

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employees' Readiness for Organizational Change: The Moderating Role of Organizational Transparency and the Mediating Role of Perceived Action Plan

Saber. Shokri^{1*}, Rouhollah. Sharifi¹, Saeed. Sadeghian Gharaghieh¹

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: shokri@pnu.ac.ir

Article Info

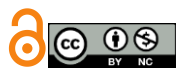
Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Shokri, S., Sharifi, R., & Sadeghian Gharaghieh, S. (2026). The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employees' Readiness for Organizational Change: The Moderating Role of Organizational Transparency and the Mediating Role of Perceived Action Plan. *International Journal of Innovation Management and Organizational Behavior*, 6(5), 1-14.

<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijimob.5789>



© 2026 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employees' readiness for organizational change, considering the mediating role of perceived action plan and the moderating role of organizational transparency.

Methods and Materials: This applied study used a descriptive-survey design. The statistical population included all employees of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, totaling 800 individuals. Based on Cochran's formula, 259 participants were selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a standardized 50-item questionnaire. The quality of the instrument was assessed through content validity, construct validity, and reliability indices. Descriptive statistics were analyzed using SPSS, while the research hypotheses and conceptual model were tested at the inferential level through structural equation modeling using PLS software. The conceptual framework of the study was adapted from Al-Arifi et al. (2024).

Findings: The results of path analysis indicated that transformational leadership had a significant indirect effect on readiness for organizational change through the mediating role of perceived action plan, with a t-value of 7.048. Transformational leadership also had a significant positive effect on perceived action plan, with a path coefficient of 0.252 and a t-value of 3.424. Moreover, transformational leadership significantly predicted readiness for organizational change, with a path coefficient of 0.206 and a t-value of 2.822. Perceived action plan had a significant positive effect on readiness for organizational change, with a path coefficient of 0.368 and a t-value of 5.125. In addition, organizational transparency significantly moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and readiness for organizational change, with a path coefficient of 0.244 and a t-value of 3.006.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that transformational leadership can enhance employees' readiness for organizational change both directly and indirectly through perceived action plans. Furthermore, organizational transparency strengthens this relationship by creating a clearer and more trustworthy organizational environment for change implementation.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Employee Readiness; Organizational Change; Organizational Transparency; Perceived Action Plan.

1 Introduction

Organizational change has become an unavoidable condition for contemporary organizations, particularly in public and health-related institutions where environmental complexity, technological transformation, stakeholder expectations, and service-quality demands continuously reshape organizational priorities. In such contexts, change is not merely a managerial initiative but a strategic necessity through which organizations adapt to policy reforms, digitalization, resource constraints, new work processes, and evolving expectations of employees and service recipients. However, the success of organizational change depends not only on the formal design of change programs but also on the psychological, behavioral, and relational readiness of employees who are expected to implement change in daily organizational routines. Employees' readiness for organizational change reflects the extent to which individuals perceive change as necessary, legitimate, feasible, and beneficial, and this readiness is shaped by leadership practices, organizational communication, cultural conditions, social capital, and the clarity of implementation plans (Alarifi et al., 2024; Engida et al., 2022; Mekonnen & Bayissa, 2023).

Readiness for change is especially important in organizations that provide public and health services because these organizations are characterized by professional specialization, bureaucratic structures, interdepartmental dependencies, and high sensitivity to service outcomes. In such settings, even technically well-designed change initiatives may fail if employees do not understand the rationale for change, do not trust decision-makers, or do not perceive a clear and actionable pathway for implementation. Previous research has therefore emphasized that organizational change should be examined not only from a structural or administrative perspective but also from the perspective of employees' attitudes toward change and their perceptions of leadership support, transparency, and participation (Mansouri, 2023; Mohammadi Kia & Pourjafar, 2024; Rumijati et al., 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant for medical sciences organizations, where change may involve administrative reforms, technological upgrades, new standards of accountability, shifts in service delivery, and coordination across professional groups.

Among the factors influencing employees' readiness for organizational change, transformational leadership has received substantial scholarly attention. Transformational

leadership refers to a leadership style through which leaders inspire followers, articulate a compelling vision, stimulate innovative thinking, provide individualized consideration, and encourage employees to transcend narrow self-interest for the achievement of collective organizational goals. The importance of transformational leadership has been emphasized in educational, governmental, banking, health, and technology-driven organizations because this leadership style can create meaning, commitment, and psychological energy during periods of uncertainty (Bakhtiari Fayanderi et al., 2016; Fitriadi et al., 2026; Ghoochani et al., 2017; Rahimi Khatounabad & Sharifipour, 2022). Unlike transactional leadership, which is primarily based on formal exchanges, rewards, and corrective mechanisms, transformational leadership strengthens employees' internal motivation and encourages them to interpret change as an opportunity for development rather than merely as an imposed organizational requirement (Mansouri, 2023; Mekonnen & Bayissa, 2023).

The role of transformational leadership becomes more critical when organizations are exposed to ambiguity and resistance during change. Leaders who communicate a clear vision, demonstrate commitment to change, and involve employees in the change process can reduce uncertainty and increase employees' belief that change is manageable and valuable. Abrell-Vogel and Rowold emphasized that leaders' commitment to change contributes to their effectiveness in guiding change processes, indicating that employees are more likely to support change when they observe consistent commitment and credibility in leadership behavior (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014). Similarly, organizational diagnosis perspectives suggest that effective change requires attention to people-centered factors, including employee perceptions, participation, motivation, and communication patterns (Bray, 2014). Therefore, transformational leadership can be considered a central antecedent of readiness for change because it shapes how employees understand the necessity, desirability, and feasibility of change.

Transformational leadership has also been associated with creativity, innovation, empowerment, organizational learning, and competitive advantage. These outcomes are conceptually relevant to readiness for change because employees who feel empowered, innovative, and capable of learning are more likely to accept change and participate constructively in its implementation. Studies have shown that transformational leadership can enhance employees' creativity and innovation, support empowerment, and

strengthen organizational learning capacity (Ghoochani et al., 2017; Khorshid & Pashazadeh, 2014; Torabi et al., 2014). In competitive and knowledge-based environments, leadership styles may also influence organizational innovation and individual creativity, which in turn can contribute to sustainable competitive advantage (Zafari et al., 2017). These findings suggest that transformational leadership does not affect change readiness only through direct motivational influence; it also develops the organizational capabilities and employee orientations required for adaptive change.

The contemporary literature has further expanded the relevance of transformational leadership by linking it to digital transformation, employee engagement, job satisfaction, knowledge sharing, innovative work behavior, and firm performance. In the digital era, transformational leadership is increasingly viewed as a key mechanism for enabling employees to navigate complexity, acquire new competencies, and engage with innovation-oriented change (Fitriadi et al., 2026; Odai et al., 2026). Recent studies have indicated that transformational leadership can foster innovative work behavior by encouraging the movement from idea exploration to implementation (Phairat et al., 2026). It can also influence employee engagement through job satisfaction with supervisors in higher education contexts, demonstrating the relational and motivational pathways through which leadership affects employee attitudes (Vo & Tran, 2026). At the organizational level, transformational leadership has been linked to firm performance through innovation capacity and management accounting systems usage, showing that leadership can connect human motivation with strategic organizational systems (Yen et al., 2025). These developments support the argument that transformational leadership is a dynamic resource for change-oriented organizations.

Despite the importance of leadership, employees' readiness for organizational change cannot be fully explained by leadership behavior alone. Change readiness is also influenced by employees' understanding of the practical steps through which change will be implemented. In this regard, the concept of a perceived action plan is important. A perceived action plan refers to employees' perception that the organization has a clear, structured, and feasible plan for implementing change. It concerns the extent to which employees believe that change is supported by defined priorities, operational steps, responsibilities, timelines, and mechanisms for coordination. When employees perceive that a coherent action plan exists, they are more likely to

interpret change as manageable and less likely to experience uncertainty, confusion, or resistance. Conversely, when change is communicated only as a broad vision without an understandable implementation pathway, employees may support the idea of change in principle but remain hesitant about its execution.

The mediating role of perceived action plan is theoretically meaningful because transformational leaders often influence readiness for change by translating vision into shared understanding and perceived feasibility. Transformational leaders may inspire employees and create commitment, but this influence becomes stronger when employees perceive that there is a realistic plan for action. In other words, leadership vision must be connected to implementation clarity. The literature on organizational change indicates that readiness is strengthened when employees understand both why change is necessary and how it will be carried out (Alarifi et al., 2024; Engida et al., 2022). Studies on information technology capabilities and transformational leadership have also suggested that readiness for change may be shaped by mediating mechanisms such as knowledge sharing, which help employees make sense of change and reduce uncertainty (Rahimi Khatounabad & Sharifipour, 2022). In a similar logic, perceived action plan can function as a cognitive and operational bridge between transformational leadership and employees' readiness for organizational change.

Another critical factor in the change process is organizational transparency. Organizational transparency refers to the extent to which organizational information, decisions, procedures, and rationales are communicated openly, accurately, and accessibly to employees. Transparency is not limited to the dissemination of information; rather, it involves creating a communicative climate in which employees believe that leaders and organizations provide reliable explanations, reduce ambiguity, and avoid hidden agendas. In change contexts, transparency can strengthen trust and reduce suspicion because employees are better able to understand the purpose, consequences, and expected trajectory of change. Research has directly emphasized the role of organizational transparency in preparing employees for change under transformational leadership, suggesting that transparency can illuminate the change process and reinforce the effectiveness of leadership behaviors (Alarifi et al., 2024).

The moderating role of organizational transparency is particularly important because transformational leadership may not have the same effect in all organizational climates.

When organizational transparency is high, employees are more likely to interpret transformational leadership messages as credible, consistent, and actionable. In contrast, when transparency is low, even inspiring leadership may be viewed with uncertainty or skepticism because employees may not have sufficient information about organizational intentions, resource allocation, or implementation procedures. Empirical work has shown that organizational transparency can mediate or shape the relationship between transformational leadership and relevant organizational outcomes, including the use of electronic teaching among teachers (Heydarifard et al., 2022). Broader discussions of social capital also support this logic, as trust, shared understanding, and relational networks are fundamental to organizational effectiveness and collective action (Babajani Mohammadi & Takroosta, 2014; Seyed Naghavi & Shadan, 2010; Tizchang & Houri, 2017). Therefore, transparency can be viewed as a contextual condition that strengthens the impact of transformational leadership on readiness for change.

The relevance of transparency is also consistent with broader organizational and sustainability perspectives. Sustainable organizational development requires accountability, stakeholder orientation, and responsible communication, especially when organizations seek to implement long-term strategic transformation (Ketprapakorn, 2019). Visionary organizations are often distinguished by coherent values, long-term commitment, and the ability to align people around enduring organizational purposes (Collins & Porras, 2014). In this regard, transparency contributes to change readiness by aligning employees' perceptions with organizational goals and reducing the gap between managerial intentions and employee interpretations. Work engagement literature also suggests that employees are more likely to invest energy and commitment in organizational goals when they perceive meaningfulness, involvement, and organizational support (Farashbandi et al., 2019). Thus, transparency can create the communicative and psychological conditions under which transformational leadership becomes more effective.

In addition to transparency, adaptability and participatory values are increasingly recognized as essential for successful organizational change. Research on adaptability and organizational change has indicated that leadership values emphasizing participation can influence employees' response to change initiatives (Mohammadi Kia & Pourjafar, 2024). Similarly, innovation speed and organizational performance are linked to the ability of

organizations to respond quickly to environmental demands and convert new ideas into practical outcomes (Maharti & Hassani Rad, 2016). These findings reinforce the importance of studying change readiness through an integrated model that includes leadership, employee perceptions, and organizational context. Such an integrated approach is necessary because change readiness emerges from the interaction between leader behavior, perceived implementation mechanisms, and the transparency of the organizational environment.

Although previous studies have examined transformational leadership, organizational change, and employee readiness in different sectors, several conceptual and empirical gaps remain. First, many studies have focused primarily on the direct relationship between leadership and readiness for change, while less attention has been paid to how employees' perception of an action plan explains this relationship. Second, although transparency has been recognized as a key factor in change communication, its role as a moderator in the relationship between transformational leadership and readiness for change requires further investigation in public health-related organizational contexts. Third, the medical sciences sector has unique structural and professional characteristics, and employees' readiness for organizational change in this sector may be influenced by both motivational leadership and the clarity of organizational processes. Therefore, examining transformational leadership, perceived action plan, organizational transparency, and readiness for organizational change in a single model can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of change management in health-related public organizations.

Accordingly, the aim of this study was to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employees' readiness for organizational change, considering the mediating role of perceived action plan and the moderating role of organizational transparency among employees of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences.

2 Methods and Materials

The present study is applied in terms of objective and descriptive-survey in terms of method. The sampling method in this study was simple random sampling. The statistical population of the study included all employees of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, totaling 800 individuals, and the statistical sample size was determined to be 259 participants based on Cochran's formula. The data

collection instrument was a standardized 50-item questionnaire. To assess the quality of the questionnaire, content validity, construct validity, and reliability were examined. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS software, and at the inferential level, structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses through PLS software.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Data Based on Research Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Transformational leadership	3.51	1.40
Employees' readiness for organizational change	3.08	1.40
Organizational transparency	2.91	1.35
Perceived action plan	2.88	1.26

The results indicate that transformational leadership had the highest mean, whereas perceived action plan had the lowest mean.

Table 2

Skewness and Kurtosis Test

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transformational leadership	-0.776	0.325
Employees' readiness for organizational change	-0.635	0.342
Organizational transparency	-0.477	0.252
Perceived action plan	-0.456	-0.264

Based on the skewness and kurtosis tests, and considering that the values were between -1 and +1, all variables and data were normal and homogeneous.

In the following section, structural equation modeling was used to examine the relationships among the research variables.

Table 3

Validity Values Related to Each Variable

Variable	Validity
Transformational leadership	0.531
Employees' readiness for organizational change	0.554
Organizational transparency	0.565
Perceived action plan	0.573

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all variables in this study were greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.70. Composite reliability, unlike Cronbach's alpha, which implicitly assumes that all indicators have equal weights, is

3 Findings and Results

First, the descriptive analysis of the research variables is presented. To identify the status of these variables among employees of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, descriptive indices such as mean and standard deviation were used. The results are presented in Table 1.

To examine the homogeneity of the data, skewness and kurtosis tests were used.

As shown in Table 3, the average variance extracted values for the latent variables were higher than 0.50. Therefore, it can be stated that the convergent validity of the measurement models was acceptable.

based on the actual factor loadings of each construct and therefore provides a better criterion for reliability. Composite reliability should be greater than 0.70 to indicate

the internal consistency of the construct. Table 4 presents the reliability results of the measurement instrument in full.

Table 4

Reliability Values Related to Each Variable

Row	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
1	Transformational leadership	0.764	0.848
2	Employees' readiness for organizational change	0.789	0.757
3	Organizational transparency	0.847	0.884
4	Perceived action plan	0.734	0.754

Table 5 shows the assessment of the discriminant validity of the research model. Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs. This type of validity is calculated at two levels: the indicator level and the latent variable level. At the indicator level, cross-loadings are used to assess discriminant validity, and the loading of an indicator on its corresponding construct must be higher than its loadings on other constructs. At the latent variable level, the Fornell–Larcker criterion was used. According to this criterion, the

square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable must be greater than the highest correlation of that construct with other constructs in the model. In other words, the square root of the AVE values of the latent variables in the present study, which are placed on the main diagonal of the matrix, must be greater than the correlations among the variables, which are arranged below and to the left of the main diagonal. The logic behind this criterion is that a construct should share more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs.

Table 5

Assessment of Discriminant Validity of the Research Model

Variables	Transformational Leadership	Employees' Readiness for Organizational Change	Organizational Transparency	Perceived Action Plan
Transformational leadership	0.785			
Employees' readiness for organizational change	0.532	0.781		
Organizational transparency	0.529	0.396	0.737	
Perceived action plan	0.325	0.344	0.445	0.729

The results of Table 5 indicate that all variables had acceptable discriminant validity. In the following section, the inner, or structural, model of the study is examined.

To analyze and assess the model of this study, structural equation modeling was used for data analysis. Structural equation modeling is a statistical model used to examine linear relationships between latent, or unobserved, variables and manifest, or observed, variables. In other words,

structural equation modeling is a powerful statistical technique that combines the measurement model, namely confirmatory factor analysis, and the structural model, namely regression or path analysis, within a simultaneous statistical test. Through these techniques, researchers can reject hypothetical structures, or models, or confirm their fit with the data. SmartPLS software was used to analyze the conceptual model of the study.

Figure 1

Measurement Model of the Study with Factor Loading Values and Path Coefficients (Beta)

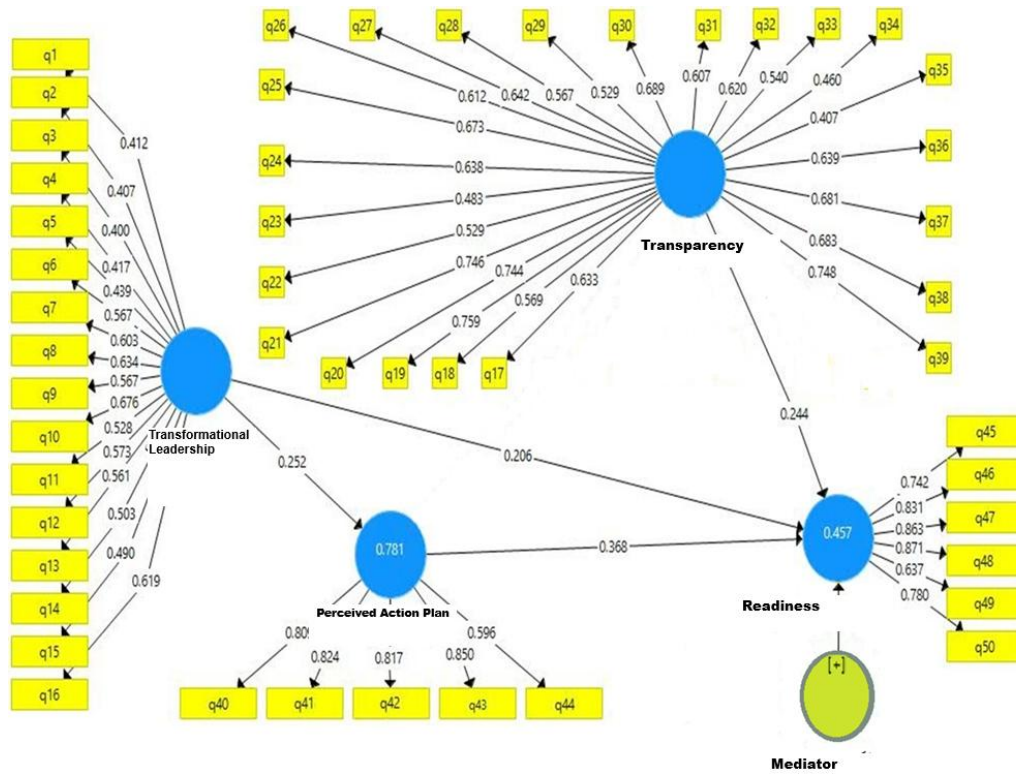
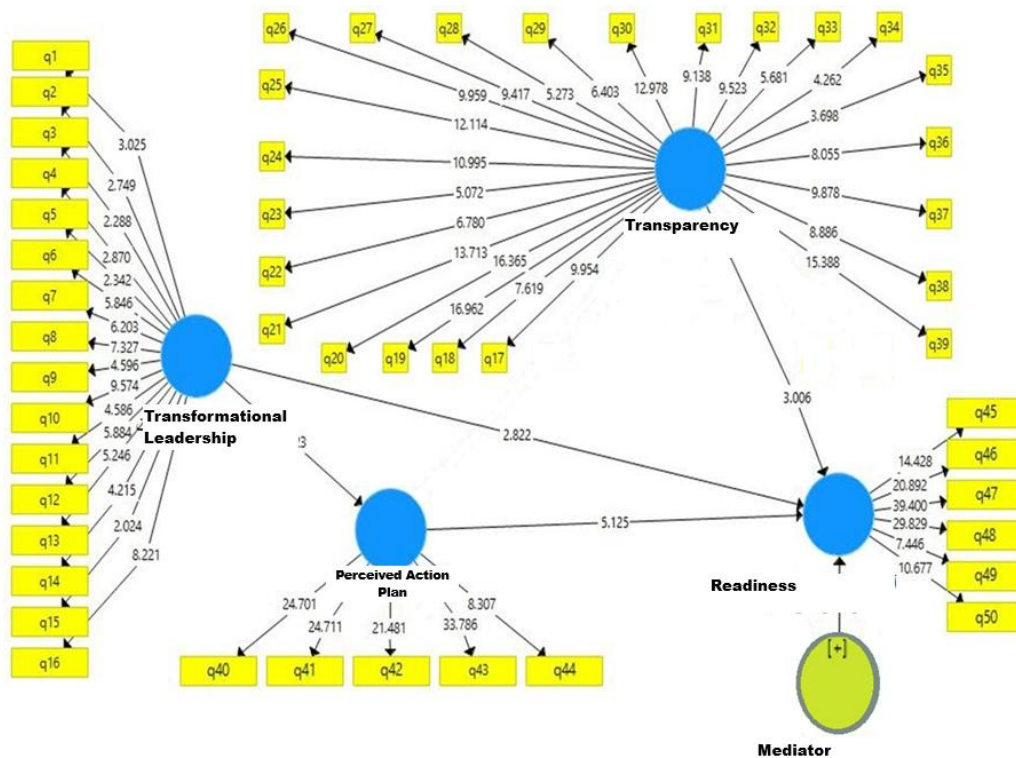


Figure 2

Final Structural Model of the Study with Critical Values (t-Statistics)



In the inner model section, the relationships among the latent variables of the study are analyzed. The first criterion for evaluating the inner model is examining the absence of

collinearity among the variables. For this purpose, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was used. A VIF value higher than 5 indicates collinearity among variables.

Table 6

Results of Collinearity Indices

Variables	Collinearity Indices
Transformational leadership	2.731
Employees' readiness for organizational change	1.468
Organizational transparency	1.386
Perceived action plan	1.927

According to Table 6, it can be observed that the condition of non-collinearity was met for each variable.

The second criterion for evaluating the inner model is the path coefficients. To examine their significance, the

bootstrapping procedure was used. These coefficients, along with their corresponding t-statistics, significance levels, and confidence intervals for direct effects, are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Results of Direct, Indirect, Total, and Effect Size Estimates in the Inner Model of the Study

Hypotheses	Effect Coefficient (β)	T-Value	Confirmation / Rejection
Transformational leadership $\rightarrow$ Perceived action plan	0.252	3.423	Confirmed
Transformational leadership $\rightarrow$ Readiness for organizational change	0.206	2.822	Confirmed
Perceived action plan $\rightarrow$ Readiness for organizational change	0.368	5.125	Confirmed
Transformational leadership $\rightarrow$ Perceived action plan $\rightarrow$ Readiness for organizational change	—	7.048	Confirmed
Organizational transparency $\times$ Transformational leadership $\rightarrow$ Readiness for organizational change	0.244	3.006	Confirmed

The results of the Sobel test indicated that transformational leadership had a significant effect on readiness for organizational change through the mediating role of perceived action plan, with a t-value of 7.048. In addition, transformational leadership had a significant effect on perceived action plan, with an effect coefficient of 0.252 and a t-value of 3.424. Transformational leadership also had a significant effect on readiness for organizational change, with an effect coefficient of 0.206 and a t-value of 2.822. Moreover, perceived action plan had a significant effect on readiness for organizational change, with an effect coefficient of 0.368 and a t-value of 5.125. Furthermore, transformational leadership had a significant effect on readiness for organizational change through the moderating role of organizational transparency, with an effect coefficient of 0.244 and a t-value of 3.006.

To examine the role of transformational leadership in readiness for organizational change through the mediating role of perceived action plan, the Sobel test was used.

The Z-value was 7.048. Since this value is greater than 1.96, the effect of transformational leadership on readiness for organizational change through the mediating role of perceived action plan was confirmed.

The R-square, or R^2 , criterion is used to connect the measurement component and the structural component in structural equation modeling. It indicates the effect that an exogenous variable has on an endogenous variable. The R^2 value is calculated only for endogenous, or dependent, constructs in the model, whereas this criterion is zero for exogenous constructs. The three values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered weak, moderate, and strong benchmark values, respectively (Davari, 2014). These values are shown in Table 8.

Table 8*R² Criterion Values*

Variables	R ²
Transformational leadership	—
Employees' readiness for organizational change	0.457
Organizational transparency	—
Perceived action plan	0.781

According to the table above and the R² values, the model fit was appropriate.

The redundancy criterion indicates the amount of variability in the indicators of an endogenous construct that is affected by one or more exogenous constructs. It is

obtained by multiplying the communality values of an endogenous construct by its corresponding R² value. The higher the mean redundancy value, the more appropriate the fit of the structural component of the model in a study.

Table 9*Redundancy Criterion Values*

Variables	Communality Values	Coefficient of Determination	Redundancy
Transformational leadership	0.378	—	—
Employees' readiness for organizational change	0.439	0.457	0.2006
Organizational transparency	0.465	—	—
Perceived action plan	0.305	0.781	0.238

According to the table above, the model fit was appropriate.

The third criterion for model evaluation is the calculation of the goodness-of-fit index in partial least squares modeling. In structural equation modeling using the PLS approach, unlike the covariance-based approach, there is no index for assessing the overall model. However, an index called goodness of fit (GOF) was proposed by Tenenhaus et al. (2005). This index considers both the measurement model and the structural model and is used as a criterion for

assessing the overall performance of the model. The value of this index ranges between zero and one, and Wetzels et al. (2009) introduced the three values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 as weak, moderate, and strong GOF values, respectively. This index is manually calculated as the square root of the product of the average communality and the average R² value:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{average Communality} \times \text{average } R^2}$$

This index is the square root of the product of two values: the mean communality values and the mean coefficient of determination, or average R².

Table 10*Results of the Overall Model Fit*

Variables	Coefficient of Determination	Communality Values	Goodness-of-Fit Index
Transformational leadership	—	0.378	GOF = $\sqrt{(0.619 \times 0.397)} = 0.496$
Employees' readiness for organizational change	0.457	0.439	
Organizational transparency	—	0.465	
Perceived action plan	0.781	0.305	

The goodness-of-fit index of this model was obtained as 0.496, indicating the overall desirability of the model.

4 Discussion

The present study examined the effect of transformational leadership on employees' readiness for organizational

change, considering the mediating role of perceived action plan and the moderating role of organizational transparency among employees of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences. The findings showed that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on employees' readiness for organizational change. This result indicates that when leaders articulate an inspiring vision, provide intellectual stimulation, support employees individually, and communicate confidence in collective capabilities, employees are more likely to perceive organizational change as necessary, feasible, and beneficial. The path coefficient for the direct effect of transformational leadership on readiness for organizational change was positive and significant, suggesting that transformational leadership functions as an important psychological and managerial antecedent of readiness for change. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that transformational leadership strengthens employees' acceptance of change, facilitates positive attitudes toward change, and supports organizational adaptation in complex environments (Mansouri, 2023; Mekonnen & Bayissa, 2023; Rumijati et al., 2022). In health-related organizations, where employees often encounter procedural reforms, technological changes, administrative restructuring, and increased accountability demands, transformational leadership can reduce ambiguity and motivate employees to participate actively in the change process.

This finding is also aligned with studies emphasizing the broader developmental consequences of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has been associated with empowerment, organizational learning, creativity, innovation, and competitive advantage, all of which are closely related to readiness for change (Ghoochani et al., 2017; Khorshid & Pashazadeh, 2014; Torabi et al., 2014; Zafari et al., 2017). Employees who experience transformational leadership are more likely to feel psychologically empowered and more capable of contributing to organizational improvement. Such employees may interpret change not as a threat to existing routines but as an opportunity for learning, professional development, and organizational progress. This interpretation is consistent with the argument that transformational leaders enhance employees' intrinsic motivation and encourage them to move beyond passive compliance toward active participation. The result is also compatible with the view that effective change depends on leader commitment, credibility, and the capacity to guide employees through uncertainty (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold,

2014). Therefore, the significant direct effect observed in this study confirms that transformational leadership is a key managerial capability for preparing employees for organizational change.

The results further showed that transformational leadership had a significant positive effect on perceived action plan. This finding indicates that employees who perceive their leaders as transformational are more likely to believe that the organization has a clear, coherent, and actionable plan for implementing change. This result is important because transformational leadership is not limited to inspirational communication; rather, it also shapes employees' understanding of how change will be operationalized. Leaders who explain change goals, clarify expected responsibilities, and communicate a future-oriented vision can help employees perceive the change process as structured and manageable. This finding is consistent with research indicating that transformational leadership can support knowledge sharing, readiness for change, and adaptive organizational processes by creating clarity and shared understanding among employees (Engida et al., 2022; Rahimi Khatounabad & Sharifipour, 2022). It is also supported by recent research in digital transformation contexts, where transformational leaders help employees navigate new processes, understand emerging expectations, and engage with innovation-oriented change (Fitriadi et al., 2026; Odai et al., 2026).

The significant relationship between transformational leadership and perceived action plan may also be explained through the cognitive role of leadership in change implementation. Employees do not respond only to the abstract desirability of change; they also evaluate whether the organization has the capacity and planning discipline required to implement change successfully. Transformational leaders can influence this evaluation by translating strategic goals into shared meanings and by helping employees connect organizational vision with practical action. This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that transformational leadership promotes innovative work behavior and supports the transition from idea exploration to implementation (Phairat et al., 2026). It is also consistent with evidence that transformational leadership improves organizational outcomes through intermediate mechanisms such as innovation capacity, managerial systems, and employee engagement (Vo & Tran, 2026; Yen et al., 2025). Therefore, the present finding suggests that transformational leadership contributes to perceived action plan by making change more

understandable, purposeful, and operationally credible for employees.

Another important finding was that perceived action plan had a significant positive effect on employees' readiness for organizational change. This result indicates that employees' readiness increases when they perceive that the organization has a clear and feasible action plan for implementing change. In other words, readiness for change is not shaped only by positive attitudes toward leadership or general support for organizational improvement; it also depends on employees' belief that change has been planned appropriately and can be implemented in practice. When employees perceive that change is accompanied by specific actions, defined responsibilities, and a realistic implementation path, they are more likely to trust the process and commit to it. This finding is consistent with organizational diagnosis perspectives emphasizing that successful change requires attention to people-centered processes, communication, participation, and clarity (Bray, 2014). It also corresponds with the broader literature on visionary and sustainable organizations, which highlights the importance of coherent values, systematic planning, and long-term alignment between organizational purpose and action (Collins & Porras, 2014; Ketprapakorn, 2019).

The effect of perceived action plan on readiness for organizational change can be further interpreted through the reduction of uncertainty. Organizational change often produces anxiety because employees may not know what is expected from them, how their roles will change, or whether they will have sufficient support to adapt. A perceived action plan can reduce this uncertainty by providing a cognitive map of the change process. This explanation is compatible with research emphasizing social capital, educational effectiveness, and complex leadership functions, which suggests that shared understanding, trust, and coordinated action are essential for collective effectiveness (Babajani Mohammadi & Takroosta, 2014; Seyed Naghavi & Shadan, 2010; Tizchang & Hour, 2017). Employees are more prepared for change when they perceive that organizational actors are moving in a coordinated direction. Therefore, the significant effect of perceived action plan on readiness demonstrates that planning clarity is not merely a technical aspect of change management but a psychological condition that influences employees' willingness to support change.

The mediation analysis also confirmed that perceived action plan mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' readiness for organizational change. The significant Sobel test value

showed that transformational leadership affects readiness not only directly but also indirectly by strengthening employees' perception of an actionable change plan. This finding is theoretically meaningful because it explains one of the mechanisms through which transformational leadership becomes effective in change contexts. Transformational leaders may inspire employees, but inspiration alone may not be sufficient if employees do not perceive a clear implementation pathway. The mediating effect indicates that transformational leadership becomes more influential when it is translated into perceived planning clarity. This result aligns with Alarifi et al., who emphasized the importance of organizational transparency and preparation mechanisms in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee readiness for change (Alarifi et al., 2024). It is also consistent with evidence that change leadership affects readiness through organizational culture, demonstrating that leadership effects are often transmitted through mediating organizational mechanisms (Engida et al., 2022).

The mediating role of perceived action plan can also be understood in relation to adaptability, participation, and organizational innovation. Previous research has shown that adaptability and participatory leadership values are relevant to organizational change, and that employees respond more positively to change when they perceive the process as inclusive and feasible (Mohammadi Kia & Pourjafar, 2024). Similarly, studies on innovation speed and performance suggest that organizations need not only ideas and motivation but also the ability to convert intentions into timely and effective actions (Maharti & Hassani Rad, 2016). From this perspective, perceived action plan is the practical bridge between transformational leadership and readiness for change. Transformational leaders establish direction and motivation, while the perceived action plan provides employees with confidence that the change can be implemented. The current finding therefore contributes to the change management literature by clarifying that leadership-driven readiness depends partly on employees' perception of implementation structure.

The study also found that organizational transparency significantly moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' readiness for organizational change. This means that the effect of transformational leadership on readiness becomes stronger when organizational transparency is higher. This finding is highly consistent with the argument that transparency "illuminates" the change process by providing employees

with reliable information, clear explanations, and greater confidence in organizational intentions (Alarifi et al., 2024). In transparent organizational environments, transformational leadership messages are more likely to be interpreted as credible and trustworthy. Employees can better understand why change is needed, what its consequences may be, and how leadership decisions are connected to organizational goals. Therefore, transparency strengthens the psychological effect of transformational leadership by reducing suspicion and increasing trust.

This moderating effect is also supported by research on organizational transparency in educational and organizational contexts. Heydarifard et al. showed that organizational transparency plays an important role in the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' use of electronic teaching, suggesting that transparency can enhance the effectiveness of transformational leadership in technology-related and change-oriented contexts (Heydarifard et al., 2022). The present finding extends this logic to employees' readiness for organizational change in a medical sciences organization. When transparency is present, employees may perceive transformational leaders as more authentic, consistent, and reliable. In contrast, when transparency is weak, employees may remain uncertain about the real motives and consequences of change, even if leaders communicate an inspiring vision. Thus, the moderating effect of organizational transparency confirms that leadership effectiveness depends not only on leader behavior but also on the communicative climate of the organization.

The explanatory power of the model also supports the importance of examining transformational leadership, perceived action plan, and organizational transparency together. The R^2 value for employees' readiness for organizational change indicated that a meaningful proportion of variance in readiness was explained by the model. Moreover, the R^2 value for perceived action plan was substantial, indicating that transformational leadership strongly contributed to employees' perception of planning clarity. The overall goodness-of-fit value also indicated the desirability of the model. These statistical results suggest that the proposed model provides an appropriate framework for understanding readiness for organizational change in the studied organization. In line with previous studies, the findings show that readiness for change is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by leadership, planning perceptions, communication, and organizational context (Alarifi et al., 2024; Engida et al., 2022; Mekonnen

& Bayissa, 2023). Therefore, organizational change should not be managed solely through formal directives or structural reforms; it also requires transformational leadership behaviors, transparent communication, and clear action planning.

5 Conclusion

Overall, the findings demonstrate that transformational leadership is a significant antecedent of employees' readiness for organizational change, both directly and indirectly through perceived action plan. The results also show that organizational transparency strengthens this relationship, indicating that leadership is most effective when employees receive clear and reliable information about change. These findings are consistent with a wide body of research linking transformational leadership to organizational learning, empowerment, innovation, employee engagement, and change readiness (Ghoochani et al., 2017; Khorshid & Pashazadeh, 2014; Rumijati et al., 2022; Vo & Tran, 2026). In the context of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, the results suggest that preparing employees for change requires more than formal planning; it requires leaders who can inspire commitment, communicate change meaningfully, provide confidence in implementation, and operate within a transparent organizational environment.

The present study had several limitations. First, the study used a descriptive-survey design, which limits the ability to make strong causal claims about the relationships among transformational leadership, perceived action plan, organizational transparency, and readiness for organizational change. Second, the data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may create common method bias and may be influenced by respondents' subjective perceptions at the time of data collection. Third, the statistical population was limited to employees of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences; therefore, the generalizability of the findings to other public organizations, private institutions, hospitals, universities, or non-health sectors should be done with caution. Fourth, although the model included perceived action plan as a mediator and organizational transparency as a moderator, other potentially important variables such as organizational culture, trust in management, psychological safety, resistance to change, employee engagement, and perceived organizational support were not included in the model.

Future studies are recommended to examine the proposed model in other organizational contexts, including hospitals, universities, public-sector agencies, private companies, and technology-oriented organizations, in order to compare the stability of the relationships across different institutional environments. Future research can also use longitudinal designs to investigate how transformational leadership, perceived action plan, transparency, and readiness for change evolve before, during, and after the implementation of actual organizational change programs. In addition, researchers may expand the model by including other mediating and moderating variables such as organizational trust, psychological empowerment, knowledge sharing, work engagement, organizational culture, and resistance to change. Qualitative or mixed-method studies are also suggested to explore how employees interpret leadership behaviors, transparency, and action planning during real change processes.

From a practical perspective, managers and decision-makers should strengthen transformational leadership behaviors among supervisors and senior managers by emphasizing vision communication, individualized support, intellectual stimulation, and motivational leadership during change initiatives. Organizations should also design and communicate clear action plans before and during change implementation, including specific objectives, implementation steps, timelines, responsibilities, feedback mechanisms, and support systems for employees. Furthermore, organizational transparency should be institutionalized through open communication channels, timely information sharing, clear explanations of change-related decisions, and opportunities for employees to ask questions and express concerns. In health-related organizations, where change can directly affect service processes and employee workloads, combining transformational leadership with transparent communication and practical action planning can substantially increase employees' readiness and participation in organizational change.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

References

- Abrell-Vogel, C., & Rowold, J. (2014). Leaders' Commitment to Change and Their Effectiveness in Change: A Multilevel Investigation. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 27, 900-921. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-07-2012-0111>
- Alarifi, A., AlThnayan, S., Bajaba, S., & Liu, Y. (2024). Illuminating the Way: The Role of Organizational Transparency in Preparing Employees for Change under Transformational Leadership. *Current Psychology*, 43, 17646-17663. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-05726-x>
- Babajani Mohammadi, S., & Takroosta, H. (2014). The Importance of Social Capital in Government Organizations. International Conference on Business Development and Excellence, Tehran.
- Bakhtiari Fayanderi, M., Binesh, M., & Meshkati, A. (2016). Transformational Leadership in Educational Systems. International Conference on Modern Management in the 1404 Horizon, Tehran.
- Bray, D. W. (2014). Personnel-Centered Organizational Diagnosis. In (pp. 152-171). Guilford Press.
- Collins, J. C., & Porras, J. I. (2014). *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*. Harper Business.
- Engida, Z. M., Alemu, A. E., & Mulugeta, M. A. (2022). The Effect of Change Leadership on Employees' Readiness to Change: The Mediating Role of Organizational Culture. *Future Business Journal*, 8, 31. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-022-00148-2>
- Farashbandi, R., Habibi Dahaneh-Siri, Z., Sadeghzadeh, F., & Habibi Damaneh-Sari, Z. (2019). The Position and Role of Work Engagement in Organizations. First National Conference on Business Management, Entrepreneurship, and Accounting, Tehran.

- Fitriadi, H., Isnurhadi, I., Zunaidah, Z., & Syathiri, A. (2026). Transformational Leadership in the Digital Era: A Systematic Literature Review on Employee Engagement. In *Proceedings of the 24th Malaysia-Indonesia International Conference on Economics, Management, and Accounting in Conjunction with the 9th Sriwijaya Economics, Accounting, and Business Conference* (pp. 248). Springer Nature. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xojCEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA248>
- Ghoochani, F., Mohammadi Hosseiniyeh, J., & Abdollahi, M. (2017). Determining the Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Empowerment: Case Study of Agricultural Bank Employees. Annual Conference on New Management Paradigms in the Field of Intelligence, Tehran.
- Heydarifard, R., Aghamohammadi, M., & Sadr, A. (2022). The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership Style and the Extent of Elementary School Teachers' Use of Electronic Teaching with the Mediating Role of Organizational Transparency. *Monthly Journal of Modern Advances in Psychology, Educational Sciences, and Education*, 5(53).
- Ketprapakorn, N. (2019). Toward an Asian Corporate Sustainability Model: An Integrative Review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 239, 117995. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.117995>
- Khorshid, S., & Pashazadeh, A. (2014). The Effect of Transformational Leadership Style on Organizational Learning Capability Considering the Mediating Role of Organizational Intelligence. *Transformation Management Research*, 6(11), 1-28.
- Maharti, Y., & Hassani Rad, P. S. (2016). Investigating the Effect of Innovation Speed on Performance: Case Study of Companies Located in Incubators and the Science and Technology Park of Mashhad. Fourth International Conference on Accounting and Management with an Approach to Modern Research Sciences, Tehran.
- Mansouri, M. (2023). Examining the Relationship Between Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles and Attitude Toward Organizational Change in Bandar Abbas Municipality. First International Conference on Law, Management, Educational Sciences, Psychology, and Educational Planning Management, Tehran.
- Mekonnen, M., & Bayissa, Z. (2023). The Effect of Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles on Organizational Readiness for Change among Health Professionals. *Sage Open Nursing*, 9, 23779608231185923. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23779608231185923>
- Mohammadi Kia, A., & Pourjafar, D. (2024). The Effect of Adaptability on Organizational Change with the Moderating Role of Participatory Leadership Value among Employees of Tejarat Bank Branches in Hamedan. Twentieth National Conference on Economics, Management, and Accounting, Shirvan.
- Odai, L. A., Xiao, Y., Korankye, B., & Ahakwa, I. (2026). Navigating digital transformation: the critical role of knowledge sharing and digital transformational leadership in boosting innovation capability in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Business Process Management Journal*, 32(2), 653-678.
- Phairat, P., Kim-Lim, T., Ting, H., Soonsan, N., & Tanticharatwarodom, P. (2026). Driving Idea Exploration to Implementation: The Role of Transformational Leadership in Fostering Innovative Work Behavior. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 45(5), 545-559. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.70034>
- Rahimi Khatounabad, M., & Sharifipour, A. (2022). Investigating the Effect of Information Technology Capabilities and Transformational Leadership on Readiness for Change with the Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing: Case Study of Employees of Ayandeh Bank Branches in Mashhad. Fourth National Conference on Management and Tourism Industry, Tehran.
- Rumijati, A., Irawati, S., & Novianti, K. R. (2022). The Role of Readiness to Change Between Transformational Leadership and Work Performance in Higher Education During COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Social and Political Issues on Sustainable Development in the Post COVID-19 Crisis*. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003263586-14>
- Seyed Naghavi, M. A., & Shadan, S. (2010). The Effect of Social Capital on Complexity Leadership Functions in Complex Adaptive Systems. Second International Conference on Intellectual Capital Management, Zanjan.
- Tizchang, M., & Houri, M. (2017). A Sociological Analysis of the Relationship Between Social Capital and Educational Effectiveness. *New Research in Humanities*, 3(20).
- Torabi, S. A., Torabi, S. A., & Valizadeh Dastjerd, H. (2014). The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Creativity and Innovation of Organizational Employees. Second International Conference on Management Challenges and Solutions, Shiraz.
- Vo, K. N., & Tran, M. H. P. (2026). Effects of Transformational Leadership on Employee Engagement through Job Satisfaction with Supervisors in Private Higher Education Institutions in Ho Chi Minh City. *Discover Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-026-01374-4>
- Yen, T., Chau, T., & Pham, Q. T. (2025). Transformational Leadership and Firm Performance: The Mediating Roles of Innovation Capacity and Management Accounting Systems Usage. *Sustainable Futures*, 10, 1-11.
- Zafari, H., Abedi, R., & Konfchian, M. (2017). The Effect of Leadership Styles on Competitive Advantage Considering the Mediating Role of Individual Creativity and Organizational Innovation: Case Study of Companies Located in the Science and Technology Park of the University of Tehran. Second International Conference on Management and Accounting, Tehran.