

HUMAN FACTORS INFLUENCE ON POLICY CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION OF OGUN STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Change initiatives in Nigerian higher education institutions continue to encounter implementation challenges arising from both human and structural factors. Persistent funding constraints, infrastructural deficits, and staff related responses such as resistance and low motivation have weakened the effectiveness of recent policy reforms. This study examines the influence of resistance to change, staff motivation, and institutional barriers on policy change adoption among academic staff in selected public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. A cross sectional survey design was employed, drawing data from 200 lecturers across three public universities in Ogun State. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and hierarchical regression to assess the relationships among human factors, structural barriers, and change adoption. The results reveal moderate resistance to change and relatively low motivation among academic staff. Funding and infrastructural limitations emerged as the most significant institutional barriers and were strongly associated with resistance. Motivation and resistance jointly explained a substantial proportion of the variance in change adoption, with motivation exerting a stronger positive influence on reform uptake. The study recommends the adoption of motivation driven change strategies, participatory governance structures, and sustained investment in educational infrastructure. Strengthening leadership commitment and aligning reform processes with staff professional needs are critical to improving policy change implementation and performance outcomes in Nigerian higher education institutions.

Keywords: Change Management, Higher Education, Motivation, Nigeria, Resistance To Change

Introduction

The effectiveness of policy change initiatives in Nigerian higher education institutions depends largely on how institutional conditions interact with staff motivation and resistance (Ogunode & Ahaoma, 2021). Complex environmental and systemic issues, such as unstable policies, inadequate infrastructure, and ongoing condition of service restructuring, affect Nigerian higher education institutions (Ogunode & Ahaoma, 2021; Ogunode, Musa, & Abubakar, 2022). Adaptive institutional capacity is required in light of recent National Universities Commission (2023) mandates for competency-based curricula and blended learning adoption. However, human factors like leadership inertia, motivational deficiencies, and attitude resistance make successful change implementation elusive (Adebayo & Iweala, 2023).

Human factors such as beliefs, values, and perceptions often determine whether structural reforms succeed or fail, according to the Change Management Scholarship (Kotter, 2012; Piderit, 2000). Responses to recent changes in performance management and teaching delivery at Ogun State's public universities—FUNAAB, OOU, and TASUED—have been mixed, ranging from mild resistance to excitement. Systemic barriers have been extensively studied (Eze & Okoli, 2021; Aina & Ogunleye, 2022;), but few empirical studies have examined the micro-level dynamics of resistance and motivation influencing reform adoption. Thus, this study looks into: 1. How common and strong is opposition to educational reform among selected Ogun State educational institution. How contextual and motivational factors forecast the adoption of change in these institutions.

Literature Review

Considering Human Factors in the Implementation of Change Employees' cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses to reform processes are all considered human factors in organisational change (Piderit, 2000). Personal efficacy, perceived fairness, and leadership communication all influence these responses in educational institutions (Tetteh & Afful, 2023). Investigate across African universities has demonstrated that staff buy-in, rather than mere compliance, determines whether pedagogical innovation takes root (Sambo & Bello, 2024). Resistance to change frequently arises from uncertainty, a perceived loss of autonomy, and a misalignment between institutional vision and individual objectives (Kotter, 2012). Recent African-based studies (Adebayo & Iweala, 2023; Nkan, 2025) confirm that entrenched hierarchies and inadequate stakeholder engagement amplify resistance. In contrast, high motivation—particularly intrinsic motivation rooted in professional growth and competence—enhances adaptability and commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

According to empirical research from Nigeria, motivation is correlated with the availability of opportunities for professional growth and recognition systems (Okolie & Onuoha, 2024). Similarly, lecturers' receptivity to curriculum and digital reforms is influenced by their views of institutional justice (Ogunode *et al.*, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Kotter's (2012) Eight-Step Change Model, and Lewin's Force Field Theory (1947) are all integrated in this study (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to Lewin, change happens when restraining factors (uncertainty, fear, and resistance) are outweighed by motivating factors (motivation, leadership support). By

establishing urgency, enabling widespread action, and consolidating gains, Kotter operationalises these dynamics into concrete steps. By highlighting autonomy, competence, and relatedness as prerequisites for sustained engagement, SDT expands our understanding of intrinsic motivation (Hassan & Ahmed, 2023). Combining these frameworks implies that while institutional enablers—communication, resources, and participatory leadership—translate motivation into behavioural change, motivation itself serves as a psychological driver that reduces resistance.

Empirical Context in Nigeria

Resource constraints worsen human factors in the Nigerian context. Surveys show that 78% of lecturers attribute reform fatigue to a lack of infrastructure and funding (Ogunode *et al.*, 2022). Ogun State universities face financial disparities as a result of federal versus state ownership (Aina & Ogunleye, 2022). Because they were typically trained using traditional pedagogies, senior faculty members are less equipped for the digital age (Eze & Okoli, 2021). To increase the adoption of reforms, recent studies suggest continuous motivation programmes and participatory change governance (Tetteh & Afful, 2023 & Okolie & Onuoha, 2024). This study fills the empirical confirmation gap that still exists in Ogun State.

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to evaluate the relationships among perceived barriers, motivation, resistance, and change adoption. In February 2025, data was gathered from 200 instructors at three public universities: the state-owned TASUED, the federal FUNAAB, and OOU. Stratified random sampling ensured adequate representation across disciplines and academic ranks. 200 of the 250 surveys that were sent out were valid (80% response rate). Forty percent of participants senior lecturers, 35% lecturers I/II, and 25% assistant lecturers; 56% male and 44% female; mean teaching experience was 10.2 years (SD = 5.8).

Instruments

A 5-point Likert scale is used for all instruments, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." A 6-item measure of resistance to change ($\alpha = .89$) that was modified from Oreg (2003). Four-item subscales measuring infrastructure, training, and funding are used to measure perceived barriers (Ogunode & Ahaoma, 2021). Motivation Level: Five SDT-adapted items ($\alpha = .87$) (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Five items measuring the behavioural integration of reforms ($\alpha = .90$) comprise the Change Adoption scale. Age, gender, rank, experience, and institution were among the demographics in table 1 below:

Table 1: Demographic Table

Institution	Academic Rank	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
TASUED	Senior Lecturer	26	13
	Lecturer I/II	28	14
	Assistant Lecturer	20	10
FUNAAB	Senior Lecturer	28	14

	Lecturer I/II	28	14
	Assistant Lecturer	12	6
OOU	Senior Lecturer	20	10
	Lecturer I/II	14	7
	Assistant Lecturer	24	12
Total		200	100

Source: Researcher 2025

Procedure and Ethics

Ethical clearance was given by the Olabisi Onabanjo University Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was acquired, participation was voluntary, and it was kept private. To increase response rates, surveys were distributed both online and in person.

Data Analysis

SPSS 28 was used to perform descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Pearson correlations, and hierarchical regression. Cronbach's alpha was used to confirm reliability ($>.85$). Normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were confirmed by regression diagnostics.

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics, Institutional Variation, Correlations, and Regression Predicting Change Adoption

Variable Analysis	M	SD	ANOVA / Institutional Mean	Correlation with Adoption (r)	Regression β	p-value
Motivation	2.90	1.10	-	.72**	.37	<.001
Resistance to Change	3.10	1.20	OOU: 3.40 FUNAAB: 3.10 TASUED: 2.80	-.58**	.30	<.001
Funding Barrier	4.20	-	-	-.61**	-	-
Infrastructure Barrier	4.00	-	=	-.60**	-	-
Hierarchical Regression (Total R ²)	-	-	F(8,191) = 25.61	-	-	<.001
ANOVA η^2	-	-	.04	-	-	-

Notes:

$p < .001$ for all significant correlations and regression coefficients.

Correlation coefficients show that resistance and barriers are negatively associated with adoption, while motivation is positively associated.

ANOVA indicates significant institutional differences in resistance levels, with OOU having the highest mean resistance and TASUED the lowest.

Hierarchical regression shows that demographics explain 12% of adoption variance, and the addition of resistance, motivation, and barriers increases total explained variance to 52%.

Results

Low motivation ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.10$) and moderate resistance ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.20$) were revealed by descriptive statistics. The biggest obstacles were those related to funding and infrastructure ($M = 4.20$ and 4.00 , respectively). With OOU at the top (3.40) and TASUED at

the bottom (2.80), an ANOVA showed institutional variation in resistance ($F(2,197) = 4.20, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$). According to correlation analysis, resistance and all barriers had strong positive relationships ($r = .58-.65, p < .001$), while adoption and resistance had a negative correlation ($r = -.58, p < .001$). Adoption and motivation had a strong correlation ($r = .72, p < .001$).

Hierarchical regression revealed that demographics explained 12% of the variance in adoption, while the inclusion of resistance, motivation, and obstacles increased R^2 to .52 ($F(8,191) = 25.61, p < .001$). Resistance ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) and motivation ($\beta = .37, p < .001$) were the most significant predictors.

Discussion

Human factors, particularly motivation and resistance, are crucial to the success of reform. The findings of this study are in line with Ogunode *et al.*, (2022) work on funding of public universities in Nigeria: Issues and challenges which revealed funding limitations surfaced as the main obstacle in Nigerian higher institutions. In the same vein, works of these African studies scholars Tetteh and Afful (2023); Sambo and Bello (2024) and Ryan and Deci (2017), is aligned with the resistance had a negative correlation when implementing change if motivation and reason for adoption is not clearly defined. The study revealed Federal universities demonstrate how governance-linked resource allocation is reflected in institutional discrepancies. increased scores for adoption, which the study of Aina and Ogunleye (2022) in the work on funding disparities and academic performance in Nigerian state universities agree with. The work of Nkan (2025) the findings of this work on transformational leadership, leadership commitment helped to partially mitigate infrastructure deficits.

Practical Implications

1. Establish participatory change committees to reduce cognitive resistance (Piderit, 2000).
2. Embed motivation-centred training that emphasises autonomy and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2017).
3. Secure dedicated budgets for digital infrastructure (Ogunode *et al.*, 2022).
4. Develop transformational leadership skills among department heads to enhance buy-in (Nkan, 2025).

Limitations and Future Research

Cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Self-report measures may inflate associations. Longitudinal designs tracking faculty attitude changes and mixed-methods exploration of affective resistance are recommended. Future studies could employ SEM to test mediating effects of psychological empowerment or leadership trust on the motivation–adoption relationship (Hassan & Ahmed, 2023). Comparative analyses across Nigerian states may reveal contextual effects.

Conclusion

Human factors remain pivotal yet modifiable determinants of educational reform. Leadership, participatory processes, and resourcing shape motivation and resistance. Targeted interventions converting resistance into engagement can enhance reform adoption, institutional resilience, and sustainable educational outcomes in Ogun State universities.

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