

Fostering Employee Readiness for Transformative Change in Open Online Flexible Distance Learning Institutions

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Abstract

Employee readiness to change is crucial in open, online, flexible distance-learning higher education institutions, where technological advancements and dynamic educational needs necessitate a workforce that can swiftly adapt to evolving demands. This study explores the direct and indirect effects of leadership change and organizational culture on employee readiness to change, with organizational commitment serving as a mediator. By understanding these relationships, the research seeks to provide valuable insights into enhancing adaptability within educational institutions. Data for this study were collected through an online survey distributed to employees within these institutions, using purposive sampling to target individuals directly involved in change processes. 353 respondents participated in the analysis after filtering for completeness and relevance. The data analysis used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the measurement and structural model, ensuring robust validity and reliability in testing the hypotheses. Results from hypothesis testing demonstrated significant impacts: leadership change and organizational culture directly and positively influenced employee readiness to change. Organizational commitment was confirmed as an essential mediator in these relationships. Notably, the findings suggest that enhancing leadership practices and fostering a supportive organizational culture can effectively boost employee readiness to change, underscoring the role of commitment as a critical factor that links these dynamics. The study's implications suggest actionable strategies for educational leaders to foster a more adaptable workforce by emphasizing transformational leadership and aligning organizational culture with institutional goals. For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to observe these dynamics over time and comparative analyses across various educational settings to validate and extend the applicability of the current findings.

Keywords: Change of Leadership, Organizational Culture, Organizational Commitment, Employee Readiness to Change, Online Flexible Distance Learning

Introduction

Employee readiness to change is critical in implementing new initiatives within Open Online Flexible Distance Learning (OOFDL) institutions. As higher education continues to evolve with technology and pedagogical advancements, the readiness of employees to adapt to these changes becomes paramount (Ayu et al., 2023). In these institutions, employee readiness ensures smooth transitions, enhances the quality of education delivered, and maintains competitive positioning in a rapidly changing market (Du et al., 2022). Globally, higher education institutions face several challenges regarding readiness to change (Kebah et al., 2019). These include resistance due to fear of the unknown, lack of adequate training, and insufficient leadership support (Haffar et al., 2023). Recent trends highlight the increasing integration of digital technologies and the adoption of flexible learning models, necessitating employees' ability to adapt quickly and efficiently (Primandaru & Kairupan, 2024). Despite efforts to facilitate change, gaps remain, particularly around comprehensive strategies encompassing training, motivation, and psychological preparedness (Velinov et al., 2024). Research gaps in employee readiness to change include a lack of longitudinal studies that examine readiness over time and the impact of organizational culture on change adaptability (Erlyani et al., 2022). Furthermore, limited research specific to OOFDL institutions considers their unique operational and pedagogical structures (Tsauri, 2022). This gap highlights the need for studies that address these specific challenges and propose tailored strategies (Kebah et al., 2019). The significance of this study extends to policymakers, OOFDL institutions, and employees. For policymakers, understanding the factors that drive readiness can inform the development of supportive frameworks and policies that encourage innovation and adaptability (Erlyani et al., 2024). Institutions benefit by gaining insights into how best to prepare and support their employees through effective change management strategies (Li et al., 2020). This, in turn, enhances institutional resilience and educational quality (Alaghbari, 2022). For employees, increased readiness reduces anxiety, greater job satisfaction, and professional development opportunities (Osman et al., 2020). Ultimately, this study aims to contribute valuable knowledge, promoting sustainable and effective transformation within the landscape of higher education. This study aims to assess the direct and indirect relationship between change of leadership and organizational culture and employee readiness to change with organizational commitment as a mediator among employees in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

Literature Review

Underpinning Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory, initially conceptualized by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bernard M. Bass (1985), describes a leadership approach where leaders inspire and motivate employees to transcend their self-interests for the sake of the organization and achieve extraordinary outcomes. This theory identifies four key components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Through these components, transformational leaders effectively enact change by articulating a clear vision, fostering an inclusive environment, and encouraging innovative thinking. Transformational leadership is particularly pertinent in the context of open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. As these institutions undergo continuous change due to technological advancements and shifts in educational paradigms, leadership that embodies transformational qualities can significantly impact organizational culture and employee

readiness to change (Khan et al., 2020). Transformational leaders help cultivate a culture that embraces change rather than resists it, which is critical in dynamic educational environments. Moreover, transformational leadership enhances organizational commitment, mediating between leadership and readiness to change (Ng, 2022). When employees perceive their leaders as transformational, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment to the organization, increasing their readiness to adapt to change. This relationship underscores the importance of transformational leadership in guiding educational institutions through periods of change, ultimately fostering a more resilient, adaptable workforce prepared to meet the challenges of evolving educational landscapes.

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

The relationship between change in leadership and employee readiness to change is crucial for successful organizational transformations. Leadership change can significantly impact employees' willingness to adapt, especially when viewed through organizational commitment as a mediating factor. Leaders are pivotal in shaping the organizational climate and influencing employees' perceptions and attitudes toward change (Osman & Sentosa, 2013). Effective leadership can create an environment of trust, transparency, and support, enhancing organizational commitment and increasing employees' readiness to change (Ali et al., 2022; Engida et al., 2022). Organizational commitment is a critical mediator linking leadership change and employee readiness. When employees are committed to their organization, they are more likely to positively perceive and support changes initiated by new leadership (Prastiti, 2021). This commitment is often cultivated through consistent, supportive, and motivating leadership practices, which reassure employees and align them more closely with organizational goals (Al-Maamari et al., 2021). Furthermore, the interrelation of organizational commitment and readiness to change highlights the importance of addressing employee concerns and fostering an adaptable environment. Leaders who build strong organizational commitment can mitigate resistance to change by enhancing employees' investment in change processes (Fatima et al., 2020). Thus, understanding the mediating role of organizational commitment offers valuable insights for leaders aiming to implement change effectively, particularly in dynamic environments where employee readiness is crucial (Mahendrati & Mangundjaya, 2020). This perspective underlines the importance of strategic leadership in developing resilient, change-ready institutions. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:

- H1: There is a relationship between change of leadership and employee readiness to change among employees in open online distance learning higher education institutions
- H2: There is a relationship between change of leadership and organizational commitment among employees in open online distance learning higher education institutions
- H3: There is a mediating effect on organizational commitment on the relationship between the change of leadership and employee readiness to change among employees in open online distance learning higher education institutions

Relationship between Organizational Culture, Organizational Commitment & Employees' Readiness to Change

The mediating role of organizational commitment significantly influences the relationship between organizational culture and employee readiness to change. A supportive organizational culture fosters an environment where employees are more open to change,

thus enhancing their readiness to embrace new initiatives and processes. This cultural foundation is critical in promoting a shared set of values and beliefs that align with organizational goals, which, in turn, strengthens employees' commitment to the organization (Ali et al., 2022). Organizational commitment acts as a bridge between culture and readiness to change. When employees feel committed to their organization, they are more inclined to support changes that align with the organizational culture, as their personal goals and the organization's objectives are more harmoniously aligned (Kemas & Anwar, 2021). This commitment can mitigate resistance to change, as employees perceive change as an opportunity for personal and organizational growth (Olafsen et al., 2021). Research indicates that a learning-oriented organizational culture can enhance readiness and commitment to change, particularly within educational sectors (Al-Tahitah et al., 2020). Such cultures encourage continuous improvement and adaptation, fostering an environment where change is beneficial and necessary for sustainability. Additionally, during significant transitions, such as those prompted by external pressures like the COVID-19 pandemic, a solid organizational culture, coupled with affective commitment, can significantly affect employees' willingness to adapt and support e-learning changes (Haffar et al., 2023). By embedding cultural solid values within the organizational structure, leaders can nurture a committed workforce ready to embrace change, ensuring sustainable organizational development and success (Imam et al., 2013). Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:

- H4: There is a relationship between organizational culture and employee readiness to change among employees in open online distance learning higher education institutions
- H5: There is a relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment among employees in open online distance-learning higher education institutions
- H6: There is a relationship between organizational commitment and employee readiness to change among employees in open online distance-learning higher education institutions
- H7: There is a mediating effect on organizational commitment on the relationship between the organizational culture and employee readiness to change among employees in open online distance learning higher education institutions

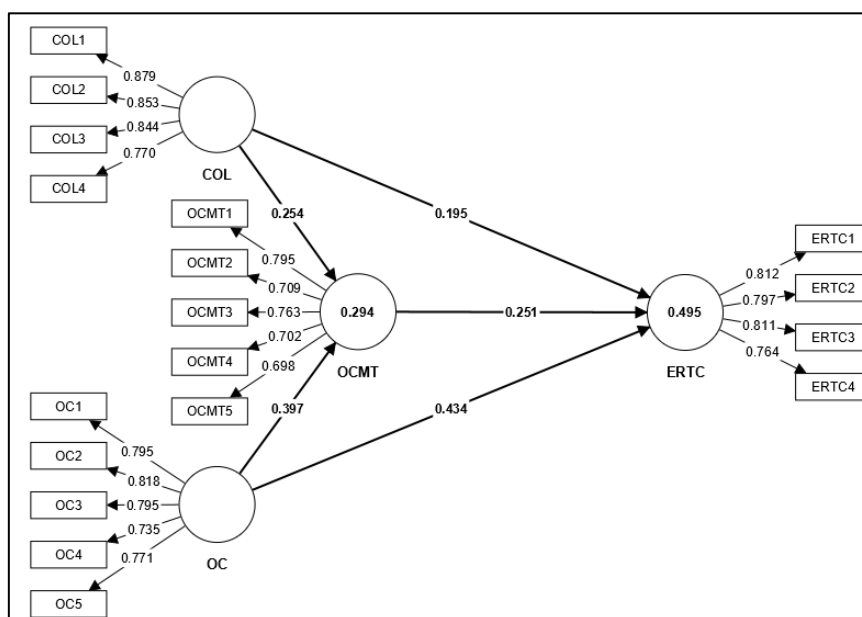


Figure 1: Research Framework

Notes: COL=Change of Leadership OC=Organizational Culture OCMT=Organizational Commitment ERTC=Employee Readiness to Change

Methodology

This study set out to thoroughly investigate both the direct and indirect effects of leadership change on employees' readiness to change, with organizational commitment and organizational culture acting as mediators in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. Primary data was carefully gathered, utilizing reliable and valid measurements identified through an extensive literature review. Researchers distributed survey questionnaires via email to selected participants, employing purposive sampling due to the lack of a complete population list. The analysis incorporated 18 observed variables, such as the independent variables of leadership change (Herold et al., 2008) consisting of 4 items, and organizational culture (Van den Berg et al., 2004) comprising five items. The mediating variable was organizational commitment (Angle & Perry, 1981) with five items, and the dependent variable was a readiness to change (Bouckenoghe & Van Den Broeck, 2009) with four items. Participants rated each construct on a five-point Likert scale, contributing to a detailed dataset. Of the 483 surveys distributed, 380 were returned, achieving a satisfactory response rate of 78.6%. From these, 353 surveys were deemed suitable for analysis. The data analysis and hypothesis testing were conducted using SmartPLS 4 software, chosen for its strength in structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques and its ability to handle multivariate data analysis effectively, as Ringle et al. (2022) recommended. SmartPLS 4 allowed for a detailed evaluation of the proposed hypotheses and extensive multivariate data analysis, enabling a comprehensive assessment of the measurement and structural models. Below is the profiles of the respondents (Table 1).

Table 1
Respondents' Profiles

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	163	46.2
	Female	190	53.8
Age	<30 Years Old	30	8.5
	31-40 Years Old	99	28.0
	41-50 Years Old	164	46.5
	51-60 Years Old	43	12.2
	>60 Years Old	17	4.8
	No. of Year Service	<5 Years	29
	6-10 Years	85	24.1
	11-15 Years	148	41.9
	16-20 Years	56	15.9
	>20 Years	35	9.9
Position	Academician	271	76.8
	Non-Academician	82	23.2
	Total	353	100.0

Data Analysis

Common Method Bias

Kock (2015) and Kock & Lynn (2012) introduced a comprehensive methodology called the collinearity test, which examines both vertical and horizontal collinearity dimensions. This

approach detects pathological collinearity by analyzing variance inflation factors (VIFs), where values greater than 3.3 suggest a significant concern regarding common method bias in the model (Kock & Lynn, 2012). Conversely, if the VIFs from the comprehensive collinearity assessment fall below 3.3, it indicates that the model is free from standard method bias (Kock, 2015). As shown in Table 1, the VIFs obtained from the overall collinearity assessment were below 3.3, confirming the model does not have an issue with common method bias.

Table 2
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	

Outer Model

In this study, we utilized the methodology proposed by Hair et al. (2017) for evaluating measurements at both the first and second-order levels. This approach helps identify items with loadings below the threshold of 0.7. Analysis of construct reliability and validity showed that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs ranged from 0.540 to 0.701, exceeding the benchmark of 0.5 and indicating strong convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017) (Table 3). Additionally, the composite reliability for all constructs was above 0.7, specifically between 0.787 and 0.866. Cronbach's alpha values also surpassed 0.7, ranging from 0.786 to 0.857 (Table 3). To ensure discriminant validity, we first assessed cross-loadings to verify that constructs were measured accurately (Table 3). Following this, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was applied as the subsequent evaluation step by the recommended standards for assessing discriminant validity in Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (VB-SEM) (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 4 displayed the HTMT ratios, original samples, and 95% confidence intervals, confirming adherence to the HTMT threshold 0.85. This comprehensive process ensured the measurement model's robustness, validating the constructs' convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 3

Constructs Reliability and Validity & Items Loadings

Construct	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Change of Leadership	COL1	0.879	0.857	0.866	0.701
	COL2	0.853			
	COL3	0.844			
	COL4	0.770			
Employee Readiness to Change	ERTC1	0.812	0.808	0.812	0.634
	ERTC2	0.797			
	ERTC3	0.811			
	ERTC4	0.764			
Organizational Culture	OC1	0.795	0.842	0.846	0.613
	OC2	0.818			
	OC3	0.795			
	OC4	0.735			
	OC5	0.771			
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 4

Hetrotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratios

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

Inner Model

This study evaluated the structural model following the methodology of Hair et al. (2017), focusing on path coefficients (β) and coefficients of determination (R^2). Using Partial Least Squares (PLS) with 5000 sub-samples, the analysis assessed the significance of path coefficients. Table 4 presents the hypothesis testing results, including confidence intervals, path coefficients (beta), t-statistics, and p-values. This approach offers insights into the significance and robustness of the relationships among the variables in the model. The comprehensive results displayed in Table 4 analyze each hypothesis, outlining beta coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and conclusions about hypothesis support. These findings enhance the understanding of the interactions between variables. By following this rigorous methodology, the study ensures the reliability and validity of its results, providing strong evidence for the proposed relationships within the context of employee readiness to change in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. The findings on the influence of leadership change on employee readiness, mediated by organizational culture and commitment, are detailed and interpreted accordingly.

The analysis of the seven hypotheses provides significant insights into the relationships between leadership change, organizational culture, organizational commitment, and employee readiness to change. *Hypothesis 1 (H1)* demonstrates that a change in leadership directly influences employee readiness to change, with a beta value of 0.195, t-statistics of 3.876, and a p-value of 0.000, leading to its acceptance. This indicates a positive and significant direct impact of leadership change on how prepared employees feel to adapt. *Hypothesis 2 (H2)* explores the effect of leadership change on organizational commitment, showing a beta of 0.254, t-statistics of 5.004, and a p-value of 0.000, resulting in the acceptance of this hypothesis. This suggests that leadership change is crucial in enhancing employees' commitment to the organization. For *Hypothesis 3 (H3)*, leadership change impacting employee readiness to change through organizational commitment presents a beta of 0.064, t-statistics of 3.717, and a p-value of 0.000, warranting its acceptance, which indicates a significant mediating effect of organizational commitment in this relationship. *Hypothesis 4 (H4)*, which examines the impact of organizational culture on employee readiness to change, shows a robust beta of 0.434, with t-statistics of 9.401 and a p-value of 0.000, resulting in acceptance and underscoring the strong influence of culture on readiness.

Likewise, *Hypothesis 5 (H5)*, investigating the impact of organizational culture on organizational commitment, reveals a beta of 0.397, t-statistics of 8.670, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming acceptance and highlighting culture as a critical driver of commitment. For *Hypothesis 6 (H6)*, the direct effect of organizational commitment on employee readiness to change is affirmed with a beta of 0.251, t-statistics of 4.663, and a p-value of 0.000, further establishing commitment's essential role in fostering readiness. Lastly, *Hypothesis 7 (H7)* examines whether the influence of organizational culture on employee readiness to change is mediated through organizational commitment, with a beta of 0.100, t-statistics of 3.859, and a p-value of 0.000, leading to its acceptance. This reinforces the notion that organizational commitment is a significant mediator in enhancing employee readiness within cultural dynamics. Overall, the consistent significance of all beta values exceeding the t-statistic thresholds and p-values below 0.05 indicates strong support for each hypothesis, emphasizing the intertwined roles of leadership, organizational culture, and commitment in shaping employee adaptability to change.

Table 5

Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Beta	T statistics	P values	LLCI 2.5%	ULCI 97.5%	Decision
<i>H1: COL -> ERTC</i>	0.195	3.876	0.000	0.092	0.290	<i>Accepted</i>
<i>H2: COL -> OCMT</i>	0.254	5.004	0.000	0.156	0.352	<i>Accepted</i>
<i>H3: COL -> OCMT -> ERTC</i>	0.064	3.717	0.000	0.035	0.103	<i>Accepted</i>
<i>H4: OC -> ERTC</i>	0.434	9.401	0.000	0.337	0.521	<i>Accepted</i>
<i>H5: OC -> OCMT</i>	0.397	8.670	0.000	0.297	0.481	<i>Accepted</i>
<i>H6: OCMT -> ERTC</i>	0.251	4.663	0.000	0.145	0.355	<i>Accepted</i>
<i>H7: OC -> OCMT -> ERTC</i>	0.100	3.859	0.000	0.054	0.155	<i>Accepted</i>

Note: significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 5 provides a comprehensive overview of effect sizes (f^2), meticulously evaluated following Cohen's criteria (1992), which categorize them as minor (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 (0.061) to large (0.272), 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 1.417. This low level of collinearity ensures robustness in comparing sizes and interpreting coefficients within the structural model. A noteworthy degree of explained variance for the endogenous construct is apparent, with an R^2 value of 0.495 (Figure 1). Concerning the mediator, the model explained approximately 29.4% of the variance in the structure, as indicated by an R^2 value of 0.294.

Table 6

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

	f^2		VIF	
	ERTC	OCMT	ERTC	OCMT
COL	0.061	0.080	1.239	1.148
OC	0.272	0.194	1.371	1.148
OCMT	0.088		1.417	

The evaluation of the model's inference and managerial implications involved a thorough out-of-sample predictive analysis using the PLSpredict method, as recommended by Shmueli et al. (2016, 2019). As shown in Table 7, the use of PLS-SEM provided significantly better Q^2 predictions (>0) compared to naive mean predictions, consistently demonstrating lower Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) values than those of linear model (LM) benchmarks, thereby underscoring its robust predictive capabilities. Notably, in seven out of nine cases, the RMSE values for PLS-SEM predictions were consistently better than the LM prediction benchmarks, highlighting the predictive power of the proposed model as outlined in Table 6. The implementation of the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) by Hair et al. (2022), along with its integration with PLSpredict analysis by Liengard et al. (2021), marks a significant advancement in predictive modeling methodologies. This integration enhances the credibility and reliability of the PLS-SEM approach, establishing it as a robust tool for predictive analytics in this study. Additionally, Table 8 verifies the superior predictive capabilities of PLS-SEM, as indicated by lower average loss values compared to indicator averages and LM benchmarks, providing strong evidence of its enhanced predictive performance. This comprehensive assessment of the model's predictive abilities not only highlights the robustness of PLS-SEM in capturing the underlying dynamics but also confirms its practical utility for managerial decision-making in the setting of employee readiness to change in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions.

Table 7

PLSpredicts

Items	Q ² predict	PLS-RMSE	LM_RMSE	PLS-LM
ERTC1	0.339	0.588	0.597	-0.009
ERTC2	0.239	0.600	0.595	0.005
ERTC3	0.258	0.658	0.670	-0.012
ERTC4	0.259	0.668	0.676	-0.008
OCMT1	0.138	0.695	0.693	0.002
OCMT2	0.131	0.621	0.626	-0.005
OCMT3	0.142	0.622	0.635	-0.013
OCMT4	0.191	0.644	0.653	-0.009
OCMT5	0.138	0.755	0.766	-0.011

Table 8

Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT_

	Average loss difference	t-value	p-value
ERTC	-0.149	6.654	0.000
OCMT	-0.078	4.836	0.000
Overall	-0.109	6.829	0.000

Ringle and Sarstedt (2016), together with Hair et al. (2018), introduced Importance Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) to assess the significance and effectiveness of latent variables in explaining acceptance, as detailed in Table 9. The assessment revealed that the most significant impact on employees' readiness to change was attributed to organizational culture (0.533), followed by change of leadership (0.259) and organizational commitment (0.251). This emphasizes the relative importance of these factors in influencing employee readiness to change. On a performance scale of 0-100, change of leadership scored 66.791, indicating higher performance, while organizational culture scored 60.584, reflecting lower achievement. Despite being the most crucial factor for employee readiness to change, organizational culture exhibited the lowest performance. These insights suggest that strategies should prioritize improving organizational culture to enhance employee readiness to change within open, online, flexible distance-learning higher education institutions.

Table 9

Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

	Importance	Performance
COL	0.259	66.791
OC	0.533	60.577
OCMT	0.251	65.783

Discussion & Conclusion*Discussion*

Change of leadership and organizational culture are pivotal strategies for enhancing employee readiness to change, particularly within open, online, flexible distance learning higher education institutions. The higher education landscape is rapidly evolving due to technological advances and shifting educational paradigms, necessitating an adaptable workforce ready to embrace change (Engida et al., 2022). As highlighted by the hypothesis

testing results, a strategic approach to leadership change, with a beta of 0.195 for its direct impact on employee readiness to change, reveals significant potential for fostering adaptability among employees. Leadership is essential in cultivating an environment of trust and innovation, encouraging employees to participate actively in change initiatives. Additionally, when leaders prioritize building a supportive organizational culture (as reflected in a robust beta of 0.434 for its direct influence on readiness), they reinforce this readiness. When aligned with strategic goals, organizational culture acts as a driving force that shapes employees' attitudes and behaviors toward change (Haffar et al., 2023). Furthermore, organizational commitment serves as a crucial mediator in this relationship. Hypothesis testing with a beta of 0.064 for the indirect effect of leadership change through organizational commitment and a beta of 0.100 for the indirect effect of organizational culture illustrates the importance of commitment in enhancing readiness. Employees who feel committed to their organization are more likely to align their personal goals with organizational objectives, thus smoothing the transition process. This commitment can be fostered by leaders who demonstrate consistent and transparent communication, provide professional development opportunities, and offer recognition and support for employee contributions. By intertwining these elements, institutions can create a dynamic and resilient workforce poised to meet future challenges. Consequently, the strategic enhancement of leadership and culture, focusing on building organizational commitment, becomes a transformative approach to boost employee readiness to change in these educational settings significantly.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of this study, grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory, are multifaceted and extend our understanding of how leadership change and organizational culture interact with employee readiness to change, mediated by organizational commitment in the context of open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. Transformational Leadership Theory posits that leaders who exhibit inspirational motivation and individualized consideration significantly impact employee attitudes and behaviors (Bass, 1985). The findings from this study highlight the theory's assertion that transformational leadership can foster an environment conducive to change by inspiring trust and commitment among employees (Ng, 2022). Furthermore, the study supports the integration of transformational leadership with organizational culture dynamics, which underscores that an aligned organizational culture is as critical as leadership in shaping employee readiness. The role of organizational commitment as a mediator aligns with the transformational leadership emphasis on the relational and motivational aspects that drive organizational change (Tsauri, 2022). By bridging these constructs, the study contributes to the theoretical discourse by demonstrating that transformational leadership and supportive culture are not solely foundational elements but are intricately linked with employee adaptability and commitment. These insights enhance our understanding of the mechanisms through which leadership styles influence organizational transformation, providing valuable direction for future research to explore these dynamics in other organizational contexts and across different leadership paradigms.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study offer valuable insights for administrators and leaders within open, online, flexible distance-learning higher education institutions. By emphasizing transformational leadership, leaders can implement strategies that foster a culture of

adaptability and innovation. This involves actively engaging with employees to build trust and inspire a shared vision for change (Ali et al., 2022). Leaders can provide clear communication and support, which enhances organizational commitment and prepares employees for transitions. Moreover, the study suggests that developing a supportive organizational culture can significantly improve employee readiness to change. Institutions can work towards creating an environment that values continuous learning and openness to new methods and technologies (Du et al., 2022). This can be achieved through regular training sessions, workshops, and open discussion forums, which promote skill enhancement and align employees with institutional goals. Additionally, organizations should focus on strengthening organizational commitment as a mediator. This can be accomplished by implementing policies recognizing employee contributions, offering career development opportunities, and maintaining transparency in organizational changes. By doing so, institutions can reduce resistance to change and enhance the overall effectiveness of change initiatives. Ultimately, the practical application of these findings can lead to a more resilient and adaptable workforce better equipped to handle the evolving demands of the education sector and contribute positively to the institution's success.

Suggestions for Future Study

Based on the findings of this study, future research could explore several avenues to deepen our understanding of leadership and organizational dynamics within open, online, flexible distance-learning higher education institutions. First, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impact of transformational leadership and sustained cultural change on employee readiness over time. This would provide insights into how leadership and culture evolve and their lasting effects on adaptability. Comparative studies across different educational institutions could highlight contextual differences and identify unique challenges and strategies in diverse settings. Researchers might also investigate digital leadership's role in remote learning environments, particularly examining how virtual leadership practices can influence organizational commitment and readiness to change. Expanding the research to include more diverse cultural contexts and institutional sizes would further validate and extend the applicability of the findings to a broader range of educational settings.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significant role of transformational leadership and organizational culture in enhancing employee readiness to change within open, online, flexible distance-learning higher education institutions. Grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory, the research highlights how effective leadership and a supportive culture can cultivate an environment conducive to change by fostering organizational commitment among employees. Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse by illustrating the intertwined dynamics between leadership, culture, and employee adaptability. It offers actionable insights for institutional leaders to implement strategies that build trust, inspire vision, and maintain robust organizational commitment, which is essential in today's rapidly evolving educational landscapes. By focusing on these elements, institutions can create resilient and adaptable workforces ready to meet emerging challenges and seize new opportunities. Future studies are encouraged to explore these relationships further across different contexts and over time to increase the generalizability and depth of these findings.

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