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Leadership Support and Organizational Change Readiness: Evidence from an Employee Engagement Survey in Knowledge-Based Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between leadership support and readiness for change in a knowledge-based organization. In particular, it explores the impact of leadership-related variables (such as fairness, feedback, and employee inclusion) on employees' readiness to embrace and support change in the workplace. This study used a quantitative cross-sectional research design with secondary data obtained from an employee engagement survey. The sample consisted of 321 employees from a knowledge-based organization over two years (2022-2023). A five-point Likert scale was used to measure variables. Leadership support was the independent variable, and readiness for change was measured using surrogate indicators. Descriptive statistics, reliability (Cronbach's alpha) measures, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were used to analyze the data. The findings suggest that employees felt that leadership was supportive, change was necessary, and they were ready to change. There was a significant positive relationship between leadership support and change readiness ($r = 0.617, p < 0.001$). Fairness in evaluation ($\beta = 0.3502, p < 0.001$), and employee opinion consideration ($\beta = 0.2972, p < 0.001$) were significant predictors of change readiness, accounting for 46.5% of variance in regression analysis. Comparisons across 2022 and 2023 indicated no significant difference in perceptions. The results suggest that transparent, fair and participatory leadership approaches play a crucial role in building change readiness. Companies should focus on communication, employee participation, and equitable assessment practices to boost flexibility. This research offers empirical insights into the association between leadership support and organizational change readiness based on engagement data, bridging the gap in both change and engagement research.

KEYWORDS: Organizational Behavior; Change Adaptability; Survey-Based Research; Leadership Support; Organizational Change Readiness

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving business landscape, firms - especially knowledge-based firms are increasingly called upon to respond to rapidly changing technological, structural and strategic challenges. These are highly dependent on intellectual capital, with employees' attitudes and behaviours playing a crucial role in organizational change efforts. Organizational change is now seen as an ongoing rather than a one-off process, and employees need to be adaptable, proactive and engaged (Oreg & Berson, 2019).

One of the factors influencing employee responses to change is engagement. They are more committed, resilient, and open to change in their organizations (Saks, 2019). Previous studies have shown that engagement increases positive change attitudes by improving employees' psychological attachment to their jobs and organizations (Matthysen & Harris, 2018). In this regard, change engagement, defined as a positive and enthusiastic state of engagement with organizational change has been recognised as a key factor in change success (Albrecht et al., 2020). Moreover, organizational and job resources such as communication, support and goal clarity play a vital role in change engagement (Albrecht et al., 2022).

Of the various organizational factors, leadership support is particularly important in influencing employee attitudes and behaviours during change. Leadership plays a vital role in shaping the communication, understanding, and execution of change processes (Hussain et al., 2018). Ethical and transformational leadership has been found to influence employees' readiness to change in a positive way, by promoting trust, fairness and transparency (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Metwally et al., 2019). Likewise, participative leadership styles that facilitate employee involvement and voice are associated with increased employee readiness and engagement (Katsaros, 2022). Leadership practices such as support, fair appraisal and feedback are crucial in minimising resistance and increasing acceptance of change (Gigliotti et al., 2019).

Furthermore, communication and perceived support are key channels of leadership influence on change readiness. Open communication enables employees to understand why change is needed and why decisions are being made, which in turn increases their support for change (Yue et al., 2019). Similarly, high-performance human resource practices and supportive work environments contribute to employees' psychological readiness and adaptability (Alqudah et al., 2022). These insights show the inter-relationships between leadership, engagement and support in promoting change readiness. Although the role of leadership and employee engagement in organizational

change is increasingly recognized, many organizations still struggle with employee readiness for change. Employee resistance to change is prevalent, often due to uncertainty, distrust in leadership, and poor communication (Cinite & Duxbury, 2018).

Furthermore, although theoretical frameworks of change management, such as Lewin's change model, highlight the role of leadership and participation, their implementation may not be effective in practice (Hussain et al., 2018). Managers may not be able to effectively translate the strategy into operational practices that are meaningful to the workforce, which may hinder the success of change (Hubbart, 2022). Therefore, it is important to conduct empirical studies that explore the impact of particular leadership practices on employee readiness for change in organizational contexts.

While there is a wealth of research on organizational change, leadership and employee engagement, there are still some gaps in the literature. First, much of the research is conceptual or based on small sample sizes or qualitative research (Oreg & Berson, 2019). What's more, prior studies have tended to consider engagement and readiness as distinct variables, rather than investigating their relationship within an integrated empirical model (Khan et al., 2020). While some research has emphasised the connection between engagement and readiness for change (Matthysen & Harris, 2018), There is a need for quantitative studies integrating these variables using empirical data from organizations. Moreover, the impact of perceived support and communication on readiness has not been fully explored using longitudinal or comparative approaches (Gigliotti et al., 2019).

To address these research gaps, the current study seeks to offer empirical insights into the link between leadership support and readiness for change in a knowledge-based organization. In particular, the study aims to explore the impact of leadership-related factors, such as supervisor support, fairness in evaluation processes, feedback and the inclusion of employees' suggestions and opinions, on employee readiness for change.

Additionally, the study seeks to understand the influence of employee engagement as a moderating factor in change readiness. Through the use of employee engagement survey data, this study offers a quantitative analysis of change in organizations. Lastly, the study compares results across two timepoints, 2022 and 2023, to determine the stability of the perceptions of employees. In conclusion, this research adds to the body of knowledge by providing a quantitative and empirical

examination of leadership support and readiness for change, thereby improving our understanding of how to effectively prepare employees for change in organizations.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is quantitative and cross-sectional to examine the link between leadership support and readiness for change. Data for the analysis is sourced from a secondary dataset of an employee survey on engagement in a knowledge-based organization. The cross-sectional design allows for the assessment of employee perceptions of leadership support and their readiness for change at a single point in time, as well as the comparison of two time points (2022 and 2023) of the survey. This approach is suitable for exploring relationships between variables in the context of an organization where experimental interventions are not possible.

2.2 Data Description and Sample

This dataset includes 321 employee responses from two time points (2022 and 2023) in an internal employee engagement survey. The company in question is situated in a knowledge-based sector where human and information-based processes are key to its operations. Participants represent a cross-section of employees from different units including administration, finance, commercial and marketing, offering a broad representation of the workforce (Vitalii Kaplan, 2025). The variables are assessed on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The variables reflect their perceptions of leadership and communication, organizational fit and job-related experiences. Alongside perceptual variables, the data also contain categorical variables (department and year) for control and comparison purposes.

2.3 Measurement of Variables

Leadership support is the independent variable and captures employees' perceptions of their supervisors' and managers' actions. This is assessed through four questionnaire items that reflect various aspects of leadership support, such as support, fairness, feedback, and inclusiveness. These include items that indicate whether employees receive sufficient support from their direct supervisors, whether their work performance is evaluated fairly and impartially, whether they receive feedback on their work performance and achievements, and whether their views are taken

into account when decisions are made. These items capture the overall level of leadership support in the organization.

Organizational change readiness is considered the dependent variable and refers to employees' cognitive and attitudinal readiness to embrace and facilitate changes in the organization. Given that the data set does not contain a measure of change readiness, this variable is measured using a set of proxy indicators, including indicators of strategic awareness, agreement with management decisions and fit with company values. In particular, it involves employees' knowledge of corporate strategy, knowledge of strategic goals, agreement with management decisions, and agreement with corporate values. These measures capture the degree of employee awareness, agreement, and support for the direction of the company, which are key elements of change readiness. Further, two control variables are added to control for the effects on employee responses. Department is employed to account for variations between different parts of the organisation, and year is used to differentiate between data collected in 2022 and 2023, enabling a comparison over time.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of the data is undertaken in a structured manner to explore the relationship between leadership support and change readiness. The analysis begins with descriptive statistics to describe the central tendency and dispersion of the variables, giving a general picture of employee perceptions in the organization. Next, a reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha is performed to determine the consistency of the constructs, confirming that the items used are measuring what they are meant to.

Then, Pearson correlation analysis is conducted to examine the magnitude and direction of the associations between leadership support and change readiness indicators. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis is conducted to determine the predictive power of leadership support on change readiness. In this analysis, variables related to leadership are used as predictors, with the composite change readiness variable as the outcome variable. Finally, a comparative analysis is performed between the two years to detect any changes over time in employee perceptions of leadership support and readiness for change.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study utilizes anonymized secondary data, and no personally identifiable information is included in the dataset. The data were obtained for internal assessment of the organization, and the current use of the data is for academic purposes. The study adheres to all ethical guidelines for confidentiality and data use.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive results reveal that employees perceived leadership support, employee engagement and readiness for change as positive. The mean score for leadership support was 4.355 with a standard deviation of 0.726, as shown in Table 1, suggesting that employees generally felt that their managers and leaders were supportive. The highest mean score was for employee engagement (4.417), indicating a high level of employee attachment, commitment, and positive job perceptions. The mean score for organizational change readiness was also high at 4.295, suggesting that employees were generally knowledgeable, understanding and supportive of the strategic direction of the organization.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Main Study Constructs

Construct	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Leadership Support	321	4.355	0.726	1.25	5.00
Employee Engagement	321	4.417	0.725	1.00	5.00
Change Readiness	321	4.295	0.726	1.25	5.00

The mean scores of the main constructs are presented in Figure 1. The results indicate that engagement was the highest, followed by leadership support and change readiness. This indicates the workplace climate was highly positive, with employees showing positive attitudes towards their leaders and the goals of the organization.

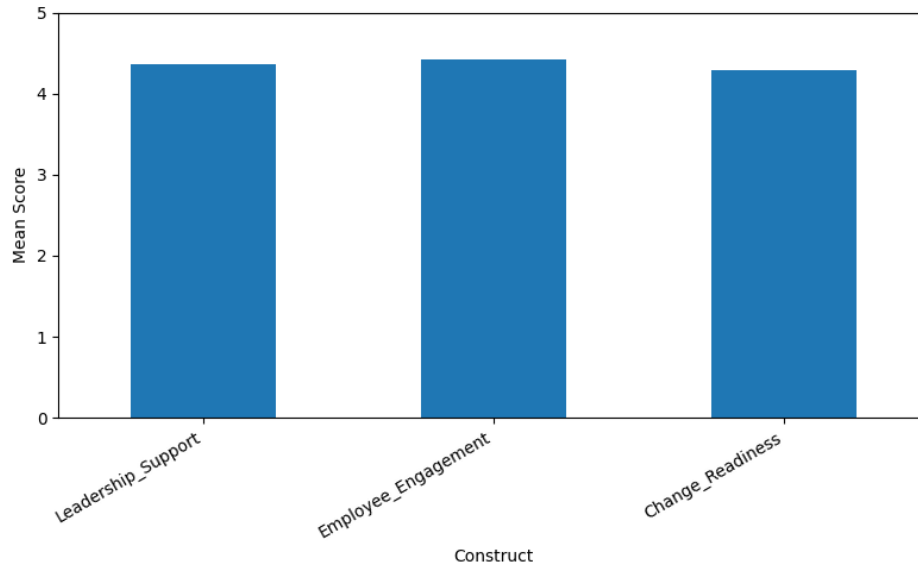


Figure 1. Mean Scores of Leadership Support, Employee Engagement, and Change Readiness

3.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the variables. As can be seen in Table 2, all of the constructs were reliable. The value of Cronbach's alpha for leadership support was 0.822, showing good reliability between the four items. Change readiness was very strongly reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.896. Organizational engagement also produced a high value of Cronbach's alpha (0.880). These findings indicate that the items used for each construct were consistent.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis of Study Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Leadership Support	4	0.822
Change Readiness	4	0.896
Employee Engagement	4	0.880

3.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation findings reveal positive and significant associations between the key constructs in the study. As shown in Figure 2, leadership support showed a positive correlation with readiness for organizational change $r = 0.617$, $p < 0.001$. This suggests that those employees who felt more

supported by their leaders were more likely to be ready for change. Similarly, leadership support was positively correlated with engagement $r = 0.651$, $p < 0.001$, and engagement was positively associated with readiness $r = 0.671$, $p < 0.001$. This finding indicates that leadership support, engagement and readiness are interrelated in the workplace.

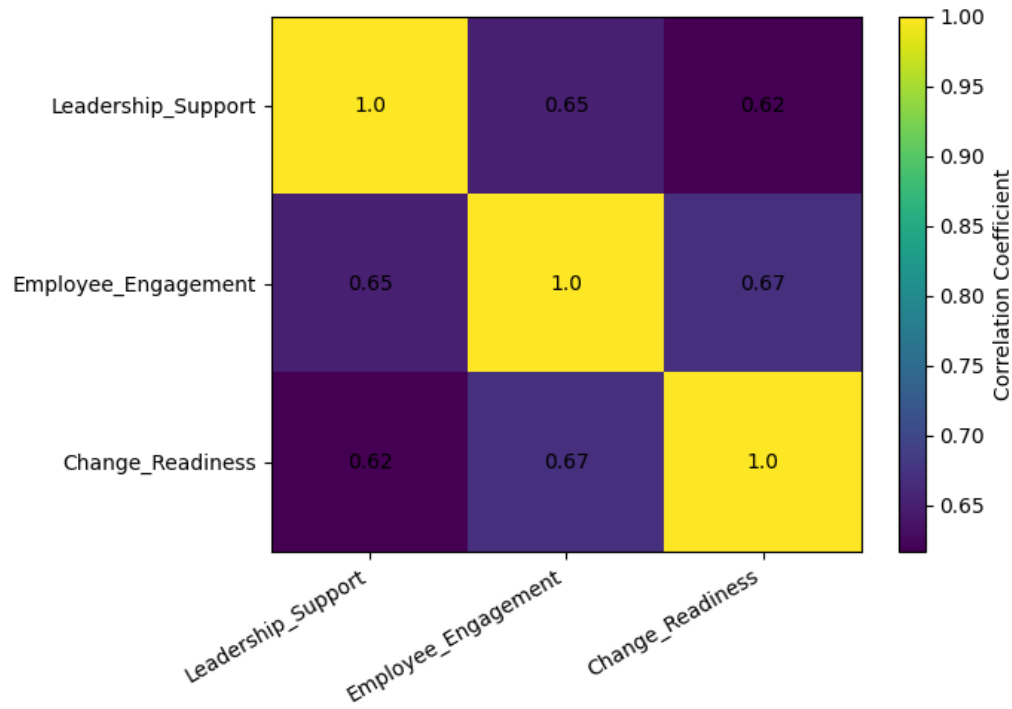


Figure 2. Correlation Matrix of Main Constructs

3.4 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to explore the influence of leadership support indicators on change readiness. The regression model was significant with an R^2 of 0.465 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.458. This suggests that the leadership support indicators accounted for about 46.5% of the variance in organizational change readiness. The F-statistic was 68.543 with a model significance value of $p < 0.001$, which indicates that the regression model was significant.

Table 3 shows that two leadership support indicators were significant predictors of organizational change readiness. Fair and objective evaluation was a positive and significant predictor of change readiness $\beta = 0.3502$, $p < 0.001$, suggesting employees who perceived their work evaluation as fair were more likely to be ready for change. Likewise, the belief that employees' opinions were valued

also had a positive and significant effect $\beta = 0.2972$, $p < 0.001$. But, immediate supervisor support $\beta = 0.0358$, $p = 0.4583$ and discussion of professional achievements $\beta = -0.0416$, $p = 0.2626$ were not found to be significant predictors by the regression model.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Predicting Organizational Change Readiness

Predictor	Beta Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Constant	1.5056	0.1986	7.5821	0.0000
The immediate supervisor provides sufficient support	0.0358	0.0481	0.7426	0.4583
Work is evaluated objectively and fairly	0.3502	0.0509	6.8766	0.0000
Professional achievements discussed in past six months	-0.0416	0.0371	-1.1223	0.2626
Opinion is taken into account	0.2972	0.0471	6.3081	0.0000

In sum, the regression results suggest that leadership support plays an important role in organizational readiness for change, especially when employees believe that they are being fairly evaluated and their views are taken into account.

3.5 Year-wise Comparison

The year-on-year comparison offers further information about changes in employee perceptions from 2022 to 2023. Figure 3 illustrates the high levels of leadership support and change readiness in 2022 and 2023. The findings indicate that employees both in 2022 and 2023 consistently reported positive perceptions of leadership and change readiness. While the change between 2022 and 2023 looks small, this comparison supports the interpretation that the level of leadership support and readiness for change were positive and consistent over time.

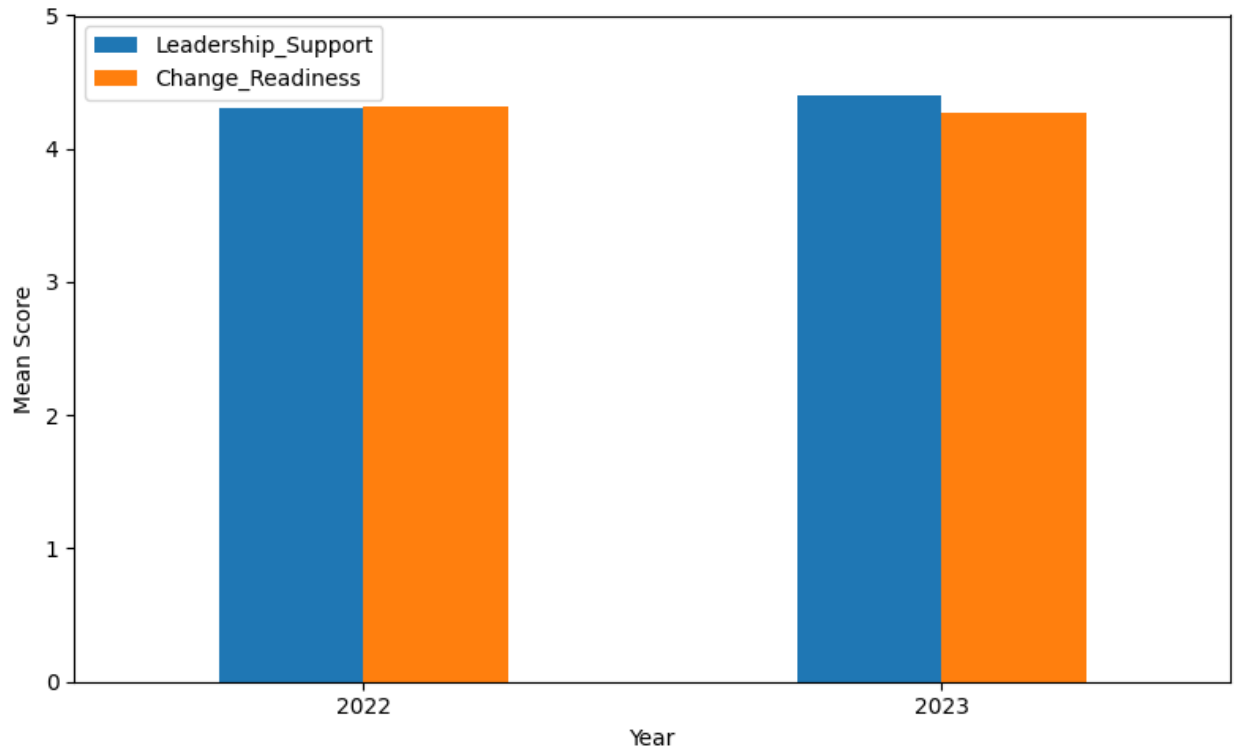


Figure 3. Year-wise Comparison of Leadership Support and Change Readiness

3.6 Summary of Results

The findings show that the employees in the knowledge-based firm have high levels of leadership support, engagement and readiness for change. Reliability analysis showed that the variables were reliable. The correlation results revealed a positive relationship between leadership support and change readiness. Results of regression analysis also showed that fair assessment and taking employees' suggestions into consideration were the most significant leadership factors in predicting change readiness. These results confirm the study's main premise that leadership support is important in enhancing employees' readiness for change.

4. Discussion

This study offers robust evidence for the influence of leadership support in shaping change readiness in organizations. The findings suggest that employees who perceive greater procedural justice in performance evaluation and participation in decision-making are more change-ready. This finding is consistent with existing literature that demonstrates leadership practices impact on employee change readiness through trust, motivation and perceived support (Peng et al., 2021).

The positive relationship between leadership support and change readiness found in this research is also supported by other evidence showing leadership plays a key role in overcoming resistance and promoting adaptive responses to change initiatives (Khaw et al., 2023).

Another critical element of change readiness is communication. Clear communication from leadership provides clarity about organizational objectives and uncertainty reduction, which in turn increases readiness to engage in change initiatives (Miake-Lye et al., 2020). Additionally, the strong links between leadership support, employee engagement and change readiness suggest that these factors are closely related. Engagement encourages employees to be more proactive in change processes, especially when leadership communication provides clarity and trust (Schaufeli, 2021).

These insights also underline the psychological aspects of change. Leadership practices affect employees' psychological reactions to change, by influencing their perceptions of change (Bjerke, 2025). In knowledge-based firms, where employees are heavily dependent on information, cooperation and autonomy, leadership support plays an even more important role in creating a positive change climate. This research adds to the organizational change and employee engagement literature by offering quantitative evidence of the association between leadership support and readiness for organizational change, based on survey data. Although earlier research has highlighted the significance of leadership styles, this study adds to the literature by examining specific leadership practices (such as fairness, feedback, and inclusion of employees) as predictors of readiness.

The results reinforce modern theories of change that highlight the importance of psychological and relational factors in employee responses to change (Caci et al., 2025). Specifically, the findings confirm that readiness for change is not just a structural or procedural construct but also depends on employees' perceptions of leadership and support. This is consistent with systematic reviews of change readiness that point to the multidimensional nature of readiness for change and leadership's role in shaping it (Miake-Lye et al., 2020).

Moreover, this research adds to engagement theory by showing that leadership support not only increases employee engagement but also their readiness for change. Engaging leadership, which involves support, empowerment and fairness, has been demonstrated to be beneficial for work-related outcomes and team performance (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022).

Moreover, the study provides insights for the emerging field of digital and knowledge-based organizations, where leaders operate in complex and dynamic settings (Lin, 2025). The findings indicate that leadership behaviours that foster transparency, fairness and participation are critical to maintain adaptability in these settings. Pragmatically, the results provide valuable guidance for leaders and managers on how to increase change readiness. First, organizations should ensure fairness and transparency in appraisal processes as these play a critical role in employees' change readiness. Second, leaders should engage employees in decision-making and provide avenues for feedback, and in doing so promote feelings of inclusion and ownership (Petrou et al., 2018).

Creating engaging leadership practices is also important. Supportive leadership, effective communication and employee empowerment foster engagement and support change (Schaufeli, 2021). In knowledge-driven enterprises where innovation and collaboration are key to success, leadership practices should emphasize trust and communication. Additionally, companies should prioritise leadership training that focuses on emotional intelligence, ethics, and servant leadership. These approaches can help overcome resistance to change and improve performance (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2025). Combining knowledge management with leadership approaches can also enhance adaptability and performance (Iqbal et al., 2019).

To overcome these limitations, future studies should include larger and more representative samples from various organizations and industries. Longitudinal research would be especially beneficial to explore the role of leadership support in change readiness over time and during various stages of change. Finally, research might also examine how emerging leadership approaches, such as digital leadership, impact employee attitudes towards change in complex organizational settings. Another avenue for future research is to explore the interplay between leadership support, employee engagement, and job crafting practices, which affect adaptation during change. By drawing on these insights, future research can offer a more comprehensive picture of how to best prepare organizations for change.

5. Conclusion

This research study explored the link between leadership support and readiness for change in a knowledge-based organisation based on survey data on employee engagement. This research study shows leadership support has a strong influence on employee readiness for change, particularly in terms of fairness in performance appraisal and employee voice. These aspects were more significant than supervisory support, emphasizing the role of participative and transparent

leadership practices. The findings also show that employees exhibited high levels of engagement and readiness for change, suggesting a positive work environment. The significant associations between leadership support, engagement and change readiness also indicate that these variables are interconnected and play a vital role in organizational change. Through its empirical findings using data from actual organizations, this research adds to the body of knowledge on organizational change and leadership. It highlights that leadership practices that focus on fairness, communication and participation are crucial to developing a change-ready culture. In all, the study highlights the role of leadership in driving change. To improve organizational adaptability and maintain performance in a changing world, organizations should focus on leadership development programs that foster trust, communication and employee participation.

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