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## **PERCEIVED IMPACT OF CHANGE AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE FOR CHANGE READINESS IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** – Adapting to technological advancements and fostering competitiveness poses compelling challenges for universities worldwide, including Indonesia. This prompts the implementation of varied policies, reshaping financial and managerial aspects across academic and non-academic spheres. In this transformative process, cultivating readiness for change across all organizational levels, including among non-academic staff, is crucial. This study aims to identify factors predicting readiness for change within non-academic staff, with perceived impact of change acting as a mediating factor.

**Methodology** – This quantitative study collected the data through surveys conducted among non-academic staff from Indonesian universities under general state financial management (n = 290). The examination focused on predictors encompassing openness to change,

organizational trust, and communication climate. Path analysis was employed to examine the role of perceived impact of change among exogenous and endogenous variables.

**Findings** – The findings revealed a compelling correlation: non-academic staff who exhibit higher levels of openness to change, harbor trust in their organization, and perceive a positive communication climate are predisposed to being more prepared for change. Moreover, the study underscored the significance of a mediating variable in influencing readiness for change, offering an imperative avenue for further exploration.

**Significance** – Practically speaking, for universities operating under general state financial management and preparing to embark on governance changes, this research would help non-academic staff understand the change process and its effects on them.

**Keywords:** Communication climate, higher educational governance, non-academic staff, openness to change, organizational trust, perceived impact of change, readiness for change.

## INTRODUCTION

Change is an indispensable factor for the sustenance of universities within the educational landscape. The implementation of change within universities is fraught with challenges, as elucidated by Rogayan and Corpuz (2022). These challenges encompass a spectrum of constraints, including resource limitations, rapid technological transformations, and the formidable hurdle of resistance to change. In response to these challenges, universities worldwide have embarked on extensive reform and transformation processes within their academic framework (Andriana et al., 2020; Tuan Sulaiman & Abdul Ghadas, 2021). In Europe, the university landscape is undergoing reform through the New Public Management (NPM) movement. This global endeavor aims to enhance university autonomy by revamping governance structures, encouraging collaboration between universities and industry, and fostering closer engagement with civil society (Facchini & Fia, 2021; Siregar et al., 2016). It is noteworthy that these strategies align with governance change policies akin to NPM and have also been implemented in Indonesia to cultivate greater autonomy within universities. These multifaceted strategies

reflect the evolving landscape of higher education worldwide, driven by the pursuit of excellence, equity, and innovative partnerships.

Governance change policies are compelled to ensure the comprehensive readiness of all human resources (HR), with particular emphasis on engaging non-academic staff who assume diverse roles spanning services and administration within the ambit of governance alterations. This emphasis is crucial, as their engagement is essential for university productivity (Rees-Johnstone, 2020). Non-academic staff's pivotal involvement can manifest through contributing insights and perspectives during decision-making processes and policy transitions, facilitating input and feedback mechanisms (Attakumah et al., 2022). This participatory engagement enables non-academic staff, as emphasized by Gebretsadik (2022), to discern and address important challenges inherent in effective change implementation. Recognizing the potency of change assumes significance as it acts as a catalyst for strategic and operational transformations at various levels – institutional, programmatic, and individual. Karlsson and Rytberg (2016) conducted a study on the contribution of non-academic staff (administrative professionals) in the Swedish higher education sector, highlighting their significant influence on university management. Despite their limited formal authority in decision-making, their impact is often indirect. However, they play a crucial role as custodians of a comprehensive viewpoint, reminding internal stakeholders about the organizational objectives of the university.

Individuals' perceptions of organizational change play a vital role in determining whether they view the change positively or negatively within the organizational context. This notion is in accordance with the perspective put forth by Worrall et al. (2004), who explained that individual perceptions wield a considerable influence on change processes, constituting a critical factor that can impact readiness for change. The lens through which individuals perceive organizational change underscores their distinct interpretations of the organizational landscape (Eby et al., 2000). Constructing a perception of change's impact serves as a navigational guide, shaping both attitudes and behavioral responses toward change (Tran et al., 2020), as an individual's perception can either facilitate or hinder the process of embracing readiness for change (Smith, 2005). This reinforces the integral role of the perceived impact of change as a mediating variable that helps elucidate the underlying dynamics contributing to readiness for change. A preliminary study was conducted through an online

survey among non-academic staff in Indonesian universities under general state financial management, focusing on their perceptions of planned changes to higher education governance (Erlyani, 2020). The survey revealed that non-academic staff lacked understanding of the planned changes, harbored doubts about the organization's ability to change, did not perceive benefits from the changes, expressed concerns about potential complexities in performance appraisal, and anticipated higher work pressure risks. Identifying predictors of their readiness is crucial to enable management to understand individual beliefs, intentions, and perceptions during the implementation of change programs.

This study aimed to explore readiness for change within the framework proposed by Holt et al. (2007), encompassing individual factors such as openness to change, organizational trust, and communication climate, mediated by the perceived impact of change, which has so far been limited attention (Vakola, 2014; Win & Chotiyaputta, 2018) especially in the context of higher education in Indonesia. A distinctive feature of this research lies in its deliberate incorporation of the organizational context, representing an innovative departure from the historical neglect of organizational context in previous studies, as highlighted by the observations of Bouckenooghe et al. (2009). However, recent perspectives from Waisy and Wei (2020) point out that varying organizational contexts can indeed exert a significant influence on readiness for change. Consequently, empirical evidence generated from this study is of substantial significance, as it serves to elucidate the nuanced role of predicting variables in shaping readiness for change, particularly in the specific domain of governance changes within tertiary institutions. The outcomes of this research are essential in offering insights that underscore the imperative for universities to effectively prepare for autonomous governance changes, enabling them to be competitively positioned in the higher education landscape.

### **Higher Education Governance Context in Indonesia**

Universities in Indonesia, often referred to as "*Perguruan Tinggi Negeri*" (PTN), have undergone significant transformations over time, driven by technological advancements and the imperative to excel and remain competitive in the academic landscape (Siregar et al., 2016). In response to these dynamics, it has become essential for these institutions to embark on autonomous financial and managerial

reforms, positioning themselves to revolutionize the established educational paradigm. This transformation aims to foster continued educational growth and equip students with the confidence to venture into uncharted territories of expertise (Ngo & Meek, 2019; Risanty & Kesuma, 2019). The core of this agenda lies in the reform of university governance in Indonesia, aiming to enhance autonomy across both academic dimensions, including curriculum development, accreditation, and program creation, and non-academic aspects such as higher education management, administration, funding, and financing. Such transformation is geared toward serving the holistic interests of society, the market, and the nation at large (Andriana et al., 2020).

University governance encompasses a comprehensive array of mechanisms, including structures, systems, and processes strategically employed by university management to steer and oversee the trajectory of the institution. This multifaceted approach aims not only to deliver value-added education but also ensure the institution's sustained viability while aligning with the expectations of its stakeholders (Risanty & Kesuma, 2019). The determination and modification of the financial management framework within universities are undertaken through performance assessment facilitated by the Ministry of Education. Triatmoko and Kurniasih (2018) underlined that universities operating under general state financial management, known as "*Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Satuan Kerja*" (PTN-Satker), adhere to specific practices such as budget execution declarations, authorization of expenditures, financial reporting methodologies, asset recognition, and tariff formulation. It is imperative for universities under general state financial management to be agile in adapting their budgets, with amendments requiring approval to enable efficient fund utilization.

Multiple factors, including funding, decentralized decision-making, and multi-dimensional planning and reporting, can lead to challenges in financial management for universities. Kasradze et al. (2019) highlighted that a robust financial management system is a fundamental element for ensuring the growth and stability of universities, particularly in the context of transforming the education system. Universities operating under a general state financial management structure lack the flexibility required for institution development and competitiveness. Consequently, changes in governance that align with national higher education standards are imperative.

## **Readiness for Change**

The essential aspect of research on readiness for change lies in the interplay between individual factors and organizational context. Many prior studies have predominantly focused on measuring individual-level readiness for change while indirectly assuming its relevance to organizational change readiness. For instance, Gelaidan et al. (2018) and Yeap et al. (2020) underscored the notion that individual factors can indeed provide insights into the broader organizational context's readiness for change. Furthermore, as noted by Benzer et al. (2017), different organizational contexts can distinctly impact readiness for change. By acknowledging the paramount significance of contextual factors and their potential impact on readiness for change, researchers contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In contrast to other researchers, Holt et al. (2007) presented the concept of readiness for change as a comprehensive attitude encompassing the assessment of individuals, groups, and organizations regarding their willingness to accept and embrace change. Potential strategies for addressing the changes advocated by Rees-Johnstone (2020) involving stakeholders, including non-academic staff. These individuals will receive guidance from their supervisors, actively participate in pilot activities, and offer feedback to enhance the process and implementation of change. On an individual level, readiness is often shaped by factors such as beliefs, behavior, perceptions of change, past experiences with change, and the degree of motivation and dedication to change (Rafferty et al., 2013; Weiner, 2009).

Regarding contextual factors, the external environment such as industry trends, market conditions, regulatory requirements, and pressures to compete can affect readiness for change at different levels of an organization (Faulks et al., 2023). The study conducted by Waisy and Wei (2020) found a different relationship between transformational leadership, readiness for change, and affective commitment to change in public and private universities due to the bureaucratic institutions and complex political systems of universities. This confirms the idea that different organizational contexts play a pivotal role in shaping readiness for change. It is important to note that the aforementioned factors interact and influence one another, and their relative importance may vary depending on the specific context of the organization and the initiation of change. The study regards universities under general

state financial management as part of the internal organizational factors and treats this as a constant variable. This treatment allows for the observation of changes in relative internal factors without the influence of organizational type. Understanding and correctly placing these factors can help organizations increase readiness for change and possibly increase success in implementing change (Vakola, 2014).

### **The Relationship among Openness to Change, Organizational Trust, Communication Climate, Perceived Impact of Change, and Readiness for Change**

Individual assessment of change plans is influenced by cognitive and emotional factors (Armenakis et al., 1993). Consequently, fostering changes in individual mindsets is essential to support change (Purwaningrum et al., 2020). At the micro level, group capacity and decisions to support change are closely aligned with individual perceptions of change (Oreg, 2003; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Individual perceptions wield significant influence over the perceived impact of change, leading either toward a negative or positive direction (Eby et al., 2000; Worrall et al., 2004). Vakola's research model (2014) underscores that the acceptance or endorsement of changes, by individuals and organizations, is partially contingent on the perceived impact of change. The inclination to prepare for action or provide support for change hinges on whether the perceived impact surpasses the expected risk (Herold et al., 2007). The extent to which employees psychologically connect with and derive satisfaction from their roles directly influences their willingness to embrace change and experience its positive outcomes (Eby et al., 2000; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). This further solidifies the perceived impact of change as a mediating variable that influences readiness for change.

Readiness for change is also shaped by the support provided within the organizational environment, including aspects like organizational structure, climate, and culture (Holt et al., 2007; Rusly et al., 2011). The communication climate pertains to the extent to which employees perceive receiving all necessary information regarding issues such as visions, strategies, policies, plans, and organizational procedures (Chiang, 2010). The communication climate can be analyzed at both individual and organizational levels (Neill et al., 2019). Previous studies have demonstrated that well-informed individuals who are recipients of change are more inclined to embrace it (Miller et al.,

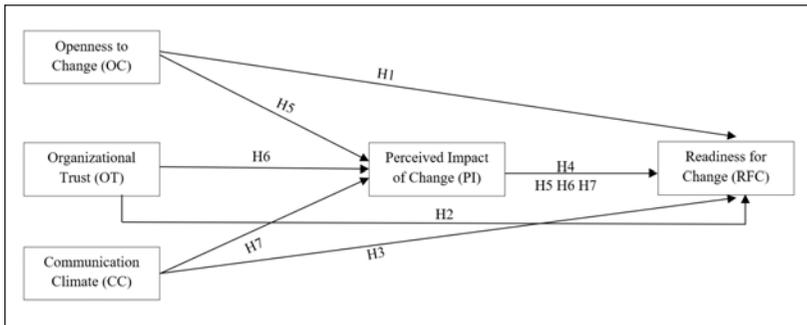
1994; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Furthermore, transparent, efficient, and direct communication regarding change has been proven to alleviate resistance to change (Paterson & Cary, 2002).

A high level of openness to change can engender employee readiness for organizational change (Armenakis et al., 1993). This attribute serves as a predictor of intervention outcomes on the individual level (Rafferty et al., 2013; Vakola, 2014). Its predictive quality holds significance as openness, at both the individual and group levels, encompasses not only the content of change but also its implementation process (Augustsson et al., 2017). Within an organization, being receptive to proposed and executed changes is a fundamental prerequisite for successful execution of planned change (Miller et al., 1994). This receptiveness is rooted in the desire to endorse change and embrace positive expectations regarding its potential outcomes (Devos et al., 2007). Individuals with a proclivity for openness to experience exhibit interest in novel concepts, and are often creative, curious, and perceptive (Choi, 2011).

Factors, such as high staff morale, mutual respect, effective leadership, organizational trust, the university's dedication to facilitating access, a supportive organizational climate, and the utilization of technology for students, can collectively contribute to ensuring readiness for change (Akbulut et al., 2007). Organizations are advised to cultivate a sense of trust among their employees by promoting transparent communication, with an emphasis on providing feedback, accurate information, clear explanations for decisions, and an open exchange of ideas (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2012). Organizational trust holds paramount importance during periods of change, facilitating the ability of organizational members to navigate change initiatives successfully and respond constructively (Oreg et al., 2011). This significance has been underscored by Gelaidan et al. (2018), who noted that approximately 70 percent of change endeavors fail due to factors such as the absence of a clear strategy and vision, lack of management commitment and support, ineffective communication plans, insufficient change management skills, strong resistance to change, and a lack of trust. In accordance with Rytberg and Geschwind (2017) and Rees-Johnstone (2020), when non-academic, including both leaders and staff, feel undervalued or ignored by their academic peers, this leads to lower levels of engagement and trust, ultimately hindering the development of their skills. Therefore, it is plausible to propose the following hypotheses:

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Model*



- Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between openness to change and readiness for change.
- Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between organizational trust and readiness for change.
- Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between communication climate and readiness for change.
- Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between perceived impact of change and readiness for change.
- Hypothesis 5: The perceived impact of change mediates the relationship between openness to change and readiness for change.
- Hypothesis 6: The perceived impact of change mediates the relationship between organizational trust and readiness for change.
- Hypothesis 7: The perceived impact of change mediates the relationship between communication climate and readiness for change.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Participants and Procedure

This study was conducted remotely using online platforms, specifically Zoom meetings. To disseminate the research findings, a webinar titled “*Tantangan Perubahan Tata Kelola PTN-Satker di Indonesia*” (Challenges against Changing the Governance of Universities under General State Financial Management in Indonesia) was organized

for non-academic staff of universities operating under general state financial management in Indonesia. This webinar took place on February 15, 2023, serving as an effective means to distribute the research outcomes on a broader scale. The data collection process was facilitated through the utilization of the Google form. To ensure comprehensive responses, the “required” option was activated for each item within the Google form, preemptively addressing the possibility of incomplete answers. Remarkably, a total of 290 data sets were successfully collected out of an expected minimum of 300, yielding a response rate of 96.67 percent. These collected data sets formed the basis for further research analysis. The data collection techniques encompassed gathering demographic information (such as gender, age, job tenure, and education level) (Table 1) and capturing psychological attributes. Notably, this research adhered to ethical standards, having successfully undergone an ethical due diligence assessment by the Health Research Ethics Commission at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, as attested by Approval No. 371/KEPK-FK ULM/EC/IX/2022, which underscored the ethical integrity and robustness of the research process.

**Table 1**

*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	160	55.2
Male	130	44.8
Age		
< 31 years	71	24.48
31–44 years	127	43.80
> 45 years	92	31.72
Education level		
High school or equivalent	28	9.65
Diploma	24	8.28
Undergraduate	167	57.59
Master’s	71	24.48
Job tenure		
1–10 years	145	50
11–20 years	88	30.35
21–30 years	42	14.48
> 30 years	15	5.17

Note.  $n = 290$ . Participants were on average 39.2 years old ( $SD = 9.55$ ).

## Instruments

The study utilized five instruments. 1) The Readiness for Change Questionnaire (RFCQ) developed by Holt et al. (2007), consisting of 25 items with a high reliability coefficient ( $\alpha = .965$ ). A sample item is “*Saya pikir Universitas akan mendapatkan manfaat dari perubahan Tata Kelola*” (I think that the organization will benefit from this governance change). 2) The Openness to Change Scale, designed by Miller et al. (1994) comprising five items with a reliability coefficient,  $\alpha = .779$ . A sample item is “*Saat ini, saya cenderung menolak perubahan Tata Kelola yang diusulkan dalam Universitas*” (Right now, I am somewhat resistant to the proposed governance changes in the university). 3) The Organizational Trust Inventory-Short form (OTI-SF) introduced by Cummings and Bromiley (1996), consisting of 12 items with a reliability coefficient,  $\alpha = .855$ . A sample item is “*Menurut pendapat saya, unit kerja saya dapat diandalkan*” (In my opinion, my unit is reliable). 4) The Communication Climate Scale developed by Neill et al. (2019) with seven items and a reliability coefficient,  $\alpha = .942$ . A sample item is “*Ketika rekan kerja saya memberi tahu saya sesuatu, saya percaya mereka mengatakan yang sebenarnya*” (When my colleagues tell me something, I trust them to tell me the truth). The Perceived Impact of Change Instrument adapted from Vakola (2014), comprising six items with a reliability coefficient,  $\alpha = .821$ . A sample item is “*Saya menyukai perubahan Tata Kelola karena struktur yang baru akan membuat Universitas ini menjadi lebih efektif*” (I like the governance change because the new structure will make this university more effective). Given the lack of validated versions of these scales, the researchers decided to adapt the five instruments using the ITC procedure (2017). Minimal modifications were made to the items, primarily adapting the context of the scales. The original scales, pertaining to organizations in general (company organization, top leaders, management), were tailored to the context of higher education (university, rector/dean/head of institution/head of study program/head of appropriate work unit). Additionally, the term “change” in all five instruments was replaced with “governance change” to ensure clarity regarding the nature of the changes addressed. All research instruments employed a Likert scale format, where participants respond on a scale of 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree”.

## **Data Analysis**

This study employed path analysis to examine the role of perceived impact of change among exogenous and endogenous variables. Path analysis is a statistical procedure that helps estimate the strength of relationships indicated by the arrows in the research model (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis was conducted using AMOS 24.0 software. Additionally, the goodness of fit of the regression model was assessed by testing the  $R^2$  value to evaluate how effectively the model explained the observed data. To identify potential differences in demographic data, a two-way ANOVA was conducted using SPSS 26.0 software. Before conducting the analysis, assumption testing was carried out, including normality, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity (at a significance level of .05), to verify that the data met the required assumptions.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This report presents the results of several assumption tests conducted during the analysis, including tests of normality, linearity, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity. Normality was assessed using both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and examination of a P-P plot. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test resulted in a significant value of .200. Additionally, the values in the P-P plot were observed to fall along the diagonal line, indicating that the data is normally distributed. The linearity test showed that the relationships between RFC to OC ( $F(1; 289) = 259.252; p < .05$ ), RFC to OT ( $F(1; 289) = 176.168; p < .05$ ), RFC to CC ( $F(1; 289) = 128.545; p < .05$ ), and RFC to PI ( $F(1; 289) = 159.364; p < .05$ ) were linear. The heteroscedasticity test involved examining a residual plot through a scatterplot of ZPRED vs ZRESID. The plot showed no severe fluctuations in scores for both variables, satisfying the heteroscedasticity assumption. Finally, the multicollinearity tests reviewed the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values. All independent variables presented tolerance values greater than .20 and VIF values less than 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not present.

**Table 2**

*Correlation*

Variable	Mean	SD	RFC	OC	OT	CC	PI
RFC	133.68	14.834	-				
OC	27.39	4.201	.637	-			
OT	66.73	10.118	.605	.627	-		
CC	38.63	6.355	.556	.568	.634	-	
PI	33.60	5.245	.600	.649	.653	.530	-

Note. OC = Openness to change, OT = Organizational trust, CC = Communication climate, PI = Perceived impact of change, RFC = Readiness for change

Based on the results of the correlation analysis presented in Table 2, several significant relationships were identified. Openness to change ( $r = .649$ ;  $p < .001$ ), organizational trust ( $r = .653$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and communication climate ( $r = .530$ ;  $p < .001$ ) were found to have a significant impact on perceived impact of change. Additionally, openness to change ( $r = .637$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (Hypothesis 1 accepted), organizational trust ( $r = .605$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (Hypothesis 2 accepted), communication climate ( $r = .556$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (Hypothesis 3 accepted), and perceived impact of change ( $r = .600$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (Hypothesis 4 accepted) demonstrated a significant influence on readiness for change. These results suggest that openness to change, organizational trust, communication climate, and perceived impact of change play crucial roles in influencing readiness for change supporting the acceptance of Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4.

To assess the goodness of fit of the model in our study we examined the  $R^2$  value as it is an indicator of the model's alignment with the theoretical framework. Ideally, the  $R^2$  value should approach 1 to indicate a well-fitted model aligned with the theoretical framework. Following the classification suggested by Hair et al. (2019),  $R^2$  values were categorized into three levels: strong (.75), moderate (.50), and weak (.25). The following is a table displaying the  $R^2$  values:

**Table 3**

*Model Summary Readiness for Change*

Model	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
OC, OT, CC → RFC	.523	.518	10.293
OC, OT, CC, PI → RFC	.537	.531	10.163

**Table 4**

*Regression*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H <sub>0</sub>	Regression	33291.442	3	11097.147	104.734	< .001
	Residual	30303.372	286	105.956		
	Total	63594.814	289			
H <sub>1</sub>	Regression	34158.438	4	8539.609	82.680	< .001
	Residual	29436.376	285	103.286		
	Total	63594.814	289			

The *R*-squared value indicated that the combined effect of the three exogenous variables on the variable “readiness for change” was .523 ( $F(3; 286) = 104.734; p < .001$ ) and the combined effect of the three exogenous variables and the mediating variable on the variable “readiness for change” was .537 ( $F(4; 285) = 82.680; p < .001$ ), thus categorized as moderate.

**Table 5**

*Path Analysis*

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	p	
OC → PI → RFC	.467	.128	.595	< .001***	Partial
OT → PI → RFC	.132	.103	.235	< .001***	Partial
CC → PI → RFC	.104	.034	.138	.045*	Partial

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

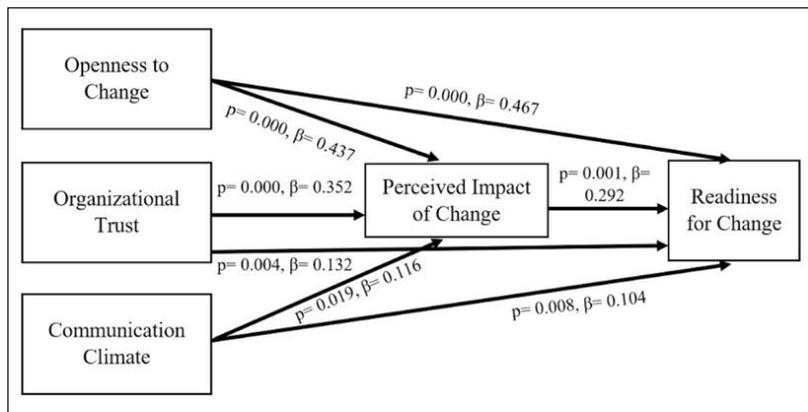
The results of the path analysis provided several key findings: i) perceived impact of change significantly partially mediated the

relationship between openness to change and readiness for change ( $\beta = .128, p < .001$ ), confirming the acceptance of Hypothesis 5. ii) Perceived impact of change also significantly partially mediated the relationship between organizational trust and readiness for change ( $\beta = .103, p < .001$ ), supporting the acceptance of Hypothesis 6. iii) Additionally, a significant relationship was observed between communication climate and readiness for change, partially mediated by perceived impact of change ( $\beta = .034, p = .045$ ), thereby confirming Hypothesis 7.

Furthermore, to provide a more detailed understanding of the comparison of readiness for change based on demographic data, two-way ANOVA were employed. The results indicated no significant difference in readiness for change based on gender ( $F(1; 288) = 1,016; p = 0,315$ ), age ( $F(2; 287) = 1,539; p = 0,217$ ), education level ( $F(3; 286) = 0,974; p = 0,406$ ), and job tenure ( $F(3; 286) = 2,065; p = 0,105$ ).

**Figure 2**

*Results of Hypothesis Testing*



**DISCUSSION**

This study affirms that readiness for change results from the interplay between individual attributes and the organizational context. It emphasizes the significance of perceived impact of change as a mediator between openness to change and readiness for change,

aligning with Oreg et al.'s (2011) argument that individuals' perceptions of potential gains or losses from changes significantly influence their acceptance of change. This research underscores the importance of non-academic staff understanding the implications of changes for the organization, as their reactions significantly impact the success of change initiatives (Men et al., 2020). When employees perceive the positive outcomes and benefits of change, and view it as advantageous for the organization, they are more likely to embrace and support the change. In our research model, perceived impact of change emerges as a significant partial mediator in the readiness of non-academic university staff under general state financial management to embrace change. Notably, the direct influence of variables such as openness to change, organizational trust, and communication climate on readiness for change remains strong without mediation by perceived impact of change. This finding contrasts with Vakola's (2014) model, where perceived impact of change acted as a full mediator for readiness to change. It suggests that the independent variable only exerts significant influence when mediated by perceived impact of change and has a greater impact when mediated through perceived impact of change.

Openness to change emerged as the most significant contributor in this study. Cultivating openness to change within a university operating under general state financial management framework can be achieved by actively enhancing change-related information dissemination, promoting communication at all levels, and providing opportunities for non-academic staff to contribute their ideas and skills to change efforts. Non-academic staff play a pivotal role in supporting academic and student success within a university (Adejare et al., 2020). Improving the functions of non-academic staff require comprehensive, job-specific training to enhance job performance (Adejare et al., 2020). Additionally, offering training programs aligned with change objectives enables non-academic staff to augment their capabilities, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in driving change. Recognizing the positive outcomes associated with change serves as a potent behavioral motivator (Liu, 2021). The link between openness and adaptability is also supported by Zacher (2014), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of openness tend to exhibit greater open-mindedness and flexibility. Oreg (2003) established that employees with closed mindsets are prone to resist change, while Wanberg and Banas (2000) emphasized that high levels of openness predict positive attitudes and acceptance of change. Individuals with higher levels of openness are indeed more inclined to positively support change

efforts (Seppala et al., 2012). This aligns with Miller et al.'s (1994) assertion that openness encompasses both a willingness to endorse organizational change and a positive influence on change processes. Initial implementation should emphasize a dedication to creating, actively involving stakeholders, including non-academic staff, and organizing a participatory approach throughout the change process (Hassenforder et al., 2015).

Additionally, openness to change, organizational trust, and communication climate can directly predict readiness for change. Effective communication and information sharing significantly impact individuals' willingness to embrace and support ongoing change initiatives (Miller et al., 1994; Vakola, 2014). A positive communication climate, as emphasized by Oreg et al. (2011), can forecast readiness for change. Transparent, efficient, and direct communication regarding change can also minimize resistance to change and mitigate negative attitudes toward proposed changes (Oreg, 2011; Vakola, 2014). The approach taken by universities to involve non-academic staff in discussions related to organizational policies is commendable. Encouraging open communication and involving employees in the change process fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among staff members. This not only aligns with effective change management principles but also contributes to a positive communication climate that facilitates acceptance of change initiatives and the establishment of a collaborative organizational environment. As long as information about upcoming change is satisfactory, readiness for change is predictable (Jones et al., 2005). Conveying messages through direct communication is deemed more effective for communicating change (persuasive communication) (Armenakis et al., 1993). Establishing a robust system of two-way communication between managers or supervisors and academic employees within the organization is crucial for conveying information about ongoing and upcoming changes (Win & Chotiyaputta, 2018). Fostering effective communication within work units tends to be more productive in terms of information sharing compared to communication between different units (Zhu, 2016).

Efforts made by the universities to foster trust among non-academic staff during the change process are instrumental in promoting their readiness for change. By involving non-academic staff, listening to their input, providing clear and essential information, and allowing them to seek clarification in decision-making processes, universities

nurture an environment of trust and collaboration (Weiner, 2009). Quality communication at all levels of the organization is pivotal in fostering a shared belief in organizing and executing change initiatives. Studies, such as those conducted by Mayer and Davis (1999), have highlighted the connection between perceptions of trust and an individual's inclination to be influenced by information from others, thereby influencing various trusting behaviors. When non-academic staff trust their organization and perceive change as beneficial for themselves, their readiness for change is likely to increase. This understanding aligns with the integrative belief model in organizations, which defines trust as an individual's willingness to be influenced by the actions of others (Mayer & Davis, 1999; McEvely & Tortoriello, 2011). This conceptualization differentiates trust from related concepts like dispositional trust and the perception that others can be trusted, highlighting the role of expectation (McEvely & Tortoriello, 2011). Furthermore, this research contributes to the understanding of the mediating effect of perceived impact of change on readiness for change. Perceived impact of change can significantly influence attitudes and behaviors (Tran et al., 2020). In an environment undergoing multiple changes, perception often becomes reality, implying that the more an individual perceives ongoing changes, the more likely they are to appreciate the value of those changes (Wagoner, 2004). By acknowledging and addressing these aspects, universities can foster a climate of positive change acceptance and readiness among their non-academic staff.

The research results confirm the theoretical implications, thus supporting Holt et al.'s (2007) theory on readiness for change. This theory emphasizes the importance of comprehensively assessing readiness for change to enhance the understanding of the initial stages of the change process, including individual and internal organizational factors within the organizational context. The study regards universities under general state financial management as part of the internal organizational factors and treats this as a constant variable. This treatment allows for the observation of changes in relative internal factors without the influence of organizational type. These findings further reinforce Menon and Suresh's (2021) assertion that readiness for change significantly impacts organizational adaptation in higher education. Furthermore, by evaluating the readiness for change among non-academic staff in higher education, it can enhance the perspectives introduced by Du et al. (2023) and Gebretsadik (2022), who concentrated on the readiness for change among leaders in higher

education. Moreover, considering the scarcity of research on change readiness in the context of higher education, as highlighted by Allaoui and Benmoussa (2020), this study provides valuable references to advance the understanding of change readiness in higher education.

On a practical level, for universities embarking on new governance or policy changes, the initial steps should involve careful consideration of individual attributes such as openness to change, the cultivation of organizational trust, and the nurturing of effective communication within the institution. It is imperative for the university's leadership and management to collaboratively enhance these predictive factors, thereby fostering readiness for change among non-academic staff. Universities can provide information about the history of changes, processes, and external demands for changes in the future. By providing information about the history of changes, the change processes, and the external pressures driving future changes, universities can foster a sense of preparedness and understanding among non-academic staff. This socialization process can be systematically executed, starting from the university level, extending to faculties, and finally reaching individual departments, effectively communicating the change plan. Anticipated benefits of change play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' openness to change as stated by Streb (2016).

Employees who perceive their leader as adept at navigating organizational change tend to have a favorable attitude toward change (Win & Chotiyaputta, 2018). When there is trust, employees' worries diminish, leading to a readiness to manage risks and tackle complex issues more effectively (Thakur & Srivastava, 2018). This suggests that a positive organizational mindset fosters employee confidence and prepares them for the change impacts. In the specific scenario of preparing non-academic university staff under general state financial management for change, leaders should foster positive beliefs among these staff members. This can be accomplished by providing training opportunities that enhance their skills in line with effective change strategies. Non-academic staff can serve as vital internal change agents due to their competencies and skills, playing a significant role in fostering goal-oriented and strategic improvements within universities (Karlsson & Rytberg, 2016). These initiatives help build organizational confidence and readiness for change. Leaders can also establish policies to foster an "open" communication climate, ensuring that employees are well-informed about forthcoming changes (Miller et al., 1994). A well-structured communication strategy can alleviate

concerns and uncertainties among employees regarding the potential consequences of change. It empowers employees, enhances their confidence in adapting to new roles, and minimizes fears associated with change (Walinga, 2008). By prioritizing transparent and open communication, organizations can significantly contribute to creating a more adaptive and change-ready workforce. Additionally, addressing aspects of non-academic staff performance, such as transparency regarding benefits, work distribution, and various guarantees, fosters trust and open communication in the workplace.

In assessing readiness for change, the demographic data found no significant differences in terms of sex, age, education level, and job tenure. This finding was consistent with previous research conducted by Wittenstein (2008), who similarly found no significant variations between demographic factors (such as age, gender, and job tenure) and employees' readiness for change. Likewise, O'Neil (2007) explored the impact of demographic variables such as gender, age, job tenure, and position and concluded that these factors did not significantly influence employees' readiness for change. These collective pieces of evidence suggest that readiness for change is a characteristic that can be experienced by individuals across various demographic categories.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. One notable limitation is that the study did not assess readiness for change across different stages or levels within the organization. Focusing solely on non-academic staff may have overlooked potential differences in readiness for change that could exist at various organizational tiers, including sub-units within the university. Additionally, the study concentrated exclusively on non-academic staff with civil servant status, potentially excluding insights from other employment categories that might exhibit distinct demographic characteristics. To enhance the comprehensiveness and applicability of future research, it might be beneficial to consider readiness for change across a broader range of organizational levels and employment statuses. This could provide a more nuanced understanding of how demographic factors interact with readiness for change in different contexts. The research scope could be broadened to encompass non-academic staff who are not civil servants (or those on contract status), allowing for a comprehensive assessment of their readiness for change. It is important to note that data collection should not rely solely on one online platform; instead, it should span a longer duration to ensure fair and balanced participant representation.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the mediating role of the perceived impact of change on openness to change, organizational trust, and communication climate in enhancing readiness for change holds significant importance. Among these factors, openness to change emerges as a particularly influential determinant of readiness for change, with its indirect influence also playing a substantial role in shaping readiness. These findings have important implications for universities, underscoring the need to provide formal training and resources to assist non-academic staff understand the complexities of the change process and its implications. By doing so, universities can effectively reduce resistance to change and enhance overall readiness among their staff.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

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