

The Impact of Workplace Culture, Educational Service Quality, and Change Readiness on University Performance in Central Thailand

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Abstract

This study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to examine the influence of educational service quality, readiness for change, and workplace culture on the operational effectiveness of universities in Central Thailand. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 390 staff members from both academic and administrative departments across nine provinces, ensuring representative subgroups. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained from in-depth interviews with 15 senior university administrators. The validity of the instrument was established through pilot testing, content validity, and construct validity assessments, while reliability was confirmed using internal consistency measures (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.80). The model's goodness-of-fit was evaluated using key fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 2.11$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.05, and SRMR = 0.04, indicating an acceptable model fit. Findings from structural equation modeling revealed that educational service quality had a significant direct impact on university performance (Standardized Path Coefficient = 0.65, $p < 0.05$), along with an indirect effect through workplace culture (Indirect Effect = 0.30, $p < 0.05$). Readiness for change also had a significant direct effect (0.55, $p < 0.01$) and an indirect effect mediated by workplace culture (0.40, $p < 0.01$). The triangulated qualitative findings emphasized the critical role of innovation, teamwork, and leadership in fostering a productive academic environment. Effective leadership, shared values, and collaborative culture were seen as central to enhancing university effectiveness. Overall, workplace culture functioned as a key mediating factor, amplifying the positive effects of service quality and change readiness. The study concludes that improving educational service quality, promoting change readiness, and fostering a strong workplace culture can significantly enhance the performance of universities in Central Thailand.

Keywords: Educational service quality; change readiness; workplace culture; university performance; mixed-methods research

Introduction

Higher education institutions in Central Thailand are increasingly challenged by global trends such as intensified competition, accreditation shifts, and technological transformation, demanding more strategic agility. Quality assurance systems like AUN-QA, EdPEX, and OECD standards provide structured frameworks for institutional development and assessment. Service quality in higher education, informed by SERVQUAL and HESQUAL models, emphasizes dimensions such as empathy, dependability, and responsiveness—elements crucial to enhancing student satisfaction. In parallel, the cultural dynamics within academic institutions—including leadership norms and shared values—play a vital role in driving quality implementation and managing change (OECD, 2023; AUN-QA, 2020). Key dimensions include empathy, reliability, and other service excellence factors (Teeroovengadum et al., 2019). Simultaneously, workplace culture, which encompasses values, behaviors, and leadership norms, significantly affects how quality is implemented and how institutions manage change (Haffar et al., 2019).

Moreover, change readiness—an organization's capacity to anticipate and respond to change—is increasingly important in the post-pandemic education landscape (Linnenluecke, 2017; Chaidaroon et al., 2022). Institutions that are flexible and forward-looking are better equipped to navigate uncertainty and sustain performance. Despite the relevance of these factors, there is limited research that integrates educational service quality, workplace culture, and change readiness into a unified framework to explain university performance. In particular, the mediating role of workplace culture remains underexplored within Thai higher education, especially in regional contexts like Central Thailand.

In the context of higher education, internal factors such as workplace culture, educational service quality, and change readiness have become increasingly important in enhancing university performance (Smith & Bititci, 2017; Islami et al., 2018). A positive and collaborative culture fosters engagement and facilitates the effective implementation of services and innovations (Haffar et al., 2019). High-quality educational services improve student satisfaction and institutional reputation

(Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016), while readiness for change enables universities to adapt to dynamic environments and sustain innovation (Linnenluecke, 2017; Wang & Kerdpitak, 2024). These factors are interrelated, with workplace culture playing a mediating role in transforming internal capabilities into sustainable performance outcomes (AUN-QA, 2020).

In today's volatile educational environment, the capacity to embrace and adapt to change has become a strategic necessity. However, few empirical studies have examined how educational service quality, organizational culture, and readiness for change collectively shape university performance—especially in regional Thai contexts. This study seeks to address that gap by investigating these interrelations, while also highlighting the mediating function of workplace culture—an aspect rarely emphasized in local academic discourse.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the existing conditions of workplace culture, service quality, and readiness for change within universities located in Central Thailand.
2. To analyze how educational service quality and institutional change readiness affect the performance of these universities.
3. To investigate the extent to which workplace culture serves as a mediating variable linking service quality and change readiness to institutional outcomes.

Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between educational service quality, change readiness, and university performance.

H2: Workplace culture has a direct positive effect on university performance.

H3: Workplace culture mediates the relationships between both educational service quality and change readiness with university performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study positions university performance as the outcome of three interrelated internal factors: educational service quality, organizational readiness for change,

and workplace culture. Influenced by foundational models such as SERVQUAL and the Competing Values Framework, the research adopts a systems–thinking perspective to illustrate how these elements interact to drive institutional success (Linnenluecke, 2017; Smith & Bittci, 2017; Islami et al., 2018).

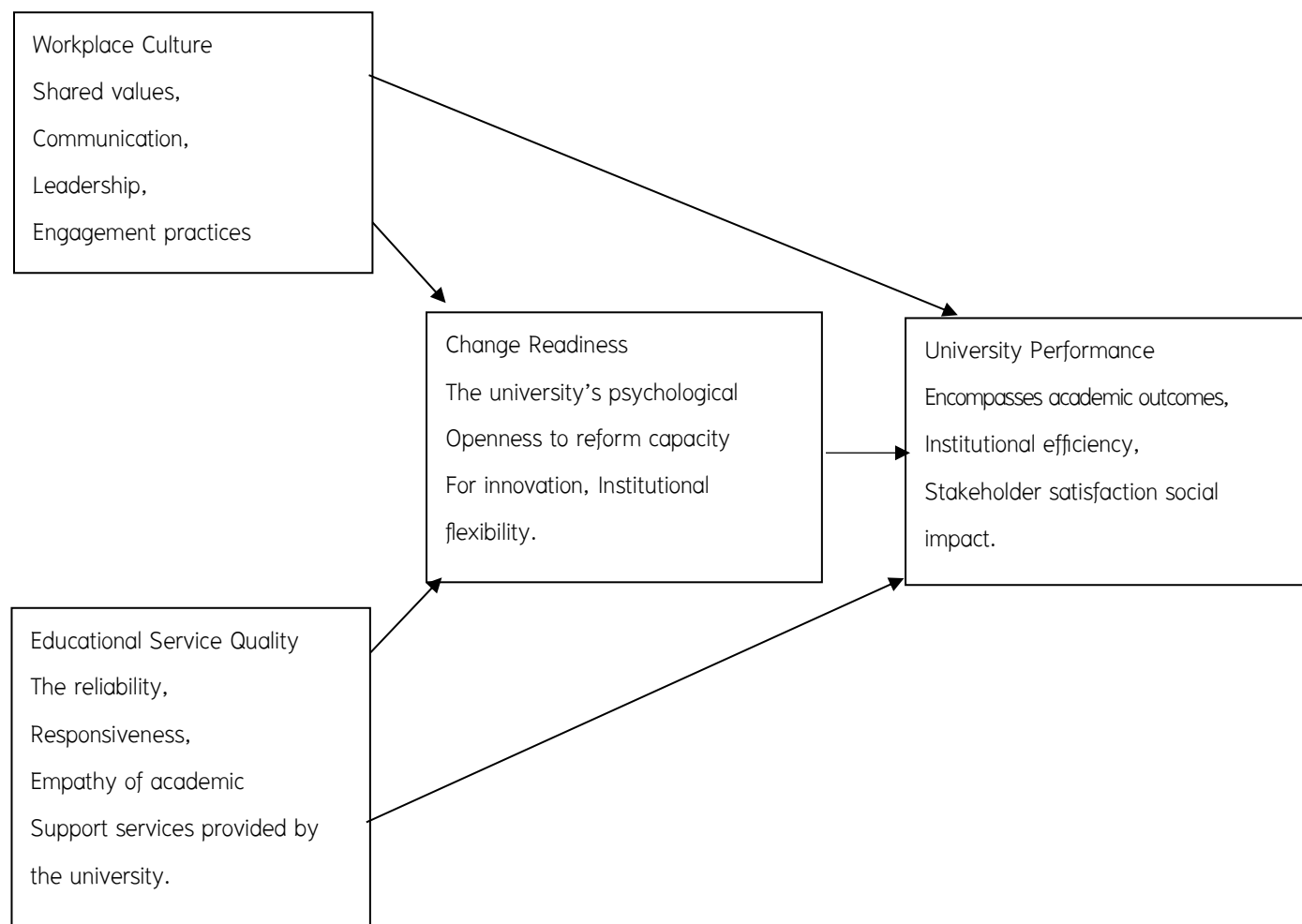


Figure 1: The conceptual framework

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed–methods design aligned with the pragmatic paradigm, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of educational service quality, readiness for change, and workplace culture on university performance in Central Thailand.

Population and Sample

1. Quantitative Methodology

1.1 Sample and Sampling Strategy

The target population consisted of academic and administrative staff from universities in Central Thailand. A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was applied to ensure representation across institutional types. A total of 390 participants were selected from six universities, stratified as follows:

Table 1: Sample Selection by University Type

University Type	Total in Population	Selected for Sample
Rajabhat Universities	8	2
Rajamangala University of Technology	8	2
Private Universities	8	2
Total	24	6

These institutional types were chosen for their strong regional relevance, community engagement, and organizational diversity, while excluding large research-intensive universities due to their differing missions and structures.

Sample Size

The sample size of 390 participants was determined using a sample size calculation for a finite population, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, ensuring sufficient statistical power for structural equation modeling (SEM).

Research Instruments and Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale, designed to measure three main constructs: educational service quality, workplace culture, and readiness for change. The items were developed by adapting established instruments from prior studies in organizational behavior, education management, and change readiness, with contextual modifications to suit the Thai higher education sector. To ensure the instrument's quality, a pilot test was conducted with 15 respondents, after which item refinement was performed. Content validity was assessed by a panel of three experts in education and organizational studies. Construct validity

was confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients exceeding 0.80 for all constructs, indicating high reliability.

For the qualitative component, guided semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 senior university administrators, selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria included holding key leadership positions in academic planning, quality assurance, or university administration, and representing a mix of university types (Rajabhat, Rajamangala, and private institutions). Participant demographics such as gender, age, professional background, and years in leadership roles were also considered to ensure diversity. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions organized into four key areas: (1) perceptions of educational service quality, (2) workplace cultural values and practices, (3) readiness and response to organizational change, and (4) leadership and collaboration dynamics. Interviews were conducted both face-to-face and virtually, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was performed using NVivo software, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase coding process. To ensure rigor and minimize bias, two independent coders analyzed the data. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa (≥ 0.85), and member checking was conducted by sharing thematic summaries with interviewees for verification. Reflexivity was maintained via researcher journaling, while peer debriefing and audit trails were employed to enhance trustworthiness.

Research Results

The findings of this study support all three research objectives and offer empirical validation for the proposed conceptual framework. The results are presented in alignment with each research objective and quantitative

1. To explore the current conditions of workplace culture, educational service quality, and change readiness in universities in Central Thailand. Descriptive statistics showed that respondents perceived educational service quality positively, with the highest average score recorded for the reliability dimension ($M = 3.96$). Workplace culture received a moderately high rating ($M = 3.76$), particularly in the areas of collaboration and commitment to quality. Change readiness was also rated favorably ($M = 3.73$). Among the performance indicators, alumni reputation was rated the highest ($M = 4.04$). The survey instrument was validated through pilot testing ($n = 30$) and expert review, followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess construct validity. Internal consistency reliability was

confirmed with Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.80 for all scales. Quantitative data were prepared through data cleaning, handling missing data via multiple imputation, and assumption testing (normality via skewness and kurtosis, multicollinearity via VIF and tolerance).

2 To examine the impact of educational service quality and change readiness on university performance in Central Thailand. The analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) revealed that both educational service quality and change readiness had a significant influence on university performance, through both direct and indirect effects. The overall model demonstrated a good fit to the data, as indicated by the following fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 2.11$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.05, and SRMR = 0.04. Specifically, educational service quality had a direct effect of 0.65 on university performance and an indirect effect of 0.30 mediated by workplace culture, resulting in a total effect of 0.95. Similarly, change readiness showed a direct effect of 0.55 and an indirect effect of 0.40, also mediated by workplace culture, yielding a total effect of 0.95. These findings provide empirical support for Hypothesis 1 (H1), affirming that both educational service quality and change readiness significantly contribute to improving university performance. The results also highlight the pivotal role of workplace culture in amplifying these effects, thereby underscoring its strategic importance within higher education institutions.

Table 3: SEM Data the SEM Data Table that will be used for SEM analysis to evaluate the relationships between the variables:

Variable	SD	Factor Loading	CR (Composite Reliability)	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
Educational Service Quality	0.984	0.82	0.89	0.72
	0.951	0.83		
Change Readiness	0.981	0.78	0.87	0.75
Workplace Culture	1.032	0.80	0.85	0.73
	0.978	0.82		
University Performance	0.907	0.85	0.91	0.80
	1.010	0.84		

3 To investigate whether workplace culture positively mediates the relationship between educational service quality, change readiness, and university performance. The results of the mediation analysis confirmed that workplace culture plays a significant mediating role in the relationships between both educational service quality and change readiness with university performance. Specifically, educational service quality had a direct effect of 0.65 and an indirect effect of 0.30 through workplace culture, resulting in a total effect of 0.95. Similarly, change readiness exhibited a direct effect of 0.55 and an indirect effect of 0.40, also mediated by workplace culture, yielding a total effect of 0.95. All effects were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), providing strong support for Hypotheses H2 and H3, and confirming that workplace culture significantly enhances the positive impact of both predictors on performance outcomes. The total effect sizes, ranging from 0.95 to 1.05, indicate a robust and stable mediating function of workplace culture in the structural model. These findings reinforce the conceptual framework of the study and underscore the importance of fostering a strong organizational culture to maximize the benefits of service quality improvements and change readiness. The relationships are illustrated in Figure 1 and detailed in Table 4, which summarize the path coefficients and mediation effects derived from SEM analysis.

Table 4: Mediating Role of Workplace Culture

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Statistical Significance	Method Used
Educational Service Quality → University Performance	0.65	0.30	0.95	Significant ($p < 0.05$)	Bootstrapping, Sobel Test
Change Readiness → University Performance	0.55	0.40	0.95	Significant ($p < 0.05$)	Bootstrapping, Sobel Test
Educational Service Quality → Workplace Culture → University Performance	0.65	0.35	1.00	Significant ($p < 0.05$)	Mediation Analysis (CFA, SEM)
Change Readiness → Workplace Culture → University Performance	0.55	0.50	1.05	Significant ($p < 0.05$)	Mediation Analysis (CFA, SEM)

Causal model: University Performance

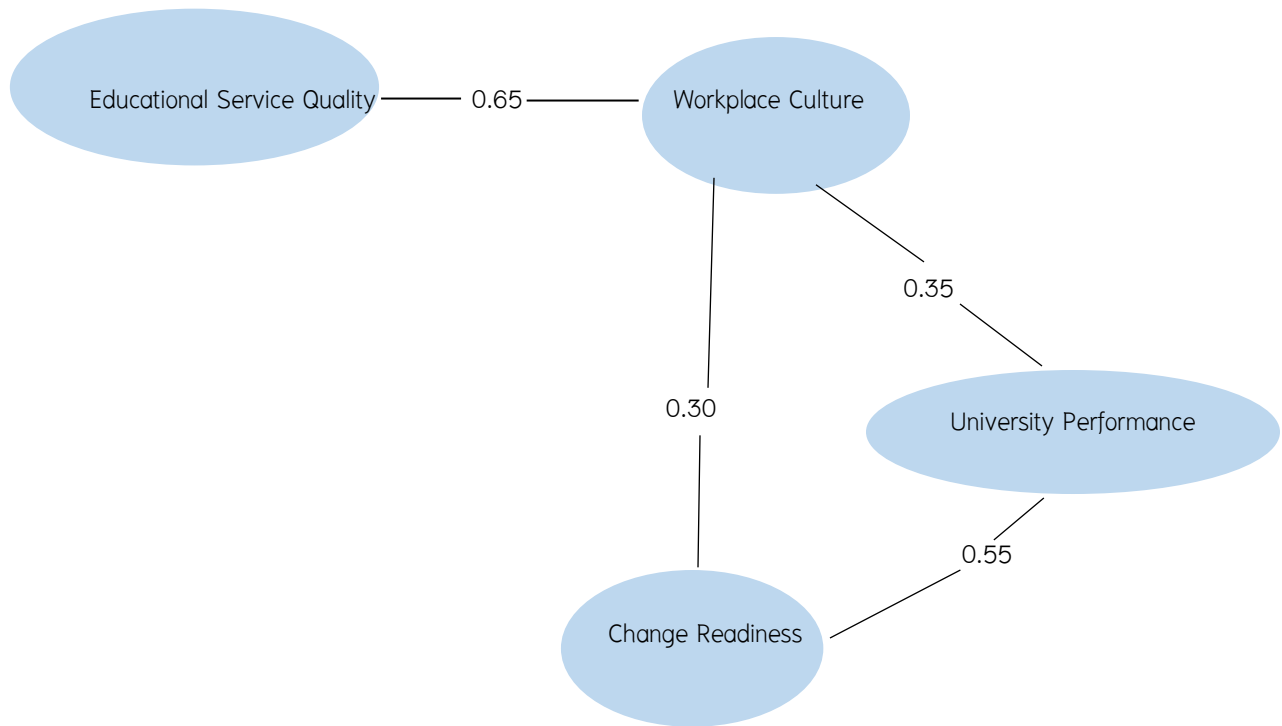


Figure 2: Path Model Showing the Influence of Educational Service Quality on University

In summary, both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that workplace culture, educational service quality, and change readiness work synergistically to strengthen university performance. These insights underscore the strategic importance of developing a values-based institutional culture, improving service delivery systems, and fostering agility to support sustainable excellence within Thai higher education.

Qualitative Insights:

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, with NVivo software used to organize and code the emerging themes related to educational service quality, change readiness, workplace culture, and performance outcomes. In-depth interviews with 15 senior university leaders provided valuable insights into how workplace culture, educational service quality, and change

readiness are perceived and operationalized within their institutions. Key themes that emerged include: Qualitative findings from interviews with university leaders revealed key themes:

Table 5: Thematic Summary of Qualitative Findings by Key Variables

Variable	Themes from In-depth Interviews	Key Qualitative Insights
Educational Service Quality	Student-centered service Empathy and responsiveness Reliability in support	Leaders emphasized the importance of providing empathetic, timely, and reliable services that meet student needs and enhance institutional trust.
Change Readiness	Openness to reform Innovation in academic and administrative areas	Respondents noted a proactive mindset toward change, highlighting adaptability and readiness to implement continuous improvement across departments.
Workplace Culture	Teamwork and collaboration Shared values and leadership engagement	Interviewees described a culture of collaboration, shared goals, and strong leadership involvement as key to driving strategic alignment and internal cohesion.
University Performance	Alumni success Staff development Academic output and reputation	Leaders identified successful alumni, investment in faculty, and institutional reputation as primary indicators of university effectiveness and long-term success.

This study explored how educational service quality, change readiness, and workplace culture impact university performance in Central Thailand. Findings showed that service quality and change readiness influence performance directly and through workplace culture. Thematic analysis emphasized empathy in student services, innovation, leadership, and collaboration. The study suggests universities improve performance by prioritizing student-centered services, adaptability, and leadership development, while recommending broader future research due to limitations like regional context and self-reported data.

Summary of Integrated Findings

Dimension	Quantitative Findings	SEM Analysis	Qualitative Insights	Consistency
Educational Service Quality	M = 3.93–3.96	Direct = 0.65 Indirect via WC = 0.30	Emphasizes empathy, responsiveness, reliability	Strong alignment on student-centered services
Change Readiness	M = 3.73	Direct = 0.55 Indirect via WC = 0.40	Highlights openness to reform and innovation	Consistent emphasis on adaptability
Workplace Culture	M = 3.74–3.76	Mediator + Direct on UP	Stresses teamwork, shared values, leadership	Reinforces collaborative culture’s central role
University Performance	M = 3.74–4.04	Influenced by SQ, CR, WC	Alumni success, academic output, reputation	Consistent across all data sources

This study explored how key internal factors, such as educational service quality, change readiness, and workplace culture, influence university performance. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data consistently emphasized the importance of these factors in shaping university outcomes. Educational service quality was found to be crucial in enhancing student services, with a focus on empathy, responsiveness, and reliability. Change readiness was also identified as a critical factor, with data showing that a proactive approach to innovation and reform is essential for improving performance, both directly and indirectly through workplace culture. Workplace culture emerged as a central factor that mediates the impact of the other elements on university performance. The study highlighted the importance of teamwork, shared values, and strong leadership, emphasizing that a collaborative and unified work environment is key to driving performance. In conclusion, the study found that university performance is influenced by a combination of educational service quality, change readiness, and workplace culture. The research suggests that universities can enhance their performance by focusing on these internal factors, particularly by creating a supportive and adaptable environment for both students and staff.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the internal factors that influence university performance in Central Thailand through a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach. Specifically, it examined the existing conditions of workplace culture, educational service quality, and change readiness; assessed the impact of educational service quality and change readiness on university performance; and investigated the extent to which workplace culture mediates the relationship between service quality, change readiness, and institutional outcomes.

The quantitative results revealed that educational service quality was perceived positively among respondents, particularly in terms of responsiveness and reliability, with mean scores ranging from 3.93 to 3.96. Change readiness was also rated favorably ($M = 3.73$), as was workplace culture ($M = 3.74\text{--}3.76$), especially in dimensions related to teamwork and leadership support. These findings were consistent with the qualitative data, where university leaders emphasized the importance of empathetic, student-centered services, openness to reform, and collaborative environments. These insights support the view that institutions in Central Thailand already possess foundational strengths in these areas, although further strategic enhancement is needed.

To test Hypothesis 1, the study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which showed that both educational service quality and change readiness have statistically significant effects on university performance. Educational service quality had a direct effect of 0.65 and an indirect effect of 0.30 via workplace culture, resulting in a total effect of 0.95. Change readiness had a direct effect of 0.55 and an indirect effect of 0.40, totaling 0.95 as well. These findings indicate that service quality and adaptability are not only influential on their own but also operate synergistically through workplace culture to enhance performance outcomes.

The mediating role of workplace culture, as hypothesized in H2 and H3, was confirmed by both quantitative and qualitative results. SEM analysis revealed that workplace culture significantly mediated the relationship between educational service quality and performance (total effect = 1.00), and between change readiness and performance (total effect = 1.05). Interview participants consistently described workplace culture as a foundation for trust, innovation, and effective leadership. Their perspectives reinforce the idea that a shared sense of purpose, open

communication, and collaborative practices create an environment in which service quality and adaptability can flourish. Despite these positive findings, the implementation of changes in workplace culture or service quality can pose practical challenges. For instance, fostering a collaborative culture may be hindered by traditional hierarchical structures, departmental silos, or lack of incentives for teamwork. Similarly, ensuring consistent service quality requires long-term investment in professional development, digital infrastructure, and performance monitoring—resources that may not be equally available across all institutions.

To address these challenges, the study proposes several actionable strategies for university administrators. First, institutions should institutionalize programs that promote shared values and collective identity, such as cross-functional innovation teams, staff recognition systems, and participatory planning processes. Second, service delivery can be strengthened through digital transformation—adopting platforms like CRM systems or AI-powered chatbots to streamline communication and improve responsiveness. Third, building change readiness requires ongoing leadership training, especially in adaptive leadership, and organizational learning frameworks that allow for continuous improvement. Importantly, these strategies must be tailored to institutional context. Differences in university size, funding models, and governance structures can affect the feasibility and impact of implementation. For example, smaller institutions may benefit from agile decision-making but face limitations in resources, while larger universities may require more structured change management processes to overcome resistance and maintain alignment across departments. In connecting these findings to broader trends in higher education, the study highlights the growing importance of digital transformation, globalization, and rising stakeholder expectations. Universities are increasingly expected to provide seamless digital services, demonstrate innovation readiness, and maintain high levels of responsiveness in a competitive and rapidly changing environment. Institutions that can integrate service quality, adaptability, and workplace culture into their core strategies will be better positioned to meet these demands. In summary, the results affirm that university performance is not determined by any single factor, but rather through the interplay of service quality, readiness for change, and organizational culture. These elements must be intentionally developed and aligned to support long-term institutional success. The study's findings

provide valuable insights for university leaders seeking to improve performance and build resilient, future-ready organizations.

Suggestions

1. Suggestion from Research

1) Universities should enhance student-centered service quality by adopting digital platforms such as chatbots, mobile apps, and CRM systems. These tools support real-time communication, improve responsiveness, and help track student satisfaction. Although digital infrastructure and literacy remain challenges, scalable pilot projects and training programs can effectively address these issues.

2) Institutions must strengthen organizational readiness for change through leadership development and innovation initiatives. Establishing innovation labs and conducting scenario-based strategic planning will foster adaptability and resilience. Overcoming resistance to change can be achieved through participatory planning and recognizing internal change agents.

3) A collaborative workplace culture should be cultivated across the institution. This can be done through cross-functional teamwork, clear communication of shared values, and participatory governance structures. Addressing institutional silos and top-down decision-making requires structured dialogue and recognition of interdepartmental collaboration.

4) It is essential to align institutional performance goals with stakeholder outcomes, particularly in terms of alumni success and reputation. Building graduate tracking systems and engaging employers and alumni in feedback mechanisms can improve relevance and impact.

5) Digital transformation should be integrated into all strategic domains of the university. A clear roadmap should guide digital governance, learning innovation, and operational efficiency. Investment in data analytics and digital pedagogy will ensure long-term institutional competitiveness. Funding constraints may be overcome through external partnerships and targeted grants.

2.Recommendations for Future Research

1) Longitudinal studies are essential to examine the long-term effects of internal factors like service quality, change readiness, and culture on institutional performance. Tracking universities over time will provide deeper insight into how these elements evolve and sustain impact.

2) Comparative research across regions or countries can test the generalizability of results and uncover important cultural or contextual differences. This is particularly important for tailoring strategies to diverse institutional environments.

3) Future studies should consider additional variables—such as leadership styles, faculty motivation, or digital integration—as potential mediators or moderators. This would help build more comprehensive and explanatory models of institutional success.

4) Broadening stakeholder involvement is recommended. Including voices from students, administrative staff, alumni, and external partners can enhance the depth, balance, and real-world relevance of qualitative findings.

5) Given the growing importance of technology in education, researchers should further explore how digital transformation initiatives influence service effectiveness and organizational agility. This is especially timely in the context of technology-enhanced learning and shifting institutional demands.

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