

**From Reflection to Organisational Change: an Exploration of the Impact of Reflection  
on Change Supportive Behaviours**

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### **Abstract**

Dynamic environments make organisations subject to fast-paced transformations. Consequently, employees need to adapt their behaviour to accommodate the new demands. However, the circumstances that foster change supportive behaviours of the employees are unclear. Therefore, this study investigates to what extent reflection on work task, on social context and on task performance predicts the change supportive behaviours of compliance, cooperation and championing and to what extent gender moderates these relationships. To assess these relationships, Dutch-speaking working professionals ( $N = 33$ ) responded to an online questionnaire containing items that reflected the mentioned dimensions of reflection and the dimensions of changing supportive behaviours. To analyse the data, a MANOVA analysis was executed. The results showed a negative significant relationship between task performance reflection and championing. Additionally, the results revealed a positive moderation effect of gender on the relationship of work task reflection with compliance and championing. Further research should investigate a possible prediction of other reflection dimensions on behavioural responses to change in organisations and look into internal precursors of change supportive behaviours.

Even since the time of the Ancient Greeks philosophers, change was considered a certainty in the life of humankind. As a considerable part of the modern world, organisations are subject to the same influences and changes in the workplace presumably will escalate (Hetzner, Heid, & Gruber, 2012). Especially due to technological changes, the environment of organisations suffers fast pace transformations, which demand rapid adaptation to the new conditions (Strauss, Niven, McClelland, & Cheung, 2015; Sung, Cho, & Choi 2011; Yang, Choi, & Lee, 2018). Accordingly, organisational change is a basic and recurring topic in the management field (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). Attempts to define the notion of change revealed that the construct has multiple possible definitions, according to the models of history and change-stability relationships adopted by the scholars (Suddaby & Foster, 2017). In this context, a definition of organisational change can be “deliberately planned change in an organisation’s formal structure, systems, processes, or product-market domain intended to improve the attainment of one or more organisational objectives” (Lines, 2005, p. 9). Therefore, besides surviving in a dynamic environment in the present, change determines organisations to be future-oriented, focused on evolving and developing (Onyeneke & Abe, 2021).

The performance of the organisations is affected by the reactions to change of the employees (Chênevert, Kilroy, & Bosak, 2019). The modifications of the organisational environment affect all the employees (Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020), and they are constrained to adjust their behaviour to accommodate new demands (Strauss, Niven, McClelland, & Cheung, 2015). Especially, for a favourable application of the change in organisations, it is necessary that employees adopt supportive behaviours (Yang, Choi, & Lee, 2018). According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), the behaviours that support change are compliance, cooperation and championing and employees adopt them depending on their engagement in the process of change. Still, a high percentage of change promoting interventions in organisations are not successful (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). Considering that a fruitful organisational change implementation requires a deep understanding of how the change processes should be managed (Hussain et al., 2018), it is critical to investigate reactions to change (Bojesson & Fundin, 2020) to develop strategies that facilitate compliance, cooperation, and championing in organisations.

Change at the workplace does not only determine the employees to display reactions to change, but offers workplace learning opportunities (Hetzner, Heid, & Gruber, 2012). Particularly, the ambiguity caused by unusual conditions in the workplace context can foster

learning (Antonacopoulou, 2018). Also, learning in organisations is related to reflection (Lundgren et al., 2017). According to Høytrup (2004), reflection is an important factor in the process of learning in organisations. Moreover, reflection, especially innovation specific reflection, is considered to support action regulation when facing changes in organisations, at the same time helping employees to enhance their work-related skills and knowledge (Messmann & Mulder, 2012). Furthermore, Messmann and Mulder (2015) suggest that reflection, when oriented to everyday work, promotes innovative attitudes, encouraging employees to explore original possibilities. Accordingly, reflection can be explored not only as a tool for learning in organisations but also as a facilitator for change and innovation.

However, it is not clear how reflection facilitates change in organisations and influences the behavioural responses of employees towards workplace change. According to Strauss, Niven, McClelland, and Cheung (2015), the current state of literature spotlight predominantly negative responses of employees in rapport to changes in organisations. Subsequently, employees perceive workplace change as demanding and impact performance, knowledge and professional roles (Hetzner, Gartmeier, Heid, & Gruber, 2009). Additionally, Ouedraogo & Ouakouak (2020) suggest that employees might experience change fatigue, a factor that might threaten the achievement of change implementation. However, since appropriate management of change determines the achievement of organisational change implementation (Onyeneke & Abe, 2021), new scientific and practical insights are necessary for managers to support employees in adapting to a changing environment at the workplace and to display supportive behaviour. Hence, exploring if reflection, as an organisational learning tool, can influence the reactions of the employees when facing change might offer new perspectives into how change can be managed at the workplace.

At the same time, there might appear gender differences in employees' behaviour at the workplace (Konrad, Ritchie Jr, Lieb, and Corrigan, 2000). Moreover, genders might experience different standards in revealing their emotions in the organisational framework (Domagalski & Steelman, 2007), therefore might display distinctive behaviours regarding the change and impact the manner they reflect. Hence, exploring the influence of gender on the reflection and reactions to change relationships might offer further understanding of how these differences are displayed in organisations and how to develop tailored approaches to enhance benefic behaviours when facing change.

Concluding, this study aims to explore the impact of reflection on change supportive behaviours, mediated by gender, in the context of organisational change. The study will

answer the following research questions: *“To what extent does reflection predict change supportive behaviours of employees in the context of organisational change?”* and *“To what extent does gender mediate the interaction between reflection and change supportive behaviours of employees in the context of organisational change?”*

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework encompasses the conceptualizations of the interest variables and introduces the hypothesis of this study. First, are presented the change supportive behaviours. Moreover, reflection at the workplace is defined and conceptualised. Also, implying both variables, the first hypothesis is presented. In the end, a possible connection between gender and reflection is suggested, an idea that determines the last hypothesis of the study.

#### **Change supportive behaviours**

According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), the change supportive behaviours that can be displayed by an employee are compliance, cooperation and championing. Compliance is defined as minimal backing of the change. The employees that are compliant with change are following cautiously only the straightforward novel demands (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). For example, when the employees are compliant with the change, they obey the changes in role caused by the change in the organisation, follow the received instructions and modify the behaviour as imposed by the change (Yang, Choi, & Lee, 2018). Moreover, cooperation means exhibiting actions that help the implementation of the change to succeed. When the employees are cooperating regarding the change in the organisation, they are adopting an innovation attitude and are willing to perform behaviours within the range of allocated tasks to help with the application of the innovation (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). For instance, the cooperating employees are positive about the change, despite the challenges, ask for help to follow the new requirements if necessary and are interested to comprehend the change in the organisation (Yang, Choi, & Lee, 2018). Finally, championing is the support behaviour that exceeds the formal requirements, showing an affinity for the new ideas and advocating for change to others. The employees that display championing behaviour are investing extra time and effort to help with the implementation of change and actively promote the advantages of the innovation to the internal and external environment of the organisation (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). To clarify, the championing employees are encouraging colleagues to adopt the change, are offering their help to colleagues to face the

difficulties related to change and frequently present the change in a favourable manner to people without affiliation to the company (Yang, Choi, & Lee, 2018).

### **Reflection at the workplace**

Reflection at the workplace has been defined as the process of investigating individual or social work-related experiences (Messmann & Mulder, 2015). Moreover, the notion of critical reflection grew as belonging to the adult learning theory, where reflective learning arises when the learner brings awareness into the experience, makes rational conclusions about it and generates practical expertise based on it (van Woerkom, 2004). Going beyond examining the proximal elements of a situation, critical reflection engages judgement on the legitimacy of thoughts and involves contextual factors in the analysis Høytrup (2004), having a direct consequence over the work commitment (Matsuo, 2019).

#### **Reflection on work tasks, social context and task performance.**

According to Messmann and Mulder (2015), in the workplace context, the conceptualisation of reflection based on the object of reflection facilitates the process of thinking on the action. As stated by the authors, the focus is on three objects of reflection, therefore, there are discerned three types of reflection in the workplace, meaning reflection on work tasks, on social context and on task performance.

First, reflection on the work tasks is about the actual assignment and the means to achieve its completion (Anselmann & Mulder, 2020). Task reflection is about assessing the dimensions of the task, considering also the framework of the task (Messmann & Mulder, 2015). Therefore, when reflecting on the work task, are in the spotlight the task attributes, situational attributes, specific steps and action method, the goals of the activity, the possible results and the impact the action has, being interpreted in the light of the workplace context. For example, when the employee reflects on a work task, he or she contemplates multiple paths to achieve an objective (Messmann & Mulder, 2015).

Based on the same conceptualisation of Messmann and Mulder (2015), the second type of reflection is the reflection on the social context. In this case, it is important how personal behaviour interplays with the socio-cultural environment of the organisation. Specifically, highlights the relationships between colleagues and the differentiation between work-related ways of thinking (Messmann & Mulder, 2015). Also refers to fundamental principles, requirements and expectations related to task completion and results (van Woerkom, 2004). For instance, the employee that reflects on the social context questions the principles and standards related to the workplace, of colleagues (Messmann & Mulder, 2015).

In this situation, the employee seems to be willing to understand his experience at the workplace in the framework of work relationships and culture. Thus, when facing change, the person considers the changes through the lens of social context and might inquire if it is a safe environment to ask for help if needed.

Finally, the third type of reflection from the conceptualization of Messmann and Mulder (2015) is on task performance and interests the conduct phase, where the connection between action and results is important. Particularly, reflection on task performance includes the assessment of results in comparison with predictions of results. Also, it analyses the outcome of work behaviour, identifying patterns of behaviour that leads to success or failure. To exemplify, an employee that is reflecting on the task performance is making sure that it evaluates probable reasons for obstacles (Messmann & Mulder, 2015). So, the employee is making extra efforts to assess the possibilities of success and failure.

**The relationship between reflection at the workplace and change supportive behaviours.** At the moment of this study, no other studies investigating the prediction of reflection on change supportive behaviours were found. However, in general, reflection can be crucial when dealing with changes at the workplace (Messmann & Mulder, 2011). Actually, reflection is positively correlated with cognitive flexibility, which allows individuals to deal with novel and challenging situations (Orakci, 2021). At the same time, reflection not only generates learning Høytrup (2004) but also is involved in unlearning, a process that exists both at the individual and organisational level, which implies renouncing convictions and behaviours that hinder change implementation (Kmieciak, 2020). Therefore, the literature suggests that reflection is an important element for dealing with change, which allows the employees to receive change with more flexibility and to unlearn the old behaviours and learn the new behaviours that support change. Moreover, the behaviour of the employees may be influenced by reflection, since Faller, Lundgren, and Marsick (2020) suggest that reflection facilitates action-taking. Thus, employees who reflect may have more cognitive flexibility and show more unlearning of old behaviours, feeling more encouraged to take action in comparison with employees that do not reflect. In this context, it is expected that in general, *(H1a) reflection predicts change supportive behaviours.*

In particular, however, work task reflection does not facilitate unlearning (Matsuo, 2019). Since unlearning is important in dealing with change (Kmieciak, 2020), it is possible that reflection focused on the work task is not suitable to generate radically different behaviour with high impact in an organisation. Thus, perhaps the employees who reflect on

work tasks are not showing cooperation or championing but may show a low effort change supportive behaviour, namely compliance. Therefore, it can be concluded that employees who reflect on work task do not show unlearning, and because of that, are engaged in lower effort change supportive behaviours. Accordingly, it can be assumed that *(H1b) reflection on work task predicts compliance behaviour*.

Concurrently, reflection on performance is associated with unlearning (Kmieciak, 2020). So, employees who reflect on performance may easily unlearn old behaviours and adopt new behaviours that support change than employees who do not reflect on performance. Therefore, a higher degree of unlearning may be involved in higher effort change supportive behaviours. In particular, because championing requires a higher amount of new behaviours that exceed the formal requirements, it is possible that unlearning is important for showing championing. Thus, it can be suggested that employees who reflect on task performance show higher unlearning and therefore, show more championing than employees who do not reflect on task performance. Consequently, it can be assumed that *(H1c) reflection on task performance predicts championing*.

### **The role that gender plays in reflection**

The actual state of literature does not offer substantial insights into whether gender influences the practice, content or quality of reflection, especially in the context of organisational change. However, reflection might be gender-sensitive (Kavoshian, Ketabi, Tavakoli, & Koehler, 2017). Concerning the number of reflection practices, a study by Kavoshian, Ketabi, Tavakoli, and Koehler (2017) on reflection based on the personal performance of teachers revealed that males reflected more than females. Regarding the content of reflections, the same authors suggest that females reflect more on people interactions, and males have a preference for the management aspects of their work, while both genders reflect on error correction, group work and their practice. Furthermore, about the gender differences in depth of reflections, Rigolizzo and Zhu (2020) found out that, when performing the act of reflection on workplace events associated with learning, male employees used more insight words than female employees. Also, Frederick (2005) and Barcellos, Cardoso, and de Aquino (2016) suggest that it is a gender difference in the cognitive style, measured through the Cognitive Reflection Test, where males score higher than females (Easton, 2018). Therefore, it can be assumed that it is a possibility that men and women use distinctive thinking patterns and express them differently, also using reflection in



the workplace differently. Thus, it is expected that *(H2) male gender moderates positively the relationship between reflection and all three change supportive behaviours.*

## Methods

### Design

The design of the current study aims to offer insights into the relationship between reflection as the independent variable, change supportive behaviours as the dependent variables and gender as a moderator. To test this relationship, a quantitative study with a cross-sectional design was performed.

### Participants

The participants were affiliated with companies from The Netherlands that were subject to a certain organizational change and were Dutch-speaking employees. In total, 74 employees participated in the study, where only 33 had complete responses. The final sample consisted of 17 (51.50%) women and 16 (48.50%) males, with ages between 20 and 58 years old with a mean age of 37.93 [ $SD = 12.20$ ]. The educational level of the participants was distributed between HBO (6.1%) and doctoral level (3%), where the majority of the participants (60.6%) had WO education. The majority of the participants worked in the education sector (18.2%), information and communication (15.2%) sector and industry sector (15.2%) and had an average of 17 years of work experience, with a minimum of one year and a maximum of 41 years [ $SD = 12.31$ ]. All participants digitally signed a consent form before completing the questionnaire.

### Materials

This study made use of an online questionnaire in “Qualtrics.” The complete questionnaire contained 49 items belonging to six different parts, as follows: demographic questions, Psychological Uncertainty Scale, reflection on work task, on social context and on task performance questionnaire, the magnitude of change questions, depth of reflection open questions and change supportive behaviour questionnaire. However, for this study, only data from the demographic questions, the reflection questionnaire, and the change supportive behaviour questionnaire was used.

**Factor analysis.** The validity of the questionnaires was assessed via a factor analysis with a principal axis factoring with oblique rotation. Eight factors had the Eigenvalues above 1 and explained 79% of the variance in the questionnaire. The result was contrary to the expectations since the questionnaire intended to measure only six factors, three factors

belonging to reflection and three factors belonging to change supportive behaviours. Therefore, it was performed a factor loadings analysis. Due to the confidentiality of the instrument, the complete results of the factor analysis cannot be presented. However, the analysis showed that the work task reflection items loaded on two different factors, the context reflection items loaded on two different factors and all the task performance items loaded on the same factor. Regarding the change supportive behaviours scale, the results of the factor analysis revealed that compliance factors loaded on two factors, while both cooperation and championing items loaded on the same factor. Despite these results, the study continued to use these pre-existing questionnaires because of their foundation on the predefined constructs of reflection and change supportive behaviours.

**Demographic questions.** The first part of the questionnaire contained five items and collected demographic data about gender, age, years of work experience, level of education, and work sector.

**Reflection on work task, social context and task performance questionnaire.**

Next, this part contained the subscale adapted by Messmann and Mulder (2015), having 18 items. The scale aimed to measure workplace reflection and contained six items that measure reflection on the work task (Cronbach's alpha = .78), one example being “I consider different ways in which I can reach my objectives,” six items that measure reflection on social context (Cronbach's alpha = .79), for instance, “I challenge work-related norms and values of my colleagues” and six items to measure reflection on task performance (Cronbach's alpha = .81), “If something does not work out as it should, I take time to find the possible cause of the problems” being one of them. The items were weighed based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *never* (1) to *very often* (5).

**Change supportive behaviour questionnaire.** Finally, the final part contained the subscale adapted by Yang, Choi, and Lee (2018). The scale measured change supportive behaviours in terms of compliance with three items (Cronbach's alpha = .76), for instance, “This person has accepted role changes following an organisational change,” cooperation with three items (Cronbach's alpha = .71), with “This person has tried to understand the organisational change as well as he/she can” as an example item and championing with another three items (Cronbach's alpha = .74), “This person has often spoken positively about the change to people outside the company” is one of them. The items were weighted based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *totally disagree* (1) to *totally agree* (5).

## **Procedure**

The respondents were approached via email and social media. The respondents accessed the Qualtrics questionnaire via a link. Once the online questionnaire was accessed, the participants had to give electronic consent for voluntary participation. Moreover, the participants had to respond to the questionnaire questions. The process of completing the questionnaire had a duration of approximately fifteen minutes. All the answers were registered on Qualtrics.

## **Data Analysis**

The statistical analysis was performed using the statistical software SPSS. To respond to the research questions “to what extent does reflection predict change supportive behaviours of employees in the context of organisational change?” and “to what extent does gender mediate the interaction between reflection and change supportive behaviours of employees in the context of organisational change” a multivariate analysis, MANOVA, was executed.

## **Results**

### **Description of the study variables**

Descriptive analysis was used to summarise the data, as can be seen in Table 1. The scores are placed above the theoretical average of the scale, suggesting the presence of both reflection and change supportive behaviours. Also, the standard deviation reveals that the responses are spread within one standard deviation around the mean.

Moreover, to establish the correlation between the different types of reflection, the different types of change supportive behaviours and gender, Pearson R was used. As it can be seen in Table 1, a significant positive correlation was found between work task reflection and context reflection,  $r = .49$ ,  $N = 33$ ,  $p < .01$ , suggesting that employees with a high score on work task reflection are likely to show a high score in context reflection. Another significant positive correlation was found between work task reflection and competence reflection,  $r = .50$ ,  $N = 33$ ,  $p < .01$ , meaning that employees with a high score on work task reflection are likely to show a high score in competence reflection. Also, context reflection was found to be significantly correlated with competence reflection,  $r = .62$ ,  $N = 33$ ,  $p < .01$ , implying that employees who have high scores in context reflection are expected to have high scores on competence reflection. Concerning change supportive behaviours, a significant correlation was found between cooperation and championing,  $r = .65$ ,  $N = 33$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that employees who show the behaviour of cooperation are likely to show championing behaviour

as well. Finally, gender was found to be significantly correlated with cooperation,  $r = .41$ ,  $N = 33$ ,  $p < .05$ , suggesting that the behaviour of cooperation might be gender-sensitive and female employees show different amounts of cooperation than male employees.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Relevant Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
1. Work Tasks reflection	3.67	.80	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Context reflection	3.18	.89	<b>.49*</b>	-	-	-	-	-
3. Task performance reflection	3.46	.91	<b>.50*</b>	<b>.62*</b>	-	-	-	-
4. Compliance	4.04	.79	.10	-.06	-.15	-	-	-
5. Cooperation	4.18	.62	.25	.02	-.10	.33	-	-
6. Championing	3.93	.83	.13	-.09	-.31	.11	<b>.65*</b>	-
7. Gender	1.52	.50	.22	.21	.12	.28	<b>.41*</b>	.17

*Note.*  $N=33$ .

\* $p < .05$ .

### **The predictive role of reflection**

To assess to what extent reflection influences the change of supportive behaviours, a multivariate regression analysis was conducted. The results illustrated that the overall model was significant with Wilks'  $\Lambda = .290$ ,  $F(3,27) = 21.99$ , and  $p < .001$  and explained 29% of the variance. Inspection of the individual parameters, as can be seen in Table 2, indicated that reflection on task performance negatively predicted championing behaviour, with  $F(1,29) = 5.80$ ,  $b = -.49$ ,  $p = .023$ . This means that on average, employees who reflect more on task performance are less likely to show championing behaviour than employees who engage less in task performance reflection. However, the analysis showed that work task reflection and context reflection alone did not have a predictive effect on compliance, cooperation nor championing. Accordingly, the answer to the first research question is that reflection has

limited predictive effects on change supportive behaviour, where only task performance reflection negatively predicts championing.

**Table 2**

*The Predictable Role of Reflection*

Predictor	Prediction	<i>F</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Work task reflection	Compliance	1.41	.25	1.19	.243
	Cooperation	3.72	.31	1.94	.062
	Championing	3.58	.39	1.88	.070
Context reflection	Compliance	.01	-.02	-.09	.930
	Cooperation	.01	.01	.09	.930
	Championing	.05	.05	.24	.812
Task performance reflection	Compliance	1.27	-.23	-1.13	.268
	Cooperation	1.90	-.22	-1.38	.178
	Championing	5.80	-.49	-2.41	<b>.023</b>

*Note.*  $df = 1,29$ .

**The moderation effect of gender**

A multivariate regression analysis was conducted to investigate whether gender moderates the relationship between reflections and change supportive behaviours. The results illustrated that the overall model was significant with Wilks'  $\Lambda = .255$ ,  $F(3,23) = 22.38$ , and  $p < .001$  and explained 25% of the variance. Inspection of the individual parameters, as can be seen in Table 3, indicated that female gender significantly positively moderated the relationship between work task reflection and cooperation, with  $F(1,25) = 6.79$ ,  $b = .78$  and  $p = .015$ . This means that on average, female employees who engage in work task reflection are more likely to show the behaviour of cooperation than male employees who engage in work task reflection. Moreover, the individual parameters reflected that the female gender significantly and positively moderated the relationship between work task reflection and championing, with  $F(1,25) = 5.12$ ,  $b = .98$ ,  $p = .032$ . This means that on average, female employees who reflect on work tasks are more likely to show championing behaviour than male employees who reflect on work tasks.

**Table 3***The Moderation Effect of Gender*

Predictor	Prediction	<i>F</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Work task reflection	Compliance	.06	-.08	-.26	.796
	Cooperation	.66	-.17	-.81	.424
	Championing	.28	-.16	-.53	.601
Context reflection	Compliance	.47	.28	.68	.497
	Cooperation	1.40	.24	1.18	.247
	Championing	1.14	.31	1.07	.295
Competence reflection	Compliance	.23	-.13	-.48	.630
	Cooperation	.05	-.04	-.23	.817
	Championing	1.17	-.28	-1.08	.290
Gender	Compliance	.04	.33	.20	.838
	Cooperation	.27	-.55	-.52	.602
	Championing	.70	-1.26	-.83	.409
Work task reflection * Gender female	Compliance	1.00	.46	1.01	.325
	Cooperation	6.79	.78	2.60	<b>.015</b>
	Championing	5.12	.98	2.26	<b>.032</b>
Context reflection * Gender female	Compliance	1.08	-.46	-1.04	.307
	Cooperation	2.00	-.41	-1.41	.169
	Championing	.97	-.41	-.98	.333
Competence reflection * Gender female	Compliance	.01	-.03	-.006	.946
	Cooperation	.30	-.15	-.58	.589
	Championing	.29	-.22	-.54	.584

*Note.* *df* =1,25.

### Discussion

This paper aimed to investigate to what extent change supportive behaviours, meaning compliance with change, cooperation with change and championing with change can be predicted by reflection on work task, reflection on social context and reflection on task performance. At the same time, it was investigated the moderation effect of gender on each relationship between the different types of reflection and the different types of change

supportive behaviour. The central research questions “*to what extent does reflection predict change supportive behaviours of employees in the context of organisational change?*” and “*to what extent does gender mediate the interaction between reflection and change supportive behaviours of employees in the context of organisational change?*” and their correspondent hypotheses were investigated. First, it was expected that in particular, reflection on work task would predict compliance behaviour and that reflection on task performance would predict cooperation and championing. Additionally, it was expected that gender would moderate the relationship between reflection at the workplace and all three change supportive behaviours.

### **The predictive role of reflection**

This study aimed to determine whether reflection predicts change supportive behaviours. Overall, reflection was found to not have an impact on change supportive behaviours. Even if literature suggest that reflection generates important outcomes that support change, for example, cognitive flexibility (Orakci, 2021), learning (2004), unlearning (Kmieciak, 2020) and action-taking (Faller, Lundgren, & Marsick, 2020), the findings do not show that reflection generates change supportive behaviours. Therefore, even if reflection enhances precursors of behavioural change, the findings may suggest that reflection may not be enough to generate action-taking (Ptakauskaite, Cox, & Berthouze, 2018). Accordingly, it seems to be a missing piece in the mechanism between reflection and change supportive behaviours.

Moreover, the inspection of individual parameters showed that in fact, reflection on task performance negatively influences the championing behaviour. This finding is supported by the idea that reflection does not always generate positive outcomes (Trowler, Allan, Bryk, & Din, 2020). According to Grant, Franklin, and Langford, (2002), reflection oriented to self may lead to rumination and according to van Seggelen-Damen and Dam (2016), employees who engage more in reflection are also engaging more in rumination, explaining a general negative influence of the reflection. Rumination can be conceptualised as being a distress response that implies an intense, recurring and passive focus on distress sensations, sources and results (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008). Particularly, workplace rumination refers to thinking focused on job-related problems (Bortolon, Lopes, Capdevielle, Macioce, & Raffard, 2019). According to Rimes and Watkins (2005), rumination negatively impacts the ability to problem-solve, confidence and motivation. In particular, work-related rumination relates to cognitive failure, diminished situational awareness and decreased cognitive flexibility, which depletes the resources available for performing (Cropley, Zijlstra,

Querstret, & Beck, 2016). A connection between reflection on task performance and rumination can be explained by the presence of self-efficacy, a lower level of self-efficacy being related to rumination (van Seggelen-Damen & Dam, 2016). Perhaps, the process of reflecting on possibilities of success or failure at the workplace orients the employee into thinking about their abilities to deal with change and reflection degenerates in rumination. Therefore, the negative impact of rumination may impede the championing behaviour when dealing with challenges caused by changes in the organisation.

### **The moderation effect of gender**

This study aimed to investigate to what extent gender moderated the relationship between reflection and change supportive behaviours. Gender appears to be a moderator in the relationship between work task reflection and cooperation and championing. Thus, the moderation effect of gender is only present when employees engage in work task reflection, but not in reflection on social context and task performance. Why the relationship is present only when work task reflection is involved, but not the other types of reflection may be explained by the skill of goal-setting or planning, part of self-regulation learning strategies, which refers to generating goals, subgoals and means to achieve them (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988). The activity of planning appears to be similar to work task reflection, meaning that employees are thinking about goals, possible results and ways to achieve that goal when facing change. Considering that the unusual situations caused by changes in organisations demand workplace learning (Antonacopoulou, 2018), the employees may use reflection on the work task as a planning strategy to assure the completion of new demands. At the same time, planning may be gender-sensitive (Naglieri & Rojahn, 2001), therefore explaining why gender moderates the relationship between work task reflection and change supportive behaviours.

Moreover, the moderation effect of gender appears only when reflection on work task predicts cooperation and championing, but not compliance. Thus, female employees who reflect on the work task engage more in cooperation and championing, but not compliance. This finding may be explained by the gender differences in commitment to change, which is a predictor of change supportive behaviours (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) suggest that cooperation and championing alone are correlated with a normative commitment to change. Additionally, Deprez, Van Den Broeck, Cools, and Bouckenooghe (2012) suggest that normative commitment is gender-sensitive. Therefore, because normative commitment to change is gender-sensitive and is related to cooperation



and championing, but not compliance, this may explain why gender moderates only the relationship of reflection to cooperation and championing, but not compliance.

Additionally, the findings reveal a difference between female and male employees who reflect more on the work task and engage in cooperation and championing behaviours when facing change in organisations, where female employees show more cooperation and championing in comparison with male employees. This finding is not in accordance with Yang, Choi, and Lee (2018), who suggested that the female gender was found to be negatively correlated with compliance, cooperation and championing. One possible explanation for the gender differences implies the different styles in reflection of females and males (Kavoshian, Ketabi, Tavakoli, & Koehler 2017). Thus, it can be assumed that reflection moderated by a gender-specific reflection style increases supportive behaviours. Additionally, there are gender differences in physiological responses to stress, where challenges concerning achievement generate a higher stress reaction to men (Stroud, Salovey, & Epel, 2002). Also, in general, women appear to be more optimistic than men (Mishra, 2013). Therefore, it can be speculated that the stress generated by the organisational change determines male employees to be less cooperative and to show less championing and the higher level of optimism in women can encourage them to show more cooperation and championing with change.

### **Limitations**

It is important to interpret the findings considering the limitations of the current study. The theoretical limitation may concern the conceptualisation of the interest variables. To conceptualise reflection, it was used the theoretical model of Messmann and Mulder (2015). This conceptualisation based on the object of reflection was used because Høyrup (2004) suggested that this manner of reflection encourages employees to think about how they can perform the work tasks, therefore matching the context of the workplace. However, even if this type of reflection conceptualisation fits the work context in general, there exists the possibility that other dimensions of reflection correlate with change supportive behaviours and perhaps are better in predicting these kinds of behaviours. For example, reflection may be conceptualised considering the reflection moment, the depth of reflection or the operational level of reflection (Messmann and Mulder, 2015). Additionally, Lundgren et al. (2017) suggest that there exist seven dimensions of reflection. Therefore, the absence of predictive relationships might be the result of unfitting of the used conceptualisation of reflection with change supportive behaviours.

Moreover, the methodological limitations of the study must be taken into consideration. There was a discrepancy between the number of expected measured constructs and the underlying factors in the questionnaires, showing more dimensions of reflection and one less dimension of change supportive behaviours. This detail can be explained by the multidimensionality of reflection. Concerning change supportive behaviour, the two underlying factors found in the factor analysis may fit the conceptualisation as displayed by Meyer, Srinivas and Topolnytsky (2007). In this conceptualisation, compliance belongs to non-discretionary support behaviour, where both cooperation and championing belong to discretionary support behaviours. Actually, the factor analysis reflected that both cooperation and championing loaded on the same factor. Consequently, perhaps the questionnaire could not register accurately the investigated variables.

### **Theoretical and practical implications**

At the moment of this study existed a gap in the literature about the relationship between reflection and change supportive behaviours. Overall, this study attempted to find a predictive relationship between these two variables. In particular, this study brought together the theoretical conceptualisation of reflection as presented by Messmann and Mulder (2015) and the theoretical conceptualisation of change supportive behaviour, as presented by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). To reveal a possible relationship were used together the existing questionnaire developed by Messmann and Mulder (2015) for capturing reflection and the questionnaire developed by Yang, Choi, and Lee (2018) for capturing change supportive behaviours.

In a context where reflection was found to be required in order to successfully accommodate organisational change (Dom & Ahmad, 2019), this study comes with results that reject a prediction effect of reflection on change supportive behaviours. Moreover, one of the findings, meaning the negative significant impact of task performance reflection on championing, leads the discussion in the direction of unexpected effects of reflection (Trowler, Allan, Bryk, & Din, 2020), one of them being rumination (Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002; Seggelen-Damen, & Dam, 2016). Kross, Ayduk, and Mischel (2005) suggest that reflecting in a non-attached manner is associated with less negative effects in comparison with reflection from a personal point of view and actually generates more insights into the problem. Therefore, this study adds an argument that the presence of reflective practice alone is not enough to generate positive outcomes regarding change supportive behaviours and

encourages future studies to explore more suitable manners to reflect, as de la Croix and Veen (2018) suggested.

Another insight revealed by the study places gender as a relevant moderator of the work task dimension of reflection and cooperation and championing. The gender impact on reflection is not strongly contoured in the literature, thus, this study strengthens the idea that reflection might be gender-sensitive. Also, even if literature suggests that the initial attitude before the change has no gender correlation (Vakola, Tsaousis, & Nikolaou, 2004) and there is no significant relationship between gender and readiness for organisational change (Cunningham et al., 2002; Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005), this study suggests that the behavioural responses are mediated by gender.

In particular, the findings have practical implications, especially in the human resources development field. Employees need support from the organisation to deal with stressors associated with organisational change (Smollan, 2017). The impact of human resources professionals is crucial to offer the needed support by providing the employees with the opportunities to grow competencies and creating an organisational culture (Gandolfi, 2006). Regarding reflection, organisations should promote appropriate ways to support their employees to learn and manage changes. However, as suggested by this study also, it requires careful usage of reflection, since it may generate opposite responses than expected, rumination, for example, having negative effects that impact both the quality of work and quality of life (Rimes & Watkins, 2005). For example, human resources practitioners can develop reflection intervention that encompasses non-attached reflection to avoid the negative effects associated with rumination and to help employees to generate more insights into the problem, as suggested by Kross, Ayduk and Mischel (2005).

Regarding change supportive behaviours, this study suggests that reflection alone might not be enough to generate action-taking. Therefore, to help employees to engage in change supportive behaviours, it may be necessary to add into interventions other precursors of these behaviours. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) suggest that cooperation and championing alone are correlated with an affective and normative commitment to change. Therefore, it can be assumed that higher engagement change supportive behaviours require conviction and a feeling of duty, while obligation can only generate minimum support for the change. This idea is in accord with Fugate and Soenen (2018), who suggests that warning appraisal is associated with low championing behaviour. Accordingly, the support interventions should nurture the affective and normative commitment and avoid generating feelings of threat. Furthermore,

according to Strauss, Niven, McClelland, and Cheung (2015), the reaction of the employees regarding organisational change are connected to traits like resilience and hope, orienting the employee towards resisting or supporting change behaviour. Thus, besides organisational factors that influence the employees' response to change, the personal and subjective factors have an influence as well (Hetzner, Gartmeier, Heid, & Gruber, 2009). Therefore, human resources need to develop interventions that can be tailored to individuals. Nevertheless, human resources professionals should take into account gender differences when developing programs within the organisation (Linstead, Brewis, & Linstead, 2005).

### **Future research**

Since literature already exists supporting the idea that reflection can be beneficial in organisational change (Dom & Ahmad, 2019; Messmann & Mulder 2015), future research may investigate what type of reflection can predict change supportive behaviours. Nevertheless, different conceptualisations of reflection are needed and the development of a new assessment tool incorporating more dimensions of the construct may be necessary. Additionally, exploring whether the moment of reflection influences the behavioural outcome of the employees may offer practical insights into when is the appropriate time to successfully use reflection in organisations. Also, explorative research may offer insights into whether the depth of reflection influences the workplace behaviour of the employees, suggesting how to use reflection for the desired results. Furthermore, exploring what are the triggers of reflection may help to facilitate the generation of this action when needed. In this sense, collecting qualitative data from employees may be useful to capture new facets, precursors and influencers of reflection that can be advantageous in the organisational context, by using individual narratives, case studies and interviews (Smollan, 2017).

Concerning the change supportive behaviours, this study could not support the predictive effect of reflection. Therefore, future research should investigate other possible precursors of change supportive behaviours, internal and external. In particular, internal factors that determine these behaviours can add depth to understanding the phenomenon (Hetzner, Gartmeier, Heid, & Gruber, 2009). According to Nikolaou (2004), personality traits are related to the attitude of the employees towards organisational change. In this context, future research can investigate whether employees' personality traits influence more than attitude and are actually precursors of behaviour related to organisational change. For example, the moderation effect of personality traits like openness may suggest which type of persons are more prone to one supportive behaviour or another. In this sense, HEXACO

Personality Inventory can successfully be used to assess personality traits that determine attitudes in the workplace context (Anglim, Sojo, Ashford, Newman, & Marty, 2019), and the scale adapted by Yang, Choi, and Lee (2018) can be used to assess the behavioural responses of the employees. These studies can offer suggestions into how to develop individually tailored interventions when approaching change in organisations.

### **Conclusion**

This study contributes to the body of research concerning the generation and inhibition of change supportive behaviours. Even though the results are limited, there is some evidence suggesting that in some cases, reflection can predict change supportive behaviours, especially when the relationship is mediated by gender. These findings add leads for future research and the development of human resources interventions in organisations, that can generate a better understanding and support of favourable conditions that foster a positive reaction to change of the employees.

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