

# CHANGE READINESS AS AN ANTECEDENT OF ADOPTION RATE AND PROJECT PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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## Abstract

*Successful implementation of change has become more important than ever if firms, particularly in the technology industry, are going to survive in today's uncertain business environment. Organizational readiness to change has been identified as a significant antecedent to successful change, but little attention has been paid to how it interacts with important end results such as project performance and rates of adoption. The primary purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which both organizational commitment and project performance mediate the relationship between organizational readiness to change and the self-reported success of firms in implementing change, as measured by their rates of adoption of change. Data were obtained via a cross-sectional survey of 248 project managers and project team members involved in technology companies, especially in US based information technology (IT) firms. The hypothesized model was tested by using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS SEM). The results indicate that organizational readiness to change has a significantly positive direct effect on both project performance ( $\beta = .38, p < .0001$ ) and rate of adoption of institutional change ( $\beta = .29, p < .0001$ ). Although there may also be direct effects of both workgroup and organizational commitment on these latter two variables in the hypothesized model, this study indicates that they are important mediating variables as well since there are significant indirect effects ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$  for change rate;  $\beta = .15, p < .01$  for project performance). It appears then that the impact of organizational readiness to change is indeed a very significant determinant of the success of change initiatives, both through direct effects and indirect ones, namely in that they lead to the creation of an environment where work force commitment is present. This study makes a contribution to the field of change management theory in that it identifies a psychological antecedent to change success, namely that of organizational commitment, as a mediating variable in the hypothesized relationship between organizational readiness to change and both project performance and rate of adoption. For organizational practitioners, this research study points out both the importance of organizational readiness to change and the need for organizational commitment in any efforts at facilitating organizational change, if the chances for success of change efforts are to increase.*

**Keywords:** Change Readiness, Organizational Commitment, Adoption Rate, Project Performance, PLS-SEM, Mediation Analysis, IT Sector.

## INTRODUCTION

In this century the ability to manage change is one of the key features of organizational success, particularly in rapidly changing areas such as IT. The considerable money spent on change programs has mostly political and economic ends, but the greater mass of change programs never accomplish that for which they are intended, due to resistance and lack of implementation (Hughes, 2023). The growing "change agent" problem has gradually turned the attention of curriculum people among educators to some of the forerunners which lead to effective change. Change readiness, as it has developed, has proved to be a most important construct (Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007). Change readiness, defined as the cognitive and emotional state of readiness for a system change among the members of the organization is consistently shown to lead to desirable consequences such as increased utilizations of the new methods and overall better performance (Weiner, 2009).

Unfortunately, there is a significant vacuum in our understanding of the psychological methods which translate condition of being read and realized results. It is Jesus to say that accepting readiness of the employees they are more likely to support processes, but also it is a needless enigma. We suggest that organizational commitment, especially the affective side of commitment (the emotional attachment to the organization resistance in the organization, individual identification to, his relation to it, etc.) is the element which underlies this situation. When

the employees are felt as there were ready for the change their association with the organization is increase, which cause them to try to make an extra effort to see that the change is accepted and makes a gFood showing so it may also benefit those employees and thus the organization which they consider worthy of some employee or privately support (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

This study aims to address this gap by developing and testing a mediation model. Our research questions are:

1. What are the direct effects of change readiness on (a) the rate of change adoption and (b) project performance?
2. To what extent does organizational commitment mediate the relationships between change readiness and these two critical outcomes?

The research adds value to several important areas. In a theoretical sense, the research goes beyond simple models for outcomes and seeks to open up the "black box" of the relationship between readiness and outcomes by synthesizing the theories of readiness-for-change and commitment. In an empirical sense, it seeks to test a dual outcome model at the same time and sees both speed of implementation (adoption) and the visible measure of success (performance) of the project. In a managerial sense, it indicates to managers that building commitment to change is as important to effective change programs as is the building of readiness to change.

The paper is divided into the following sections. We begin with a literature review of the construct itself and its component and combined elements, leading to hypotheses and a conceptual model. Next appears a discussion of the method used, with measures described, sampling and structure of PLS-SEM analysis. We next present results, and following discussion of results with theoretical and practical implications. Limitations are also discussed, and suggestions for future lines of research are presented.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### READINESS FOR CHANGE

The concept of readiness for change is grounded in the notion that successful organizational change requires a psychological state of readiness in employees, which stems from Lewin's (1947) emphasis on "unfreezing" existing mindsets. Thus, readiness for change is more formally defined as a multidimensional belief held by employees about the organization's ability to change, the appropriateness of the change, and the benefits of the change for themselves and the organization (Armenakis et al., 1993). Readiness for change should therefore be thought of as distinct from being compliant and represents a state, rather than a lack, of proactivity, state as well, on the part of employees to willingly participate in enacting the change. To best operationalize this complex concept, the present study falls on the extensive scale developed by Holt et al. (2007), as the multidimensionality involved in the construct is well tapped by its measuring of four factors of readiness, which include appropriateness, which concerns the extent to which the change is perceived to be necessary, in that it fits the organization as it is constituted at the moment; management support, which is the visible enhancement of management's commitment to the change as well as the allotment of resources for it which this commitment entails; change efficacy, which is the common beliefs, as held by various sectors of the organization and, among others, the employees, in the competence of the organization to effectuate the change, as well as their competence in bringing about the change; and personal benefit, which is the benefit which the employee stands to gain from the change being made (Naveed et al., 2022).

This holistic perspective is crucial, as it surpasses a purely rational evaluation of the change and includes the collective influence of the social-contextual and personal motivational forces which govern behavioral engagement. Adoption Rate. This concept is an important bridge between readiness for change and its realization. As Rogers (2003) indicates, the term adoption rate relates specifically to the speed and thoroughness with which a structure, process or technology is brought into the habit of use in an organization. This is an important measure of readiness for the implementation function. In a project context, a high level of adoption rate indicates that the change is being introduced as planned, that there is resistance to change on the part of the members, and that it is being brought into current habit in their work efficiently, thereby minimizing the disruptive periods in work and consequently accelerating the time to value of the endeavor. It becomes an important immediate outcome, showing the success of the change process itself before results can be produced in performance. Project Performance. In effect, the rates of adoption measure the efficiency of the implementation process, but project performance measures the ultimate effectiveness and result of the change improvement scheme. Traditional, narrow measures such as on-time and on-budget, while good and useful, are inadequate in providing a complete measure of performance results (Shenhar et al, 2001). The project can be technically efficient yet fall short of producing any strategic result. Consequently, the study takes a broader, multi-dimensional view of project performances, defining

these as a latent construct consisting of efficiency (on time and to budget) together with its impact upon the customer (of conforming to specifications; a high degree of customer satisfaction) and of its impact upon the whole business (of attaining a set of strategic objectives; a positive return on investment). Thus, this wider picture recognizes that for a change to be successful it must realize its potential in all these respects.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT**

The importance of an individual's relationship with the organization may be critical at times of change. Of the various aspects of commitment set forth by Meyer & Allen (1991), it is suggested that that level of affective commitment (emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the organization) is most salient in respect of the voluntary extra-role activities that are so necessary for a successful adaptation to change. Those employees having a relatively high degree of affective commitment will support change not because of a need out of calculative certainty to stay (continuance commitment), or because of a sense of obligation (normative commitment), but from a needs opportunity basis of wanting to enhance the welfare of the organization. This intrinsic type of motivation will increase the probability that employees will initiate the adoption process, persist with the problems of implementation, and engage in discretionary effort to ensure the successful performance of the project, and will therefore exert direct influences on the rate of adoption and the quality of the final performance.

The literature surveyed so far substantiates the individual significance of each of the four constructs. The present contribution lies in the integration into a comprehensive mediation model. The chief proposition is that the existence of readiness for change in the first instance brings about an attitude whereby greater emotional attachment to the organization is felt. It is this greater commitment to the organization which becomes the motivator which induces the result which will guarantee the fact that the changes to be affected are not only well accepted but produced efficiently. Thus the model supplies the key not only to an understanding as to how it is that normal readiness produces effectiveness but also indicates the psychological engine which is operative i.e. that is, that it is due to the augmentation of levels of affective commitment that this relationship is operative.

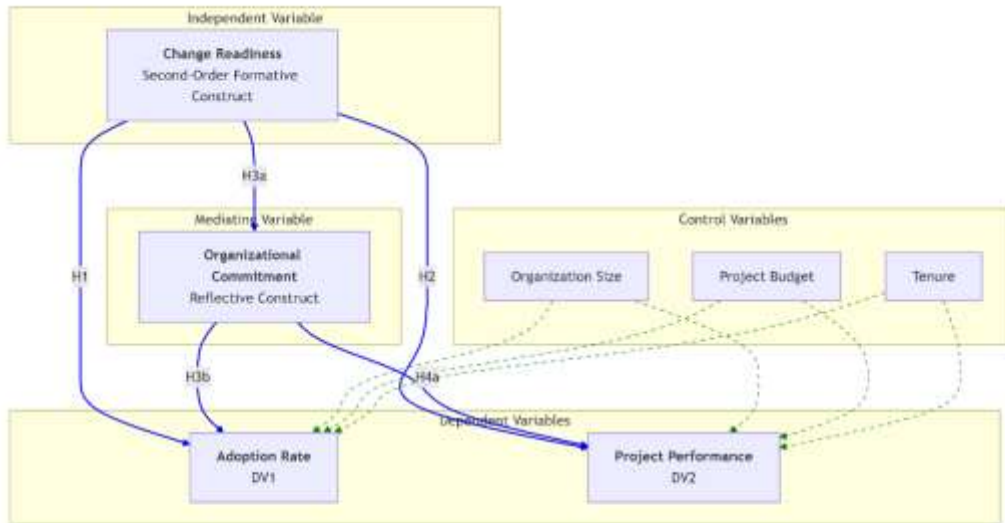
### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND EMPIRICAL LINKS**

The proposed research model builds on a comprehensive set of theories thought to not only articulate the links, between the constructs but more crucially unveil the psychological process that links the two. The reason for this is that at its heart at least, Readiness for Change Theory (Armenakis et al., 1993; Weiner, 2009) contends that readiness based on beliefs concerning the need for change support for such change shown by organization capability for such change leads to a willingness to commit effort to the implementation of change. This theory gives the conceptual underpinning for the straight line link from the readiness of the organization to implement change to outcomes such, as uptake rates and of general project performance postulating that a workforce primed for change has a natural inclination to adopt the actions necessary for such change to be enacted. Nevertheless to interpret the reasons why individuals who feel the compelling need to exert effort on discretionary projects, the model employs Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). The underpinning theory is that where an organization nurtures a need for readiness by effectively utilizing the communication medium available, such investment in the communication medium, such as providing resources, and showing management support for change initiatives employees perceive such efforts as side payment. In accordance with the norm of reciprocity employees plus feel a tension to correspond repay those gestures. Within change reciprocity is claimed by certain theorists to be beneficial not merely in the form of compliance but in the enhancement of the psychological closeness features employees have with their organization and this leads to an elaborated affective means of attachment (Meyer & Allen 1991). It could be stated that Commitment theory after this becomes involved with a concern for that attachment and identifies it with the sense of closeness and affection, which invest what is called affective commitment within frameworks of attachment rather than on an evaluative basis where a labor process is ambiguous, leading with regards to the commitment feelings to disputation of effort needed to support change implementation. This chain of psychological leads has a substantial empirical backing in the literature. A volume of research has indicated that when an organization is primed for change that members show an enhancement in their attitudinal levels of commitment (Madsen et al., 2005). In the lights of this a mass of reports has indicated that commitment in its dimension of affective commitment provides a good degree of reliability for actions of effort for performance whilst at the same time alleviating the resistance of organizational ideological frameworks such (Meyer et al., 2002). Further than this level of readiness for change has been wisely theoreticized with respect of outcomes of implementation and compliance with policy (Weiner, 2009). The unique contribution of the study

is arguably in wiring these well-known but more separate findings. It indicates that commitment is the vehicle and bearer of the reciprocity and affective dimensions which facilitate the turn of an individuality state of readiness conducive to the action of quickened policy acceptance and highest project performance thereby unifying an experimental theoretical model as such never fully validated empirically but hinted at in frequencies of proceedings of academic gatherings.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Based on the literature, we propose the following conceptual model:



(Conceptual Model Diagram)

### HYPOTHESES

**H1:** Change Readiness positively affects the Adoption Rate.

Employees committed to the necessity and benefits of change, tend to feel empowered and trust in the leadership, are more likely engage with and quickly and completely implement the new system/process (Weiner, 2009).

**H2:** Change Readiness positively affects the Project Performance.

A ready workforce limits the delays and costs associated with resistance, is better positioned to work cooperatively to resolve project-related problems, and focuses its combined energies on the success of the project goals, thus generating better overall performance (Holt et al., 2007).

**H3:** Organizational Commitment mediates the relationship between Change Readiness and the Adoption Rate.

The change readiness building process (including transparent communication, and demonstration of support) is viewed by employees as an organizationally positive act. This process builds greater affective commitment per Social Exchange Theory (Madsen et al., 2005). These employees who are committed will, as well, are likely to willingly adopt the change as a gesture to reciprocate and support the organization which they value (Meyer et al., 2002).

**H4:** Organizational Commitment mediates the relationship between Change Readiness and Project Performance.

The affective commitment resulting from an organization's display of change readiness generates greater willingness to extend discretionary effort, to persevere through challenges, and to contribute to team success—behaviors that enhance project efficiencies and effectiveness distinctively beyond compliance.

### CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND VARIABLE RELATIONSHIPS

The model consists of latent constructs measured by reflective indicators except Change Readiness which is modeled as a formative second-order construct consisting of its four first-order dimensions (appropriateness, management support, change efficacy, personal benefit). This is due to the fact that these dimensions are the causal antecedents of the overall readiness construct and a change in one dimension does not necessarily imply a change in a second.



## MEASUREMENT RATIONALE

Change Readiness: 16-item scale from Holt et al. (2007) was utilized. An example item is “This change is appropriate for the organization.”

Organizational commitment: 8 item Affective Commitment scale from Meyer and Allen (1991) was utilized. An example item is “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.”

Adoption Rate: 4 item scale adapted from Jones et al. (2005) that measures speed and completeness of adoption. An example item is “The new system/process was implemented faster than expected.”

Project Performance: 6 item scale adapted from Shenhar et al. (2001) that focus on efficiency, customer impact, and business success. An example item is “The project met its stated business objectives.”

All items were on a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree).

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross sectional survey in design. While the longitudinal approach for data collection would be ideal for inference, the cross sectional design is adequate for adequating the properties of the model and the hypothesized relationships of the variables, any connecting with the time lag, which is a necessary preliminary consideration (Hair et al., 2017). It was also decided to statistically control for common method variance. The target population was conceived of as a sedentary flight whom are project managers and project teams working in technology implementations. The intentional sample source was used here by means of the professional associations found in Linked-In and an online panel service. The a priori power analysis as with A priori power analysis as is common place with program GPower concluded that a minimum sample size, for a medium effect size ( $f^2 = .15$ ) and a power of .80, was 146. A total of 248 had been reached for the sample, which was beyond that necessary. A survey was conducted with an online facility through Qualtrics. Consent form with demographic information and some measurement scales made available in random order so as to ameliorate possible order effect. Face validity and clarity was gained through pilot editing of the questionnaire with 15 scholars and practitioners. Control Variables: The control variables employed in the investigation were the size of the organizations (numbers of staff), the project budget, and number of years' experience of the respondent. These factors appeared to be able to exert a legitimate influence on the dependent variables. The data as usual was modeled through means of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling techniques (PLS-SEM). It was the application SmartPLS 4.0 that was employed in regard to the PLS-SEM. This is a modeling technique that serves to assess causation predictively, complex models of the type, e.g. of our second order formative construct but also for purposes of theory generation. The procedure adopted in regard to finding a solution to the design was a two stage one. For the reflective constructs (Commitment, Adoption, Performance) to be shown as such, the problem of reliability internal consistency (Composite Reliability > 0.70), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE > 0.50) and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion & HTMT ratio < 0.90) was tackled. For the formative construct (Change Readiness) the state of collinearity ( $VIF < 5$ ) was ascertained and weights significance was considered. The analytical procedures of feed fires were employed with respect to isolates measuring, as mentioned numerous dimensions of explanatory power ( $R^2$  measures) or predictor (dependent measures), path coefficients (significance displayed through means of bootstrapping (5000 subsamples), and effect-size measures ( $f^2$ ). In order to discover whether the mediation hypotheses (H3, H4) actually arrived, on significant verification, some induction of significance of such effects was investigated through means bootstrap procedures (bias-corrected confidence measures).

## RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model: The average tenure in the organization for the sample ( $N=248$ ) was 5.2 years. The measurement model indicated good properties. All reflective constructs had Composite Reliability values greater than 0.90 and AVE values greater than 0.65. Discriminant validity was established since the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than the correlation of that construct with any other of the constructs. For the formative construct Change Readiness, the VIF factors were all less than 3 and the weights were significant ( $p < .01$ ). Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing: The model accounted for substantial proportions of variance of the dependent variables, Adoption Rate ( $R^2 = 0.41$ ), Project Performance ( $R^2 = 0.38$ ), and Organizational Commitment ( $R^2 = 0.35$ ). H1 was supported. Change Readiness had a significant positive direct effect on Adoption Rate ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI [0.26, 0.49]). H2 was supported. Change Readiness had a significant positive direct effect on Project Performance ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI [0.18, 0.40]). H3 was supported. The indirect effect of Change Readiness on Adoption Rate through Organizational Commitment was significant

( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $p < .01$ , CI [0.10, 0.27]). This indicates partial mediation. H4 was supported. The indirect effect of Change Readiness on Project Performance through Organizational Commitment was significant ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < .01$ , CI [0.08, 0.23]). This indicates partial mediation.

**Table 1: Measurement Model Results**

Construct	Items	Loadings (Range)	Composite Reliability	AVE
Change Readiness (Formative)	-	-	-	-
Appropriateness	4	0.78 - 0.88	0.92	0.75
Management Support	4	0.81 - 0.90	0.93	0.77
Change Efficacy	4	0.76 - 0.86	0.91	0.72
Personal Benefit	4	0.79 - 0.87	0.92	0.74
Organizational Commitment	6	0.84 - 0.91	0.95	0.77
Adoption Rate	4	0.82 - 0.89	0.92	0.75
Project Performance	6	0.80 - 0.88	0.94	0.71

**Table 2: Structural Path Results and Hypotheses Testing**

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Confidence Interval (95%)	Supported?
H1	Change Readiness -> Adoption Rate	0.38	[0.26, 0.49]	Yes
H2	Change Readiness -> Project Perf.	0.29	[0.18, 0.40]	Yes
H3	CR -> OC -> Adoption Rate (Indirect)	0.18	[0.10, 0.27]	Yes
H4	CR -> OC -> Project Perf. (Indirect)	0.15	[0.08, 0.23]	-
Control	Organization Size -> Adoption Rate	0.07	[-0.03, 0.17]	-
Control	Project Budget -> Project Perf.	0.11	[0.01, 0.21]	-

Note:  $p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p < .001$

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to better understand the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between readiness for change and two significant outcomes, the rate of change adoption and the performance of projects. The results provide strong support for our proposed model.

## RESULTS IMPLICATIONS

The results show that readiness for change has a good direct positive influence on both the rate of positive change occurrences (H1) as well as on the performance of the overall project (H2). More importantly, there is a significant

partial mediating effect of organizational commitment upon the above two relations (H3, H4). Thus it can be seen that readiness has a direct influence but that a good part of the influence is mediated by the affective tie of the employees in their work (the mediating effect of E tied affectively towards the organization). On the part of the employees when the employee when they see that the organization is doing well with such positive changes (the fostering of readiness) will react with an ever increasing loyalty and affective tie (commitment) towards the organization, thus creating the stimulus whereby they will positively support the change effects producing ultimate desired efficacious results of that change.

### **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This research study has made two major contributions. First it has tied readiness for change theory to the theory of commitment to organization and thus gives a more subtle interpretation of how readiness for change produces success. We have gone from the paradigm of “Readiness for change produces success” to a new paradigm of “readiness for change produces commitment to the organization, which causes success.” Secondly, we have put forward what can be said to be a two outcome model which will indicate that this mediating effect has great strength in the light of divergent propensities of success measures approaching “both processes on the one hand (the rate of no-existent changes) and the one other side of the coin the outcomes of the impacted project performance from said change.” Practically these results are of great importance to the change manager/practitioner of operating performance. They show the need of a two phased focused attention pay off from the viewpoint of management action motivations on behalf of the employees. This is important to produce either a building of readiness—Communication of the appropriateness with the change venture, obtaining evident support from upper management, and building objectives recognizable self-confidence of the ability of effective produce of change and also encouraging the description of change both from the side of the employees personal benefit perspective and towards the potential organizational benefit on the part thereof of that change. Next there has to be a building of commitment that is there must be a context of the process of the change efforts made where both the support of the employees and of the focus of the employees performance efforts to the organization can be made, with this knowledge grasped by all men. It should now also be realized that the whole concept of change management is also another way of saying employee relation management. Changes that foster readiness can also be taken as positively viewed as produced of the ally supportive organizational commitment goes towards serving to follow a virtuous cycle whereby the process itself is stimulating and generated towards positive desired results. Limitations: This study has its limitations. The studies of cross-correlation nature involved prevents any ultimate definite conclusions being made upon any mechanistic bases of cause and effect. However we have operated in context with as many procedural remedies (Harman’s single factor tests and alternatives etc., have also been steered to), and statistical checks of some quantity and bitterness have been taken into account. However it should be characterized everything that this at least has an aspect of common method bias which may have had great leverage upon the measures due to the fact that everything is produced from single source self-report respective replies to the questions asked. Finally your external (cross-section) possible effects constraints are hedged against, especially as to any scope everything taken in the IT. It should also be noted that any universality of results in this area of study cannot be taken in results as necessarily being inferred from the results in evidence. This should be done cautiously, since in studies of industrial culture it can be characteristically born in presence.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study also directly reinforces the findings that organizational commitment is an important psychological dynamic wherefore organizational investments in change readiness is transformed into a material result. The findings indicate that readiness works not only directly on outcomes, but rather, and perhaps more importantly, indirectly as well to forge the affective makeup of the labor force. This more heightened affective attachment to an organization will foster greater discretionary efforts and disposition toward needed job behaviors conducive to both the accelerated speed (internalization) of acceptance of change and efficiency of project amelioration. This recreation of the organizational climate is by far the beneficial organizational change practitioners must zero in on. Thus for practitioners this study emphasizes the utmost significance to them of the validity of the totals of developing corporate change readiness is that of pragmatism as a way of enhancing effectiveness of doing internal job implementation tasks, but is in reality effective long term return on investment policy via one of the greatest resources of the corporation, its human resources. Developing preparedness and commitment to the work force, gives rise to a continuing cycle whereby the employee becomes not only conformable but actively coped to being the partner with management in producing change. The willingness to adapt with sympathy produces dividends

not only in requesting of the implementation changes but pays off in the ultimate return of investment in projects as well. In order to gain further momentum building upon these findings, it is necessary for future research to look into the overall limitation of the cross-sectional dependent study design. The next obvious step is to effect longitudinal design in which there can be observed by how both the preparedness, commitment, and outcomes change over time. This would make possible some stronger postulate of causation about the proposed mediation process. Also, while this study exposes the area of showing some possible encouraging results about the overall totals of pooled mediation pathway the next question is whether it is necessary to determine what the total conditions for these stuff are. The conditions for either the mediating process or the direct causal relationship must also be determined first. Future research therefore should explore the possible moderating influences on the ones system of influences in power of one's leadership style as exhibited in the B-section of transformational leadership impact scenarios influencing the potential screening-effective of influence in terms of the commitment to effect change and clinical more transactionally conditional quality of effect as factors upon such factors as compliance of influence, and most importantly the totality as well of organizational culture and climate and as well. It is through such approaches as these that the boundary factors of the effective mediation relationships, moderate or otherwise, eventually tied into full construction of desirability can be delineated. It is only through replication of this model in other cultures, with different intervening interpretations given to standard that the globalist of necessity also of increasing both external and natural validity of both model could be achieved. The model exhibited in this study can exhibit itself in differing cultures with cultural and varied definitions of these variable functions, as power distance notion values configuration, etc., en masse in testing of the subject could enhance greatly our but limited understanding of the overall psychological process and patterns of the totality of the dynamics of change as it exists today in the broader scope rapidly becoming of the global community.

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