**CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING SYSTEMS AND SUPPLY CHAIN EFFICIENCY AT NATIONAL MEDICAL STORES**.

**ABSTRACT**

This study examined the relationship between change management in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and supply chain efficiency at National Medical Stores (NMS). The study was underpinned by the systems theory by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (Ramos et al., 2022). A correlational research design was adopted, utilizing a mixed methods approach and data were collected from 73 respondents through structured questionnaires and interviews. Change management demonstrated a very weak and negative correlation with supply chain efficiency (r = –.058, p > 0.01), implying that current change management practices may not be effectively supporting ERP-driven improvements. The study concluded that inadequate change management is limiting the full potential of ERP implementation. It recommended adopt more strategic and inclusive change management approaches to ensure successful ERP implementation and enhanced supply chain performance.

Key words: Change Management; Enterprise Resource Planning; National Medical Stores

## INTRODUCTION

In today’s dynamic healthcare environment, efficient supply chain management is vital for ensuring timely access to essential medicines and health commodities. In Uganda, National Medical Stores (NMS) plays a pivotal role in the procurement, storage, and distribution of medical supplies across the country. However, like many large organizations, NMS has historically faced challenges in ensuring efficient supply chain operations due to fragmented systems, manual processes, and a lack of real-time data visibility (Sanders, 2025). These inefficiencies result in delays, stockouts, and wastage, all of which undermine healthcare service delivery.

To address these operational challenges, many organizations have adopted Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems—integrated software solutions that automate core business processes and facilitate seamless information flow across departments (Mhaskey, 2024). When effectively implemented, ERP systems can significantly enhance supply chain efficiency by optimizing inventory management, improving procurement processes, and reducing lead times (Gupta & Sachan, 2024). However, the realization of these benefits depends heavily on change management.

National Medical Stores (NMS) is a government-owned organization mandated to procure, store, and distribute essential medicines and medical supplies to public health facilities across Uganda. Established under the National Medical Stores Act of 1993, NMS plays a critical role in ensuring an efficient and reliable public health supply chain by managing inventory, coordinating deliveries, and supporting national health programs. Despite global advancements in ERP-driven supply chain optimization, there is limited empirical research on how these systems perform in resource-constrained settings like Uganda. In particular, the effectiveness of ERP implementation at National Medical Stores—considering its change management has not been rigorously evaluated. This study sought to fill that gap by examining how this element influences supply chain efficiency at NMS. It sought to test the null hypothesis Ho = There is no significant relationship between change management and supply chain efficiency at National Medical Stores.

The findings were aimed at informing both policy and practice, offering lessons for similar public sector organizations striving to enhance supply chain performance through digital transformation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Change management plays a pivotal role in the successful implementation of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, particularly in enhancing supply chain efficiency. Communication strategies, as a key dimension of change management, foster transparency and clarity during ERP transitions (Azouri et al., 2022). Effective communication ensures that stakeholders understand the objectives, processes, and benefits of the ERP system, reducing uncertainty and resistance (Tarigan et al., 2021). In South Africa, a case study on a pharmaceutical supply chain demonstrated that clear communication through regular meetings, newsletters, and interactive training sessions led to increased user acceptance and faster implementation (Bvuchete et al., 2021). Conversely, inadequate communication during ERP deployment in Indian manufacturing firms resulted in misaligned expectations, poor user adoption, and disruptions in the supply chain (Kumar & Gupta, 2020).

Effective communication further builds organizational commitment and supports change initiatives. In Germany, companies that employed two-way communication channels, including feedback loops and suggestion systems, experienced a smoother ERP rollout with minimal supply chain interruptions (Gupta & Sachan, 2024). Employees felt valued, contributing to higher engagement and proactive problem-solving. However, in contrast, a study from Brazil indicated that top-down communication without adequate employee involvement caused resistance and operational inefficiencies, exacerbating delays in ERP implementation (Kujala, 2023).

Cultural and organizational differences also influence the effectiveness of communication strategies. In the United States, companies that adapted their communication approaches to align with organizational culture experienced successful ERP implementation and subsequent supply chain optimization (Alzahmi et al., 2024). Tailored communication through departmental meetings, interactive sessions, and digital platforms was critical. On the other hand, Chinese enterprises with hierarchical management structures faced challenges when adopting participatory communication, leading to confusion and slow decision-making (Yu & Jiang, 2024).

Furthermore, the timing and consistency of communication determine its effectiveness. In the United Kingdom, organizations that initiated communication campaigns early in the ERP implementation phase experienced greater stakeholder buy-in and streamlined supply chain operations (Oladimeji, 2023). Continuous updates and progress reports maintained transparency. However, inconsistent communication observed in Middle Eastern enterprises created information gaps, leading to misconceptions and delays in supply chain operations (Alzahmi et al., 2024).

Resistance management, the second dimension of change management, is equally critical in mitigating the negative impacts of ERP implementation on supply chain efficiency (Kunneke & Niemann, 2024). Resistance often arises from fear of job loss, lack of understanding, or discomfort with new technology. In Kenya, proactive resistance management through employee involvement in decision-making and hands-on training improved ERP acceptance and minimized supply chain disruptions (Singu et al., 2024). On the contrary, Nigerian firms that neglected employee concerns experienced frequent workarounds and data inaccuracies, compromising supply chain performance (Ameh, 2024).

Organizations adopting inclusive resistance management strategies often achieve smoother ERP transitions. In Sweden, companies that established cross-functional teams to address resistance provided employees with a sense of ownership, resulting in efficient ERP utilization and improved supply chain coordination (Reis & Saval, 2023). In contrast, Mexican organizations that dismissed employee feedback witnessed higher levels of dissatisfaction, resistance, and operational inefficiencies during ERP implementation (Corbett, 2024).

Training and support systems are also vital in resistance management. In Australia, companies that invested in comprehensive training programs and ongoing support saw significant improvements in employee confidence and ERP utilization, leading to enhanced supply chain agility (Tarigan et al., 2021). Conversely, firms in Indonesia that underfunded training efforts encountered higher error rates, delays, and diminished supply chain efficiency (Alzahmi et al., 2025).

Leadership commitment and change champions play an instrumental role in overcoming resistance. Canadian companies demonstrated that assigning dedicated change agents to address employee concerns and facilitate communication accelerated ERP adoption and supply chain performance (Monferdini & Bottani, 2024). In contrast, the absence of visible leadership support in some Eastern European enterprises resulted in persistent resistance, undermining ERP implementation success (Krishnan & Krishnan, 2024).

Despite the extensive research on the role of communication strategies and resistance management in ERP implementation, gaps remain. There was limited empirical evidence on the effects of these change management practices on supply chain resilience, particularly in low-resource settings. Additionally, studies often focused on large and predominantly business enterprises, overlooking the unique challenges faced by not-for-profit enterprises like NMS in ERP adoption. The current study on National Medical Stores addressed these gaps by exploring how tailored communication and resistance management strategies impact supply chain efficiency in a public healthcare context, offering valuable insights for both policymakers and practitioners.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design and a mixed-methods approach to analyse the impact of ERP systems implementation on supply chain efficiency. A cross-sectional design was appropriate as it allows for the collection of data at a single point in time (Maier et al., 2023). The population for this study included employees and managers involved in the ERP system implementation and supply chain operations at National Medical Stores. This encompassed individuals from various departments, including procurement, logistics, inventory management, and IT support. The study targeted a specific subset of NMS employees who had direct experience with ERP systems and their operational impact on the supply chain. Given the specialized nature of the organization, the population was relatively small but diverse, including individuals with varying levels of involvement with the ERP system. The total number of employees from relevant departments at NMS was 108. This was based on the prevailing staffing records of those directly engaged in ERP-supported supply chain functions as provided by NMS Human Resource and departmental heads. From the population a sample of 86 employees were selected using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) sample size determination table, which is appropriate for finite population sampling. This sample size ensures statistical representativeness while remaining manageable for data collection purposes. Two sampling techniques were employed: purposive sampling and simple random sampling (SRS), each justified by the roles of the target respondents. Purposive sampling was used to select top-level management, particularly those directly involved in the planning, installation, and configuration of the ERP system at National Medical Stores (NMS). Simple Random Sampling (SRS) was used to select middle-level and lower-level staff from the logistics, procurement, inventory, and IT departments. SRS was suitable for this group because it eliminates selection bias by giving each eligible employee an equal and independent chance of being chosen.

Once the data was collected, the analysis was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics—such as means, percentages, and standard deviations—were used to summarize responses and provide an overview of key supply chain performance indicators (e.g., procurement lead time, delivery timeliness, and inventory turnover) before and after ERP implementation. Descriptive statistics were appropriate for identifying central tendencies and patterns within the data, enabling a clear understanding of performance distribution across different dimensions of ERP implementation. To test the relationships between change management, and supply chain efficiency outcomes, inferential statistics were employed. Specifically, Pearson’s correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between training and supply chain performance metrics.

For the qualitative data obtained from interviews, thematic analysis was applied to identify and interpret patterns in participants' experiences and perceptions. Responses were coded into themes reflecting common challenges, benefits, and lessons learned from ERP implementation. This multi-method approach ensured triangulation of findings and a comprehensive understanding of both the measurable effects and contextual nuances surrounding ERP’s impact at NMS**.**

**FINDINGS**

This section explores the relationship between change management and supply chain efficiency at National Medical Stores (NMS) following the implementation of ERP systems. Change management is a critical factor in ensuring that organizational transitions—such as the shift from manual systems to ERP platforms—are smooth, inclusive, and effective. In the context of ERP implementation, effective change management encompasses strategic communication and resistance management to foster user acceptance, reduce disruption, and sustain system performance. By examining how well communication and resistance strategies were implemented, this study seeks to understand their influence on key supply chain outcomes such as procurement lead time, distribution timeliness, delivery reliability, and inventory turnover at NMS.

## Descriptive Statistics on Change Management

This subsection presents the descriptive statistics related to change management practices at National Medical Stores. It assesses key dimensions including communication strategies and resistance management mechanisms employed during the ERP implementation. Specifically, it evaluates the extent to which management communicated the goals and benefits of ERP adoption, involved employees in the change process, provided regular updates, and managed resistance effectively. These indicators offer insight into the organizational readiness and support systems that were in place to facilitate change and ensure that the ERP system would contribute positively to supply chain efficiency.

**Table 1: Findings on Change Management**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Items on Change Management** | **SD** | **D** | **UD** | **A** | **SA** | **Mean** | **Std Dev.** |
| Management clearly communicated the purpose and benefits of ERP implementation | 0.0% | 3.1% | 0.0% | 57.8% | 39.1% | 4.3 | 0.6 |
| There were regular updates about ERP implementation progress | 0.0% | 3.1% | 3.1% | 60.9% | 32.8% | 4.2 | 0.7 |
| Staff concerns and suggestions were considered during the ERP rollout. | 0.0% | 3.1% | 21.9% | 51.6% | 23.4% | 4.0 | 0.8 |
| There were strategies in place to manage resistance to ERP adoption | 0.0% | 3.1% | 12.5% | 68.8% | 15.6% | 4.0 | 0.6 |
| Employees were adequately involved in the change process | 0.0% | 3.1% | 15.6% | 53.1% | 28.1% | 4.1 | 0.8 |
| Resistance to the new system was handled effectively by management | 3.1% | 9.4% | 6.2% | 59.4% | 21.9% | 3.9 | 1.0 |

(N = 73)

The findings from the study revealed critical insights into change management practices during ERP implementation at National Medical Stores (NMS) and how these practices influenced supply chain efficiency. The analysis combined responses from survey participants and qualitative feedback from key informants in senior management roles.

The first item examined whether management clearly communicated the purpose and benefits of ERP implementation. A substantial majority of respondents agreed (57.8%) or strongly agreed (39.1%), yielding a high mean score of 4.3 and a standard deviation of 0.6. This indicates that communication on ERP objectives was perceived to be effective. *One top official affirmed this view, stating, “From the outset, we ensured that every departmental head was briefed on why ERP was necessary, especially regarding transparency and speed in supply chain operations. We held information sessions and circulated memos to ensure staff understood how the new system would benefit not only their work but also the broader public health service delivery.”* (Key Informant 1)

When asked whether there were regular updates about the progress of ERP implementation, 60.9% agreed and 32.8% strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.2 and a standard deviation of 0.7. This suggests consistent communication throughout the implementation phase. *A senior manager explained, “We had monthly progress meetings and dashboards showing system readiness levels. Even when delays occurred, we kept teams informed to manage expectations. Regular updates helped reduce anxiety and confusion among staff.”* (Key Informant 4)

Respondents were less decisive when asked if staff concerns and suggestions were considered during the ERP rollout, with 21.9% undecided and a lower strong agreement rate (23.4%). The mean stood at 4.0 and the standard deviation at 0.8. While many felt engaged, this finding hints at partial inclusion. *One key official clarified, “We welcomed feedback through departmental heads and suggestion boxes, but honestly, not all concerns could be acted on immediately due to budget and technical constraints. That said, where we could make adjustments—such as modifying some interfaces—we did.”* (Key Informant 2)

The study also assessed whether there were strategies in place to manage resistance to ERP adoption. Most respondents either agreed (68.8%) or strongly agreed (15.6%), producing a mean score of 4.0 and a standard deviation of 0.6. This reflects positively on NMS’s preparedness in anticipating resistance. *A top-level informant elaborated, “We anticipated pushback, especially from staff used to manual processes. So, we created change agent teams within departments to offer peer support and escalate concerns. There was also a helpdesk dedicated to guiding reluctant users through the transition.”* (Key Informant 3)

Regarding employee involvement in the change process, the data revealed a strong sense of inclusion, with 53.1% agreeing and 28.1% strongly agreeing. The mean score was 4.1, and the standard deviation was 0.8. This reflects that a majority of staff felt adequately involved. *One department head remarked, “Every functional unit was represented in the ERP rollout committee. We made sure that even junior staff had a platform to share their views through their representatives. Involvement made a big difference in ownership.”* (Key Informant 5)

Finally, when assessing whether resistance to the new system was handled effectively by management, the agreement levels slightly dropped. While 59.4% agreed and 21.9% strongly agreed, a notable 9.4% disagreed, and 6.2% were undecided. The mean stood at 3.9 with a higher standard deviation of 1.0, indicating some variability in experiences. *One senior IT officer observed, “Some staff adapted quickly, others resisted—particularly in older departments. Management tried their best by offering retraining and constant reassurance. In hindsight, perhaps more personalized support would have made it even smoother.”* (Key Informant 8).

## Testing of Hypothesis

This section presents the findings related to the hypothesis, which examined the relationship between change management and supply chain efficiency at National Medical Stores (NMS) Uganda. The analysis aimed to determine whether effective change management practices—such as communication, employee involvement, and training—had a significant influence on the efficiency of supply chain operations. Using Pearson correlation analysis, the study sought to establish the strength and direction of the association between these two variables, providing insights into how structured change management contributes to improved responsiveness, reduced delays, and overall operational performance in the supply chain.

**Table 2: Correlation between Change Management and Supply Chain Efficiency**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Change Management** | **Supply Chain Efficiency** |
| **Change Management** | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.058\*\* |
| Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .650 |
| N | 64 | 64 |
| **Supply Chain Efficiency** | Pearson Correlation | -.058\*\* | 1 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .650 |  |
| N | 73 | 73 |

This subsection examines the relationship between change management and supply chain efficiency at National Medical Stores (NMS) Uganda by testing the first hypothesis of the study. The analysis employs Pearson’s correlation coefficient to determine whether there is a statistically significant association between the two variables.

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation results between change management and supply chain efficiency. The findings reveal a very weak negative relationship between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.058, indicating a minimal and inverse association. This correlation is not statistically significant at either the 0.05 or 0.01 level (2-tailed), as evidenced by a p-value of 0.650, which is substantially higher than the standard significance thresholds. The sample size for this analysis comprised 64 respondents whose instruments were recovered complete and without error.

The implication of this result is that change management practices at NMS Uganda do not appear to have a significant impact on the efficiency of the supply chain, based on the data analyzed. The weak and statistically insignificant relationship suggests that the current change management initiatives may not be effectively influencing supply chain processes such as procurement, inventory control, distribution, or coordination mechanisms. Therefore, for change management to contribute meaningfully to supply chain performance, NMS may need to review the content, communication, execution, and stakeholder engagement strategies associated with change initiatives.

This result leads to a failure to reject the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between change management and supply chain efficiency at National Medical Stores. Further investigation and perhaps qualitative insights may be required to understand the contextual dynamics influencing this weak relationship.

## Discussion of findings

The analysis revealed an insignificant negative correlation (r = -0.058, p = 0.650) between change management and supply chain efficiency. Although communication strategies, staff involvement, and resistance management efforts were reported, they did not translate into measurable improvements in efficiency. While 59.4% of respondents believed that the change process was communicated effectively, the data suggest these strategies lacked depth, consistency, or sufficient engagement to yield operational benefits. As such, change management had minimal influence on enhancing supply chain performance.

The findings on change management at National Medical Stores (NMS) revealed a complex interplay between strategic communication, employee involvement, and resistance management during the ERP implementation process. Interestingly, despite relatively high descriptive scores across several change management indicators, the Pearson correlation analysis indicated a very weak negative relationship between change management and supply chain efficiency (r = -0.058, p = 0.650). This result contrasts sharply with the theoretical and empirical expectations outlined in Section 2.3 of the proposal literature, which posit a positive and statistically significant relationship between robust change management practices and improved supply chain performance.

From a Systems Theory lens, this disconnect suggests a possible breakdown in systemic interdependence. Systems Theory posits that changes in one subsystem—such as communication practices or resistance management—should catalyze improvements across the broader organizational system. However, the weak correlation implies that while change management activities were implemented, they may not have translated into tangible improvements in supply chain metrics like inventory turnover or distribution timeliness. This could reflect misalignment between perceived engagement efforts and actual operational outcomes, possibly due to external bottlenecks or internal inconsistencies in the feedback and decision-making loops within the ERP ecosystem.

Descriptively, respondents indicated that management communicated the purpose and benefits of the ERP system effectively, with a high mean score of 4.3. This mirrors literature such as Azouri et al. (2022) and Gupta & Sachan (2024), which emphasize communication as the cornerstone of ERP-related change management. The involvement of departmental heads in information sessions and memos illustrates proactive communication that aligns with Systems Theory’s emphasis on seamless information flow. However, the weak correlation in the inferential analysis calls into question the depth or timing of this communication. The researcher argues that while communication existed, it may have been too top-down or failed to evolve into actionable staff buy-in, thereby limiting its systemic influence on operational efficiency.

Furthermore, the results on regular updates during ERP rollout (mean = 4.2) suggest a high level of transparency, echoing best practices in change communication highlighted by Oladimeji (2023). Yet, a strong correlation with supply chain efficiency was still absent. This contradiction may stem from a critical nuance: communication in itself does not drive change unless accompanied by responsive organizational behavior. As Systems Theory suggests, feedback mechanisms are central to adaptation. The researcher contends that if updates were not coupled with adaptive changes in implementation plans, then transparency without responsiveness might have led to perceived engagement without actual empowerment—diminishing the system’s responsiveness and thus its efficiency.

The mixed perceptions about whether staff concerns were considered (mean = 4.0; with 21.9% undecided) reveal a potential gap in participatory change management. Although this mean is relatively strong, it is less convincing than other indicators, suggesting that inclusion was somewhat tokenistic or constrained. This finding aligns with the warnings in the literature (e.g., Kujala, 2023; Ameh, 2024) that superficial participation—without genuine decision-making power—can breed disengagement and inefficiencies. The Systems Theory interpretation would be that input from peripheral subsystems (i.e., junior staff or operational units) was collected but not properly reintegrated into the central decision-making mechanisms, thereby creating informational bottlenecks that limited performance gains.

The study also examined resistance management strategies, which showed a moderately high mean of 4.0. Qualitative insights revealed the use of departmental change agents and a dedicated helpdesk, reflecting adaptive strategies recommended by Monferdini & Bottani (2024) and Reis & Saval (2023). From a systems perspective, these interventions suggest an effort to build internal buffers and feedback loops to manage transition shocks. However, the lack of significant correlation again suggests these efforts may not have been systemic or robust enough to transform attitudes at scale. The researcher posits that while resistance was addressed in principle, execution gaps—such as inadequate training or over-reliance on hierarchical dissemination—may have diluted their effectiveness in enhancing supply chain outcomes.

Employee involvement yielded a relatively high mean of 4.1, indicating that staff perceived themselves as included in the change process. This mirrors best practices observed in Sweden and Kenya (Reis & Saval, 2023; Singu et al., 2024), where cross-functional involvement fostered ownership. Yet, the inferential results undermine the presumed linearity between involvement and efficiency. This paradox may be explained by considering that involvement alone, without commensurate authority or feedback, does not equate to empowerment. In Systems Theory, effective systems are those where every subsystem not only communicates but also influences systemic outputs. The researcher maintains that involvement at NMS, while present, may have been largely symbolic, lacking the functional leverage to shape ERP outcomes meaningfully.

The final item assessed whether resistance was effectively handled (mean = 3.9), though with noticeable variability (SD = 1.0), indicating inconsistencies across departments. This variability weakens systemic harmony, which Systems Theory posits as essential for coordinated functionality. Literature by Ameh (2024) and Azouri et al. (2022) warns that unresolved resistance—even in small pockets—can cascade into broader system inefficiencies. The researcher’s view is that although NMS initiated several commendable resistance management strategies, their application may have lacked uniformity, resulting in uneven acceptance and adoption of the ERP system. This likely disrupted the feedback loops necessary for continuous improvement in supply chain processes.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite relatively high ratings in communication, staff involvement, and resistance management during ERP rollout, change management was found to have no statistically significant impact on supply chain efficiency (r = -0.058, p = 0.650). This suggests that the change management strategies employed were insufficiently embedded or lacked practical influence on operational performance. The disconnect between awareness and actual empowerment, inconsistent resistance handling, and symbolic rather than functional involvement may explain this weak outcome. The study concludes that unless change management is executed with greater depth, participation, and responsiveness, it may fail to contribute meaningfully to systemic efficiency improvements.

In light of the weak and statistically insignificant relationship between change management and supply chain efficiency, NMS should revisit its approach to organizational change. Rather than relying on top-down communication, the organization should embed participatory change strategies that empower employees at all levels to contribute meaningfully to ERP processes. This includes establishing feedback loops where staff suggestions directly influence implementation decisions and strengthening peer-led change agent networks across departments. Furthermore, NMS should ensure that resistance management is not symbolic but actively tailored, supported with individualized coaching, and responsive to department-specific needs. Elevating the functional role of change management can create the cultural alignment necessary to translate engagement into measurable performance gains.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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