

Embracing Change: Enhancing Employee Readiness in Open Online Flexible Distance Learning Institutions

Zahir Osman

Faculty of Business and Management, Open University Malaysia, Malaysia
Corresponding Author Email: zahir_osman@oum.edu.my

Malik Yatam

Faculty of Business Management Open University Malaysia
Email: malik86@oum.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJAREMS/v13-i2/21648> DOI:10.6007/IJAREMS/v13-i2/21648

Published Online: 19 June 2024

Abstract

This study investigates the direct and indirect relationship between leadership change and employee readiness to change, with organizational culture and organizational commitment serving as mediators in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. Primary data was collected through survey questionnaires distributed via email to selected participants using purposive sampling. Out of 483 distributed surveys, 380 were collected, yielding a satisfactory response rate of 78.6%, with 353 surveys deemed suitable for analysis. SmartPLS 4 software was employed to conduct data analysis and hypothesis testing using structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques. The hypotheses testing results reveal several key findings. Leadership change was found to directly influence employee readiness to change, as well as indirect effects mediated by organizational culture and commitment. Organizational culture and commitment were also shown to impact employee readiness to change directly. The study highlights the varied impact of the variables, with effect sizes ranging from small to large. To enhance employee readiness to change effectively, the study suggests that open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions should adopt a multifaceted approach focusing on leadership development, organizational culture, and commitment. Investing in transformational leadership skills, cultivating a culture of innovation and collaboration, and fostering organizational commitment are crucial for navigating change successfully. Future studies should explore how different leadership styles impact employee readiness for change within the unique context of online higher education, investigate the moderating role of technological advancements and the digital landscape, and consider the implications of organizational culture and commitment on employee attitudes towards change over time. By understanding these relationships, institutions can better support their employees and create an environment conducive to change and growth in online higher education.

Keywords: Change of Leadership, Organizational Culture, Organizational Commitment, Employee Readiness to Change

Introduction

In the realm of open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions, the significance of employee readiness to change is paramount. These institutions navigate a dynamic environment marked by continual technological advancements, evolving pedagogical methods, and shifting learner expectations (Mahendrati & Mangundjaya, 2020). The ability of employees to adapt directly influences the institution's capacity to innovate, compete effectively, and address the diverse needs of learners. Given the unique characteristics of open online flexible distance learning, with their diverse student demographics and reliance on digital platforms, faculty and staff must be prepared to adjust teaching methods, materials, and support services accordingly (Potnuru et al., 2023). Without a proactive stance toward technological integration, employees may struggle to utilize online tools effectively, impeding the institution's educational delivery (Haffar et al., 2023). Ultimately, employee readiness to change is essential for these institutions to flourish amid rapid educational evolution, ensuring equitable and impactful learning experiences for all students (Wardani et al., 2024). The latest developments in global employee readiness to change highlight a shift towards a more nuanced understanding of the factors driving organizational adaptability (Haffar et al., 2023). Increasingly, organizations are focusing on psychological aspects like mindset and motivation, recognizing their pivotal role in fostering employee receptivity to change (Jung et al., 2020). Technologies such as AI-driven analytics and virtual reality simulations are gaining traction for assessing and enhancing readiness to change, offering personalized interventions and immersive training experiences (Alolabi et al., 2022). Leadership also emerges as a critical factor, with empathetic and transparent leaders being instrumental in creating a supportive change environment (Olafsen et al., 2021). These trends underscore the need for a holistic approach, addressing cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors to cultivate a workforce capable of thriving in today's rapidly evolving organizational landscape (Potnuru et al., 2023). The problem of employee readiness to change lies in the resistance and hesitancy often encountered when implementing organizational transitions. Despite the necessity for adaptation in today's dynamic work environments, employees may exhibit various barriers to embracing change (Bagga et al., 2023). These barriers can stem from factors such as fear of the unknown, perceived loss of control, or resistance to departing from familiar routines and practices. Additionally, organizational culture, communication breakdowns, and insufficient support systems can exacerbate resistance to change among employees (Rahmatullah et al., 2022). Such reluctance can impede the successful implementation of change initiatives, leading to inefficiencies, decreased productivity, and ultimately, organizational stagnation (Chen et al., 2023). Addressing the problem of employee readiness to change requires a multifaceted approach that involves fostering a culture of openness and transparency, providing adequate training and support, and actively involving employees in the change process to mitigate resistance and facilitate smoother transitions (Mutonui et al., 2022). This study is crucial for policymakers, employees, and open online flexible distance learning institutions. Policymakers can use its insights to shape supportive policies for organizational change, enhancing agility. Employees gain valuable strategies to enhance adaptability, fostering professional growth and satisfaction. Institutions benefit from actionable recommendations tailored to their unique challenges, fostering innovation, improving instructional delivery, and

enhancing education quality for students. This study aims to evaluate the direct and indirect relationship between change of leadership and employee readiness to change with organizational culture and organizational commitment as mediators among the employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

Literature Review

Underpinning Theory

The Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) Prochaska & DiClemente (1982), also known as the Stages of Change model, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and facilitating behavior change. This model, developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in the late 1970s and early 1980s, posits that individuals progress through distinct stages when adopting new behaviors or making changes in their lives. The model delineates five stages: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. In the context of the study examining the relationship between change of leadership and employee readiness to change in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions, TTM offers a robust theoretical foundation. The model suggests that employees may transition through these stages as they navigate leadership and organizational culture changes. For instance, employees in the pre-contemplation stage may be unaware of or resistant to impending changes, while those in the preparation stage may be actively seeking ways to adapt and align with new leadership directives (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Moreover, TTM emphasizes the role of mediators, such as organizational culture and organizational commitment, in facilitating or impeding the change process. Organizational culture, defined as the shared values, beliefs, and norms within an organization, can shape employees' perceptions and responses to change initiatives. Similarly, organizational commitment, encompassing affective, normative, and continuance dimensions, influences employees' willingness to invest in and support organizational change efforts. By integrating the Transtheoretical Model of Change into the study framework, researchers can examine the direct and indirect relationships between change of leadership and employee readiness to change, with organizational culture and organizational commitment acting as mediators. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play within open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions undergoing organizational transitions.

Relationship between Change of Leadership, Organizational Commitment & Readiness to Change

The relationship between change of leadership, organizational commitment, and employees' readiness to change is intricately interconnected, reflecting a dynamic interplay that significantly impacts organizational effectiveness (Adiwijaya & Hayati, 2023). When leadership changes, it often acts as a catalyst for organizational transformation, influencing employees' perceptions and attitudes toward new directions and strategies (Aziz et al., 2022). Effective leaders play a critical role in fostering organizational commitment by building trust, providing clear communication, and demonstrating a commitment to the organization's vision and values (Runa, 2023). This, in turn, enhances employees' readiness to embrace change, as they feel more secure, valued, and aligned with the organizational goals. Conversely, a lack of consistent and supportive leadership can erode organizational commitment, leading to resistance to change and a decline in overall morale (Potnuru et al., 2023). The degree of employees' readiness to change is thus directly proportional to the strength of their organizational commitment, which is nurtured through stable and inspiring

leadership. Leaders who effectively manage transitions can mitigate uncertainty and foster a culture of adaptability and resilience, ensuring that employees are not only prepared but also motivated to engage in and support the change process (Mansour et al., 2022). Consequently, the synergy between leadership change, organizational commitment, and readiness to change is vital for achieving sustainable organizational growth and innovation (Nasser et al., 2023).

Relationship between Change of Leadership, Organizational Culture & Organizational Commitment

The relationship between change of leadership, organizational culture, and organizational commitment is a complex and pivotal dynamic that significantly influences the stability and performance of an organization (Rahmatullah et al., 2022). Leadership changes often bring shifts in organizational culture, as new leaders introduce different values, norms, and practices that can redefine the workplace environment. Effective leaders recognize the importance of aligning their vision with the existing culture while also fostering a culture of adaptability and growth (Amtu et al., 2021). This alignment enhances organizational commitment by creating a sense of coherence and shared purpose among employees. When leaders successfully integrate cultural changes that resonate with employees' values and expectations, it strengthens their emotional and psychological attachment to the organization (Yasin et al., 2023). Conversely, abrupt or misaligned leadership changes can disrupt the organizational culture, causing confusion and diminishing employees' sense of belonging and commitment. Leaders who are adept at managing cultural transitions can cultivate a positive and resilient culture that supports high levels of organizational commitment (Hamidi et al., 2024). Thus, the interplay between leadership change, organizational culture, and commitment underscores the importance of strategic leadership in maintaining a cohesive and motivated workforce, ultimately driving organizational success and continuity (Jung et al., 2022).

Relationship between Change of Leadership, Organizational Culture & Readiness to Change

The relationship between change of leadership, organizational culture, and readiness to change is vital in determining an organization's ability to navigate and thrive during transitions (Engida et al., 2022). When leadership changes, it often brings a shift in organizational culture, as new leaders introduce fresh perspectives, values, and strategic directions. This cultural shift can either facilitate or hinder employees' readiness to change (Al-Tahitah et al., 2021). Effective leaders understand the importance of cultivating a supportive and adaptive culture that aligns with the new vision. They actively work to engage employees, communicate transparently, and foster a sense of inclusion and trust, which are critical for building a culture that is receptive to change (Diwanti et al., 2021). When organizational culture promotes openness, learning, and resilience, employees are more likely to embrace change positively. Conversely, a culture resistant to change, characterized by rigid practices and lack of communication, can impede readiness, leading to resistance and decreased morale (Mladenova, 2022). Therefore, the success of leadership transitions hinges on the ability to align cultural change with organizational goals, thereby enhancing employees' readiness to change and ensuring smoother, more effective transformations. This interconnectedness underscores the strategic role of leadership in shaping culture to foster an environment conducive to change (Saamal et al., 2021).

Relationship between Organizational Culture, Organizational Commitment & Readiness to Change

The relationship between organizational culture, organizational commitment, and readiness to change is integral to fostering a resilient and adaptive organization. Organizational culture, encompassing shared values, beliefs, and practices, sets the tone for how change is perceived and managed within the organization (Olafsen et al., 2021). A positive, inclusive culture that values innovation and flexibility encourage higher levels of organizational commitment, as employees feel connected to the organization's goals and values (Kemas & Anwar, 2021). This strong commitment, in turn, enhances employees' readiness to change, as they are more likely to trust the organization's direction and believe in the benefits of the proposed changes (Marchalina et al., 2021). When employees are committed and feel a sense of belonging, they are more open to adapting their behaviors and attitudes in line with new initiatives. Conversely, a negative or rigid culture can stifle commitment and create resistance to change, as employees may feel disengaged or skeptical about the organization's intentions (Mansour et al., 2022). Therefore, fostering a supportive and dynamic organizational culture is crucial for maintaining high levels of commitment and ensuring that employees are prepared and willing to embrace change. This synergy highlights the importance of strategic cultural management in achieving successful organizational transformation and growth (Ali et al., 2022).

Based on the hypothesis's development, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:

- H1:* There is a relationship between change of leadership and readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- H2:* There is a relationship between the change of leadership and the organizational culture of readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- H3:* There is a relationship between change of leadership and organizational commitment of readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- H4:* There is a mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between change of leadership and readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- H5:* There is a mediating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between the change of leadership and organizational commitment of readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- h6:* There is a mediating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between change of leadership and readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- H7:* There is a relationship between organizational culture and readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- H8:* There is a relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment of the readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.
- H9:* There is a relationship between organizational commitment and readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

H10: There is a mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between organizational culture and readiness to change among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

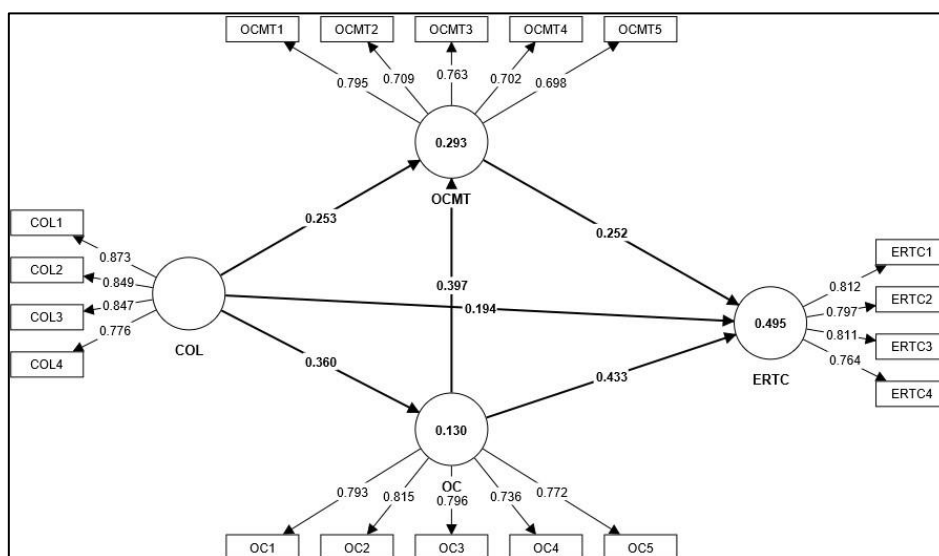


Figure 1: Research Model

Notes: COL=Change of Leadership OC=Organizational Culture OCMT=Organizational Commitment

Methodology

This study aimed to comprehensively examine the direct and indirect influence of leadership change on employee readiness to change, with organizational commitment and organizational culture serving as mediators in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. To achieve this, researchers meticulously curated primary data, selecting reliable and valid measurements through an exhaustive literature review. Survey questionnaires were then distributed via email to selected participants, using purposive sampling due to the absence of a comprehensive population list. The analysis focused on 18 observed variables, including the independent variable of leadership change Herold et al (2008) with 4 items, mediating variables of organizational commitment Angle & Perry (1981) with 5 items, and organizational culture Van den Berg et al (2004) with 5 items, as well as the dependent variable of readiness to change Bouckenooghe & Van Den Broeck (2009) with 4 items. Respondents evaluated each construct using a Likert scale with five response options, contributing to a comprehensive dataset. Out of 483 distributed surveys, 380 were collected, yielding a satisfactory response rate of 78.6%. Of these, 353 surveys were deemed suitable for analysis. Researchers employed SmartPLS 4 software, renowned for its proficiency in structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques, to conduct data analysis and hypothesis testing. This choice was motivated by the software's robust assessment capabilities and its expertise in managing multivariate data analysis, aligning with the study's objectives and adhering to the recommendations of (Ringle et al., 2022). SmartPLS 4 facilitated a meticulous evaluation of proposed hypotheses and conducted extensive multivariate data analysis, enabling a thorough assessment of both measurement and structural models.

Data Analysis

Respondents' Profiles

The respondents' profiles detail gender, age, years of service, and position within the organization. In terms of gender distribution, there are 163 male respondents, accounting for 46.2% of the total sample, while female respondents' number 190, making up 53.8%. Examining the age distribution, 30 respondents are under 30 years old, representing 8.5% of the sample. The 99 respondents aged 31-40 years constitute 28.0% of the total. The largest age group, with 164 respondents aged 41-50 years, accounts for 46.5%, while 43 respondents aged 51-60 years make up 12.2%. Additionally, there are 17 respondents over 60 years old, representing 4.8% of the total sample. Regarding the number of years of service, 29 respondents have less than 5 years of service, making up 8.2%. The 85 respondents with 6-10 years of service represent 24.1%, while the largest group, with 148 respondents having 11-15 years of service, constitutes 41.9%. Furthermore, 56 respondents have 16-20 years of service, accounting for 15.9%, and 35 respondents have more than 20 years of service, representing 9.9%. In terms of position, the majority of respondents, 271, are academicians, making up 76.8% of the total sample, whereas there are 82 non-academicians, which is 23.2% of the sample. Overall, the respondent profile indicates a fairly balanced gender distribution with a slight majority of females. The most represented age group is 41-50 years, suggesting a mature workforce. In terms of years of service, the largest group has 11-15 years, highlighting a significant portion of experienced employees. Academicians dominate the sample, reflecting the nature of the institution as primarily educational. This demographic data provides a comprehensive overview of the respondents, essential for understanding the context of employee readiness to change within the organization.

Common Method Bias

Kock (2015); Kock & Lynn (2012) introduced an inclusive methodology known as the collinearity test, which addresses both vertical and horizontal collinearity aspects. This method identifies pathological collinearity by examining variance inflation factors (VIFs), with values exceeding 3.3 indicating a notable concern for common method bias within the model (Kock & Lynn, 2012). Conversely, if VIFs resulting from the comprehensive collinearity assessment fall below 3.3, it can be deduced that the model remains unaffected by common method bias (Kock, 2015). As illustrated in Table 1, the VIFs derived from the overall collinearity assessment were found to be below 3.3, confirming the absence of any common method bias issue within the model.

Table 1

Full Collinearity Test

	ERTC	OCMT	COL	OC
ERTC		1.792	1.837	1.536
OCMT	1.396		1.465	1.452
COL	1.237	1.267		1.303
OC	1.357	1.647	1.710	

Measurement Model

In this investigation, we adopted the methodology recommended by Hair et al (2017) to assess each measurement at both the first and second-order levels, facilitating the identification of items with loadings below the 0.7 threshold. The analyses of construct

reliability and validity revealed that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs ranged from 0.540 to 0.701, surpassing the 0.5 benchmark, thereby indicating well-established convergent validity Hair et al (2017) (Table 2). Furthermore, the composite reliability for all constructs exceeded 0.7, falling within the range of 0.787 to 0.861. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs were greater than 0.7, varying from 0.786 to 0.857 (Table 2). To ensure discriminant validity, the initial step involved evaluating cross-loadings to confirm the appropriate representation and measurement of respective constructs (Table 2). Subsequently, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was employed for further assessment, adhering to the recommended criterion for examining discriminant validity in Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (VB-SEM) (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). Table 3 presented the HTMT ratios, original sample, and 95% confidence intervals, affirming compliance with the HTMT threshold of 0.85. This comprehensive approach ensured the robustness of the measurement model, confirming both convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 2

Construct Reliability & Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Change of Leadership	COL1	0.873	0.857	0.861	0.701
	COL2	0.849			
	COL3	0.847			
	COL4	0.776			
Employees' Readiness to Change	ERTC1	0.812	0.808	0.812	0.634
	ERTC2	0.797			
	ERTC3	0.811			
	ERTC4	0.764			
Organizational Culture	OC1	0.793	0.842	0.845	0.613
	OC2	0.815			
	OC3	0.796			
	OC4	0.736			
	OC5	0.772			
Organizational Commitment	OCMT1	0.795	0.786	0.787	0.540
	OCMT2	0.709			
	OCMT3	0.763			
	OCMT4	0.702			
	OCMT5	0.698			

Notes: CA=Cronbach Alpha CR=Composite Reliability AVE=Average variance Extracted

Table 3

Hetrotrait-Monorait (HTMT) Ratios

	COL	ERTC	OC
ERTC	0.536		
OC	0.422	0.751	
OCMT	0.475	0.666	0.589

Structural Model

In this study, the evaluation of the structural model adhered to the methodology outlined by Hair et al (2017), involving a meticulous examination of pathway coefficients (β) and coefficients of determination (R^2). Utilizing the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method, the analysis leveraged 5000 sub-samples to determine the significance levels of path coefficients. The results from hypothesis testing, which include confidence intervals, path coefficients (beta), corresponding t-statistics, and p-values, are meticulously presented in Table 4. This rigorous analysis offers invaluable insights into the significance and robustness of the relationships among the variables within the structural model. The comprehensive presentation of hypothesis testing results in Table 4 provides a nuanced analysis of each hypothesis, highlighting beta coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and the ultimate decisions regarding hypothesis support. This thorough approach enhances the depth and clarity of the study's findings, enabling a more profound understanding of the interplay between the variables under investigation. By adhering to such a rigorous methodology, the study ensures the reliability and validity of its results, thus offering robust evidence for the proposed relationships and their implications within the context of employee readiness to change in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. The hypotheses testing results for the study on the influence of leadership change on employee readiness to change, mediated by organizational culture and commitment, are detailed and interpreted as follows. Hypothesis *H1*, which posits that change of leadership directly influences employee readiness to change, is supported with a beta of 0.194, a t-statistic of 3.852, and a p-value of 0.000, leading to its acceptance. Hypothesis *H2*, suggesting that change of leadership impacts organizational culture, is also accepted with a beta of 0.360, a t-statistic of 6.820, and a p-value of 0.000. Similarly, Hypothesis *H3*, which indicates that change of leadership affects organizational commitment, shows significant results with a beta of 0.253, a t-statistic of 4.943, and a p-value of 0.000, thus accepted. Hypothesis *H4*, examining the indirect effect of leadership change on employee readiness to change through organizational commitment, is accepted with a beta of 0.064, a t-statistic of 3.705, and a p-value of 0.000. Hypothesis *H5*, which explores the pathway from change of leadership to organizational commitment via organizational culture, is supported by a beta of 0.143, a t-statistic of 5.237, and a p-value of 0.000. Hypothesis *H6*, assessing the indirect impact of leadership change on employee readiness to change through organizational culture, is accepted with a beta of 0.156, a t-statistic of 5.474, and a p-value of 0.000. Further, Hypothesis *H7*, which asserts that organizational culture directly influences employee readiness to change, is strongly supported with a beta of 0.433, a t-statistic of 9.354, and a p-value of 0.000. Hypothesis *H8*, indicating that organizational culture affects organizational commitment, is also accepted with a beta of 0.397, a t-statistic of 8.661, and a p-value of 0.000. Hypothesis *H9*, which posits that organizational commitment directly influences employee readiness to change, is supported by a beta of 0.252, a t-statistic of 4.675, and a p-value of 0.000. Lastly, Hypothesis *H10*, exploring the indirect effect of organizational culture on employee readiness to change through organizational commitment, is accepted with a beta of 0.100, a t-statistic of 3.870, and a p-value of 0.000. These results collectively underscore the significant direct and mediated relationships between leadership change, organizational culture, organizational commitment, and employee readiness to change in the context of open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

Table 4

Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Beta	T statistics	P values	2.50%	97.50%	Decision
H1: COL -> ERTC	0.194	3.852	0.000	0.093	0.290	Accepted
H2: COL -> OC	0.360	6.820	0.000	0.247	0.456	Accepted
H3: COL -> OCMT	0.253	4.943	0.000	0.153	0.351	Accepted
H4: COL -> OCMT -> ERTC	0.064	3.705	0.000	0.035	0.103	Accepted
H5: COL -> OC -> OCMT	0.143	5.237	0.000	0.092	0.198	Accepted
H6: COL -> OC -> ERTC	0.156	5.474	0.000	0.102	0.214	Accepted
H7: OC -> ERTC	0.433	9.354	0.000	0.336	0.520	Accepted
H8: OC -> OCMT	0.397	8.661	0.000	0.297	0.481	Accepted
H9: OCMT -> ERTC	0.252	4.675	0.000	0.145	0.355	Accepted
H10: OC -> OCMT -> ERTC	0.100	3.870	0.000	0.055	0.155	Accepted

Table 5 provides a comprehensive overview of effect sizes (f^2), meticulously evaluated following Cohen's criteria (1992), which categorize them as small (0.020 to 0.150), medium (0.150 to 0.350), or large (0.350 or greater). The observed effect sizes in this study ranged from small (0.060) to large (0.271), underscoring the varied impact of the variables under scrutiny. Additionally, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, detailed in Table 5, consistently remained below the more lenient threshold of 5, with the highest value being 1.415. This low level of collinearity ensures robustness in the comparisons of sizes and the interpretation of coefficients within the structural model. Notably, the model demonstrates a substantial degree of explained variance for the endogenous construct, as evidenced by an R^2 value of 0.495 (Figure 1). Regarding the mediators, the model adeptly explains approximately 29.3% and 13.0% of the variance in the structure, as reflected by R^2 values of 0.293 and 0.130, respectively. This indicates the model's efficacy in capturing the underlying dynamics of the mediation process. The detailed presentation of effect sizes, VIF values, and R^2 values enhances the depth and clarity of the study's findings, providing a robust framework for understanding the impact and relationships between variables in the context of employee readiness to change in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

Table 5

Effect Sizes (f^2) & Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

	f^2			VIF		
	ERTC	OC	OCMT	ERTC	OC	OCMT
COL	0.060	0.149	0.079	1.239	1.267	1.149
OC	0.271		0.194	1.371		1.149
OCMT	0.089			1.415		

The assessment of the model's inference and managerial implications underwent rigorous out-of-sample predictive analysis utilizing the PLSpredict method, as advocated by Shmueli et al. (2016, 2019). As depicted in Table 6, the application of PLS-SEM yielded notably superior Q^2 predictions (>0) compared to naive mean predictions, consistently showcasing lower Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) values than linear model (LM) benchmarks, thereby highlighting its robust predictive capabilities. Notably, in ten out of fourteen instances, the RMSE values for PLS-SEM predictions consistently outperformed those of the LM prediction benchmark, emphasizing the predictive strength of the proposed model as delineated in Table 6. The

introduction of the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) by Hair et al (2022), coupled with its integration with PLSpredict analysis by Liengard et al (2021), underscores significant advancements in predictive modeling methodologies. This integration enhances the credibility and reliability of the PLS-SEM approach, making it a robust tool for predictive analytics in this study. Furthermore, Table 7 reaffirms the superior predictive capacities of PLS-SEM, as evidenced by lower average loss values compared to indicator averages and LM benchmarks, thereby providing robust evidence of its enhanced predictive performance. This comprehensive evaluation of the model's predictive capabilities not only underscores the robustness of PLS-SEM in capturing the underlying dynamics but also affirms its practical utility for managerial decision-making in the context of employee readiness to change in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

Table 6

PLSpredicts

Indicators	Q ² predict	PLS-RMSE	LM_RMSE	PLS-LM
ERTC1	0.127	0.672	0.676	-0.004
ERTC2	0.127	0.642	0.637	0.005
ERTC3	0.117	0.718	0.725	-0.007
ERTC4	0.108	0.733	0.737	-0.004
OC1	0.089	0.667	0.673	-0.006
OC2	0.057	0.664	0.669	-0.005
OC3	0.068	0.694	0.691	0.003
OC4	0.069	0.710	0.709	0.001
OC5	0.074	0.653	0.659	-0.006
OCMT1	0.070	0.722	0.722	0.000
OCMT2	0.054	0.648	0.650	-0.002
OCMT3	0.091	0.640	0.647	-0.007
OCMT4	0.088	0.684	0.692	-0.008
OCMT5	0.085	0.778	0.783	-0.005

Table 7

Cross -Validated Predictive Ability Test

Constructs	Average loss difference	t-value	p-value
ERTC	-0.065	3.519	0.000
OC	-0.035	2.733	0.007
OCMT	-0.041	3.096	0.002
Overall	-0.046	3.706	0.000

Ringle and Sarstedt (2016) along with Hair et al (2018) introduced Importance Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) to evaluate the significance and effectiveness of latent variables in explaining acceptance, as elaborated in Table 9. The overall impact on employees' readiness to change was most pronounced for organizational culture (0.533), followed by change of leadership (0.450), and organizational commitment (0.252), highlighting their relative importance in employee readiness to change. Change of leadership (66.793), while organizational culture had the lowest score (60.584) on a 0-100 scale, indicating better performance for change of leadership and lower achievement for organizational culture. Despite ranking first in leader employee readiness to change importance, organizational

culture displayed the lowest performance. These findings suggest prioritizing strategies to enhance organizational culture in the organization, potentially improving the overall employee readiness to change in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

Table 8

Importance-Performance Map Analysis

Constructs	Total Effect	Performance
COL	0.450	66.793
OC	0.533	60.584
OCMT	0.252	65.783

Discussion

This study focuses on the direct and indirect relationship between change of leadership and employee readiness to change with organizational culture and organizational commitment as mediators among the employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. Based on the findings of this study, to enhance employee readiness to change effectively, open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions should adopt a multifaceted approach focusing on leadership, organizational culture, and commitment. First, institutions must prioritize the selection and development of transformational leaders who can inspire and motivate employees through clear vision, effective communication, and supportive relationships. Such leaders are instrumental in driving change and fostering a culture of adaptability. Leadership development programs should emphasize skills in change management, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking to equip leaders with the necessary tools to guide their teams through transitions. In parallel, cultivating a robust organizational culture that embraces change is crucial. Institutions should promote a culture of continuous learning and innovation, encouraging employees to experiment with new teaching methodologies and technologies. This can be achieved through regular professional development opportunities, workshops, and access to the latest educational tools and resources. Moreover, fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment where employees feel valued and heard can significantly enhance their readiness to engage in change initiatives. Encouraging open communication and feedback mechanisms can help identify potential resistance points and address them proactively. Furthermore, enhancing organizational commitment is vital for sustained change readiness. Institutions should implement strategies that align individual goals with organizational objectives, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees. Recognizing and rewarding contributions to change initiatives can reinforce commitment and motivate employees to embrace new ways of working. Providing clear career development pathways and opportunities for professional growth can also strengthen employees' attachment to the institution, making them more inclined to support and engage in change efforts. Integrating these strategies into a cohesive framework ensures that the change of leadership, organizational culture, and commitment effectively contribute to enhancing employee readiness to change. By focusing on leadership development, cultivating a supportive and innovative culture, and strengthening organizational commitment, open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions can navigate the complexities of change more effectively, ensuring sustained success and continuous improvement in their educational offerings.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of employing the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) in studying leadership change and employee readiness to change within open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions are manifold. Firstly, understanding the stages of change outlined by TTM can guide leaders in designing tailored interventions to support employees at different points of their change journey. For instance, leaders can develop communication strategies that address employees' concerns in the pre-contemplation stage, while also providing resources and support for those in the action and maintenance stages. Secondly, by recognizing the influence of organizational culture and commitment as mediators in the change process, leaders can proactively work to cultivate a supportive and adaptive culture. This may involve fostering open communication channels, promoting collaboration, and demonstrating a commitment to employee development and well-being. Furthermore, integrating TTM into the study framework enables researchers to assess the effectiveness of change initiatives and identify areas for improvement. By examining the direct and indirect relationships between leadership change and employee readiness to change, researchers can provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing organizational change efforts.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. Firstly, the significance of transformational leadership in enhancing employee readiness to change suggests that institutions should invest in leadership development programs. These programs should focus on equipping leaders with skills in change management, strategic thinking, and emotional intelligence to effectively guide their teams through transitions. By fostering strong, inspirational leadership, institutions can better navigate the complexities of organizational change. Secondly, the study highlights the critical role of organizational culture in facilitating change readiness. Institutions should aim to cultivate a culture that values continuous learning, innovation, and collaboration. This can be achieved through regular professional development opportunities, workshops, and access to the latest educational technologies and resources. Promoting open communication and feedback mechanisms will ensure that employees feel valued and heard, thus reducing resistance to change and fostering a more adaptable workforce. Furthermore, enhancing organizational commitment is essential for sustaining change initiatives. Institutions should implement strategies that align individual goals with organizational objectives, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees. Recognizing and rewarding contributions to change efforts can reinforce commitment and motivate employees to embrace new practices. Providing clear career development pathways and opportunities for professional growth will also strengthen employees' attachment to the institution, making them more supportive of change initiatives.

Suggestions for Future Study

In future studies, it is crucial to consider several key aspects. Firstly, explore how different leadership styles impact employee readiness for change within the unique context of online higher education. Investigate how organizational culture influences employees' commitment to change initiatives in a virtual learning environment. Additionally, delve into the mediating role of organizational culture and commitment in the relationship between leadership change and employee readiness for change. It would be beneficial to conduct longitudinal research

to capture the dynamics of these relationships over time. Lastly, consider the implications of technological advancements and the digital landscape on organizational culture and employee attitudes towards change in online education settings.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the complex relationships between leadership change, employee readiness for change, organizational culture, and organizational commitment in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. The findings suggest that leadership change has a significant impact on employee readiness for change, with organizational culture and commitment playing crucial mediating roles. The study highlights the importance of considering the unique context of online higher education, where leadership styles and organizational culture can significantly influence employees' attitudes toward change. The results also underscore the need for institutions to foster a culture that supports and encourages change, as well as to invest in building strong organizational commitment among employees. Furthermore, the study's findings have implications for leadership development and change management strategies in online higher education settings. By understanding the dynamics of these relationships, institutions can better navigate the challenges of change and create an environment that is conducive to innovation and growth. Ultimately, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on organizational change and development in the context of online higher education, providing practical insights for institutional leaders and policymakers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their institutions.

References

- Adiwijaya, S., & Hayati, K. (2023). The effect of transformational leadership on readiness for change mediated by organizational commitment. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, 23(15), 69-80.
- Ali, M. A. S., Negm, A. P. D. E. M., El Mokadem, A. P. D. M., & Ragheb, M. A. (2022). The Impact of leadership Style and organization culture on employee readiness to change with mediating role of employee commitment to energy management An empirical study on petrochemical secto in Egypt. *Res Militaris*, 12(6), 37-46.
- Alolabi, Y., Ayupp, K., & Al Dwaikat, M. (2022). The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Individual Readiness to Change: The Mediating Roles of Work Engagement and Organizational Justice (A Study of UAE Construction Industry). *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*, 11(3), 538-570.
- Al-Tahitah, A., Muthaliff, M. M. A., Sammari, N., & Abdulrab, M. (2021). The mediating effect of learning organisational culture between leadership styles and readiness for change: An empirical study in Yemen. *International Journal of Learning and Change*, 13(6), 609-626.
- Amtu, O., Souisa, S. L., Joseph, L. S., & Lumamuly, P. C. (2021). Contribution of leadership, organizational commitment and organizational culture to improve the quality of higher education. *International Journal of Innovation*, 9(1), 131-157.
- Angle, H. L., & Perry, J. L. (1981). An empirical assessment of organizational commitment and organizational effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392596>
- Aziz, N. A. A., Asimiran, S., & Hassan, A. (2022). Mediating role of readiness for change in the

- relationship between principal instructional leadership and commitment to change. *International Journal of Management in Education*, 16(4), 407-437.
- Bagga, S. K., Gera, S., & Haque, S. N. (2023). The mediating role of organizational culture: Transformational leadership and change management in virtual teams. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 28(2), 120-131.
- Bouckenooghe, D., Devos, G., & Van Den Broeck, H. (2009). Organizational change questionnaire—climate of change, processes, and readiness: Development of a new instrument. *The Journal of psychology*, 143(6), 559-599.
- Chen, S., Kadir, S. A., & Kang, E. K. M. S. (2023). Moderating Role of Long-Term Learning Environment and Organisational Culture as Mediators: The Effects of Transformational Leadership on Organisational Commitment—Evidence by University Lecturers in China. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 108(108), 47-69.
- Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112, 155–159. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.112.1.155
- Diwanti, D. P., Suryanto, S., Iswati, S., Agustina, T. S., & Notobroto, H. B. (2021). The Effect of Organizational Culture and Readiness to Change on Organizational Entrepreneurship: The Role of Competence. *Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis*, 12(2), 248-265.
- Engida, Z. M., Alemu, A. E., & Mulugeta, M. A. (2022). The effect of change leadership on employees' readiness to change: the mediating role of organizational culture. *Future Business Journal*, 8(1), 31.
- Haffar, M., Al-Hyari, K., Djebarni, R., Alnsour, J. A., Oster, F., Al-Shamali, A., & Alaya, A. (2023). The mediating effect of affective commitment to change in the readiness for change—TQM relationship. *Total quality management & business excellence*, 34(3-4), 326-344.
- Haffar, M., Al-Karaghoul, W., Djebarni, R., Al-Hyari, K., Gbadamosi, G., Oster, F., ... & Ahmed, A. (2023). Organizational culture and affective commitment to e-learning changes during COVID-19 pandemic: The underlying effects of readiness for change. *Journal of business research*, 155, 113396.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2022). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* (3 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hamidi, R., Barari, R., Sahebdel, F., & Bayat, F. (2024). Evaluating the model of causal relations between organizational identity and organizational commitment in hospital nursing staff through the mediation of organizational culture. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 36(1), 79-100.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., and Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1): 115-135.
- Herold, D. M., Fedor, D. B., Caldwell, S., & Liu, Y. (2008). The effects of transformational and change leadership on employees' commitment to a change: a multilevel study. *Journal of applied psychology*, 93(2), 346.
- Jung, J. Y. (2022). The effect of authentic leadership of deans and directors on sustainable organizational commitment at universities: mediated by organizational culture and trust. *Sustainability*, 14(17), 11051.
- Jung, K. B., Kang, S. W., & Choi, S. B. (2020). Empowering leadership, risk-taking behavior, and

- employees' commitment to organizational change: The mediated moderating role of task complexity. *Sustainability*, 12(6), 2340.
- Kemas, M. A., & Anwar, R. (2021). The Effect of Organizational Culture Gaps on Individual Readiness to Change through Organizational Commitment. *International Journal of Business and Technology Management*, 3(3), 70-81.
- Kock, N., & Lynn, G. S. (2012). Lateral collinearity and misleading results in variance-based SEM: An illustration and recommendations. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 13(7), 546-580.
- Kock, N. (2015). Common method bias in PLS-SEM: A full collinearity assessment approach. *International Journal of e-Collaboration*, 11(4), 1-10.
- Lienggaard, B. D., Sharma, P. N., Hult, G. T. M., Jensen, M. B., Sarstedt, M., Hair, J. F., & Ringle, C. M. (2021). Prediction: Coveted, Yet Forsaken? Introducing a Cross-validated Predictive Ability Test in Partial Least Squares Path Modeling. *Decision Sciences*, 52(2), 362-392.
- Mahendrati, H. A., & Mangundjaya, W. (2020, April). Individual readiness for change and affective commitment to change: The mediation effect of technology readiness on public sector. In *3rd Forum in Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST 2019)* (pp. 52-59). Atlantis Press.
- Mansour, A., Rowlands, H., Al-Gasawneh, J. A., Nusairat, N. M., Al-Qudah, S., Shrouf, H., & Akhorshaideh, A. H. (2022). Perceived benefits of training, individual readiness for change, and affective organizational commitment among employees of national jordanian banks. *Cogent Business & Management*, 9(1), 1966866.
- Marchalina, L., Ahmad, H., & Gelaidan, H. M. (2021). Employees' commitment to change: personality traits and organizational culture. *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, 37(4), 377-392.
- Mladenova, I. (2022). Relation between organizational capacity for change and readiness for change. *Administrative Sciences*, 12(4), 135.
- Mutonyi, B. R., Slåtten, T., Lien, G., & González-Piñero, M. (2022). The impact of organizational culture and leadership climate on organizational attractiveness and innovative behavior: a study of Norwegian hospital employees. *BMC health services research*, 22(1), 637.
- Naseer, S., Chughtai, M. S., & Syed, F. (2023). Do high-performance work practices promote an individual's readiness and commitment to change? The moderating role of adaptive leadership. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 36(6), 899-916.
- Olafsen, A. H., Nilsen, E. R., Smedsrud, S., & Kamaric, D. (2021). Sustainable development through commitment to organizational change: the implications of organizational culture and individual readiness for change. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 33(3), 180-196.
- Potnuru, R. K. G., Sharma, R., & Sahoo, C. K. (2023). Employee voice, employee involvement, and organizational change readiness: mediating role of commitment-to-change and moderating role of transformational leadership. *Business Perspectives and Research*, 11(3), 355-371.
- Prochaska, J. O., & Velicer, W. F. (1997). The transtheoretical model of health behavior change. *American journal of health promotion: AJHP*, 12(1), 38-48. <https://doi.org/10.4278/0890-1171-12.1.38>
- Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1982). Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more

- integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 19 (3), 276–288. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0088437>.
- Rahmatullah, A., Ramdansyah, A. D., Kambara, R., & Haryadi, D. (2022). Improving organizational performance with organizational culture and transformational leadership through intervening organizational commitment variables. *Dinasti International Journal Of Digital Business Management*, 3(2), 180-194.
- Runa, R. (2023). Determinants of Employee Change Readiness: A Study of Transformational Leadership and Self-Efficacy and the Role of Organizational Commitment. *Almana: Jurnal Manajemen dan Bisnis*, 7(1), 154-167.
- Samal, A., Patra, S., & Chatterjee, D. (2021). Impact of culture on organizational readiness to change: context of bank M&A. *Benchmarking: An international journal*, 28(5), 1503-1523.
- Shmueli, G., Ray, S., Estrada, V. J. M., and Chatla, S. B. (2016). The elephant in the room: predictive performance of PLS models. *Journal of Business Research*, 69: 4552–4564.
- Shmueli, G., Sarstedt, M., Hair, J. F., Cheah, J.-H., Ting, H., Vaithilingam, S., and Ringle, C. M. (2019). Predictive model assessment in PLS-SEM: Guidelines for using PLSpredict. *European Journal of Marketing*. 53: 2322–2347.
- Van den Berg, P. T., & Wilderom, C. P. M. (2004). Defining, Measuring, and Comparing Organisational Cultures. *Applied psychology*, 53(4), 570-582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2004.00189.x>
- Wardani, R., Tarbiati, U., & Suhandiah, S. (2024). Organizational Culture with Individual Readiness as a Mediator for Championing Behavior Electronic Medical Record Implementation. *Journal Of Nursing Practice*, 7(2), 270-282.
- Yasin, N. A., Nasir, M., & Kurniawaty, K. (2023). The Influence of Leadership and Organizational Culture on Organizational Commitment to Employees of Grand Mode Cendrawasih. *Economos: Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis*, 6(1), 48-54.