



Investigating the impact of transformational leadership on change management in government institutions: Case of district & session courts

Huma Ali^{1,*}, Ahmad Timsal¹, Ahmad Tisman Pasha¹, Asif Imdad¹

¹. Institute of Banking & Finance, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan (Pakistan):

* Corresponding Author: huma.ali@bzu.edu.pk

Article Information	Abstract
<p>Article history: Submitted: 25th November, 2022 Accepted: 28th May, 2023 Published: 30th June, 2023</p>	<p><i>Government institutions usually work under strict legal frameworks. They usually tend to avoid risks and prefer to operate through highly formalized and concentrated decision-making. But, with the dynamicity of the work environments particularly after the pandemic, organizations (public or private) are feeling the urge to adopt change. Rapid developments such as globalization, digitization, and work flexibility are required for organizations to remain successful and competitive. However, despite having the urge, public sector organizations (i.e., government institutions) are at times bound by their strict policies, frameworks, underlying assumptions, and bureaucratic structures. This hurts the change readiness of employees in that organization and the overall change management process. Transformational leadership is said to be the basic element of successful or failed change management programs. Managers who use a transformational leadership style motivate members through dimensions of leadership such as inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence. Most of these academic research findings are true for Western contexts and their societal and organizational realities. Developing countries such as Pakistan have their unique set of issues when it comes to managing organizational change. This study investigates how Transformational Leadership impacts Change Management within the relatively complicated structure of the district judiciary in Multan (Pakistan). It also studies the mediating effect of Change Readiness on this relationship. A survey questionnaire was distributed amongst 372 research participants working in the District and Session Courts of Multan. The quantitative data analysis shows that the adoption of a Transformation Leadership style in a traditional setup of the District and Session Court of Multan helps in implementing change and improving Change Readiness. However, the findings also highlight some of the issues and challenges being faced by top personnel of these courts, while managing change. These findings could be useful at the managerial level in taking accurate decisions concerning planning and implementing change for overall organizational development. These findings again reaffirm the stance taken by various researchers about the benefits of adopting the Transformational Leadership style, particularly within complex work environments and when organizations are undergoing significant change.</i></p>
<p>Volume No. 03 Issue No. 01 ISSN: 2790-7899</p>	
<p>Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Organizational Change Management; Change Readiness</p>	

Introduction

Globalization has undoubtedly created multiple opportunities, but it has also increased competition among organizations – irrespective of the sector. According to Waddell et al. (2019), the changing work environments, economic conditions, and relatively fierce competition is urging organizations to *change*, per the pace of change of such macro-level factors. Organizations throughout the world are adopting or aspiring to adopt *aggressive* strategies to gain and retain their market share. Organizations usually undergo change to adopt better strategies, alter their usual frameworks, and implement newer employment and organizational cultural strategies (By, 2005). Another emerging organizational change is the acceptance of the *digitization paradigm* and the use of technology within organizations (Hashim et al., 2021). Organizations that do not readily accept change or respond to the need for change face extinction.

However, acceptance and implementation of change within an organization is not a straightforward process. Numerous issues must be addressed – with the most common being the lack of managerial and leadership skills. According to Mosadeghrad and Ansarian (2014), many organizations face difficulty in implementing organizational change, particularly due to insufficient management support, poor leadership, inadequate monitoring systems, and an overall rigid organizational culture. Thus, organizations need to have leaders who are proactive rather than reactive, as they can then help the organization understand, prepare and then cope with the ever-increasing dynamicity of the market. Transformational leadership is one style that inspires positive changes in those who follow. As per Faupel and Süß (2019), such leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic, and passionate and are *concerned* and *involved* in the change management process. Moreover, they also ensure that every member of their organization is also successful in adapting to change.

Transformational leadership is a style in which leaders *encourage*, *inspire* and *motivate* their employees to bring about the change that will help an organization grow and compete (Salanova et al., 2011). Transformational leaders endeavour to inspire their employees to embrace change by fostering workplace autonomy (independence) and ownership. According to (REF), transformational leadership boosts employees' morale and self-confidence and encourages them to work together as a unit, rather than many isolated entities. Having said that, it is important to understand that transformational leadership negates the concept of micromanagement (Faupel & Süß, 2019) – an element strongly absent in the public sector organizations of Pakistan. Transformational leaders *motivate* their workforce to take decisions, they trust the creativity of their subordinates and look toward the future with an open mind (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010).

Organizational Change represents the *actions* that an organization takes to alter one or some of its major components, for example, culture, structure, operations, and internal processes (Oreg & Berson, 2019). Organizational Change Management is then the process or method of bringing about this change successfully (Van Dam et al., 2018). An organizational change could be adaptive i.e., smaller in scale, incremental, and usually address a current need of the organization (Santhidran et al., 2013), while other changes are transformational or large scale and often bring about a rather sweeping evolution within the organization. Irrespective of the type of organizational change, the *readiness* of the organization and its relevant stakeholders for that change is a basic requirement. As per Holt et al. (2007), not preparing your organization for change puts both the employees and managers and in some cases, even the customers, at great risk. This is where leadership plays a pivotal role and this is where leadership style matters the most. According to Chou (2015), transformational leadership, when properly applied, can transform a stagnant set of employees into a more productive and dynamic group of individuals.

Pakistan as a country has always faced a unique set of challenges, even as compared to its regional neighbours. Therefore, the findings of the research conducted in Western countries are difficult to apply in such contexts. Having said that, like in other countries, the macro-environment factors in Pakistan are also forcing Pakistani organizations to change. However, the majority of the public sector organizations are unionized i.e., it becomes complicated to segregate the interests of the union from that of the organization (Bakari et al., 2017). According to Aslam et al. (2018), the unions within Pakistani organizations make it more challenging for managers and leaders to manage change within their organizations. Subsequently, the credibility and capability of the leadership are questioned. This study investigated if adopting a transformational leadership style impacts Organizational Change and Organizational Readiness within a public sector setup i.e., District and Session courts in Multan. An apparent reason for selecting this particular context is that very limited information is available in academia about Organizational Change and Change Management within Pakistan's judiciary. Therefore, the specific research question being investigated in this study is if transformational leadership impacts Organizational Change Management and Change Readiness or not.

In the next section, the extant literature in this domain will be reviewed to highlight the research gap and establish the research hypotheses. This will be followed by a brief description of the methodology, results, and finally the discussion, conclusion, and implications of the study.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership and Change Readiness

Transformational leadership is an important concept in organisational studies. Bass and Riggio (2006) define it as a style of leadership that inspires followers through shared goals and values. A transformational leader not only articulates a long-term vision and certain objectives to achieve but also intellectually stimulates followers (Du et al., 2013). Ackoff (1999) further explains the argument that a transformational leader recognises that there *could* be differences between your employees, but the focus should be on following a process of shared vision, belief, and ethics to work jointly towards achieving the desired goals. This is different from the motivational leadership style where the emphasis is on presenting a clear organisational vision and inspiring employees to work towards this vision by establishing a connection with them and understanding their needs (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010). Transformational leaders are relatively more active in their role as sometimes they even set aside their needs over collective (organisational) needs.

There have been several research studies (see for example Bass & Riggio, 2006; Chou, 2015; Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005) that have established the traits present in transformational leaders. For example, transformational leaders are mostly driven by curiosity i.e., they are inquisitive and seek out innovative solutions to various organisational issues. Similarly, transformational leaders are communicative, visionary, and *risk-tolerant*. They understand that calculated risk-taking is a necessary and integral part of introducing and managing change. Such traits then inspire their followers, both at an individual and collective level, and encourage them to improve their performance and work jointly towards implementing organisational change. As per Bass and Riggio (2006), such traits in a leader help in promoting the *willingness* and *openness* to a change initiative within the organisation. Thus, transformational leadership then impacts both employee attitudes and readiness for change (Santhidran et al., 2013). If organisational changes are implemented in a relatively smoother manner, it can also lead to higher job satisfaction and organisational commitment level and can reduce the probability of issues such as job burnout and turnover intention (Wang et al., 2014).

A recent strand of research in this domain has also explored how transformational leadership affects employees' attitudes toward Organisational Change. In making an organisational change, employees must embrace that change. To do so, it is first required to provide the needed *readiness* in employees and make them ready for change (Asbari et al., 2021). Change readiness represents the ability to understand and react to change in manner that is constructive and useful for the organisation. And, as per Rafferty et al. (2013), a transformational leadership style can help increase the employee buy-in for a change initiative, increase their support, and also motivate them to move towards embracing the change. De Cremer (2006) also found similar results where transformational leadership enhanced employees' readiness, acceptance, and commitment toward organisational change.

In the Pakistani context, a recent study by Adil and Kamal (2016) also found a positive correlation between the change in promotional behaviour of the leader and the subsequent followers' attitude. Similarly, other studies in Pakistan have also investigated the relationship of various variables such as job satisfaction (Bushra et al., 2011), organisational commitment (Riaz et al., 2011), and change readiness (Kalsoom et al., 2018) with transformational leadership.

H1: Transformational Leadership positively affects employees' Change Readiness.

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Change Management

Organisational Changes are those which significantly impact the organisation as a whole, such as changes within the employee base, revision of organisational goals, products and offerings, and overall operations (Chou, 2015). However, identifying the need for change and understanding *how to make that change successful* are two different skills. Santhidran et al. (2013) defined change management as a process in which an organisation continuously reviews its direction, structure, policies and capabilities in accordance with the changing needs of both the internal and external environment. As per Rosenbaum et al. (2018), a productive organisational change is all about how it is managed i.e., how involved and informed are your employees about that change, how well they understand the need for that change, and most importantly how will they be affected by that change. Therefore, such changes are usually supported by the attitudes, behaviours, and approaches of the people involved in the organisation such as managers, leaders, and most importantly the employees. Thus, as per Faupel and Süß (2019), effective change management is then directly associated with the leadership style. It is the leader that sets the direction for the change and their style which impacts how change management is planned, scheduled, and organised.

There have been some recent studies (see for example Klein et al., 2022; Rosenbaum et al., 2018; Waddell et al., 2019) which have discussed the association of transformational leadership on employees' attitudes, behaviour, and approaches toward change. For example, Saboe et al. (2015) discuss how transformational leadership increases an employee's confidence, trust, and dedication towards their leader and they subsequently enhance their efforts to move out of their comfort zones to try and make the organisational change successful. According to Rosenbaum et al. (2018), it is the approach and attitude of the leader that makes a change management initiative successful. It is important that the leader is supportive of the ideas being put forward by the employees and should take *gradual* steps towards the desired outcome. Transformational leadership can help an organisation to discard less effective work techniques and try to influence the ways employees approach their tasks (Wright & Pandey, 2010).

The majority of the above research findings are based in the context of private sector organisations where the rules and regulations are quite flexible and can be adjusted easily for the betterment of the organisation and its employees. In public sector organisations, on the other hand, introducing change is not a straightforward process. There have been studies (Fernandez

& Rainey, 2017; Van der Voet et al., 2016; Wright & Pandey, 2010) that have shown how change management in public sector organisations is usually unsuccessful. However, these studies do not discuss how change management could be successful in public sector organisations. Public sector organisations are usually operating under a strict legal structure (Fernandez & Rainey, 2017). Similarly, such organisations mostly have a bureaucratic organisational structure which may further hinder the change management process (Van der Voet et al., 2016).

H2: Transformational Leadership positively affects Organisational Change Management

In this study, the basic purpose was to understand the change management process in Pakistan's public sector organisations – a relatively under-explored context. The focus was to bring forward the issues and challenges (particularly related to leadership) being faced by such organisations and to identify ways in which such initiatives can be successful.

Change Readiness and Organizational Change Management

For change management to be successful, organisations need to understand the concept of *change readiness*. According to Bernerth (2004), change readiness does not imply an understanding of the change, nor does it only signify your belief in the change, in fact change readiness represents a collection of thoughts and intention that you exhibit towards a specific change initiative. Although, theoretically this concept sounds reasonable there is limited empirical research that has established the significance of change readiness for organisational change management. According to Holt et al. (2007), change readiness is affected by four core aspects. The *content* of change, the *process* of change, the *context* of change, and most importantly the *people* involved in the change. Therefore, change readiness could be achieved when an individual's effort is aligned with the overall intent of the change and the capability of the organisation to carry out the change. And, subsequently, any resistance to change initiatives will decrease change readiness and will hurt organisational change management. Kim et al. (2011) argue that the readiness of employees is the first step toward increasing the chances for successful change management.

In their study of almost 900 public and private sector employees about change readiness, Holt et al. (2007) found that change readiness is a multidimensional construct that is influenced by the belief about the capability of individuals to implement the proposed change (*change-specific efficacy*), the *appropriateness* of the change for the organisation, commitment of the leadership (*management support*) and the benefit of the change for the organizational members (*personal valence*). For successful change management, if the objectives and outcomes are not aligned, then it would naturally become quite challenging for the employees to accept that change. For example, Ming-Chu and Meng-Hsiu (2015) in their study based on Taiwanese manufacturing sector found that change readiness of employees decreased their resistance towards a change initiative. They also found that perceived organisational support and preparedness played a pivotal role in bringing about change readiness, which subsequently led to better change management.

In public sector organisations, one of the biggest issues is individual change readiness. In a study based in Pakistan, Hameed et al. (2019) identified change readiness as a major factor that can hamper organisational change management. They found that uncertainties around a change initiative make it difficult for leadership to anticipate everything that the employees might need to accept change. Thus, it becomes more critical that employees should buy into the change. They argued that for leadership in public sector organisations, it is vital that they give more autonomy to their employees if they want to minimise the resistance to change initiatives. In another study, Shantz et al. (2016) also found (in UK's context) that constructive organisational support helps in developing a proper mindset of the employees towards change.

This helps them be prepared for the change and deal with it in a way that is beneficial for both the organisation and the employee.

H3: Change Readiness positively affects Organisational Change Management

Transformational leadership then comes into play and may affect employee readiness for change. As per Faupel and Süß (2019), as a transformational leader believes in communication, he/she may help to clear any ambiguities about the change initiative and ensure that the understanding and commitment of both the management and employees regarding the change are aligned. In a recent study Oreg and Berson (2019), found that transformational leadership enhances employees’ change readiness, evokes their performance, and inspires them to work towards the achievement of the desired state. Similarly, in a previous study Salanova et al. (2011) conducted a study on Portuguese nurses and also found that change readiness tends to mediate the association between transformational leadership and organisational change management. In this study, the aim was to explore this relationship in a non-western, developing country’s (i.e., Pakistan) context.

H4: Change Readiness mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organisational Change Management.

Research Methodology

Our study is explanatory (causal) in nature, as it identifies the extent and nature to which one variable effects (explains) the other. The data was collected from the District and Session courts of Multan, Pakistan. The decision to choose a public sector organization was mainly due to two reasons. First, the Pakistani public sector organizations are usually characterized by red tape and bureaucratic hurdles (Quratulain & Khan, 2015). The organizational culture and structure are mostly rigid and do not appreciate a change in the status quo very easily. Therefore, it was interesting to study such organizations and their associated issues concerning change management. Second, there is some effort to modernize and upgrade the judicial system in Pakistan, for example, the institutionalization of the e-courts system (Qureshi et al., 2021), the launch of portals and online repositories (Asad, 2019), etc. At the time of our study, the district judiciary was undergoing major structural and procedural changes. Although our sample is specific to the district judiciary, the findings and conclusions may be applied to other public sector organizations as well. The theoretical model is based on the assumption that transformational leadership affects change readiness and overall organizational change management. Thus, this independent variable (i.e., transformational leadership) can be tailored to all types of organizations.

The following theoretical model has been used to investigate the relationships:

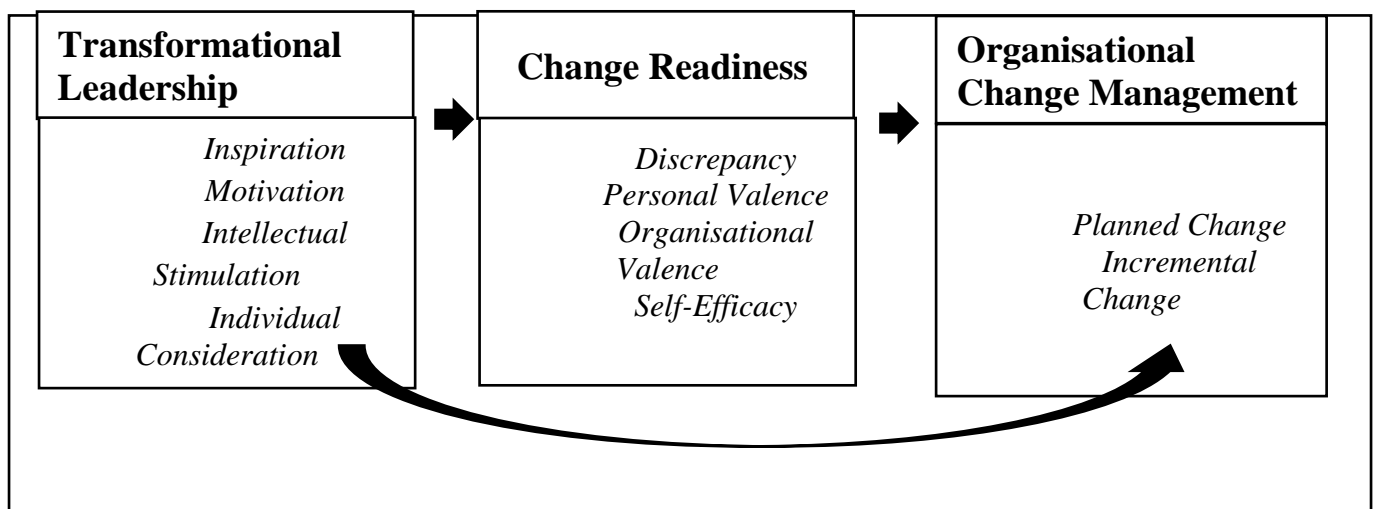


Figure 1: Theoretical Research Model

Sampling Technique

The questionnaire was administered in English, as it was easier for the employees working in managerial and staff level positions to comprehend it. The questionnaire was administered to all lower, middle, and top-level managerial employees to ensure their familiarity with the ongoing organizational changes and issues surrounding leadership. The research participants were chosen using non-probability convenience sampling. As the sample was non-random in nature, to ensure representativeness of the population, there was diversity in the demographics (age, gender, education, and experience). Furthermore, to ensure the anonymity of the participants, there were no identity-specific questions. The research team personally met the participants and completed fieldwork related to data collection.

The questionnaire was distributed to 400 research participants out of which 383 filled responses were received. After data cleansing and sorting, 372 responses were considered valid for analysis. Out of these 372 respondents, 63.2% were male, while 36.8% were female participants. Regarding the age of the participants, 35.8% of the participants were 21-30 years old, 37.1% were 31-40 years old and the remaining were above 41 years. In gathered data, 13.4% of participants had an educational qualification of intermediate or equivalent, 37.6% are graduates, 36% have done a master and 12.9% had some other qualifications. In terms of their professional association with the district judiciary, 48.1% had an experience of fewer than 5 years, 32.8% had an experience of between 5-10 years and 19.1% had experience of more than 10 years. Finally, 29.6% of respondents were working in the top and middle-level managerial positions, while the rest of them were part of the lower-level management.

Research Instrument

The research instrument was developed using established scales available in the literature. The variables were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach's α coefficient was applied to determine the internal consistency of the items that contribute to constructs to determine reliability in our context.

Transformational Leadership was measured using the 36-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1996). The original scales focus on transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership styles, therefore it could not have been used in their current form for this study. Thus, the researchers opted for statements only related to transformational leadership style (Cronbach's α coefficient = 0.974).

Change Readiness was measured using the 26-item scale developed by Holt et al. (2007). The scale measures the variable using four dimensions i.e., change-specific efficacy, appropriateness, management support, and personal valence. Some of the items not relevant to our context were removed (Cronbach's α coefficient = 0.948).

Organizational Change Management was measured using the 42-item scale developed by Bouckennooghe et al. (2009). For this study, the items related to the process of change (e.g., communication, participation, the attitude of top management, supervisor support) and climate of change (e.g. trust in leadership, cohesion, and politicking) were selected Cronbach's α coefficient = 0.934).

Results

The data has been analyzed using various descriptive and inferential statistics techniques, with the help of business research tools such as SPSS and PLS-SEM. The major findings are presented below:

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is used to determine the strength or weakness of the relationship between variables and it also informs us about the *degree* of that relationship. Table I presents the correlations between the independent and dependent variables of the study. Transformational leadership shows a statistically significant correlation with organizational change management in the hypothesized direction. The independent variable also exhibited a significant correlation with the mediating variable i.e., change readiness in the proposed direction. Similarly, there was a significant relationship between change readiness and organizational change management. These statistics increase the confidence in the directionality of the proposed hypotheses.

Table I: Correlation Analysis

		TL	CR	OCM
TL	Pearson Correlation	1	.452**	.564**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	372	372	372
CR	Pearson Correlation	.452**	1	.566**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	372	372	372
OCM	Pearson Correlation	.564**	.566**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	372	372	372

** . P<0.01

TL = Transformational Leadership; CR = Change Readiness; OCM = Organisational Change Management.

Hypotheses Testing

The regression model is tested using SPSS. Regression Analysis is used to investigate the impact of one variable (independent) on the other variable (dependent). In this study, hierarchical regression analysis has been used to discuss how the change in dependent variable is influenced by the independent variable. For Hypothesis 1, results indicate a β -Coefficient value of 0.564, r^2 of 0.318, t -value of 13.147. This shows that transformational leadership significantly and positively affects organizational change management. The p -value is also less than 0.05, indicating that the hypothesis can be accepted.

For Hypothesis 2, results indicate a β -Coefficient value of 0.452, r^2 of 0.204, t -value of 9.378. This shows that transformational leadership significantly and positively affects employees' change readiness. The p -value is also less than 0.05, indicating that the hypothesis can be accepted. For Hypothesis 3, results show a β -Coefficient value of 0.566, r^2 of 0.320, t -value of 13.203. This shows that change readiness significantly and positively affects organizational change management. The p -value is also less than 0.05, indicating that the hypothesis can be accepted.

For mediation analysis, the table below (Table II) shows the direct, indirect, and total effect on the prediction of Organizational Change Management:

Table 2: Mediation Analysis I

Independent variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total Effect
TL on OCM	.3284	.1495	.4779

Similarly, Table III below shows the mediating effect of the role of Change Readiness in the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Change Management:

Table 3: Mediation Analysis II

Relationship	Indirect effect	Total effect	VAF	Assessment
TL> CR>OCM Mediation	.1494	.7691	31.28%	Partial

Partial Least Squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) is one of the ways of analyzing mediation effects. According to Hair Jr et al. (2014), VAF (variance accounted for) be calculated by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect and multiplying by 100. Thus, if the significance level less than 20%, it represents *no mediation* (1), if the level greater than 20%, it represents *partial mediation* (2), while a level above 80% represents a *full mediation* (3). In this case, as per the data collected from this study, Change readiness *partially mediates* the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational change management. This indicates that other factors must be taken into account when studying the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational change management. These factors will now be discussed in the qualitative analysis of the data collected from the open-ended questions of the survey.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative Analysis was used to identify and explore the experiences of research participants in depth. Apart from open-ended questions in the survey, *structured observation* was also used as one of the researcher's works in the district judiciary of Multan. According to Stausberg (2011), structured observation is a methodology in which an event or series of events is observed in its natural setting and recorded by the researcher. In this study, the researchers not only observed the participants but also actively engages in the activities of the research participants. In this case, the following issues pertinent to change management in the district judiciary were observed and documented:

- 1) The introduction of the Cash Flow Management System (CFMS) is facing resistance due to a lack of training and unwillingness to move away from the traditional system.
- 2) The requirement to submit daily progress reports to Presiding Officers threatens the status quo.
- 3) Lack of prior exposure to technology and unavailability of appropriate training is making it difficult to introduce systems such as online availability of records, and biometric attendance.
- 4) Structural changes such as the establishment of a judicial academy and establishment of different courts i.e., commercial courts, ADR courts, etc. without proper planning and stakeholder engagement and unclear communication from the senior leadership and top-level management have increased the employee resistance to change.

Discussion & Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of transformational leadership on Organizational Change Management. The findings revealed that transformational leadership positively impacts Change Readiness and Organizational Change Management, and Change Readiness mediates the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Change Management. Similarly, the findings also show that the presence of a leader who inspires and motivates his/her followers facilitates the implementation of change, even in relatively traditional setups such as those of Multan's district judiciary. The District and Session courts of Multan are presently undergoing several changes such as digitization, for example, the introduction of the Case Flow Management System (CFMS) to increase the efficiency and reduce the unnecessary delays present in the workflow of the registered cases. Similarly, the establishment of the Judicial Academy is another major structural change that will challenge the decade-old systems within the district judiciary and might provide significant benefits to the general public.

However, within Pakistan's public sector, there are issues particularly related to unionization which do hamper the progress of such initiatives and create problems for the leadership, as indicated by prior studies such as those of (Adil & Kamal, 2016). But, when managing organizational change, in such situations it is the leader who needs to understand and provide an answer to certain critical questions such as what and who needs to be ready. How ready is ready enough? And whose viewpoint should be used when judging readiness? (Bushra et al., 2011; Riaz et al., 2011). According to our findings, Change Readiness is not only dependent on organizational resources (e.g. finance, materials, humans, or information) that can be applied to the change, but it is also determined by the *psychological willingness* of affected people to cooperate in implementing the change. This is where leadership style matters the most. If perceived and understood in this way, then Change Readiness can mediate the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Change Management.

Our findings can help organizations (both public and private) to better understand the leadership styles that could be more effective in the public sector organizations of Pakistan. It will help the decision-making authorities to have a relatively clearer picture of the kind of managerial expertise and employee skills that must be developed if they wish to successfully implement change within their organizations. Such expertise and skills can then help in enhancing change readiness and overall change management practices. Similarly, the findings are also useful for those leaders who prefer to remain *passive* within their organizations. It highlights the importance of the argument that style of leadership becomes particularly crucial during change management, therefore it needs to be modified at an appropriate time.

The findings of the study can also facilitate the policymakers to take more accurate steps when planning and implementing changes within their organizations. It also makes them more aware of the kind of work-environment complexities present within the public sector organizations, such as the judiciary – which have *affixed* themselves with decades-old systems and are known to be resistant to change.

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