World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews
eISSN: 2581-9615 CODEN (USA): WJARAI
Cross Ref DOI: 10.30574/wjarr
Journal homepage: https://wjarr.com/

(Research Article)

Change management practices and employee adaptability of commercial banks in South-South, Nigeria

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 31(01), 1404–1417

Publication history: Received on 13 June 2026; revised on 20 July 2026; accepted on 22 July 2026

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.31.1.1939

Abstract

The emergence of new technology, regulatory reforms, innovations in digital banking and the growing competition in the banking sector have made organizational transformation in the Nigerian banking industry inevitable. Despite all these changes, many of the commercial banks are still facing problems due to the inability of their employees to adjust themselves to the changing demands of the organization. The study examined the relationship between change management practices and employee adaptability of commercial banks in South-South Nigeria with psychological empowerment as the moderator. In particular, the study examined the relationships between communication, participation, training, leadership support, and employee flexibility and the moderating effects of psychological empowerment. The study was based on the following theories, which were used as anchors; Kotter's eight-step change theory, organizational readiness for change theory and psychological empowerment theory. The study employed cross sectional survey research design and the positivist philosophy. The study involved 4986 workers from 20 commercial banks in South-South Nigeria. A sample size of 370 was calculated by the Taro Yamane formula and 400 questionnaires were issued by multi-stage sampling technique. The data collected were primary data which was analyzed by descriptive statistics and Spearman rank correlation coefficient and partial correlation analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Communication ($\rho = 0.228$; $p = 0.000$), participation ($\rho = 0.453$; $p = 0.000$), training ($\rho = 0.269$; $p = 0.000$) and leadership support ($\rho = 0.509$; $p = 0.000$) were all found to be positive and statistically significant with the employee flexibility. The study also confirmed that psychological empowerment significantly enhanced the relationship between change management practices and employees' adaptability ($r = 0.708$; $p = 0.000$). The study found that the integrated change management practices have significant positive effect on the adaptability of the employees in commercial banks. It thus suggested to increase leadership support, participatory decision making, ongoing employee training, effective organizational communication and psychological empowerment to improve the adaptability of employees in organizational changes. The study added to the body of knowledge because it had shown that psychological empowerment is complementary in enhancing the relationship between change management practices and employee adaptability in the Nigerian banking sector.

Keywords: Communication; Participation; Training; Leadership Support; Psychological Empowerment.

1. Introduction

The present-day banking sector is operating in a rapidly changing environment, with digitalization, regulatory changes, fintech competition, cybersecurity risks and changing customer needs dominating the landscape. All the above have forced commercial banks around the world to continuously undergo organizational change to remain competitive and competitive while keeping up with the operational efficiency. The adoption of cashless policies, recapitalization agenda, technology and digital banking platforms have revolutionized the banking activities in Nigeria. Kotter (1996) states that

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organizational change will only be successful if its change management process can convey the information to employees and get them to embrace the new system. Findings from the recent development of the Nigerian commercial banks also reveal that banks with a thorough approach to change management have better organisational outcomes as compared to those banks that undertake change management without systematically involving employees (Ajani et al., 2024; Otalor et al., 2025).

Change management practices are intentional management interventions that help employees embrace and embrace the change in the organization. The most prevalent practices are: Communication, employee participation, employee training and leadership support. Effective communication helps to reduce uncertainty by delivering information promptly, accurately and transparently about the intent and anticipated results from organizational change. Armenakis and Harris (2009) claimed that readiness for change is developed through communication because it influences employee's beliefs about the need for, and the right to, change. Similarly, worker involvement increases their sense of ownership of any change program as those people who take part in decisions are less likely to be against implementation (Lines, 2004). Recent studies in Nigeria also shows that effective communication, participative leadership and constant staff engagement are critical to the effectiveness of the organization during transition in commercial banks (Edehwor & Ernest, 2025; Otalor et al., 2025).

Training is another essential change management practice as change often means new technology, new work processes and standards of performance that require new skills. Cummings and Worley (2014) highlighted that employees who take part in continuous learning are more likely to feel confident and better capable to implement change, thereby lowering resistance to change. The strategic direction, motivation, resources and psychological security for successful change initiatives are also provided by leadership support. According to Herold et al. (2008), supportive leadership would enhance the commitment of employees to organizational change and Oreg et al. (2011) showed that the reactions of the employees would be influenced by the leadership behaviours. Also, recent findings in Nigerian banks reveal that the commitment of leadership and the continuous training of staff are important factors that can enhance behavioural adjustment and organizational efficiency when implementing changes (Ekine, 2025; Otalor et al., 2025).

Therefore, in organisations where there is ongoing change, adaptability has become one of the most valued behavioural skills of the employees. Pulakos et al. (2000) defined adaptability as "the capacity to adjust effectively to the changing nature of work, technologies, and organizational requirements". In this study flexibility and psychological empowerment are the construct of adaptability. Flexibility is the degree to which employees are willing to change their behaviors, do different jobs and adjust positively to organizational changes (Griffin et al., 2007, Janssen, 2000). Psychological empowerment is a concept first introduced by Spreitzer (1995) and is defined as employees' perceptions of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact in their work. The results of a meta-analysis indicate that psychologically empowered workers are more likely to be active, creative, resilient, and committed to the organization than those who are not psychologically empowered (Seibert et al., 2011). Recently, research carried out in Nigerian deposit money banks have shown that employee development, supportive leadership, and organizational learning positively contribute to employee adaptability and resourcefulness especially when it comes to technological and organizational change initiatives (Don-Baridam, 2024; Uranta et al., 2025).

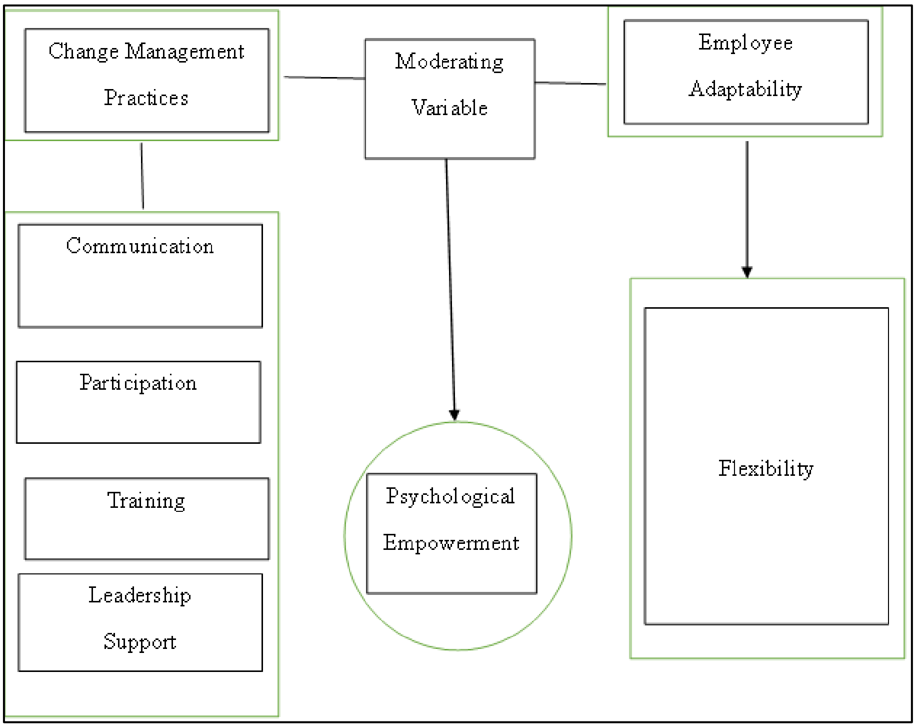
1.1. Statement of the Problem

Empirical research since then has shown that change management has positively affected other areas such as organizational performance, employee commitment, job satisfaction and readiness for change in various organizational contexts. For instance, Kumolu-Johnson (2021) studied technological and structural change in the Nigerian banks and found that such changes have significant impact on employees' performance, Ajani et al. (2024) observed that there are positive relationships between workplace change management and the quality of work, timeliness and effectiveness of employees of First Bank Nigeria. In the same vein, Edehwor and Ernest (2025) studied selected banks in Delta State, and concluded that employee performance is positively influenced by communication, employee involvement and training. More recently Otalor et al. (2025) showed that the application of proactiveness and increment change strategies were very effective in enhancing the performance of commercial banks in Nigeria using technological assistance.

First, previous studies in Nigeria have mostly concentrated on employee performance, organizational performance, commitment, readiness for change, and organizational effectiveness; with few empirical studies that focused on employee adaptability as a multidimensional construct, flexibility and psychological empowerment. Second, few studies have focused on the communication, participation, training and leadership support as discrete change management practices in the context of adaptability outcomes, in Nigeria. Third, empirical data specifically about commercial banks in South-South Nigeria is limited, although the region is particularly exposed to the expansion of digital banking, regulatory reforms, and the digital banking market is beset by intense competition. This study thus fills these gaps by examining the effect of communication, participation, training and leadership support on employee flexibility and psychological empowerment in commercial banks in South-South Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Framework



Source: Change Management Practices: Communication, participation, training and leadership support (Kotter, 1996; Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Lines, 2004; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011; Cummings & Worley, 2014; Vakola, 2014; Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008; Kotter, 1996). Employee Adaptability: Flexibility (Pulakos et al., 2000; Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Janssen, 2000). Psychological Empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011).

Figure 1 Conceptual framework on the relationship between change management practices and employee adaptability of commercial banks in South-South, Nigeria

2.1.1. Change Management Practices

Change management practices are the managed activities or actions, strategies, and interventions used by managers to plan, support, and lead the workforce through the process of change as it occurs in an organization, with the goal of minimizing resistance and maximizing change being implemented. Instead of thinking of change management in one process, today's scholars say it's an ongoing process, with planning, communication, employee involvement, capability building, leadership commitment and performance monitoring. Kotter (1996) developed a conceptual framework for successful change, which involves creating a sense of urgency, forming a coalition, developing a vision for change, communicating the vision, delegating authority to change, and institutionalizing the change. Organizational scholars have recently suggested that successful change management involves the consideration of both the technical and human aspects of change (Vakola, 2014; Agbana et al., 2023), since organizational changes must be accepted and understood by employees, and must be carefully planned and executed.

Communication, employee participation, training and leadership support are some of the most influential change management practices as identified in modern literature. Through communication, uncertainty can be minimized by ensuring that the information about the goals of organizational change and the anticipated outcomes is timely and transparent, and credible; and through participation, the employee can contribute ideas, and be psychologically committed to the implementation of the change (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Lines, 2004). Training increases the skills and confidence of employees to use the new technology, systems, and work processes, while leadership support ensures organizational resources, motivation, and strategic direction are aligned during the transformation process (Herold et al., 2008; Cummings & Worley, 2014). Recent systematic reviews also show that organizations implementing integrated change management programmes have higher employee acceptance, stronger organizational commitment, less resistance to change and better organizational performance than organizations with only structural and/or technological interventions (Yuvaraj et al., 2023; Agbana et al., 2023).

2.1.2. Employee Adaptability

An employee's ability and willingness to change behaviors, learn new skills, adapt to new or altered work requirements, and perform effectively when circumstances of the workplace change is known as employee adaptability. The ability to adapt is now a vital behavioural skill required of employees in today's organizations, which must function in an unpredictable and technology-intensive environment while dealing with shifting customer needs and evolving work practices. Adaptability is a multi-dimensional concept defined by Pulakos et al. (2000) as an ability to learn new tasks, solve new problems, deal with uncertainty, interpersonal adjustment and work-oriented stress. Griffin et al. (2007) also suggest that adaptability is not just about what one can do in the job, but also about the proactive behaviors that allow workers to participate effectively in the change process of the organization.

Employee adaptability has been increasingly recognized in contemporary research as a strategic resource for an organization, as it shows that employees are more resilient, innovative, learning and committed to the organization. Recent research shows that adaptive employees are more prepared to organizational change, less resistant to change, better able to collaborate with others, and are more effective at organizational transformation (Gonzalez et al., 2023; Oreg et al., 2024). In organizations, adaptability is often manifested in behavioral flexibility and psychological adaptation. Flexibility allows workers to undertake a variety of tasks, change work practices and adopt new approaches to the work without too much disruption (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Janssen, 2000). At the same time, workers with psychological resources like confidence, resilience, and empowerment can better handle the ongoing organizational changes. Thus, supportive leadership, learning, participation in decision-making, and communication have become priorities for organizations to implement as they are increasingly realizing that they make their employees more adaptable, and help the organizations compete in the volatile business environment (Vakola, 2014; Agbana et al., 2023).

2.1.3. Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is a motivational construct that refers to employees' self-perceptions in their capacity to influence work outcomes, have autonomy in work performance, work effectively, and to find meaning in their work tasks. In contrast to the structural empowerment, which highlights the distribution of power via the organizational structure, psychological empowerment attends to the inner cognitive appraisal that employees are making about their working. Spreitzer (1995) defined psychological empowerment as consisting of four related components: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Meaning is about how well personal values correspond to organizational responsibilities, competence is about self-confidence in the performance of assigned duties, self-determination is about perceived autonomy in decision-making, and impact is about an employees' belief that their actions make a difference to the outcomes of their organization.

The recent organizational studies research has once again established psychological empowerment as one of the best predictors of employee adaptability, innovative behaviour, organizational commitment, work engagement and job performance. Meta-analytic evidence shows that psychologically empowered employees are more motivated, resilient, proactive, and willing to adapt to organizational change than employees with lower levels of empowerment (Seibert et al., 2011; Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024). In an organizational change scenario, empowerment helps to minimize the uncertainty as they feel they are actively contributing to the change and not just getting it handed down to them. Leadership support, participatory decision-making, communication, and ongoing employee growth have repeatedly been found to be significant antecedents of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Soponpatima et al., 2023). Hence, companies that have good change management tend to have more empowered employees, more organizational citizenship behaviour, more flexibility and a higher level of commitment to company goals. The psychological empowerment is thus an important employee outcome and it also serves as an intervening variable between organizational change practices and employees' adaptability, and sustainable organizational performance (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024; Seibert et al., 2011).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Kotter's Eight-Step Change Theory

The Kotter's eight step change theory, developed by John P. Kotter (1996), is one of the most influential models that can be used to explain successful organizational change. The theory emerged after a number of years of research and investigation into why organizational change projects often fail despite the significant investment in restructuring, technology and strategic changes. Successful organizational change requires a sequence of organizational management actions instead of relying on one-off interventions, as organizational change is fundamentally a behavioural process that relies on the acceptance, commitment and continued participation of the employees. Kotter (1996) suggests that companies that don't consider the people side of the change are more likely to experience resistance, uncertainty and failure of implementation. The theory offers a practical approach to managing change in a deliberate way, both through actions taken by leaders and by involving employees. Recent research further identifies Kotter's model as one of the most applicable models to managing organizational change in private and public sector organizations (Pollack & Pollack, 2023; Harrison et al., 2021).

Kotter suggested eight steps that need to be followed in succession to achieve successful organizational change. This is done by creating an urgency, building guiding coalition, forming a strategic vision, communicating the vision, creating short-term wins, consolidating the gains, and institutionalizing the change into organizational culture (Kotter, 1996). Every phase builds employee understanding and commitment, as it minimizes uncertainty and expands participation during the change process. Communication is given a central role in the model because staff who understand the rationale for change and the benefits to be gained will be more likely to support the organisation's change. Likewise, leadership support, ongoing employee education, and employee engagement help to ensure ownership of the organization's change and enhance employees' desire to engage in new work behaviors (Pollack & Pollack, 2023; Harrison et al., 2021).

2.2.2. Psychological Empowerment Theory

Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment theory is a theory that explains the relationships among intrinsic motivational states of employees and their attitudes, behaviors, and effectiveness in an organization. Spreitzer expanded on the previous research of Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and suggested psychological empowerment as a multidimensional psychological state rather than a managerial tactic or arrangement. The theory states that employees are empowered when they feel good about their competence, their autonomy, their influence, and their meaningfulness in their work. Structural empowerment is much more concerned with the delegation of authority in the organizational policies and formal structures while the Psychological Empowerment Theory is much more focused on the employees' perceptions of their work experiences. To date, contemporary organizational behaviour research continues to view psychological empowerment as one of the most powerful predictors of employee engagement, innovative behaviour, organizational commitment, adaptability and work performance; as it is, employees who feel empowered are more likely to accept uncertainty and be proactive in contributing to organizational success (Seibert et al., 2011; Kim & Beehr, 2023).

Spreitzer (1995) identified four interrelated components of psychological empowerment – meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Meaning is how important and consistent employees find their work with their beliefs and values. Competence is about the confidence that employees have in their ability to successfully complete responsibilities assigned to them. Self-determination refers to the extent to which employees feel they have control over decisions made in the work domain and impact refers to employees' self-perceptions of their ability to affect the organization's outcomes and decisions. These four dimensions combined, lead to intrinsic motivation that makes employees feel compelled to be proactive, creative, resilient and show initiative – even in times of organizational uncertainty. Empirically, supportive leadership, transparent communication, employee participation, continuous learning opportunities, and inclusive organizational cultures have been shown to be key factors in strengthening psychological empowerment among employees and thus their adaptability and willingness to support organizational transformation (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024; Soponpatima et al., 2023).

2.3. Empirical Review

Iyaji et al (2023) examined the impact of change management practices on employee engagement and organisational performance in competitive business environments. This study was designed cross sectional study. Two hundred and forty-five respondents were selected and the data were analyzed by the Spearman rank correlation coefficient. The study revealed that communication, employee involvement, leadership support and training were positive and significant for organizational performance. The study has come to the conclusion that companies that have embraced agile change management strategies that cater for employee needs and organisational objectives are better equipped to maneuver the market and attain sustainable long-term success.

Dereso and Kant (2023) conducted to access the effect of change management on employee performance. Main data for this study were collected from the respondents who were randomly selected from the employees. The result of the correlation analysis showed that the evaluation of leadership change in this study had the strongest positive correlation and statistically significant with employee performance.

The effect of change management on employee performance of health workers in rivers state, Nigeria was studied by Isokariari (2023). Descriptive cross sectional research method was used. The study concluded that health workers in Rivers State were identified to benefit a lot from change management strategies such as change communication and stakeholder engagement. The Health Care Management Board should prioritise effective change communication techniques to help create a positive and supportive culture where individuals can flourish in spite of change.

Gemechu and Wake (2021) studied the relationship between the effect of change management practices and the performance of the organization in the case of Ethiopia telecom south region. The descriptive analysis and inferential analysis in the form of multiple linear regression were used. The study showed that occasionally, balanced scored cared, kaizen and standard quality circle management was practiced in the Ethiopia telecom south region. Besides, this study found that balanced scored cared, kaizen and standard quality circle management practice was found to be an enabler to a great extent in the organizational performance of Ethiopia telecom south region. Organizational performance of Ethiopia telecom south region was also found to have significant relationship with balanced scored cared, kaizen and standard quality circle management practices.

3. Methodology

The study was descriptive in nature with a cross-sectional survey design was used because it allowed the collection of quantitative data from the employees of commercial banks at one particular time. The design was deemed as appropriate because study variables were not manipulated in the study and relationships between the change management practices and the adaptability of employees were examined. The design also enabled data collection from a reasonably large sample of respondents from the selected commercial banks which ensured the findings were generalizable to the study area (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The study was based on the positivist research philosophy. The positivistic approach has the assumption that some organizational phenomena are measurable, quantifiable, and analyzable by statistical methods to determine empirical relationships between variables. The philosophy is objectivity, hypothesis testing and the generation of reliable and generalizable findings through scientific methods. It was appropriate because the constructs studied were measurable and the researcher used questionnaires and statistical methods to study them. There were many methodological works that recommended positivism in quantitative organizational and management studies that use hypothesis testing and correlational methods (Bell et al., 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

All the twenty-one (21) licensed quoted commercial banks in Nigeria (CBN 2024, NIBSS 2024) were used as the target population. These institutions were part of the formal banking sector and were actively engaged with organizational restructuring, digital transformation, strategic service delivery and continuous innovation. Due to the scope of the study, the accessible population of the study was limited to twenty (20) commercial banks that have operated continuously for at least ten (10) years (2015-2025) maintaining an active operation in South-South Nigeria. The number of employees in the accessible population was 4,986. The sample size was calculated according to Taro Yamane (1967) formula for finite population. The accessible population is 4,986 employees and a minimum sample size of 370 respondents was obtained. The questionnaire was sent to 400 copies to improve the representativeness and to make up for the possible non-response. Multi-stage sampling method was used. Twenty commercial banks were initially selected for the study using purposive sampling technique that met the inclusion criteria. Then, proportionate stratified sampling was used in order to distribute the questionnaires among the selected banks based on the number of staff members in each bank, and simple random sampling was employed to select individual respondents in each bank. The sampling methods used reduced sampling bias, and there was a good representation of bank employees within the banks that participated (Saunders et al., 2023).

Primary data was collected directly from the commercial bank employees, who were the respondents of the study using a structured questionnaire. Primary data were deemed suitable because it had first-hand information about the perception of respondents on the change management practices and adaptability of employees. The items in the questionnaire were all closed-ended with a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The instrument allowed the standardized responses that can be analyzed quantitatively from a statistical point of view (Sekaran & Bougie, 2021).

Change management practices – independent variable – was operationalized by four dimensions: Communication (Kotter, 1996), Participation (Armenakis and Harris, 2009), Training (Herold et al., 2008), Leadership support (Vakola, 2014). Employee adaptability was assessed using two dependent variables: flexibility and psychological empowerment, based on Pulakos et al. (2000), Spreitzer (1995), Griffin et al. (2007) and Seibert et al. (2011). The constructs were assessed by several items of the questionnaires with a five-point Likert format. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by experts in the fields of management, organizational behaviour and research methodology. They provided feedback to make revisions to improve the clarity, relevance, and sufficiency of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability with at least 0.70 as acceptable, which shows a satisfactory internal consistency among the items that make up the measurement (Hair et al., 2022). The pilot study further confirmed that the instrument was suitable for the main survey.

Data collected were coded and analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27. The characteristics of the respondents and the description of the study variables were summarized in descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations. The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was used for the hypotheses testing for this study as the measurement of the study variables was ordinal (Likert scale) and the testing of the hypotheses centered on the strength and direction of the relationship of the study variables. In addition, the moderating effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between change management practices and adaptability of employees was investigated using Partial Correlation Analysis at 0.05 significance level, and holding the moderating variable constant. Both of these methods have been extensively used for non-parametric data in behavioural and organisational research as well as for testing relationships (Field, 2024; Pallant, 2020).

4. Results

Table 2 Questionnaire Distribution and Number Retrieval

S/No	Descriptions	Frequency	Percent
1	Questionnaires Distributed	400	100.0
2	Questionnaires Retrieved	383	95.8
3	Valid Questionnaires	377	94.3

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The questionnaires were administered to the employees of the selected commercial banks in South-South Nigeria, making a total of 400 questionnaires. Of these 383 questionnaires were retrieved (95.8% of distributed questionnaires) and 377 questionnaires were determined to be valid and suitable for analysis (94.3%). Six questionnaires were returned that were not completed, but were excluded. The percentages of retrieval and validity were very high, showing a high level of response and respondents' willingness to participate in the study. This is well above the 50% response rate typically required for survey research and ensures that the data reflects the perceptions of employees about change management practices and employee adaptability with a level of confidence that is acceptable for survey research. Saunders et al. (2023) suggest that a response rate of 70% or higher is generally regarded as adequate to minimize non-response bias and ensure the reliability of survey results.

Table 3 Demographic Results

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	109	28.9	28.9	28.9
	Male	268	71.1	71.1	100.0
	Total	**377**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Age	20-35	96	25.5	25.5	25.5
	36-50	235	62.3	62.3	87.8
	51 and above	46	12.2	12.2	100.0
	Total	**377**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Marital Status	Married	266	70.6	70.6	70.6
	Separated	9	2.4	2.4	72.9
	Single	102	27.1	27.1	100.0
	Total	**377**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Educational Attainment	HND/Bachelor	238	63.1	63.1	63.1
	Master and above	71	18.8	18.8	82.0
	WAEC/OND	68	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	**377**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: SPSS 28.0 Output

The findings show that there were 268 respondents (71.1%) males and 109 respondents (28.9%) females suggesting the workforce of the sampled commercial banks is dominated by males. As far as age distribution is concerned, 62.3 % of respondents were in the age group 36-50, 25.5 % were aged 20-35 and 12.2 % were 51 years or above. This discovery shows that most respondents were people with experience in the workplace, and thus with high likelihood of exposure to organizational change initiatives. Regarding marital status, 266 respondents (70.6%) were married, 102 (27.1%) were single and 9 (2.4%) were separated. The level of education further showed that 238 respondents (63.1%) were with HND or Bachelor's degrees, 71 respondents (18.8%) were with Master's degree or higher qualification while 68 respondents (18.0%) were with WAEC or OND qualifications. The educational profile showed that the respondents had adequate knowledge to comprehend the process of change in the organization and were able to give reliable answers to the questions in the questionnaire (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Table 4 Spearman Correlation Results

Correlations							
			Flexibility	**Communication**	**Participation**	**Training**	**Leadership Support**
Spearman's rho	Flexibility	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.228**	0.453**	0.269**	0.509**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.	00.000	00.000	00.000	00.000
		N	377	377	377	377	377
	Communication	Correlation Coefficient	0.228**	1.000	0.519**	0.298**	0.291**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	377	377	377	377	377
	Participation	Correlation Coefficient	0.453**	0.519**	1.000	0.481**	0.438**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.	0.000	0.000
		N	377	377	377	377	377
	Training	Correlation Coefficient	0.269**	0.298**	0.481**	1.000	0.441**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.	0.000
		N	377	377	377	377	377
	Leadership Support	Correlation Coefficient	0.509**	0.291**	0.438**	0.441**	1.000

		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.
		N	377	377	377	377	377

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output 25

The results indicated that communication was positively related with flexibility and the relationship was statistically significant (p = 0.000, ρ = 0.228). The correlation between the two was not very strong, but the positive coefficient suggests that better communication when an organization change was linked to more flexible employees. The flexibility was moderately positively and statistically correlated with participation (ρ = 0.453, p = 0.000), which meant that the more involved employees were in the processes of organizational change, the more they were able to adjust to the new demands on their work. Likewise, training was found to have a positive and significant correlation with flexibility (ρ = 0.269, p = 0.000), suggesting that better trained employees were more flexible with the changes within the organization. The leadership support was the practice that had the highest correlation with flexibility (ρ = 0.509, p = 0.000), suggesting that among the factors of change management, the most influential on flexibility was leadership support. All the probability values were below the 0.05 level for significance and the study concluded that communication, participation, training and leadership support were all positively and significantly related to employee flexibility.

Table 4.4 Partial Correlation Results

Correlations					
Control Variables			**Employee Adaptability**	**Change Management Practices**	**Psychological Empowerment**
-none-[a]	Employee Adaptability	Correlation	1.000	0.793	0.524
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.	0.000	0.000
		df	0	375	375
	Change Management Practices	Correlation	0.793	1.000	0.567
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.	0.000
		df	375	0	375
	Psychological Empowerment	Correlation	0.524	0.567	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.
		df	375	375	0
Psychological Empowerment	Employee Adaptability	Correlation	1.000	0.708	
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.	0.000	
		df	0	374	
	Change Management Practices	Correlation	0.708	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.	
		df	374	0	

Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.
Source: SPSS Output 25

The zero-order correlation showed positive correlation between the Change Management Practices and Employee Adaptability (r = 0.793, p = 0.000) and there was also a positive correlation between the Psychological Empowerment and Employee Adaptability ($r = 0.524$, $p = 0.000$) and between the Psychological Empowerment and Change Management Practices ($r = 0.567$, $p = 0.000$). When psychological empowerment was controlled, the relationship between the change management practices and adaptability among employees was reduced to $r = 0.708$ ($p = 0.000$), although it was still strong and statistically significant. There was a significant reduction between 0.793 and 0.708, indicating that Psychological Empowerment accounted for some of the relationship between change management practices and employee adaptability and had a meaningful moderating effect. However, the strong and significant relationship remained after accounting for the moderator implies that the change management practices had an independent effect on employee adaptability over and above that of psychological empowerment.

5. Discussion of Findings

Results of the study found that the communication in the study had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the flexibility of employees ($p = 0.000$, $\rho = 0.228$). The coefficient shows a weak positive correlation, but the statistical significance shows that effective communication is one of the important factors that determines the employees' adaptation in organizational change of commercial banks in South-South Nigeria. The information finding indicates that the promotion of information on time about organisational objectives, technological modifications, working procedures and organisational direction, has beneficial effects on comprehending change activities and decreasing uncertainty, thus increasing the behavioural flexibility of the employees. This discovery is a corroboration of Armenakis and Harris's (2009) assertion that communication prepares for change by affecting employees' beliefs about the need and rightness of organizational change. Likewise, Kotter (1996) underscored that disseminating the change vision is a crucial part of effective organizational change as staff will be more receptive to the change if they have an understanding of why the change is necessary. The finding is corroborated by the study of Edehwor and Ernest (2025) who found that effective communication has a positive effect on the performance of the employees during the process of change in organizations in Nigeria. Similarly, Ajani et al (2024) revealed that communication had a positive effect on employees' effectiveness in First Bank Nigeria. Communication, in the context of Kotter's Eight-Step Change Theory, helps to minimize ambiguity, ensure that employee expectations match organizational goals, and assist in the behavioral changes needed when changes occur; all of which can lead to employee flexibility.

There was also a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between employee participation and flexibility ($\rho = 0.453$, $p = 0.000$) which emerged from the study. The strength of the coefficient suggests that significantly more willingness to adapt to the changing organizational requirements results from the involvement of employees in the decision-making and implementation processes. By engaging in participation, the employees feel a sense of ownership, build their commitment, and reduce resistance, since they feel they are not being pushed to change but that they are part of the change. This is consistent with Lines (2004) who posited that involvement contributes to the commitment of employees to organisational change through boosting their ownership of change programmes. Likewise, Oreg et al. (2011) found that employee involvement had a positive effect on the positive response to organizational change. The outcome also corroborates the result of Otalor et al. (2025) which noted that participatory change management strategies have been found to significantly improve the performance of commercial banks in Nigeria by boosted employee commitment and technology adoption. These results are also in line with Organizational Readiness for Change Theory (Armenakis et al., 1993) which suggests that employees' perceptions of appropriateness and personal valence will be strengthened with participation, increasing their willingness to accept and act upon an organizational change. This increases the flexibility of the employees' behaviour and helps them accept changes within the organization better.This encourages employee engagement in behaviour and helps employees to be more accepting of the changes that the organization is undergoing.

The results also showed that training was positively and significantly correlated with the flexibilities of employees ($\rho = 0.269$, $p = 0.000$). The relationship, though relatively weak, is still statistically significant, showing that continuous employee development somehow plays a significant role in adaptive capacity of employees. Training builds the skills, knowledge, and confidence in employees to meet new business demands, especially when there are any technological innovations or digital transformation. This finding aligns with the idea of Cummings and Worley (2014) that employee training helps to diminish resistance to change as it enhances employees' competence and confidence to manage new responsibilities. Similarly, Herold et al. (2008) suggested that an organisational commitment via capability development boosts employees' commitment to change. The result is in line with the study conducted by Edehwor and Ernest (2025) which found that training of the staff members was found to have enhanced organizational performance in the implementation of change. Likewise, Agbana et al. (2023) found that organizations that invest in ongoing employee training undergo more seamless organizational transformation, as employees learn the skills needed to successfully implement change. The Organizational Readiness for Change Theory states that training improves change's effectiveness by increasing employees' confidence in their capabilities to effectively function in new and different organizational conditions.

Leadership support was also found to have the highest positive and statistically significant correlation with employee flexibility (ρ = 0.509; p = 0.000). The coefficient shows a moderate level of association and indicates that supportive leadership significantly affects the adaptability of employees of all the change management practices studied. The discovery suggests that staff can be more flexible in a company that gives strategic guidance and encouragement, timely resources, training, and concrete support for change initiatives. Supportive leaders are also able to build trust, alleviate uncertainty, and encourage employees to accept organizational change. The results corroborate the findings Herold et al. (2008) who reported that transformational leadership has a significant impact on organizational change commitment. Similarly, Kotter (1996) believed that a good leader must be willing to commit to the organization to drive change throughout the implementation process. The empirical results are in line with Otalor et al. (2025) that showed that the performance of commercial banks in Nigeria is significantly influenced by leadership-driven change strategies. The discovery additionally demonstrates the assumptions of Psychological Empowerment Theory (Spreitzer, 1995) which suggests that supportive leadership promotes staff members' sense of competence, autonomy, meaning, and impact, leading to a greater readiness to adapt to change within the organization and to be more flexible.

Both psychological empowerment and employee adaptability were found to be positively and statistically significant (r = 0.708, p = 0.000). The correlation coefficient decreased when moderator variables were controlled, but the relationship remained strong, suggesting that psychological empowerment played an important role in strengthening the relationship between the change management practices and adaptability of employees. The statistical significance of the relationship after the variance of variance of employee psychological empowerment suggests that the influence of communication, participation, training, and leadership support on employee adaptability remained statistically significant. This discovery suggests that the organization's change practices benefit employees' psychological empowerment more when they feel competent, autonomous, purposeful, and effective in the organization. This finding is in line with the meta-analysis done by Seibert et al. (2011) that showed psychological empowerment increases employee initiative, organizational commitment, adaptability and work performance. Likewise, Kim and Beehr (2023) found that empowering leadership positively affects employee behavioural adjustment and organizational engagement when organizations go through change. The discovery also reinforces the results of Llorente-Alonso et al. (2024), who found that psychological empowerment increases employees' resistance and ability to accept organizational change. The findings are in line with Psychological Empowerment Theory (Spreitzer, 1995) which states that employees who feel competent, autonomous, and have a sense of control over organizational outcomes are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to respond positively to change within their organization. The results show that overall, psychological empowerment positively correlates with the direct effect of change management practices on employee adaptability and is an important tool by which commercial banks can boost the flexibility and responsiveness of their employees in the ongoing transformation of their organizations.

6. Conclusion

The study revealed that change management practices significantly increased employee adaptability in commercial banks in South-South of Nigeria. In particular, communication, participation, training and leadership support were all found to be positively related to employee flexibility, and leadership support the most so, with the relationships all being statistically significant. Moreover, the results revealed that psychological empowerment moderated the relationship between change management practices and employee adaptability, suggesting that there was a stronger relationship between the predictors and the outcomes for employee adaptability when the employees were psychologically empowered. Based on this, it was concluded that continuous organizational change demands the commercial banks to implement the integrated change management practices while at the same time, promoting psychological empowerment will make the employees flexible, resilient and effective in their organization.

Limitations

The study used a cross-sectional survey design which only focused on one point in time and did not allow for any inferences to be made about change over time in employee adaptability or causal relationships. Second, the study was entirely based on self-reported data from questionnaires, so that the results may be subject to common method bias and social desirability bias despite the assurance of anonymity. Thirdly, the geographic scope covered only the commercial banks in South-South Nigeria, so the results may not be applicable to other geopolitical zones, financial institutions, and non-banking institutions. Finally, four dimensions of change management practices and two dimensions of employee adaptability were examined. Other organizational and individual issues (e.g., organizational culture, employee resilience, digital competence, job autonomy, organizational learning capability) were not explored and may potentially impact employee adaptability in subsequent research.

Recommendations

- Commercial banks in South-South Nigeria should implement transformational and participative leadership development initiatives for their branch managers, regional managers and departmental managers in the institution. These programmes should focus on developing competencies for change leadership including coaching and mentoring, clear communication, emotional intelligence and the support of employees in times of organisational change. Periodic town hall meetings should also be held with bank executives to give direction, set expectations and respond to staff concerns, and review sessions should be replaced to do the same. These would boost the trust that staff have in management and make them more resilient to technological change and restructuring.
- Commercial banks should make provisions to when the employees are actively involved in the organization's change initiatives. Management should establish cross-functional committees to implement change, including members from various branches and operational units, to help generate ideas prior to the introduction of significant organisational change. It is also important to involve employees when developing new policies, when implementing changes to the way things work, and when redesigning processes and workflows using formal feedback channels, input mechanisms and regular employee meetings. Engaging employees in decisions will build ownership of organisational change, minimise resistance and enhance adaptability as employees are more likely to be on board with initiatives that they have contributed to.
- Commercial banks should therefore establish the digital banking technology, financial innovations and new banking practices, cybersecurity, regulatory compliance, customer relationship management and comprehensive training programmes for continuous professional development. Training should be given prior to the implementation of new technologies and organisational procedures to help employees develop the skills and confidence to adapt. In addition, skills assessments should be carried out regularly to determine competency gaps and form a series of interventions that build capacity to improve organizational change goals.
- Commercial banks should create overall internal communication plans that give accurate, consistent and timely information before, during and after organizational change processes. The reasons for the change, why it is needed, what will change, when it will happen and what responsibilities employees will have for the change should be communicated through digital communication channels, departmental briefings, newsletters, and interactive communication channels. Clear communication helps to diminish uncertainty, eradicate misinformation, and better prepare workers for change, and promotes trust in managers.
- Commercial banks should intentionally adopt policies to enhance psychological empowerment of their employees. The autonomy in decision making of employees should be increased, delegation of responsibility should be greater, recognition of good performance should be greater, efforts to promote innovation should be greater, and supportive working environments should be developed so that employees' efforts are seen as having value. These measures will increase employees' competence, autonomy and organizational effectiveness, supporting the effectiveness of communication, participation, training and leadership support in relation to adapting employees to the continuous change within an organization.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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