistic, efficient, highly productive (Cimini et al., 2020), happy, proud and comfortable (Harikkala-Lahinen, 2019). Meanwhile, those who detest and confuse about organisational change implementations have negative feelings such as anger, tremor, in denial (Buchanan & Badham, 2020), discouraged, disappointed (Zimmerman et al., 2020), uncertain, intention to resign, anxious, scepticism (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2021), fear and frustration (Mukhtar & Fook, 2020). In addition, besides having either positive or negative feelings, study by Lee (2021) suggests change participants can experience both positive and negative emotions. The researchers reported their respondents are in denial, angry and depress about change but after some time, they are happy and show their support towards it. Resisting new initiatives or efforts at workplace are not good for middle managers' career and for their organisation. They must improve their adaptability, and a key to break their obstacles to change is, emotional reflexivity competency.

2.2 Emotional Reflexivity

Emotional reflexivity has been defined in various ways. First, it can be understood as being aware and attentive towards the way a person's feels about issues, how it affects the person's responses, actions, stories and values the person believes and his or her perceptions upon others individually and as a group (Song, 2020). Leading scholar in this area such as Burkitt (2012) defines emotional reflexivity

an approach that guide individuals to be cautious about the impacts of emotions on their behaviours, and by reflexing the rise emotions, it guides them to response to the events they are facing. In the work of another scholar, Holmes (2015) mentions emotional reflexivity is “the practices of altering one’s life as a response to feelings, and to interpretations of one’s own and other’s feelings about one’s circumstances” (p.61). Based on the shared definitions, it can be concluded that emotional reflexivity is a continuous process of questioning and managing reactive emotional feelings, so individuals can be more focus and rational when they are handling a situation or event. It helps individuals to build positive self-identity because it makes people to be honest and recognise their own emotions, gain more knowledge about their own selves and consequently makes them to be empathic and free from being judgemental.

As stated earlier, organisational change makes its participants to be in the state of fear grief, hopeless, anxious and anger (Cameron & Green, 2019). If the above emotions are being ignored, it leads the participants to be in the state of denial and they will reject change efforts individually or collectively (Hamilton, 2020). One way to solve this is through emotional reflexivity (Sarkar, 2021). Emotional reflexivity gives participants the chance to deal with conflicts rise from organisational change rationally. Muhr et al. (2019) highlight emotional reflexivity being an important skill at workplace especially during organisational change because it guides organisational members to rationalise their emotions, influences their ability to act upon the event they encounter. The work of Jena et al.’s (2021) also highlights on the importance of emotional reflexivity during change because it increases change participants’ moral and courage to adapt to adhere the new workplace policies, rise their happiness and help them to tackle problems or conflicts in their workplace amidst their chaotic and unending job pressure. Other studies also have highlighted on the benefits of conducting emotional reflexivity at workplace. Hibbert et al. (2019) in their study found emotional reflexivity practices reduce employees’ stress and tense during crisis. Besides, emotional reflexivity also makes organisational members to be open minded, confident, resilient, creative and ease collective decision-making processes (Aromaa et al., 2020). Lastly, it is also reported that emotional reflexivity helps middle managers to control the impacts of negative emotions on oneself and others, be more rational in handling workplace conflicts and decrease workplace traumas (Hibbert et al., 2022).

2.3 Middle Managers

Previous research has shown that middle managers are important in organisational change or managing change (Purwaningrum et al., 2022; Sukoco et al., 2022). Middle managers are individuals who are in charge of a particular business unit at an intermediate level of the organisational hierarchy and follow orders from the top-level strategic management (Schermerhorn et al., 2020). They are seen as the personnel who are given responsibilities to work as administrative members in an organisation, monitor their subordinates’ activities and execute their leaders’ strategic plans into daily operational activities (Rydland, 2020). They are in charge of translating formal and administrative rules into practical working rules, manage the work of their subordinates, handle conflicts in their team, and deliver important information from the bottom up and top bottom (Livijn, 2019). The definitions of middle managers are elastic, and there has been no universally accepted definition of middle managers. However, all of the definitions presented before share similar characteristics in which middle managers are the centre of an organisation’s hierarchy. They are positioned between the top and lower level management. Based on the works presented earlier, this research defines middle managers as organisational members appointed to be in the positions of head of a division, head of a department, branch manager, or team leader. Middle managers work directly under their organisational leaders, and they are in charge of supervising their subordinates.

Middle managers held many organisational roles (Saleem et al., 2020). Previous studies have indicated that middle managers have important roles in organisational change and the degree of its success (Heyden et al., 2020). They have been associated as umbrella carriers because middle managers are responsible to protect their subordinates from the top management’s excessive demands throughout change period, ensure there is no disruption that can hinder their subordinates from completing their works, take care their subordinates’ well-being, monitor work performance and reduce their subordinates’ intentions from leaving their organisation (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020). According to the work by Nadkarni and Prugl (2020), middle managers are important players when organisational leaders want to renew their organisation’s strategies. Their inputs are needed because their unique position in the organisation gives great insights into the organisation’s current operations. From that, they can give practical knowledge that can be used to develop new operational strategies. After helping the organisational leaders to develop practical organisational strategies, they are expected to implement organisational agenda smoothly. Another two roles of middle managers are to disseminate knowledge about their organisation’s current activities to all organisational members (Boutcher et al., 2022) and work as mediators for organisational leader when their subordinates question organisation’s operational activities and strategies (Solstad & Petterson, 2020). It is clear from the literature presented earlier that the decision to have middle managers as the respondents of the current study is practical. Their rich knowledge about their respective workplace, and the roles and activities performed by them, place them on the most influential and powerful hierarchy in their organisation (Knox & Marin-Cadavid, 2022; Gawke et al., 2019).

2.4 Stories

Stories can be defined the simple information or detailed information on chronologies or reports of events happening in an individual’s life that are being shared by the storyteller to other individuals (Van De Mieroop, 2021). They are the vivid ideas, beliefs, personal experiences and life-lessons that induce powerful emotions and insights between the storyteller and the listeners (Bassano et al., 2019; Serrat, 2017). In other words, stories are verbal, nonverbal, concrete and abstract information that is being arranged logically by the storytellers and they share it with their listeners for various purposes. For example, stories have been used to influence other people’s actions (Bostanli & Habisch, 2023) and it also useful in helping people to categorise others and their own behaviour as normal or eccentric, rational or irrational or legal versus criminal (Hollihan & Baaske, 2022; Charokopaki, 2019).

There are various ways stories being used by middle managers during change period. For examples, middle managers use stories to share their negative and positive emotional experiences during change (Elbanna & Newman, 2022; Vito & Sethi, 2020), to influence internal or external stakeholders’ actions (Ogbu, 2023), to give leaders their feedback on current workplace practices (Dickson & MacDonald, 2023), to solve conflicts resulted from organisational change initiatives (Galpin, 2023), to strengthen relationship with colleagues and subordinates (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020) and to help build a trustful relationship between the leaders and other employees (Stark & Reif, 2023). Besides, during organisational change period, middle managers also use stories to shape employees’ identities (Foroughi, 2020), increase employees’ loyalty and commitment towards organisation (Logemann et al., 2019), provide subordinates’ feedbacks to leaders about their current organisational change plans (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023) help subordinates to make sense and adapt to organisational change smoothly (Blakcori & Psychogios, 2021), and provides ideas and suggestions that can help to improve organisational change initiatives (Dikilitas & Comoglu, 2020; Whysall et al., 2019).

In the context of the present study, this research focuses on the stories told by middle managers in their conversations on emotional reflexivity during change. Their stories consist of their expressions on their own life experiences, ideas, or values in their everyday work life as well as their organisation's processes and realities. This can be supported with Peeples (2020) as well as Cassell and Bishop (2019) who mention stories are a powerful tool in studying organisation and its being because they act as a map or an entry point for the researchers and scholars to understand the phenomenon they studied. Many organisational studies researchers have opted to use stories because it allows them to study emotional and sensitive issues comfortably (Ramdeo, 2023; Jamjoom & Mills, 2023) and it allows them to learn about the world that their respondents live in (Gajic, 2020; Clarke et al., 2019). Earlier research by Snow (2021) and Yahaya (2020) also reported that there are different themes of organisational change stories and those stories reflected the respondents' emotions about the situation they are currently in, the actions taken by the respondents in order to survive the challenges and the realities of their respondents' organisational practices. The work of Sadaric and Skerlavaj (2023) added researchers should listen to the stories told by organisational members because the themes of the respondents' stories highlight the emotional experiences and the core problems faced by organisational members during organisational change. For example, Nyqvist and Lundgren-Henriksson (2022) reported themes such as victim, servant and survivor stories to depict their respondents' difficult organisational change experiences. Respondents' experiences of organisational change and transition also depicted with themes like hero, villain and victim stories (Gehring & Grigoletto, 2023), lack of future, future planning, career paths, dark future (Parola, 2020), uncertainty, practical concerns, worry for customers, importance of relationships, employees' identity, reflections (Kim et al., 2020) and blame, renewal, victim, hero, and memorial (Liu et al., 2020). Besides, Boeri and Giustini (2023) have reported stories told during workplace crisis such organisational change is valuable because it informs the activities conducted by the respondents to survive messy and complex change. For examples, Evans and Alexander (2023) report the respondents minimise change impacts by proactively managing the professional self, sustaining oneself through engaging actively in practice, learning and self-care, and seeking positive solutions and outcomes. Other studies conducted by Berry et al. (2022) and Hamouche (2021) also report similar outcomes where stories told by the respondents offers them to analyse the implications of unplanned organisational change towards their organisation's operation, the quality of work life, and to investigate how employees coped during the crisis.

All of the findings discussed above shares similar messages where organisational change stories positively inform the participants' emotional responses, assessments of information validity, responsibilities of leaders, actions and behaviours of the organisational members. From the literature presented earlier, exploring middle managers' stories can help researchers to make sense of threatening change experiences and understand how change participants tried to cope with it emotionally. It can be concluded that the current research's decision to study stories told by middle managers is practical because as presented in the earlier paragraphs, stories are proven to be a valuable and critical tool that help researchers to make sense the impacts of change on their personal and work life (Shaharuddin et al., 2022). Besides, to use middle managers' stories gives great advantage for a qualitative research study (Aflaki & Lindh, 2023) as it gives the opportunity to develop deeper insights on the reasons behind why middle managers do, say and feel about the phenomenon under investigation.

2.5 Communicative Constitution of Organisations - The Montreal School Theory

Communicative constitution of organisations the Montreal school (CCO TMS) theory is the underpinning theory of the present study. CCO TMS theory is founded by James R. Taylor together with Francois Cooren in 1996 (Taylor et al., 1996). It believes that communication makes up an organisation. The scholars see organisation as a described and realised entity, where organisation is being described by organisational members in textual form and being discussed by the speakers and listeners via conversational form (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Simply said, an organisation is defined by organisational members and leaders' texts through the conversations among themselves or with others. There are two essential elements in CCO TMS which are text and conversation. Text is "string of languages" (Taylor & Van Every, 2000, p. 37) in the forms of written, listening, verbal, nonverbal and visual. Simply said, any information that is being shared by a speaker to his or her listener is text. Meanwhile, 'conversation' can be understood as communication activities where the speakers and listeners meaningfully and automatically develop and share texts either through face-to-face or electronic mode of communication. In other words, conversations are the actual communication activities that occur between two or more participants such as conversations between middle managers or middle managers and the researcher.

CCO TMS theory is being widely used in organisational communication area as it successfully guides researchers to comprehend the ways organisations are designed, transformed, and preserved through organisational members and leaders' texts and conversations (Mak et al., 2021). Besides its usages in organisational communication (Thurlow, 2022), CCO TMS theory also regarded as one of the prominent theories in organisational studies (Verhoeven & Madsen, 2022). For example, Kopaneva (2019) applies CCO TMS theory to analyse the way organisational members develop loyalty to their organisation's new mission and vision. The researcher uses CCO TMS theory by converting the mission and vision as text and the respondents' feedback in the interviews as the conversations. By using this theory, it provides the researcher to have a more nuanced understanding of factors that facilitate or impede respondents' sense of loyalty towards their organisation's mission and vision. In another study, Clifton and de la Broise (2020) have used CCO TMS to study texts and conversations in electronic media. However, their research analysed a video clip on the yellow vests and the communicative constitution of an online protest movement instead of written communication. The researchers reported that the protest movements had doubts with mainstream media outlets, so to express their voices, they extensively used social media applications such as Twitter, Instagram and/or YouTube. In this study, the researchers used CCO TMS theory to analyse a YouTube video footage of the gilets jaunes (a contemporary French protest movement) to explain how a protest movement rejects the state's authority through a textual artifact (YouTube video clip). Their findings have indicated that the protest movement is not only discursively constructed through the commentary that accompanies the video, but the communication was also constituted by non-verbal materials such as the usage of space, buildings, and clothing. From their research, it can be concluded that besides verbal communication, non-verbal communication is also important because it can trigger people to challenge authorities' orders. This is quite similar to the output produced by Kopaneva's (2019) research, where organisational members' texts (verbal and nonverbal) are important to be attended to by organisational leaders because if their voices are being neglected, the employees will not be bothered to fulfil their leaders' expectations.

This research argues that the texts and conversations of middle managers allow the researcher to have a rich understanding about their emotional reflexivity experiences during change. This aligns with the foundation of CCO TMS in which communication (texts and conversations) of the organisational members describes the multiple realities of their workplace. Therefore, it can be concluded that CCO TMS is a practical theory to guide the current research. This can be supported with Mazza et al. (2020) who claimed middle managers' conversations helps researchers and practitioners to learn and identify their emotional experiences during workplace crisis. Moreover, earlier research also reported that studying middle managers' conversations can inform the peculiar loneliness (Zumaeta,

2019), uncertainties and emotional vulnerability (Ernst & Schleiter, 2021) faced by them during organisational change. As mentioned earlier, the two essences of CCO TMS theory are texts and conversations. This study sees texts as the verbal or written messages, forms of expression like writing, pictures, or any other contents that reflects middle managers' opinions about the studied phenomenon. Meanwhile, conversations refer to the communication exchange activities where the texts on the studied area are automatically and meaningfully developed and shared between the middle managers and the researcher. To put in other words, this research sees middle managers' conversations consists of stories (Eder & Carlson, 2020) on emotional reflexivity (Holmes et al., 2021) during change and at the end, it informs the emotional reflexivity dimensions of the middle managers during change. Studying middle managers' texts and conversations on emotional reflexivity during change is important and beneficial in many ways. It helps researchers to explore the ways middle managers handle organisational change (Yue et al., 2019; Lewis, 2019), it tells the truth about middle managers' mental health specifically their emotional, psychological and social well-being (Strange, 2023) and it leads the researchers to understand the factors that lead middle managers to have negative and/or positive attitudes and behaviours when facing organisational change (Boukes & LaMarre, 2021). Based on the weight of evidences presented earlier, this research believes that CCO TMS theory is useful to help understand middle managers' emotional reflexivity during organisational change. As previous works that use CCO TMS theory have not explicitly addressed the role of CCO TMS in emotional reflexivity during change, this research helps add a new point of consideration for CCO TMS application in organisational studies.

■ 3.0 METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology with in-depth interviews approach was employed in this study. In-depth interviews were being utilised as it is one of the best qualitative approaches to study organisation and its life-beings (Zheng et al., 2021). The interview questions were in semi-structured forms because it helped the research to get full elaborated answers from the respondents on the discussed topics, without being afraid of judgment and influenced by others, minimised the respondents' tendency to omit any sort of information and confidentiality as well as privacy of the respondents were secured (Dunwoodie et al., 2023). Pictorial vignette approach was also being facilitated during the in-depth interviews to discover the respondents' responses towards the studied phenomenon. Pictures that represent the different emotions that commonly faced by middle managers at their workplace especially during organisational change were being showed to the respondents to stimulate their responses to distinct scenarios during the interview sessions. The usage of pictorial vignettes encouraged the respondents to reveal their personal experiences comfortably (van den Broek et al., 2023). This can be further supported with Cheah et al. (2023) who mentioned pictorial vignettes have helped their respondents to do well in the interviews and increase the accuracies of their research results.

This study was conducted at an organisation named XYZ, a pseudonym. The selection of XYZ was due to the nature of the organisation. Encik Mohd (research informant, 7 years' experience as middle manager at XYZ) narrated XYZ has gone through a series of planned and unplanned organisational change and those change efforts cause XYZ middle managers to have positive and negative emotions where they were happy, grateful and excited since it ensures the survival of XYZ organisation, but at same time they were also feeling anxious, stress and scared. Due to this factor, XYZ was being selected to be the population of the study. This research used purposive sampling. In selecting the respondents, the research constructed two criteria. First, the respondents must have worked at XYZ for more than four years regardless of their positions. Second, they must work as middle managers for at least one year. These conditions ensured they can share rich information on the series of changes, the impact of the changes towards their emotions, and the influences of their emotions towards their work life. There were 30 middle managers altogether and the data collection period were started from November 2021 until May 2022. Once the interview sessions ended, the researcher transcribed the interview verbatim and later, they were being returned to the respondents for member checking process. The research instrument has 25 items altogether. 11 items adapted from Edgren (1990)'s Commando model and another 14 questions were developed based on the literature reviews and theory of the current study. From 25 items, six items were pictorial vignette questions and the respondents were being shown series of pictures of emotions that they may experience during change. In general, the research instrument focused on areas such as XYZ organisation's history, planned and unplanned organisational change, emotions rise during change, emotional reflexivity skills, work routines, work qualities, workplace relationships and many others.

Thematic analysis was used in analysing data since they are practical to analyse organisational members conversations of their organisations (Bukhari et al., 2021). All of the data from the in-depth interviews with the respondents were being transcribed verbatim. This including the data gathered when using pictorial vignette during the interviews. The pictures are being transcribed by inserting the name of the selected emotions. After the data being checked by the respondents, they were data were being analysed manually in Microsoft Office Word. Analysing the occurrence and frequencies of words, phrases, or concepts in this research using software would be difficult because the interview transcripts were a mixture of Malay and English. To start the data analysis process, five columns were being made in each one of the respondent's transcripts. The first column contains the respondents' conversations, the second column was used to jot down the generated codes, the third column is for the initial sub themes, the fourth column is for the final sub themes and the last column is for the main theme. Key words such as "story", "stories", "pictures" and "emoticons" were being used to locate the data and after the codes for were being produced, they are being categorised into relevant main themes. The main themes were being named by using the most frequent emotions selected by the respondents using pictorial vignettes approach which were happy, gratitude, anger, hopeful, grief, anxious and fear emotions. All of the themes were being refined, and reviewed from time to time to ensure all data were coherence so that a common narrative could be produced. Upon the completion of data analysis, the draft of the research outputs was being submitted to the respondents for member checking purpose. The examples of thematic analysis conducted in this study are as displayed in Table 1:

Table 1 Examples of Thematic Analysis

Data extract	Coded for	Sub themes	Main theme
<p>Oh I also have another story about it, in the early stage, I do not know what the new work involves, the demands it requires now and, in the future, within this period, my emotions are suffering, I felt lonely, unsure and anxious most of the time. If you ask others, they would tell you the same too. Nobody likes to work when you are feeling depressed and stressed right? If you want me to show what I feel using these emotions, I guess I should pick pictures like frightened, nervous, lonely and heart-broken? I was worried if it stopped me from getting what I want either in my personal life and work life because right now work hours are getting longer and I must do more work during the transition period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories • Worried about the change purposes & impacts (personal and work goals) • General feelings: Lonely, unsure & anxious <p>Pictorial vignettes: Frightened, nervous, lonely & heart-broken</p>	<p>Anxious</p> <p>Sad</p>	<p>Anxious</p>
<p>I can share lots of stories about that with you. First of all, when change took place, I remembered that I was having a mixed of feelings, there were days I felt stress and tired because I have little ideas on who the new leaders were, what did they want from us, how does the new things going to work out. When you do not know what to expect, it is so stressful, so during those days, it was best to be shown using emotions like grieving, suffering and gloomy. But from time to time, when I know and learn what their expectations are, I can do all of the works well. When this happened, I feel good, happier and calm. It is satisfying too because I can end my day knowing all of the goals for that particular projects are completed. When this happened, I can say my emotions can be portrayed using pictures like happy, good, glad & optimistic emoticons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories • Worried about change purpose & impacts • Activities middle managers conducted during change • Feelings: Tiring, stress, good, grateful, satisfied & calm • Pictorial vignettes: Grieving, suffering, gloomy, happy, good, glad & optimistic 	<p>Sad</p> <p>Anxious</p> <p>Happy</p> <p>Grateful</p>	<p>Anxious</p>
<p>Another sharing that I can share with you about my stories on emotions during change is, I have high anxiety when all of this happened probably because of the negative perceptions that others associated with the impacts of change on our career. For examples, at that time I assumed the new leaders may not offer any opportunities for career growth or the new bosses may not like us and maybe they just want us to work like robots make money for the company. All of those negative assumptions and also my experiences with former leaders made me felt sick. I was feeling anxious because I thought my company had to cease its operation, this was because the way former leaders left us without properly informed us about the take over. Besides, when leaders executed another change initiatives after COVID hits us, I was also worried because some of employees are transferred since their departments are being shut down. Actually, when the current leaders speak up on change clearly and honestly, and I know what is in for me as well as what I need to, I started to feel relax and at ease since understand why change is necessary and why do decide to execute certain actions, which is the company had made less profits, and some departments had to be closed due to the lack of projects for that particular department, they do not want to dismiss any staff so that is why they reshuffle some employees' roles and responsibility. So, for my positive experiences, I would pick emotions like admiring, good, proud and adoring. Besides that as I mentioned to you, I also have negative moments, so I choose unsure, suspicious, anxious and also nervous.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories • Worried about change impacts • XYZ change factors • Leaders' strategies to execute smooth change plan • General feelings: Worried, anxious, sick, understanding & calm • Pictorial vignettes: admiring, good, proud, adoring, unsure, suspicious, anxious & nervous 	<p>Hopeful</p> <p>Anxious</p> <p>Grateful</p>	<p>Gratitude</p>
<p>When I understand the strengths that change brings and the gaps it fills, it enables me to shift my thinking towards it. I like when the current leaders do their best to protect the wellbeing of the employees, the reinvent and restructure our company's operations, values and policies for the good of all. With increasing productivities and performances, I must say that it makes me to experience emotions like relieved, delighted, and basically feeling happy and satisfied! However, there are some people who does not support their decisions, but even if some people are not pleased and feeling enraged, to be honest, I am happier because those structural changes influence the way my organisation functions as a whole, where we our financial profits keep increasing and our work culture becomes better compared to when XYZ under previous management. You may think my story on change is all sweets and treats, it is not, I do not deny that there are days I felt tired, stress and suffering due to the amount of works. But I received help from my colleagues, team members and boss, they always play a big role in boosting workplace morale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories • Benefits of change • Activities middle managers conducted during change • Leaders' strategies to execute smooth change plan • General feelings: Happy, satisfied, lack of confidence, suffering <p>Pictorial vignettes: Glad, delighted, happy, satisfied, depressed, hurt & upset</p>	<p>Happy</p> <p>Sad</p>	

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Respondents' Demographic Background

A total of 30 middle managers from 12 different departments at XYZ organisation has participated in this study. There are eight female respondents and 22 male respondents. The shortest years of experience working at XYZ organisation are four years and the longest are 25 years. Meanwhile, the shortest work experiences as middle managers are three years and the longest are 15 years. 29 respondents are

Malay middle managers, and there is one Indian middle manager. Lastly, this research had 22 male middle managers and eight respondents' female middle managers. The demographic backgrounds of the 30 respondents are being summarised in Table 2:

Table 2 Respondents' Demographic Information

ID	Gender	Years of working at XYZ	Years of being Middle Manager	Middle Manager's Position	Division
Luq	Male	4	3	Junior	Business Performance Management
Athi	Female	5	4	Senior	Engineering and Technology
Mad	Male	7	6	Senior	Risk, Insurance and Compliance
Zuh	Female	8	3	Junior	Engineering and Technology
Izza	Female	9	4	Junior	Quality
Zul	Male	9	4	Junior	Engineering and Technology
Wan	Male	9	7	Senior	Finance
Ami	Female	9	8	Senior	Quality
Mus	Male	9	5	Senior	Quality
Fu	Male	9	5	Senior	Supplier Management
Isma	Female	10	4	Junior	Engineering and Technology
Man	Male	10	6	Senior	Production
Haz	Male	10	8	Senior	Programme Management
Saf	Male	10	7	Senior	Quality
Tafa	Male	10	6	Senior	Risk, Insurance and Compliance
Hila	Male	11	10	Senior	Engineering and Technology
Wana	Female	12	8	Senior	Programme Management
Fara	Female	14	5	Senior	Commercial
Han	Male	15	10	Senior	Mechanical Assembly
Abdul	Male	17	15	Senior	Production
Jas	Male	18	10	Senior	Information and Technology
Wahub	Male	19	12	Senior	Production
Elmy	Male	19	15	Senior	Programme Management
Zah	Female	19	15	Senior	Supplier Management
Affan	Male	20	11	Senior	Core Processing
Hed	Male	20	15	Senior	Production
Hak	Male	20	13	Senior	Production
Sheikh	Male	20	10	Senior	Programme Management
Zain	Male	20	12	Senior	Quality
Siv	Male	25	15	Senior	Quality

4.2 XYZ Middle Managers' Stories during Change

4.2.1 Anxious

The first theme identified from the respondents' conversations is anxious stories. When change occurs at XYZ organisation, it creates uncertainty among the respondents. This triggers the respondents to feel anxious. The respondents are worried because they have limited knowledge about their new job scopes, and the new policies affect their personal and/or work goals. The respondent claimed,

“In the early stage of change, I do not know what the new work involves, the demands it requires now and also in the future...I was worried if it stopped me from getting what I want either in my personal life and work life because right now work hours are getting longer and I have to do more work...”

Imad

Another factor that led the respondents to feel anxious is because they needed to learn new things. Due to the imposed change, they have more work to do in very little time. Since their former work routines have gone, they push themselves to do their best, so all tasks are completed according to the current procedures. The respondents narrated,

“Many things change, I am anxious and stress about it...struggling to ensure that can perform well and achieve company's goals...push ourselves to the limit to follow the new culture”

Sham

“Nobody knew I was struggling. Change was difficult and bring lots of confusion, hard to understand the new procedures to complete our task, I do not want to lose my job if the new roles and responsibilities require skills that I did not have”

Abadi

The third factor that led the respondents to have anxiety during change is due to the organisation's restructuring. When the COVID-19 crisis happened, the leaders decided to make some changes around XYZ. They were anxious because they thought their organisation had to cease their operation since the leaders shut down several departments, amended their work operation hours, and had to decrease employees' benefits for a couple of years. The respondents mentioned,

“I have high anxiety when all of this happened...thought my company had to cease its operation...some of employees are transferred since their departments are being shut down”

Amani

“We had to work four days in a week, seems nice but stress and worried because we need to use our annual leave for the fifth day, so need to plan the AL wisely, holidays and emergencies all need to take AL, if you do not have enough, you have to apply unpaid leave”

Zain

4.2.2 Grief

Grief stories are related to the respondents' expectations towards some XYZ leaders. It involved a surfacing of feelings hidden from them or had not been expressed with others. Grievances for expectations were connected to the behavior of some leaders when initiating the change programme, specifically during leadership transformation. Some of the respondents felt their presence was not acknowledged and appreciated by some of their leaders. Besides, they also thought some of their leaders had poor communication skills when explaining the change programmes. The respondent pointed out,

"He did not show respect. He dismissed us with no explanation...I felt disappointed, poor communication about change has worsened my resistance towards change until other leaders step up and provided better clarifications on change programmes".

Hak

The remaining respondents said they were in a grieving state during the planned and unplanned organisational change because they felt that the introduced change was a burden since they needed to spend lots of time making sense of the new organisation practices. One respondent narrated,

"Unable to function...stressful impact of change, painful when the change takes place...stricter rules and policies and it was different from what I used to deal with"

Zul

Another reason the respondents were in a grievance state is because during an unplanned change, XYZ leaders reduced the employees' benefits without their own will. One respondent pointed out,

"Forced to use our annual leave during COVID-19...employees' benefit such as annual leave to follow the company's request for four days work...unfair because I think they are making money out of it because when some of us had to apply unpaid leave since we do not have AL anymore, they do not need to pay us and most of the buildings are not operating, so they can get more money by doing so".

Musa

The last factor that led the managers to grieve during change was the unfair implementation of organisational change, where the new rules and procedures were not being applied to all leaders and organisational members. One respondent shared,

"The rules are not enforced to all XYZ members, this is unfair and it makes to be sad because we had to follow it but not some people. I am feeling unsatisfied with some of the implementation between management, technical and production. They set the regulations but at the end their breaks their own rules".

Tiana

4.2.3 Anger

The anger theme focuses on the stories of a few respondents over ill-treatment and injustices they experienced during XYZ change. There were only two respondents who felt angry throughout organisational change period. The respondents were angry because the organisational change affected their work freedom and preferences. The respondents said,

"I am very angry when the leaders decided to make some changes because it affected my work life... my boss decided to shut down my department and transfer me from R&D to here. I do not like this because I want to stay at my former department...I cannot work with my former colleagues... They transfer employees, make some employees being in basket status...demotivated and not planning to work here in future".

Tina

"The leadership transformation has made the old work style that I used to enjoy disappeared...question some parts of the introduced change, I was demoted, pissed off and not satisfied...salary also became lesser, Rm1000.00 difference from what I used to get. If I have an opportunity, I will leave XYZ. No longer proud member of XYZ".

Bob

4.2.4 Fear

During the change period, XYZ's top management was seen as an entity that created fear among the middle managers. The middle managers were worried because majority of the new leaders were new, so they did not know their new leaders' personalities, leadership styles, and expectations. Hence, it made them feel worried. The respondents shared,

"XYZ new management was seen as an entity who created a great feeling of fear because we do not know any of them"

Zah

I was having lack of confidence to communicate with our new leaders...I have no idea what was the expectations they want from their employees."

Zul

Another reason that led to feeling fearful during change is that the middle managers thought the new management would leave them like their previous leaders as they can make them lose their jobs. The respondent narrated,

"At first, it is difficult for us to get motivated when the new management came in...worried that it is going to end abruptly just like the last management...concerned about our jobs, families, and our career."

Fara

Lastly, the fear story was also about survival. When XYZ organisation has undergone unplanned organisational change, the middle managers were also in a state of fear. They were worried if they would face retrenchment or their salaries would be reduced because their organisation's profits were greatly affected. The respondent shared,

"I am worried if the management is less tolerable or caring about us...during Covid-19, many things are being re-adjusted. The main fear of XYZ members including me would be deduction of salary or company retrenchment, but thankfully it did not happen"

Saif

4.2.5 Hope

The analysis found evidence for hope stories. Organisational change was seen by majority of the respondents positively because it increases their workplace happiness and satisfaction. The respondents thrive on change because when they were under the ABC management, they were always disturbed when they were doing their job and had to go through the extra hassle to do so. After DEF Incorporated took over XYZ organisation, operational activities at XYZ organisation improved, and their workplace environment became better. The respondents shared,

"I thrive for change because when XYZ organisation under the leadership of ABC Incorporated, employees were always being disturbed and distracted by their leaders, not being given enough freedom to do their jobs and not interested to focus on employees' growth and wellbeing...high hopes, more opportunity to be independent when making decisions, and the new business culture brings more benefits to everyone"

Abadi

"I have high hopes in our leaders, I know that the leadership transformation can make our organisation to be better...the transformation has changed my mindset of working in a corporate company as the current management has constantly provides everyone at this place ample room for opportunity and growth unlike previous bosses".

Affan

"Leaders know what they are doing...introduced change was effective...can complete our tasks efficiently...successful in achieving our short and long term goals".

Tafa

4.2.6 Happy

Many respondents have echoed that they are happy with the imposed change at XYZ organisation. During the change period, the middle managers recognised the need for change, and know how to successfully adapt to it. Based on their conversations, the management's decision to implement those changes significantly impacted their job scopes, personal situations, social relationship and relationship with XYZ management. Since they understand the change and know how it affects them, the respondents have high morale to follow it. Upon the transformations, the respondents said they were happier because those structural changes have influenced how their organisation functions. Among the happiness shared by the respondents are first, they could do their work productively; second, they have excellent communication exchanges between members and leaders, and third, their well-beings were taken care of better than the former management. The respondents said,

"I recognised the need for change and happy with it, since it is meant to solve XYZ current problems, provide better goals, vision and mission for a brighter future...Continuous efforts has been done in order to provide a clear communication on change and its impacts on our job scopes, group and individual work situations"

Isma

"I am happier because those structural changes influence the way my organisation functions as a whole, where we our financial profits keep increasing and our work culture becomes better compared to when XYZ under previous management".

Haz

"I can see that it makes us to complete our works with zero or minimal errors, we have excellent internal communication with our bosses and our needs are being taken care better than before...Management considered staff difficulties or issues, and they are responsive towards the issue which makes us happy because they acknowledge our presence...more focus and able to deliver their work very well".

Zizie

4.2.7 Gratitude

Many respondents agreed that they feel grateful when XYZ change takes place because it enhances their personality and workability. The respondents described those changes as beneficial and crucial to their efficiency, success, and productivity while also improving other organisational members' behaviours and organisational climate. XYZ members, as well as the top management, became more compassionate and empathetic towards one another. Most respondents agreed that change at XYZ organisation is worthy because it increases positive relationships, social support, and employees' well-being, reduces negative emotions at the workplace, and concurrently enhances XYZ organisational health and success. The respondents stated,

"Our boss sympathises our situation, many of us work from home, our salaries are not affected, we are not being forced to resign and I feel grateful that they are being compassionate with us during the hard times. Those change were done to accommodate all of us, so no one will be left behind when other organisations have forced many of their employees to resign"

Elhan

“Appreciate change because it makes me to be more organised, dynamic, more professional in executing my task...I can see that it enhances my staff and also my colleagues’ personality and work ability...this process is important, beneficial and crucial, alhamdulillah for this because it has improved XYZ’s efficiency, success, and performances”

Sheikh

“Improves everyone’s behaviours and fix our workplace culture...For me, the works done to improve XYZ is so far so good, and we need to understand the reason of why company do the changes...I am glad with it, it was a good initiative to drive this company to a better future...current leaders are very transparent, compassionate and empathetic, they do their best to improve staff’s satisfaction”

Isma

■ 5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 General Overviews

This research found that some middle managers at XYZ organisation oppose organisational change. A quarter support organisational change from the beginning and the remaining managers start to accept it after they understand the direction and purposes of the change. This shows that leaders have to spend time and continuously try to explain why they decide to make changes and why those changes are important instead of just telling the employees organisational change is coming. Although the organisation’s nature is different, this research help to re-affirm previous research suggestion made by Nilsen et al. (2020) and Yue et al. (2019) that clear and continuous communication during change efforts by leaders are important. Next, gender is unrelated to middle managers’ emotional reflexivity during organisational change. Majority of the male and female middle managers have excellent emotional reflexivity skills during change and there are also male and female middle managers who are less emotionally reflexive. This result disagrees with Falconier et al. (2023), who indicated that women are more capable of managing their emotions than men. This research proves that both genders have the same capability to use emotional reflexivity during a crisis. In this study, almost all male and female middle managers were rationale and skilled in understanding their emotions and handling the impacts of their emotions when they are with others throughout organisational change period.

This research also compares the change experiences of respondents between junior managers and senior managers. It was found that their work experiences cannot be the reason to clarify the differences in their emotional reflexivity during change. In this research, majority of the senior managers are resilient and calm, probably because they are exposed to many hardships and learn to develop emotional reflexivity over time. However, there are also many junior managers who are able to reflex their emotions effectively. In addition to that, there is a senior manager and a junior manager who have been unable to control the impacts of their emotions when they are with others. This contradicts the study of Alshammari et al. (2020), work experience increases participants’ ability to manage their emotions. This research suggests that all middle managers, regardless of their work experiences, must be given continuous training, practice, and experience to build emotional reflexivity. This opportunity can help the middle managers manage their own and others’ emotions, help them to express authentic emotional responses, increase empathy, and sharpen their ability to share feelings and thoughts without causing conflicts at their workplace.

5.2 XYZ Middle Managers’ Stories During Change

XYZ middle managers have narrated anxiety, grief, anger, fear, hope, happy and gratitude stories about their workplace change, and their stories are being enhanced through their selections of emotional pictures. This research supports the former studies (Cheah et al., 2023; Kingston, 2023; Khanolainen & Semenova, 2023) who mentions vignettes are useful complementary technique in exploring potentially sensitive topic that participants may find it difficult to discuss openly. The present study has proven that pictorial vignettes have successfully helped to elicit the respondents’ attitudes and knowledge on XYZ organisational change comfortably. It encourages the respondents to expand and elaborate their stories on the studied phenomenon thus the interpretations of the respondents’ stories on emotional reflexivity during change is being unfold from the personal perspectives of the respondents rather than being externally imposed by the researcher.

From the narrated stories, it is clear that some middle managers opposed XYZ organisational change initiatives because their personal needs were affected. This result strengthens the arguments made by Kucukatalay et al. (2023) that not all change efforts are openly received by the organisational members, especially when their individual needs are affected. Even though the protestors of change at XYZ organisation are small in number, it can be troublesome if their sullen hostility or wild strikes are ignored. Their problematic behaviour will drain their team’s energy, morale and destroys productivity. Therefore, if those middle managers are important resources in XYZ, they have to be frequently engaged in change conversation so they are clear about the benefits the change can bring to them individually and the positive impact on their jobs.

Meanwhile, most XYZ middle managers have described the ‘new’ XYZ organisation as a workplace with a healthy, positive and dynamic environment. Indeed, the respondents reveal their moments of fear, grief, anxiety, and anger over XYZ’s rapid change. They must step out of their usual routine, learn skills they do not have before, and complete their task according to new rules and procedures. However, towards the middle of their conversations, the middle managers provide positive expressions and understand how important those change events were. The current XYZ leaders’ skills in handling organisational change have taken their anxiety, fear, grief, and anger away. Although earlier study by Ling et al. (2023) indicate that Malaysians respond to change easier because they are collectivistic society, the stories they told have indicated that cultural factor does not influence their acceptance of change efforts. The middle managers are highly motivating and engaging, and support organisational change initiatives according to their free will. They support change because it has allowed them to work together dynamically, and improves everyone’s well-being and growth at XYZ organisation. Contrary to Alnoor et al. (2020) who claim that the leaders’ lack of abilities in managing change is the main reason for failed change initiatives, the researcher argues that the change participants themselves are responsible for self-directing their self to take change proactively. The findings have proven that XYZ’s top management has tried its best to identify and remove change barriers. Therefore, all middle managers should be proactive and do their best to support XYZ’s change initiatives.

5.3 Dimensions of XYZ Middle Managers' Emotional Reflexivity During Change

Previous research studies (Boeri & Giustini, 2023; Gehring & Grigoletto, 2023; Sadaric & Skerlavaj, 2023; Nyqvist & Lundgren-Henriksson, 2022; Parola, 2020) have highlighted that the importance of attending organisational members' stories during workplace crisis since it highlights the emotional experiences of the respondents, the core problems faced throughout change period, the quality of work life, the activities conducted by the respondents to survive messy and complex organisational change and the lessons learned from the crisis. From this statement, it can be inferred that middle managers' emotional reflexivity during organisational change can be explored from their shared stories. Based on the respondents' stories, this study developed three dimensions of emotional reflexivity which are self-consciousness, self-control and motivation. Majority of the respondents practice self-consciousness to understand their emotions and monitor how it influences those around them. They recognise their emotional strengths and weaknesses, and they use it to support their subordinates who are facing difficulties to accept the imposed change. Meanwhile, self-control is the capability of the XYZ middle managers to control or reconfigure their emotional moods. Even though at the beginning of change most of the middle managers tend to react irrationally, they later organise their minds and regulate their behaviours. For motivation dimension, many respondents are motivated to learn new things introduced by their leaders. They seek new challenges as it helps to increase their passion, desire and aspirations to work at XYZ.

This research strongly believes that emotional reflexivity during change provides middle managers a chance to react suitably when facing complicated challenges. It helps them to be successful in their workplace, and it makes them to be the ones that other people want on their team. Their presences also will make others to feel positive as they go through changes in their organisation much more easily than people who are easily angered or upset. Moreover, being efficient in reflexing their emotions assists them to improve their work performance, make progress in their career, increase their capabilities in managing conflict and foster their moods to accomplish their desired goals. This study verified the work of Kim et al. (2021) by proving that the organisational members' stories on their emotional reflexivity experiences during change period reflect the total realms of their every day's situation at workplace. It sheds the challenges faced by the middle managers, it informs how organisational change circumstances affect their personal and professional lives and it also the actions taken by them to counter the effects of organisational change programmes. Their emotional reflexivity has helped them to alter their responses to change. Even though the works of Holmes and Thompson (2023) and Holmes et al. (2021) how important emotional reflexivity is in determining what to feel, their works does not explicitly mention on how to practice emotional reflexivity. This research has helped to expand the emotional reflexivity concept by introducing the emotional reflexivity dimensions which can be used by other middle managers or organisational members when undergoing workplace crisis.

Despite all the findings, the present study has several limitations. The study was limited to middle managers group. Future research on this area can consider to include wider samples varieties with larger sample size including the top management members and the supporting employees. Instead of conducting individual in-depth interviews, future researchers should consider conducting observations followed by joint interviews in order to achieve complete understanding about the emotional reflexivity of the respondents towards one another.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This research concludes stories are essential communication tools for any researchers to facilitate their understanding on middle managers' emotional reflexivity experiences during change. All seven themes collectively served as the indicators to the realities of planned and unplanned changes efforts at their organisations. This research also conclude that leaders should use middle managers' stories to build, reinforce and change their company's environment. This is because the stories they use can create space for problem-solving and break down any barriers that exists between middle management and top management groups which eventually increase all middle managers' engagement and openness towards any organisational change initiatives. Moreover, emotional reflexivity during organisational change is very important since it helps middle managers regardless of their gender and work experiences to recognise, understand and manage the impacts of their emotions, moods and actions when they are with their organisation's internal and external stakeholders. Besides, it can also be concluded that practicing emotional reflexivity gives several positive effects on middle managers' work life. For examples, they are more calm and graceful when handling awkward or uncomfortable situations, better communication skills and can deeply understand their own personalities and abilities.

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