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Internal communication as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and academic staff's readiness for change in higher education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the specific factors influencing academic staff's readiness for organizational change at Islamic State University (IAIN) Kerinci, Indonesia, focusing on the mediating role of internal communication. The study examines the direct and indirect effects of organizational change readiness, transformational leadership behavior, and internal communication on staff readiness to change. A sample of 118 academic staff (40 male and 78 female) participated in this empirical study. Data were collected using an online survey, employing a Likert scale to measure the constructs. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses, with the PLS Algorithm assessing the measurement model and PLS Bootstrapping testing the structural model for mediation effects. Results revealed that organizational change readiness, transformational leadership behavior, and internal communication each have a significant positive effect on staff readiness for change. Internal communication was found to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational change readiness on academic staff's readiness for change. Key statistical results include a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$) and strong mediation effects, further emphasizing the importance of effective internal communication in facilitating organizational change. The cross-sectional survey design introduces limitations, including potential response bias due to self-reporting. This study contributes to the literature on organizational change by highlighting the role of internal communication as a mediator and the unique context of Islamic higher education institutions.



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Introduction

Higher education in Indonesia, especially within Islamic institutions such as IAIN Kerinci, faces significant challenges in managing organizational change. Recent shifts in government regulations, the introduction of new curriculum standards, and the pressures of globalization demand that these institutions become more adaptive. However, a key obstacle at IAIN Kerinci is the readiness of its academic staff to embrace these changes,

particularly in an environment deeply rooted in cultural and religious values. Despite the critical role academic staff play in implementing and sustaining organizational changes, many are resistant, particularly when such changes challenge traditional practices or are perceived as inconsistent with the institution's Islamic principles.

Although the concept of readiness for change has been widely studied, there is limited research focusing on the higher education sector in developing countries, particularly in Islamic educational institutions like IAIN Kerinci. Unlike sectors such as healthcare or business, educational institutions face specific challenges, including resistance to curriculum reform and hesitation to adopt new management models imposed by external policy changes. At IAIN Kerinci, these challenges are intensified by the intersection of academic governance with Islamic values, where change is often viewed with skepticism if it appears to conflict with religious ideals. One of the key issues facing IAIN Kerinci is the tension between modern organizational practices and the institution's cultural and religious foundations. This creates a unique environment where transformational leadership is essential, as it has the potential to reshape staff perceptions of change. However, what remains underexplored is the role of internal communication as a mediator between leadership behaviors and staff readiness for change. In a context where trust in leadership and collective values are paramount, internal communication could serve as the bridge that facilitates acceptance of change.

This study seeks to address these challenges by examining how organizational readiness for change, transformational leadership behavior, and internal communication contribute to the academic staff's readiness to change at IAIN Kerinci. The research aims to provide valuable insights into the specific obstacles Islamic higher education institutions face in navigating organizational change, particularly within Indonesia, where such studies remain scarce. By focusing on the interplay of leadership, communication, and readiness for change in this culturally unique context, this study aims to fill a critical gap in the literature while offering practical recommendations for institutions like IAIN Kerinci. The concept of readiness for change has been defined and researched in many places as expressed in the organizational change literature. Some researchers explain readiness for change as the extent to which individuals have a positive view of the need for organizational change as well as the extent to which individuals perceive the change will have a positive impact on them and the organization as a whole (Holt et al., 2007). Others focus on change readiness from individuals' perceptions that the organization and its members are ready to undertake large-scale change efforts (Eby et al., 2000). Some scholars suggest that for individuals to be ready for change, they must understand the benefits of change (Prochaska et al., 1994) as well as understand the risks of failing to change (Spector, 1989). Regardless, most researchers agree that readiness for change involves the process by which organizational members' attitudes and beliefs are changed to see change as necessary and likely to be successful (Eby et al., 2000; Lewin, 1951).

The important role that readiness for change plays in successful implementation has been well documented in previous research across a variety of occupational sectors. In a longitudinal study of healthcare workers, Cunningham et al. (2002) found readiness for change was a good predictor of participation in change efforts in the healthcare industry. They found that the more prepared they were for change, the more contribution they made in change efforts. To change, it is necessary to mobilize change or renewal efforts must be made so that increased participation and acceptance of change initiatives can be realized (Eby et al., 2000; Lewin, 1951; Wheatley, 1992). Experts have suggested several strategies to deal with resistance such as providing education, communication, participation, support, and negotiation and deal opportunities for those affected by change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979).

In successful change efforts, leaders have a vision for change (Herold et al., 2008). If this vision is compelling and paints a picture of a future that employees will be proud to be a part of, people tend to be more committed to change. Research shows that those who have more information about the upcoming change are more committed to the change effort (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Ensuring that top management communicates with employees about upcoming changes also has symbolic value (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993). "Change or die!" "Change or die!" is the rallying cry among today's managers around the world.

Method

Procedures and Samples

This study employs a survey method with an ex-post facto approach, testing the impact of organizational change readiness, transformational leadership behavior, and internal communication on the readiness to change of academic staff. The ex-post facto approach was chosen because it is well-suited for research where direct manipulation of variables is not possible. In this study, variables such as transformational leadership and readiness for change are phenomena that have already occurred and cannot be controlled or manipulated by the researcher. Therefore, this approach allows for the observation of natural relationships between variables

without interference. It is particularly appropriate given the context of organizational change that has already taken place at IAIN-Kerinci.

IAIN-Kerinci is a state university located in Kerinci Regency, Jambi Province, which is currently undergoing significant changes in organizational management. These revolutionary changes make it a suitable case for examining the relationship between leadership, communication, and readiness for change. The study population consists of 192 academic staff members (45 with Doctoral degrees and 147 with Master's degrees). From this population, the sample includes 118 academic staff members (40 men and 78 women) who were willing to return the questionnaire. The sampling method based on willingness to participate introduces the possibility of volunteer bias, as those who choose to respond may differ in meaningful ways from those who do not. Efforts were made to mitigate this bias by encouraging participation from all academic divisions within the university.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was chosen for this study due to its suitability for exploratory research and its ability to handle complex models with multiple variables. PLS-SEM is particularly effective when the primary goal is to maximize the explained variance of the dependent variables, which aligns with this study's objective to assess the impact of transformational leadership behavior, internal communication, and organizational change readiness on readiness for change. Additionally, PLS-SEM is robust in cases of smaller sample sizes and when data do not meet the normal distribution assumption, making it ideal for this research with 118 respondents. Unlike Covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), which focuses on model fit, PLS-SEM is better suited for predictive purposes, and it is capable of handling both reflective and formative constructs, which are relevant to the multidimensional nature of the variables in this study. Thus, PLS-SEM offers the flexibility and analytical power necessary for the comprehensive analysis of the relationships in this model.

In this study, validity in the PLS-SEM analysis was established through two key processes: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values exceeding the 0.5 threshold for most constructs, indicating that the indicators effectively represent the underlying constructs. Discriminant validity was evaluated through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings, ensuring that each construct is distinct from the others. Additionally, composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha were calculated to confirm internal consistency, with values above 0.7, supporting the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Measures

This study used a questionnaire to collect data, which was designed to measure variables that influence readiness to change. The measurement instrument involved several aspects: Readiness to Change was adapted from Holt et al. (2007), with modifications from Readiness to Change Measurement Items (Purwoko, 2017), consisting of five indicators (Discrepancy, Appropriateness, Efficacy, Principal support, and Valence), each indicator is measured through 3 items or a total of 15 question items. Internal Communication is taken from Muhammad A (2001) and measures three indicators (downward communication, upward communication, and horizontal communication) through 9 question items. Organizational Change Readiness was adopted from Ramnarayan and Rao (2011), translated and modified by Mangundjaya (2013), involving 6 dimensions of organizational readiness to change, with a total of 5 question items. Transformational Leadership Behavior is measured through a transformational leadership style perception scale, adapted from Bass (1985), with 4 indicators (Idealized Influence Charisma, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration), each indicator measured through 3 items or a total of 15 question items. Responses use a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree.

Data Analysis

In this study, Smart PLS 3.0 software and SPSS were used in data analysis. SEM PLS works in stages to obtain a prediction model in the form of a final statistical report equipped with a number of statistical tests. Validity and reliability tests using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extract (AVE) with the help of Smart PLS 3.2.9 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Partial Least Squares (PLS) is used to test the predictive relationship between constructs without requiring a strong theoretical basis, especially when the model is complex with many constructs and indicators (Hair et al., 2017). SEM PLS involves two stages, namely Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and regression analysis. The CFA stage is used to construct the relationship between constructs and indicators, with an emphasis on manifest variable indicators (Hoyle, 2000). After the CFA stage, continued with regression analysis to test the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. Retest with Smart PLS 3.2.9 was conducted to manage the research results before further data analysis, as well as the Model Fit test to assess the quality of the model by comparing the SmartPLS calculation results with the existing criteria.

Results and Discussions

Construct Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity were assessed once the uni-dimensionality of the constructs had been achieved. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and the average variance extracted (AVE). The summary of the measurement model evaluation is shown in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha $\geq 0,7$	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Extracted 0,5	Variance (AVE) \geq
Readiness to change	0.931	0.934	0.940		0.595
Disperancy	0.754	0.769	0.859		0.670
Appropriateness	0.791	0.803	0.878		0.707
Efficacy	0.809	0.816	0.874		0.636
Principal support	0.769	0.786	0.868		0.689
Valence	0.714	0.715	0.840		0.637
Internal Communication	0.972	0.975	0.975		0.557
Openness	0.972	0.975	0.975		0.557
Mutual respect	0.876	0.883	0.918		0.738
Familiarity	0.990	0.990	0.991		0.919
Kinship	0.878	0.886	0.910		0.634
Transformational Leadership Behavior	0.908	0.912	0.923		0.503
Idealized Influence Charisma	0.764	0.767	0.864		0.679
Inspirational Motivation	0.902	0.927	0.939		0.837
Intellectual Stimulation	0.705	0.706	0.836		0.630
Individual Consideration	0.814	0.815	0.890		0.729
Organizational Change Readiness	0.903	0.907	0.918		0.547
Individual commitment to organizational plans, priorities, programs and goals	0.790	0.808	0.880		0.713
Attention to innovation/change	0.860	0.863	0.855		0.746
Attention to lateral integration	0.806	0.816	0.834		0.716
Attention to vertical integration	0.812	0.812	0.804		0.672
Environmental scanning, networking efforts; and learning from others	0.832	0.831	0.804		0.578
Building individual or group capabilities	0.977	0.979	0.989		0.977

The findings of this study demonstrate strong reliability and validity across the measured constructs, as indicated by the high Cronbach's Alpha (≥ 0.7) and Composite Reliability values for all variables, ensuring the consistency of the measurement scales. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for most constructs exceeds 0.5, indicating good convergent validity. Specifically, constructs such as Readiness to Change, Transformational Leadership Behavior, and Internal Communication show high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.931, 0.908, and 0.972, respectively. Sub-dimensions of these constructs, including Inspirational Motivation ($\alpha = 0.902$) and Familiarity ($\alpha = 0.990$), also indicate robust internal consistency. These results suggest that the variables measured—such as readiness for organizational change, transformational leadership, and internal communication—are both reliable and valid in explaining the readiness to change among academic staff at IAIN Kerinci.

Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

This study used Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) to identify the key factors that influence the readiness to change variable among elementary school teachers in Sungai Penuh City. This analysis was conducted through SmartPLS to add measurements of other factors that influence readiness to change to each factor of the research model. The purpose of IPMA is to identify factors with relatively high performance and/or relative importance in the structural model (Hair et al., 2014; Ramayah et al., 2014; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Performance is calculated from the average latent variable values, while importance is tested through the estimated total effect of the structural model. The results of the IPMA analysis of the research model are shown in Figure 1.

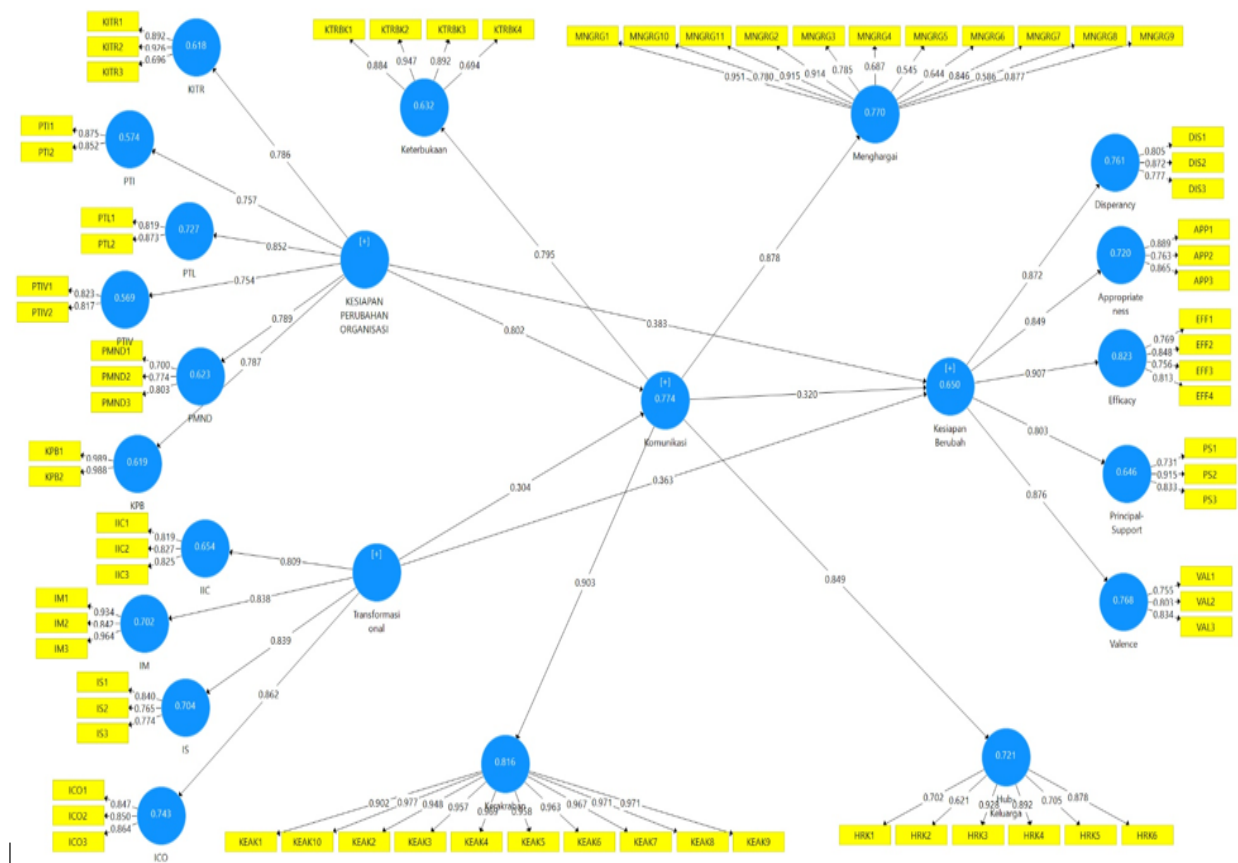


Figure 1. Model Struktural dan Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IMP)

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing aims to identify the partial effect of independent variables (exogenous) on the dependent variable (endogenous). Hypotheses are accepted if p -values < 0.05 or $t > 1.96$ (Hair et al., 2017). The test results also reveal the direction of influence, indicated by the original sample value for each relationship. Positive values indicate a positive/directional effect, while negative values indicate an opposite effect. Table 2 summarizes the hypothesis testing results, while Figure 2 depicts the Structural Model Diagram. . Table 2 shows the summary of the hypothesis testing results. And Fig. 2 shows the Structural Model Diagram.

Tabel 2. Path Analysis

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
H1: Internal communication -> Readiness to change	0.320	0.316	0.135	2.366	0,018	Accepted
H2: Transformational Leadership Behavior -> Internal Communication	0.477	0.489	0.123	3.889	0.000	Accepted
H3: Transformational Leadership Behavior -> Readiness to change	0.786	0.784	0.054	14.678	0,000	Accepted
H4: Transformational leadership behavior -> internal communication -> Readiness to change	0.290	0.288	0.123	2.359	0.019	Accepted

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
H5: Organizational change readiness -> Transformational Leadership	0.715	0.717	0.051	14.030	0.000	Accepted
H6: Organizational Change Readiness -> Internal Communication	0.441	0.434	0.132	3.333	0.001	Accepted
H7: Organizational change readiness -> Readiness to change	0.383	0.387	0.127	3.020	0.003	Accepted
H8: Organizational change readiness -> Internal communication > Readiness to change	0.257	0.252	0.107	2.401	0,017	Accepted

The findings of this study reveal significant relationships among the key variables. Internal communication has a positive and significant effect on readiness to change (H1: $\beta = 0.320$, $p = 0.018$). Transformational leadership behavior positively influences both internal communication (H2: $\beta = 0.477$, $p = 0.000$) and readiness to change (H3: $\beta = 0.786$, $p = 0.000$). Additionally, internal communication mediates the relationship between transformational leadership behavior and readiness to change (H4: $\beta = 0.290$, $p = 0.019$). Furthermore, organizational change readiness significantly impacts transformational leadership behavior (H5: $\beta = 0.715$, $p = 0.000$), internal communication (H6: $\beta = 0.441$, $p = 0.001$), and readiness to change (H7: $\beta = 0.383$, $p = 0.003$). Lastly, internal communication also mediates the effect of organizational change readiness on readiness to change (H8: $\beta = 0.257$, $p = 0.017$). All hypotheses were accepted, highlighting the critical roles of internal communication and transformational leadership in facilitating readiness for organizational change.

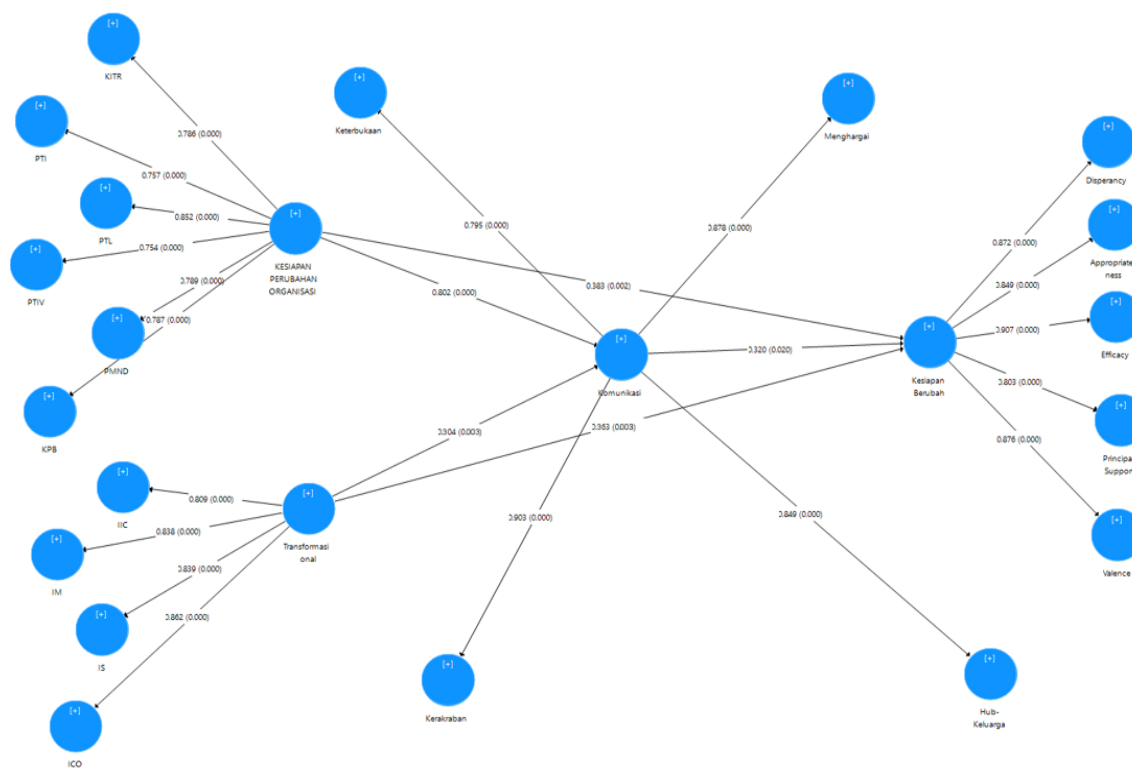


Figure 2. Structural Model Diagram

Goodness of Fit model (GoF)

The purpose of Goodness of Fit (GoF) is to test the quality of the research model in measurement and structural aspects, with a focus on inclusive model performance (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013). In this test, SRMR values

below 0.08 for saturation models are considered good (Hu & Bentler, 1998), and Normed Fit Index (NFI) close to 1 indicates model accuracy (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, the saturation model had an SRMR of 0.064, indicating good model fit, and the NFI reached 0.607, meeting the assessment threshold. The general factor assessment of the model was calculated using RMS_theta, which in PLS-SEM is only available for composite models. RMS_theta values below 0.12 indicate model fit, while higher values indicate a lack of fit (Henseler et al., 2016). Table 3 displays the results of model fit testing on the structural model.

Tabel 3. Research Model Test Results (*Model Fit*)

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,056	0,079
d_ULS	23,601	47,316
d_G	13,348	13,545
Chi-Square	15763,961	15832,872
NFI	0,617	0,616
rms Theta		

The goodness-of-fit (GOF) measures for the model show that the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values are acceptable, with the Saturated Model having an SRMR of 0.056 and the Estimated Model showing a slightly higher value of 0.079, both below the 0.08 threshold, indicating a good fit. The d_ULS (Unweighted Least Squares) value for the Saturated Model is 23.601, while for the Estimated Model it is higher at 47.316, suggesting some discrepancies in the structural model's fit. The d_G (Geodesic Distance) values are fairly close between the Saturated Model (13.348) and the Estimated Model (13.545), indicating a stable model structure. The Chi-Square for the Saturated Model is 15,763.961, and for the Estimated Model it is 15,832.872, showing consistency between the two models. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) values for both models are relatively low, at 0.617 and 0.616, respectively, suggesting that the model fit could be improved. Unfortunately, rms Theta is not reported, which could provide further insights into the fit of the reflective measurement model. Overall, while the SRMR indicates a good fit, other indicators suggest that improvements may be needed.

This study focuses on readiness for change among IAIN Kerinci lecturers and explores the factors that influence such readiness, such as organizational change readiness, transformational leadership behavior, and internal communication. Individual readiness for change helps reduce resistance to change and increases individual adaptability. Organizational change readiness influences individual readiness to change, especially through effective communication about organizational change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007). Longitudinal research confirms a positive relationship between organizational and individual change readiness (Cunningham et al., 2002). Literature studies also support this relationship (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). The findings of Woo (2014) and SEM analysis studies (Suwaryo et al., 2016) also corroborate the effect of organizational change readiness on individuals to change.

A review of the literature on change strategies and learning culture suggests that individuals have higher readiness for organizational change when experiencing normative-reeducative change strategies and when the work environment is connected to a learning culture (M. Choi & Ruona, 2010). Trust and positive communication influence individuals' readiness to change, with satisfied employees more likely to be ready for change (Vakola, 2014). However, there are studies that link individual readiness to change with organizational change readiness, where prior experience, organizational commitment, and participation in decision-making play a role (Mathur, Kapoor, & Swami, 2023).

This study found that transformational leadership behavior affects the desire to change among IAIN Kerinci lecturers. Several previous studies have shown the relationship between these two variables. Jung & Avolio's study found that transformational leadership has a positive impact on desire to change, through the mediation of trust and value congruence (Jung & Avolio, 2000). Bycio, Hackett, & Allen's study stated that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with desire to change, while transactional leadership has a negative relationship (Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995). Meta-analysis shows that transformational leadership is more powerful in driving the desire to change compared to transactional or laissez-faire leadership (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The study of Novitasari et al. concluded that transformational leadership has no significant impact on employee performance, but has a positive and significant effect on readiness to change (Novitasari, Goestjahjanti, & Asbari, 2020).

This study found that transformational leadership has a positive impact on employee engagement, perceptions of attractive change consequences, as well as triggering change supportive behaviors (Faupel & Süß,

2019). Other findings also confirm that transformational leadership significantly affects an individual's desire to change, which in turn affects affective commitment to change (Nuhanisa Radian & L. Mangundjaya, 2019). Similarly, research by Meria et al. indicated that transformational leadership has a positive correlation with readiness to change, although it does not have a direct impact on self-efficacy that affects readiness to change (Meria, Saukani, Prastyani, & Dudhat, 2022). In this context, transformational leadership encourages individuals' desire to change and develop, driving team members' motivation to achieve better changes in themselves and in the organization. Furthermore, the results of hypothesis testing in this study confirm that organizational change readiness has a significant influence on internal communication, which has a central role in managing change. Organizational change readiness helps organizational members understand the basis of change, its purpose, possible impacts, and implications for work and teams. This allows for clearer and more purposeful internal communication, helping organizational members understand expectations and expected contributions (Holt et al., 2007). Good organizational change readiness also encourages active participation of organizational members in the change process, making room for input, ideas and suggestions. This participation makes internal communication more interactive and engaging, enabling collaboration, problem solving and consensus building (Ford & Ford, 1995).

Armenakis & Harris' research shows that high organizational change readiness is associated with better internal communication, where organizations with high change readiness have open, transparent, and effective communication systems, facilitating smooth information flow and better interaction among members (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Analysis by Elving found that aspects of communication such as information, sense of community, and feelings of uncertainty affect resistance to change, which in turn affects the success of change (Elving, 2005). Regression analysis also showed that organizational support is related to internal communication satisfaction (Tkalac Verčič, 2021). In this context, transformational leadership was shown to influence internal communication. Basu & Green's research shows that transformational leadership improves communication between leaders and team members, creating an environment that supports open communication (Basu & Green, 1997). Meta-analysis also indicated that transformational leadership is positively correlated with reciprocal and open communication in organizations, encouraging openness, honesty, and collaboration in communication (Wang et al., 2011). Furthermore, Eisenbeiss et al. concluded that transformational leadership is positively related to internal team communication, as transformational leaders encourage the sharing of information, ideas, and knowledge, promote a positive communication climate, and increase team innovation (Eisenbeiss, 2009).

This research reveals that transformational leadership has a positive impact on organizational symmetrical communication and employee-organization relations, mediated by symmetrical internal communication (Men, 2014), as well as related to increased employee voice behavior and megaphone behavior, with the mediating role of communal relationship norms and exchange (Lee & Chon, 2021), as well as the existence of a link between communication and transformational leadership (Suwandana, 2019). Furthermore, the results of this study reveal that readiness for organizational change has a significant effect on the development of transformational leadership. Change readiness reflects individual and organizational readiness for change, which also affects acceptance and participation in transformational leadership. When the environment supports change and individuals have a high readiness for change, transformational leadership can develop better. This leadership style is able to change individuals' views on change, encourage active participation in decision-making, and facilitate the implementation of organizational change. High change readiness and transformational leadership support each other, creating a positive synergy that contributes to organizational progress.

This study found that organizational change readiness is positively related to transformational leadership behavior. Individual readiness for change can result in transformational leaders who are more effective in inspiring and motivating teams to adapt to change (Choi, 2007). Meta-analysis shows that transformational leadership is positively related to readiness and commitment to change (Peng et al., 2020). Furthermore, Jones' study revealed that organizations that are more ready for change have leaders who tend to apply transformational leadership, as organizational readiness affects leadership style (Jones, 2010). This study also examined the indirect influence of organizational change readiness and transformational leadership behavior on IAIN Kerinci lecturers' willingness to change through internal communication. The findings of Axtell et al. and Mills & Ungson confirm that individual readiness to change through internal communication is related to the perception that the organization is ready for change and has open and transparent communication (Axtell et al., 2000; Mills & Ungson, 2003). High organizational change readiness tends to create a better communication environment, influencing individual readiness to change through open and transparent communication (Oreg et al., 2011).

This study reveals that the relationship between organizational change readiness and the willingness to change among lecturers at IAIN Kerinci can be mediated by internal communication. Previous research indicates a positive impact of the human relations climate on readiness to change, as well as an indirect effect through employee participation and superior leadership (Mumtaz, Selvarajah, & Meyer, 2023). Structural equation modeling analysis has found that psychological capital mediates the relationship between management support and employee readiness for change (Kerrane, Lennon, O'Connor, & Fu, 2017). Leaders who adopt transformational leadership create an open communication environment and facilitate change through effective internal communication (Carmeli, Meitar, & Weisberg, 2006; Shin & Zhou, 2007). Other studies confirm that the quality of individuals mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and readiness to change, while transformational leadership and transparent communication are associated with employees' organizational trust, which in turn affects their openness to change (Muafi et al., 2019; Yue, Men, & Ferguson, 2019). These findings suggest that individual readiness to change is significantly influenced by the variables of organizational change readiness, transformational leadership behavior, and internal communication. Individual readiness for change is a crucial factor in achieving successful change across various contexts, including organizational settings, education, and personal development. High levels of individual readiness promote innovation, continuous learning, and adaptability to change.

This study highlights the impact of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, both directly and indirectly. In the descriptive analysis, some academic staff appeared to have low readiness to change, so it was proposed to conduct in-depth interviews with them. In addition, the analysis of the results and discussion indicated the possibility of other variables that could be included in the structural model. Interestingly, this variable has never been tested in the relationship between organizational change readiness, transformational leadership behavior, and readiness to change. Observations showed that internal communication did not fully mediate this relationship, indicating the possibility of other unidentified mediators.

The figure above shows that "trust" is the only variable that can be included in the model. Trust plays a crucial role in organizational success. High trust between team members and departments contributes to effective collaboration and solid cooperation. Trust enables information sharing, open questions, and cooperation to achieve common goals. This establishes a harmonious and productive work environment. High trust creates a foundation for open and honest communication. Trust allows employees to share important information, provide constructive feedback, and ask relevant questions. Effective communication improves performance and addresses problems efficiently. Organizational change readiness and transformational leadership behaviors have an impact on increasing individual trust, which affects readiness to change. Thus, in future research, statistically integrating the variable "trust" can expand and enrich the existing model.

Managerial Implication

The results of this study demonstrated a significant influence among the tested variables, leading to the acceptance of all alternative hypotheses. Specifically, organizational change readiness positively impacts academic staff's readiness to change, mediated by internal communication, as revealed in the partial testing. Given the critical role of internal communication in enhancing the readiness of IAIN Kerinci lecturers to adapt to change, it is imperative to design intervention programs aimed at improving communication skills among lecturers. This should include training in active listening, effective messaging, negotiation, conflict resolution, and non-verbal communication. Moreover, establishing cross-departmental or faculty working teams can enhance internal communication by facilitating analysis, generating recommendations, and implementing corrective actions, thereby acting as a bridge between leadership and academic staff. Additionally, it is advisable to provide training and development opportunities for academic staff to bolster their skills and knowledge in managing change, encompassing technical competencies, leadership capabilities, and adaptation strategies. Implementing these measures will not only enhance individual and organizational readiness for change but also ensure that achievements are recognized, while any shortcomings are addressed appropriately.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study establishes critical insights into the dynamics of organizational change within the context of higher education. The findings demonstrate that internal communication plays a pivotal role in enhancing readiness to change, while transformational leadership behavior significantly influences both internal communication and readiness for change. Moreover, the mediating effects of internal communication underscore its importance as a conduit for facilitating transformational leadership's impact on staff readiness. Additionally, the study reveals that organizational change readiness not only affects transformational leadership behavior but also has a direct and positive influence on both internal communication and readiness to change. These results collectively emphasize the necessity for higher education institutions, particularly those in culturally rich environments like IAIN Kerinci, to foster effective internal communication and adopt

transformational leadership practices. By doing so, they can enhance their academic staff's readiness to embrace and navigate organizational changes, ultimately contributing to a more adaptive and resilient educational framework.

The influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, both directly and indirectly, was highlighted. Descriptive analysis revealed that some academic staff exhibited low readiness to change, prompting the suggestion to conduct in-depth interviews with these individuals. Additionally, the results and discussion indicated the possibility of incorporating other variables into the structural model. Interestingly, this variable has not been tested in the context of the relationship between organizational change readiness, transformational leadership behavior, and readiness to change. Observations also suggested that internal communication does not fully mediate this relationship, indicating the potential for other unidentified mediators. Therefore, future research should consider the statistical integration of the variable "trust" to enhance and enrich the existing model.

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