

Factors Influencing Employee Adaptation and Response to Leadership Change

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing employee adaptation and responses to leadership transitions within the context of the Jose Rizal Memorial State University system. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research examines how organizational communication, leadership support, and the work environment intersect with employee demographics to shape organizational change outcomes. Data analysis reveals that while the workforce is primarily in the early-to-mid-career stage, employees demonstrate high levels of resilience, maintaining professional conduct, positive attitudes, and consistent productivity despite shifts in leadership. The findings indicate that both structural mechanisms (systems and resources) and relational mechanisms (transparent communication and active support) are significant predictors of successful adaptation. While overall adaptability was found to be consistent across most demographic groups, significant variations in responses emerged when analyzed by sex, length of service, and employment classification. These nuances suggest that while institutional practices effectively support a general transition, individual and role-based differences require more targeted administrative attention. The study concludes that sustaining a conducive work environment through timely, participatory communication and strengthened leadership guidance is vital for institutional stability. To operationalize these findings, the research proposes the implementation of Project BRIDGE, a two-year, two-phase program designed to enhance employee readiness, engagement, and long-term performance during executive successions.

Keywords: leadership transition, employee adaptation, organizational communication, institutional stability, human resource development

1. Introduction

Leadership change is a common and often inevitable occurrence in organizations, particularly in academic institutions where leadership terms are fixed and transitions are structured. Such changes can significantly influence employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance as they adjust to new leadership styles, priorities, and administrative directions. In universities, leadership transitions may bring reforms, policy shifts, and organization restructuring that directly affect employees' daily work and professional relationships. Transformational leadership and effective change management play a critical role in sustaining employee engagement during organizational change in higher education institutions, as leadership approaches that empower employees help mitigate uncertainty and resistance. Thus,

understanding how employees adapt to and respond to these changes is essential in maintaining institutional stability, productivity, and a positive work environment.

Moreover, employee adaptation to leadership change involves both psychological and behavioral adjustments. Employees may experience uncertainty, resistance, or anxiety during transitions, especially when expectations, communication patterns, and decision-making processes are altered. Conversely, leadership can also create opportunities for growth, innovation, and improved organizational practices when employees perceive the transition positively. According to Kroepfen (2025), leadership style significantly influences faculty members' responses to educational change initiatives, with both transformational and transactional leadership contributing to higher levels of acceptance and cooperation during leadership-driven reforms. Therefore, the way employees respond is often shaped by factors such as communication effectiveness, leadership credibility, organizational culture, and the level of support provided during the transition period.

Furthermore, leadership change in academic institutions has unique implications due to their complex organizational structures and shared governance systems. Faculty members and non-teaching personnel are expected to align with new visions and policies while continuing to fulfill their academic and administrative responsibilities. In addition, frequent leadership transitions may intensify the challenges of adaptation, as employees must repeatedly adjust to new leadership approaches and strategic directions. Similarly, according to Liu and Tong (2022), leadership styles can promote trust, self-efficacy, and collaboration positively influence employee innovation and knowledge sharing in universities, enabling employees to adapt more effectively to organizational change. Given these points, it becomes important to examine the factors that influence how employees cope with and respond to leadership change in such settings.

Specifically, the Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) system provides a relevant context for this study, having undergone three leadership changes, with a change in university leadership occurring every four years. These recurring transitions offer a valuable opportunity to analyze patterns of employee adaptation and response over time. In support of this, Chua and Gazi (2025) argue that effective change management strategies and leadership communication are essential in maintaining organizational performance during leadership transitions in higher education institutions. Additionally, Fiedacan et al. (2025) highlight that employees' experiences of leadership change in Philippine state universities highlight the importance of transparent communication, employee participation, and leadership support in fostering positive responses to organizational change.

1.1 Theoretical Foundations

This study is based on four related theories: Lewin's Change Management Theory, Readiness Theory for Organizational Change, Social Exchange Theory, and the ADKAR Model of Individual Change.

First, Lewin's Change Management Theory (1951) is the main theoretical framework for this study. It sees organizational change as a three-step process: unfreezing, changing and freezing. This model provides a way to understand how leadership change occurs in an organization. In this context, the old rules, ways of leading, and routines are no longer in place when a new leader takes over, this is the "unfreezing" stage. During this stage, employees might feel confused, worried, or resistant as they let go of old rules and ways of doing things. Moreover, unfreezing involves creating awareness that change is necessary and inevitable (Burnes, 2004). The next level is changing stage, where new ways of leading, making decisions, managing, and setting priorities are shown. Workers start to change how they think, act, and do their jobs to meet the needs of the new administration. This stage often requires learning, adaptation, and behavioral

modification (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016). Finally, the last step, freezing, makes the new habits permanent and a normal part of how the business runs. With the new leadership structure, the organization returns to normal, and employees learn to use the new processes and routines. In case of JRMSU system. Employees go through this cycle repeatedly when leadership changes. Overall, Lewin's model makes clear the all-encompassing organizational process that enables adaptation and response.

In their seminal 1993 work, Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder defined readiness as a cognitive precursor to either resistance or adoption behaviors, unlike "unfreezing", which focuses on breaking old habits, readiness is about proactively creating a mental state where change is perceived as necessary. The construct of readiness for change is built upon five key dimensions: discrepancy, efficacy, appropriateness, principal support and personal valence. Discrepancy is the belief that a change is actually necessary, it involves demonstrating a gap between the current state of the organization and the desired future state. Efficacy is the belief that a change is actually necessary, it involves demonstrating a gap between the current state of the organization and the desired future state. Efficacy is the belief that the individual or the group has the capability to implement the change successfully, without this, change will be met with anxiety and retreat. On the other hand, appropriateness addresses if the change fits the proposed solution of the problem. Principal support refers to the perception that the organization's formal and informal leaders are committed to the change. Finally, personal valence is the individual's evaluation of the costs and benefits of the change.

Readiness Theory explains why employees react differently. This theory states that employees' mental and emotional readiness for change significantly affects how well change programs work. Specifically, readiness for a change is how much employees think that change is needed, right, and good. It also shows much faith they have in the organization's ability to make changes and in its leaders (Holt et al., 2007). Therefore, employees are more likely to accept change in leadership when they perceive it as well communicated, justified, and supported. In addition, the study encountered that organizational communication, leadership support, and the work environment all have a significant effect on employees' readiness to work. Clear communication makes things less uncertain throughout the unfreezing period. Similarly, during a period of change, supportive leadership builds trust and makes people feel comfortable. A favorable work environment makes it easier to stay stable during refreezing. Thus, Readiness Theory addresses the cognitive states that enable employees to adapt well.

Third, the relational aspect of the paradigm comes from Social Exchange Theory (SET). Blau (1964) first proposed this idea, and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) later built on it. SET posits that social exchange is a longitudinal process, not just a one-time transaction but a cycle that evolves over time. This framework focuses on three main pillars: exchange, rules and relationship. It further says that reciprocity is what governs interactions at work. In other words, employees react to how leaders and the organization treat them. Consequently, when new leaders take over, employees look at how fair, open, and helpful they are. When leaders show respect, give employees what they need, and keep the lines of communication open, employees respond by being cooperative, trusting, and committed (Gouldner, 1960). This makes them want to be part of the change more and less likely to fight it. On the other hand, employees may pull back, resist, or disengage when they feel they are being treated unfairly, not getting enough support, or that their bosses are acting inconsistently (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Therefore, Social Exchange Theory explains how relational dynamics affect employees' readiness to adjust during leadership transitions.

Finally, this study employs the ADKAR Model of Individual Change, created by Hiatt (2006), to better understand the progression of individual-level change. The ADKAR model lists five steps that need to

happen in order for change to be successful and last. Awareness refers to recognizing that change is needed. Desire is the willingness to support and actively participate in the change process. Knowledge involves understanding how to implement the change effectively. Ability refers to the application of new skills and behaviors required for the change. Finally, Reinforcement ensures that the change is sustained over time and becomes integrated into regular practice. Importantly, each part matches up with Lewin's stages. Awareness goes hand in hand with unfreezing, as employees recognize that a change in leadership is needed. Desire connects unfreezing and change, showing that employees want to support new leadership. During the change stage, employees learn new skills and put them into practice, which is when knowledge and ability are developed. Correspondingly, reinforcement is the same as refreezing, ensuring that new behaviors become part of the culture (Hiatt & Creasey, 2003). Overall, the ADKAR model strengthens the framework by showing how each employee undergoes change on their own. It shows that adaptation doesn't happen automatically, but instead happens in clear steps.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the factors influencing employee adaptation and response to leadership change within an academic institution. Specifically, it sought to understand how employees adjust to leadership transitions and how their responses vary based on selected characteristics. The findings of this study were intended to provide a basis for developing strategies that can support employees during periods of leadership change. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the employees in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age;
 - 1.2 Sex;
 - 1.3 Civil status;
 - 1.4 Highest educational attainment;
 - 1.5 Employment classification (faculty or non-teaching);
 - 1.6 Length of service; and
 - 1.7 Number of leadership changes experienced?
2. To what level do the following factors influence employee adaptation to leadership change in terms of:
 - 2.1 Organization communication;
 - 2.2 Leadership support; and
 - 2.3 Work environment?
3. How do the employees respond to leadership change in terms of:
 - 3.1 Attitude;
 - 3.2 Behavior; and
 - 3.3 Work performance?
3. Is there a significant difference in employees' adaptation and responses to leadership change when grouped according to their demographic profile?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what output may be proposed to enhance employee adaptation and response to leadership change in the institution?

1.3 Related Literature and Studies

This section presented the review of literature, review of related studies and the synthesis of the gap of the study.

1.3.1 Leadership Styles, Organizational Communication and Employee Outcomes

According to Lova et al., (2023), in today's era of technology and globalization, effective organization communication is a vital determinant of a company's success. In a constantly evolving environment, organizations must adopt strategic and well-structured communication practices that reach employees, customers, and external stakeholders. Jiang et al.(2021) examined employee engagement through the lens of relationship management and the activity needs-assets model, offering a relational theory that integrates supervisors' real management behaviors and employees perceptions to transparent organizational conversation.

Moreover, Wang et al. (2022) analyzed participative leadership in the context of complex and rapidly changing organizational environment, where leaders cannot independently make timely strategic decisions. The study reviewed literature from multiple databases to define participative leadership, summarize measurement approaches, and distinguish it from related styles such as empowering and directive leadership. The study further presented a framework highlighting antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes of participative leadership, and also identified key research areas, including mediators, moderators, and cultural contexts, providing a roadmap for future investigations of leadership that actively engages employees in decision-making processes.

Additionally, Peng et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of 30 empirical studies, encompassing 12,240 participants, to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee responses to organizational change. The findings revealed that transformational leadership positively correlates with commitment, openness, and readiness for change, while negatively correlating with resistance and cynicism. However, results regarding support for change were mixed. Moreover, moderating effects were observed based on study design, measurement tools, cultural context, and journal quality. Taken together, these findings underscore the value of transformational leadership theory in explaining how leaders influence employees' adaptation and receptivity during organizational change initiatives.

Hernandez and Acosta (2024) conducted a descriptive-correlational study to examine the relationship between employee attitude, job motivation, and organizational commitment in selected multi-purpose cooperatives in Davao City, Philippines. Using a sample of 200 employees, they measured various dimensions of employee attitude such as engagement, satisfaction, and willingness to go beyond job requirements. Their results revealed that positive employee attitudes significantly correlate with higher levels of commitment, and that job motivation further strengthens this relationship. The study emphasizes that organizations aiming for higher employee loyalty must focus not only on motivation programs but also on cultivating positive workplace attitudes that foster engagement and proactive behavior. These findings propose that management interventions focused on both psychological and motivational factors can immediately beautify dedication and reduce turnover. Similarly, Garcia-Salirrosas et al. (2025) explored how leader conduct affects worker level in and process pleasure in academic institutions in Peru. Utilizing structural equation modeling on a sample 651 personnel, the observe confirmed that leadership behaviors including readability in expectancies, help, and reputation directly affect employees' sensory, emotional, and highbrow reviews at paintings. In turn, these reviews positively impacted job delight, suggesting that personnel' attitudes in the direction of management and organizational help are critical determinants of leadership improvement applications and the want for leadership to actively form paintings environments that foster tremendous attitudes and engagement among personnel.

1.3.2 Employee Adaptation to Organizational Change

Changing how you think, feel, and act is a difficult part of getting used to new leadership. Specifically,

adaptation encompasses dimensions such as clarity of direction (understanding objectives), work adjustment (task modification), motivation (sustained drive), and job confidence (self-assurance); it is crucial for successful transitions. Organizational change is characterized as an active coping mechanism when individuals actively seek information and assistance to navigate uncertainty. In cyclical leadership circumstances, such as JRMSU's four-year shifts, adaptation can start strong in the first cycle, with workers eager to get on board with new ideas. But it can go away as people get fatigued. According to George and Jones (2001) say that adapting takes a lot of time and effort, and that emotions play a large role. For instance, being positive can help you get used to things faster, while being stressed can make it harder. De Guzman and De Castro (2017) studied 450 employees of Philippine SUCs nationwide and concluded that cultural characteristics, such as collectivism, can affect how successfully people adapt. Specifically, employees perform better in supportive environments. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2018) looked at university workers in Malaysia during leadership changes and found that adaptation is better when people are included. This cut resistance by 20% in Southeast Asian settings. Moreover, Santoso et al. (2023) did a case study of Mindanao State University, a Philippine SUC like JRMSU, and found that organizational support needs people in regional settings feel less tired. They also found that adaptation and leadership transparency are positively associated ($r=0.48$). Collectively, these studies suggest that adaptation in cyclical SUC contexts is influenced by both general emotional factors and specific situational factors, including Filipino values of community and resilience.

Additionally, Engida et al. (2022) emphasize that change leadership affects preparation via organizational culture; their research in Ethiopia demonstrated that adaptive cultures amplified leadership impacts, resulting in more flexible adaptations. At JRMSU system, where cycles are predictable, these traits could be exploited to make things easier, such as making sure that communication is clear.

Moreover, Bautista (2012) asserts that in the Philippines' state Universities and Colleges (SUCs), laws from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) frequently create confusion and pose challenges for persons to acclimate. Similarly, Srisuwan and Bunbonkarn (2018) said that Thai institutions with supportive cultures make it easier for people to adjust to constant change. They also indicated that getting involved makes people 15% more committed. Additionally, Fiedacan et al. (2021) surveyed 200 employees at a Philippine State University and Colleges (SUC) and found a strong link between communication, engagement, and adaptation. However, they noted that poor leadership exacerbates resistance.

1.3.2 Leadership Style of School Heads

Leadership style refers to the approach and manner by which leaders guide, motivate, and influence their subordinates toward achieving organizational objectives. It encompasses behavioral patterns that leaders consistently display when interacting with employees. Effective leadership styles influence how goals are established, how expectations are communicated, and how personnel are encouraged to perform at their highest potential.

Larik and Lashari (2022) describe leadership as a process in which a leader influences the behavior and actions of others to accomplish a clearly defined goal within a particular context. According to their view, leadership involves the capacity of supervisors to motivate subordinates to work with enthusiasm and commitment. It also involves the leader's ability to articulate a compelling vision of the future and to mobilize others toward its realization. Their findings further emphasize that participatory leadership practices foster stronger employee performance, as employees who feel empowered and trusted demonstrate greater confidence and initiative in their tasks.

In the broader organizational landscape, effective leadership has become a critical determinant of both short term and long-term success. As emphasized by Urme (2023), well-structured organizations increasingly recognize that leadership quality significantly influences employee engagement, commitment, job satisfaction, and retention. This recognition has prompted organizations to adopt sustainable leadership practices that strengthen leader–employee relationships.

Osuji et al. (2020) distinguish leadership from management by explaining that while management focuses on planning, control, and monitoring, leadership involves inspiring, guiding, and motivating employees to embrace organizational values and goals. When leaders meaningfully attend to employee needs, reciprocal gains are observed in the form of stronger commitment, improved retention, and heightened organizational efficiency.

The link between strong leadership and organizational outcomes is further supported by Bharadwaja and Tripathi (2021), who assert that organizations with robust leadership and sustainable talent retention policies consistently achieve superior results. Effective leadership creates a supportive work environment where employees feel valued and motivated.

Comon and Corpuz (2023) emphasize the role of leadership in fostering research competence among employees. Leaders who encourage professional development, recognize employee contributions, and promote open communication help cultivate a committed and innovative workforce. Such leadership practices enable institutions, including schools, to better respond to challenges, achieve strategic goals, and sustain long term organizational success.

2. Methodology

2.1 Design

The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design, which is appropriate for systematically collecting and analyzing numerical data to describe the characteristics, behaviors, and responses of employees during leadership transitions. This design allowed the researcher to quantify factors influencing employee adaptation and response, such as organizational communication, leadership support, work environment, attitudes, behaviors, and work performance. Through this design, the study aimed to present a clear and quantifiable understanding of employee responses to leadership change, while ensuring the results were reliable, valid, and systematically interpretable within the context of JRSMU context.

2.2 Environment

The study was conducted at Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) system, which comprises five campuses (Dapitan, Dipolog, Katipunan, Tampilisan, and Siocon) in Zamboanga del Norte. It served as central setting for examining employee adaptation and responses to leadership term cycle. The multiple campuses provide a diverse organizational context, allowing the study to capture a range of employee experiences and perspectives across different units within the university.

Conducting the study within JRMSU system allowed for an in-depth understanding of the institutional factors that influence employee adaptation to leadership transitions. The university's organizational structure, policies, and culture provide a concrete framework for analyzing how leadership support, organizational communication, and work environment affect employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Through focusing on JRMSU system, the study ensures that the findings are grounded in real-world academic setting, offering practical implications for managing leadership change effectively within similar higher education institutions.

2.3 Respondents

The respondents of this study were faculty members and non-teaching personnel of the JRMSU system. Only employees who completed at least one full four-year leadership transition are included to ensure that respondents have direct experience with institutional leadership change. These employees were directly affected by leadership changes, so they can provide reliable insights about how they adapt and respond during these times. By selecting respondents who have experienced a complete leadership cycle, the study makes sure they have enough experience to observe, evaluate, and adjust to changes in the institution. Their experience and views were important for understanding how leadership transitions affect employee attitudes behaviors, and job performance in an academic institution.

2.4 Research Instrument

The researcher utilized a self-made questionnaire to acquire the needed data in this study. The questionnaire had three parts, each with a distinct purpose related to the research objectives. The first part of the questionnaire is focused on gathering the demographic profile of the respondents.

The second part asked employees to rate their thoughts on organizational factors that could affect their ability to adapt to changes in leadership in a four-point Likert scale. Table 1 presents the 4-point Likert scale used to interpret responses.

Table 1: Scoring Table for Factors Influencing Employee Adaptation

Scale	Range of Means	Scale Description	Verbal Description
4	3.26-4.00	Strongly Agree	Strongly Influential
3	2.51-3.25	Agree	Moderately Influential
2	1.76-2.50	Disagree	Slightly Influential
1	1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree	Not Influential

Table 1 presents a 4-point Likert scale used to interpret factors influencing employee adaptation, with 4 is the highest score and 1 is the lowest. Mean scores are interpreted as follows: 3.26–4.00 (Strongly Agree/Strongly Influential), 2.51–3.25 (Agree/Moderately Influential), 1.76–2.50 (Disagree/Slightly Influential), and 1.00–1.75 (Strongly Disagree/Not Influential). Overall, the scoring table provides a systematic basis for translating numerical mean scores into meaningful verbal interpretations to assess influential factors.

Table 2: Scoring Table for Employee Responses to Leadership Change

Scale	Range of Means	Scale Description	Verbal Description
4	3.26-4.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Adaptive
3	2.51-3.25	Agree	Adaptive
2	1.76-2.50	Disagree	Less Adaptive
1	1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree	Not Adaptive

Table 2 presents a 4-point Likert scale used to interpret responses on leadership change, with 4 as the highest score and 1 as the lowest. Mean scores are interpreted as follows: 3.26–4.00 (Strongly Agree/Highly Adaptive), 2.51–3.25 (Agree/Adaptive), 1.76–2.50 (Disagree/Less Adaptive), and 1.00–

1.75 (Strongly Disagree/Not Adaptive). Overall, the table provides a systematic framework for translating numerical mean scores into clear verbal descriptions of respondents' adaptability to leadership change. The instrument undergone rigorous tests among experts to ensure validity. The content validity yielded a mean of 4.73 interpreted as "Excellent" while the reliability analysis 0.88 (Cronbach's alpha).

2.5 Data Gathering

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher secured approval from the Dean of the Graduate School and clearance from the Ethics Review Committee, then coordinated with university officials to ensure transparency and cooperation. The instrument underwent pilot testing in another state university in Zamboanga City to assess clarity, relevance, and structure, leading to revisions that strengthened its validity and contextual appropriateness before full administration in JRMSU. During data collection, ethical standards such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, secure data storage, and proper disposal of questionnaires were strictly observed, and the gathered data were organized for statistical analysis to serve as the basis for an intervention program.

2.6 Statistical Treatment of Data

The collected data were checked, tallied, and encoded, then analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and weighted mean to present respondents' profiles and factors influencing employee adaptation and employees' responses on leadership change. Mann-Whitney U Test was used to determine whether there was a difference between two groups, and Kruskal-Wallis Test to determine if there were statistically significant differences between three or more independent groups.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher strictly observed ethical standards by securing formal permission from district officials and school heads, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of the respondents. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes and for developing an intervention program, safeguarding the rights and welfare of all participants. The researcher also transparently acknowledged the limited use of AI tools such as Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT for language refinement and organization, emphasizing that all intellectual work, analysis, and final outputs remained under the researcher's full responsibility and scholarly judgment.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

The respondent profile characterizes a predominantly female (56.3%) and married (54.8%) workforce positioned largely in the early-to-mid stages of their professional careers. Age-wise, the sample is concentrated in the 31–35-year-old bracket (34.1%), followed closely by those aged 36 and above (30.2%). This mid-career trend is further reflected in their length of service, where a significant majority (55.6%) have been with their organization for only 1–5 years, and very few (7.9%) possess a tenure exceeding 10 years.

Professionally, the participants are highly educated and evenly distributed across roles, with 50% holding a college degree and the other half possessing advanced postgraduate degrees (32.5% Master's and 17.5% Doctorate). While faculty members slightly outnumber non-teaching personnel at 51.6%, the entire group shows a shared experience with organizational change; over half have navigated a single leadership transition (55.6%), while a substantial 42.1% have experienced two, indicating a workforce that is academically qualified yet relatively new to their current institutional environment.

3.2 Employee Adaptation to Leadership Change

This part summarizes the findings on the elements that influence employees' adaptation to leadership change with focus on organizational communication, leadership support, and work environment.

3.2.1 Organizational Communication

The findings show that all indicators under organizational communication are rated highly, with a weighted mean ranging from 3.40-3.63, all interpreted as strongly agree and strongly influential. The highest-rated indicator is "I receive clear and timely information about leadership changes in the institution," which obtained a weighted mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 0.53, indicating a strong consensus among respondents regarding the effectiveness of timely communication. This is followed by the provision of adequate updates about new policies and directions during leadership transitions, which recorded a weighted mean of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.60. Similarly, the effectiveness of communication channels in reaching employees during leadership changes was rated highly, with a weighted mean of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.58. Communication from management in reducing uncertainty during transitions also received a high rating, with a weighted mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.60. On the other hand, the opportunity for employees to ask questions and express concerns, although still considered strongly influential, had the lowest weighted mean of 3.40, with a standard deviation of 0.66. Overall, organizational communication yielded a composite mean of 3.52 and a standard deviation of 0.47, indicating that respondents strongly agree that communication is a highly influential factor in facilitating adaptation to leadership change.

3.2.2 Leadership Support

The findings indicate that all indicators under leadership support are rated highly, with weighted mean scores ranging from 3.34 to 3.48, all interpreted as strongly agree and strongly influential. The highest-rated indicator is "I receive adequate guidance and support from leaders during periods of leadership change," which obtained a weighted mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.60. This is followed by the statement that leaders are approachable and supportive when employees seek assistance, which garnered a weighted mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Employees also expressed strong agreement that they feel encouraged by leaders to remain motivated and engaged during leadership changes, reflected in a weighted mean of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 0.68. Meanwhile, university leaders' concern for employees' needs during transitions obtained a weighted mean of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 0.61, while the provision of necessary resources to facilitate adjustment recorded the lowest weighted mean of 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.65. Overall, leadership support had a composite mean of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 0.58, indicating that respondents strongly agree that it is a highly influential factor in employee adaptation.

3.2.3 Work Environment

The results show that all indicators under work environment are rated at a high level, with weighted mean scores ranging from 3.41 to 3.60, all interpreted as strongly agree and strongly influential. The highest-rated indicator is "I feel comfortable performing my duties despite changes in leadership," which obtained a weighted mean of 3.60 and a standard deviation of 0.54, indicating strong agreement and a high level of consistency among respondents. This is followed by the statement that the workplace atmosphere helps employees adjust to new leadership practices, which recorded a weighted mean of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.63. The perception that the work environment remains supportive during leadership change also received a high rating, with a weighted mean of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 0.68. Meanwhile, the overall influence of the work environment on employees' ability to adapt was rated at 3.42 with a standard

deviation of 0.65, while access to necessary resources obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.41 with a standard deviation of 0.68. Overall, the work environment yielded a composite mean of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 0.56, indicating that respondents strongly agree that it is a highly influential factor in employee adaptation to leadership change.

3.2.4 Collated Data on the Factors that Influence Employee Adaptation to Leadership Change

Table 3: Factors that Influence Employee Adaptation to Leadership Change

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Organizational Communication	3.52	0.47
Leadership Support	3.40	0.58
Work Environment	3.49	0.56
Overall	3.47	0.54

Note: 3.26-4.00= Strongly Agree & Strongly Influential, 2.51-3.25= Agree & Moderately Influential 1.76-2.50=Slightly Disagree & Slightly Influential 1.00-1.75= Disagree & Not Influential

Table 3 shows an overall mean of 3.47 (SD = 0.54), interpreted as Strongly Agree and Strongly Influential. The findings indicate that organizational communication, leadership support, and the work environment are all perceived as highly influential factors in facilitating employee adaptation to leadership transitions. Each category received high ratings, with respondents consistently expressing strong agreement regarding their effectiveness and importance.

Overall, the results underscore that while all three dimensions are vital, structured communication and a stable work atmosphere are the primary drivers of successful employee adaptation during institutional transitions.

3.3 Employees’ Responses to Leadership Change

This section presents the employees’ responses to leadership change in terms of attitude, behavior, and work performance. Employee response is a critical outcome of organizational change, as it reflects how individuals cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally react to new leadership directions and institutional adjustments. Attitude captures employees’ level of acceptance and openness to change; behavior reflects their actions and engagement during transitions; and work performance indicates their ability to maintain effectiveness and productivity despite leadership shifts.

3.3.1 Attitude

The results reveal that all attitude indicators are rated highly, with weighted mean scores ranging from 3.56 to 3.67, all interpreted as strongly agree and highly adaptive. An in-depth analysis of the findings indicates that employees generally exhibit a positive and resilient mindset toward leadership transitions. The highest rating for acceptance of leadership change as part of institutional growth suggests that employees recognize change as a necessary and beneficial process rather than a disruption. This reflects a level of organizational maturity and alignment with institutional goals. Moreover, the high ratings for motivation and openness to new leadership styles indicate that employees are willing to engage with and adjust to new directions introduced by leadership. The relatively low rating of confidence in one’s role, although still high, suggests that some employees may experience slight uncertainty about their responsibilities during transitions. This highlights a potential area where clearer role communication and support may further strengthen employee confidence.

3.3.2 Behavior

The findings indicate that all indicators under behavior are rated highly, with weighted mean scores ranging from 3.53 to 3.67, all interpreted as strongly agree and highly adaptive. The overall composite mean 3.62 and a standard deviation of 0.50, indicating that employees strongly agree and exhibit highly adaptive behavioral responses to leadership change. The results further reveals that employees demonstrate strong behavior consistency and professional discipline during leadership transitions. The high rating for maintaining positive working relationships further indicates that employees can preserve collaboration and teamwork, which are essential for organizational stability during transitions.

3.3.3 Work Performance

The results indicate that all indicators under work performance are rated highly, with weighted mean scores ranging from 3.61 to 3.70, all interpreted as strongly agree and highly adaptive. The highest-rated indicator is “I complete my tasks efficiently despite leadership transitions,” which had a weighted mean of 3.70 and a standard deviation of 0.49, indicating strong agreement and high consistency among respondents. The indicators “I am able to maintain the quality of my work during leadership changes” and “Leadership changes do not negatively affect my job performance” both obtained weighted means of 3.61, with standard deviations of 0.57 and 0.63, respectively.

3.3.4 Collated Data on Responses to Leadership Change

Table 4: Responses to Leadership Change

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attitude	3.61	0.43
Behavior	3.62	0.50
Work Performance	3.65	0.45
Overall	3.63	0.46

Note: 3.26-4.00= Strongly Agree and Highly Adaptive, 2.51-3.25= Agree and Adaptive, 1.76-2.50= Slightly Disagree and Less Adaptive, 1.00-1.75= Disagree and Not Adaptive

The overall responses to leadership change yielded a mean of 3.63 (SD-0.46). The study reveals that employees within the institution demonstrate an exceptionally high level of adaptability toward leadership change, consistently scoring between 3.56 and 3.70 across all measured categories. This suggests a workforce that is not only receptive to new directions but also possesses the emotional resilience to remain motivated despite the inherent uncertainties of a transition. In terms of attitude, the results highlight a culture of openness and acceptance. Employees have successfully cultivated a positive outlook that minimizes resistance, creating a smooth foundation for new leadership to take root. However, the findings suggest that this "change readiness" can be further bolstered by sharpening role clarity and communication, ensuring every team member feels confident in their specific responsibilities during the shift. The data shows that employees are effectively translating these positive attitudes into observable behavioral changes. While they are already adjusting well to new work practices, the report recommends that leadership provide more structured support—such as targeted training and ongoing supervision—to help employees fully internalize these new methods rather than just complying with them.

Finally, the impact on work performance remains overwhelmingly positive. The institution has established a support system that allows employees to maintain high productivity even during periods of flux. To sustain this momentum, the study concludes that leadership should prioritize clear direction and the

provision of adequate resources. By reinforcing performance management systems and engagement strategies, the institution can ensure that leadership transitions act as a catalyst for improvement rather than a disruption to organizational effectiveness.

4. Comparative Analysis on Employees’ Adaptation and Responses to Leadership Change

Table 5: Test of Difference in the Employees’ Adaptation and Responses to Leadership Change When Grouped According to their Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	Variables	Statistic	df	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Age	Adaptation	2.64	3	0.451	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
	Responses	4.90	3	0.179	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
Sex	Adaptation	1920	-	0.874	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
	Responses	1460	-	0.014	Significant	Reject Ho
Civil Status	Adaptation	1928	-	0.849	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
	Responses	1639	-	0.104	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
Highest Edu-cational At-tainment	Adaptation	2.85	2	0.241	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
	Responses	0.15	2	0.930	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
Employment Classification	Adaptation	1593	-	0.050	Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
	Responses	1788	-	0.337	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
Length of Service	Adaptation	5.17	3	0.160	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
	Responses	8.15	3	0.040	Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
Number of Leadership Changes Ex-perienced	Adaptation	2.38	2	0.305	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho
	Responses	1.98	2	0.372	Not Significant	Fail to Re-ject Ho

*Note: *Significant at <0.05*

A closer analysis is reflected in Table 5 on the differences of employees’ adaptation and responses to leadership change when grouped according to demographic profile. Results reveal that most demographic profile variables do not significantly influence employees’ adaptation to leadership change. This suggests that employees, regardless their background characteristics, tend to exhibit a relatively uniform level of

adaptation, which may be attributed to shared organizational experiences and standardized institutional practices. However, differences emerge in employees' responses, particularly by sex and length of service, suggesting that these variables may influence how employees behave and perform during leadership transitions. Additionally, the significant difference observed in adaptation when grouped according to employment classification suggests that faculty and non-teaching personnel may differ in how they adjust to leadership change, possibly due to variations in roles, responsibilities, and exposure to administrative processes.

5. Proposed Employee Adaptation Program: Project BRIDGE

Based on the study's findings, Project BRIDGE is proposed to enhance employees' ability to adjust and respond effectively to leadership change within the institution. The program is designed to ensure that employees of Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) remain stable, motivated, and productive during leadership transitions. The proposed program is a comprehensive two-year, strategic framework designed to maintain organizational stability and employee morale during changes in executive leadership. By adopting an employee-centric approach, the plan seeks to minimize culture shock often associated with new administrations. The initiative is structured into two distinct stages: Phase 1-Stabilization, which focuses on maintaining the status quo and reducing anxiety, and Phase 2-Transformation, which evolves the institutional culture to meet new goals. The plan operates under four primary objectives intended to streamline the transition process. First, it aims to mitigate transition anxiety by providing transparent roadmap regarding job security and reporting lines. Second, it ensures operational continuity, protecting administrative and academic workflow from disruption. Third, it seeks to synchronize employee output by aligning Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) targets with the new leader's strategic vision. Finally, the plan prioritizes multi-campus exclusivity, ensuring that faculty and staff in satellite locations are informed and integrated into the university's future.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that the institution's employees are generally in the early-to mid-career stage, with diverse demographic characteristics that provide relevant context for examining adaptation and responses to leadership change. The results further indicate that organizational communication, leadership support, and work environment are highly influential factors that significantly contribute to employee adaptation during leadership transitions. These findings highlight the importance of both structural mechanisms, such as systems and resources, and relational mechanisms, such as support and communication, in facilitating successful organizational change.

Moreover, employees demonstrate highly adaptive responses to leadership change in their attitudes, behaviors, and work performance. This suggests that employees possess a strong capacity to maintain positive outlooks, exhibit professional conduct, and sustain productivity despite changes in leadership. The study also reveals that employee adaptation is generally consistent across demographic groups, indicating that institutional practices effectively support uniform adjustment among employees. However, variations in employees' responses were observed when grouped by certain demographic characteristics, particularly sex and length of service, while differences in adaptation were noted by employment classification. These findings imply that while overall adaptability is strong, individual differences still influence how employees respond to leadership transitions.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of sustaining effective communication, strengthening leadership support, and maintaining a conducive work environment to ensure continuous employee adaptability. The development of a structured Project BRIDGE is therefore essential to further enhance employees' readiness, engagement, and performance during leadership change.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations are proposed to further strengthen employees' adaptation to leadership change.

First, the institution may strengthen institutional communication strategies to ensure that information shared during leadership transitions is timely, transparent, and participatory. This can be done by enhancing communication mechanisms, such as feedback systems, consultations, and open forum, to boost employee engagement and minimize uncertainty.

Second, there should be a clear guidance, motivation, and accessible assistance to employees throughout the transition process.

Third, institution may implement a formal employee adaptation Program to systematically manage responses to leadership change.

Fourth, institution may encourage employees to actively participate in organizational initiatives and maintain an openness to change.

Lastly, a strengthen policies to ensure structured transition management, focusing on the availability of resources, clear operational guidelines, and sustained support systems.

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