
Change Management and Organizational Performance of Hospitality Firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria's hospitality sector face persistent challenges such as limited resources, resistance to innovation, and rapidly changing business environments, which threaten their performance and sustainability. This study examined the relationship between change management and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted, and the population comprised 232 hotel managers, supervisors, and administrative staff. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 147 respondents was determined. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) technique with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed positive and significant relationships between the dimensions of change management and organizational performance: change readiness assessment ($r = 0.817$), leadership commitment ($r = 0.915$). These results indicate that effective change management practices substantially enhance performance outcomes in hospitality firms. The study concluded that successful organizational change depends on leadership commitment and change readiness assessment. It was recommended that hospitality SMEs adopt a strong leadership commitment and actively engage employees in change processes to foster ownership, reduce resistance, and improve overall organizational performance.

Keywords: Change Management, Organizational Performance, Leadership Commitment, Employee Engagement, Hospitality Firms, Akwa Ibom State.

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are globally recognized as the backbone of economic development, driving innovation, job creation, and poverty reduction. In Nigeria, SMEs account for approximately 96% of business establishments and contribute significantly to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (SMEDAN, 2021). They play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurship, promoting industrialization, and enhancing economic diversification. Within Akwa Ibom State, SMEs particularly hospitality firms—serve as vital contributors to regional growth through employment generation, tourism development, and service provision. However, the dynamic nature of today's business environment, characterized by technological disruption, market competition, and shifting consumer expectations, has made adaptability through effective change management a prerequisite for organizational survival and performance.

Change management is a structured process of transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired future state to achieve strategic goals and performance improvement (Adel, 2018). It involves preparing, equipping, and supporting employees to successfully adopt change initiatives. Classical models such as Lewin's (1951) Three-Stage Model which includes “unfreezing,” “change,” and “refreezing” highlight the psychological and behavioral readiness required for successful transformation. Similarly, Kotter's (1996) Eight-Step Model emphasizes the importance of leadership vision, communication, employee engagement, and institutionalization of new practices. Despite these models being widely adopted in large organizations, SMEs often struggle with limited resources, managerial rigidity, and poor structural systems, which hinder their ability to effectively implement and sustain change.

The critical components of change management include leadership commitment, communication, employee engagement, training, and monitoring. Leadership commitment provides the strategic direction and motivation needed to guide the organization through periods of uncertainty (Moloi, Theron, & Fourie, 2021). Effective communication enhances transparency, reduces employee resistance, and builds trust. Employee engagement ensures active participation and ownership of change processes, while training equips workers with the competencies required to adapt to new operational realities. Monitoring and feedback mechanisms, on the other hand, help evaluate progress and reinforce behavioral alignment with organizational goals. Collectively, these elements form the foundation upon which successful organizational transformation is built.

Organizational performance refers to the degree to which an organization effectively utilizes its resources to achieve predetermined goals. Performance may be evaluated using financial measures such as profitability, market share, and revenue growth, as well as non-financial indicators like employee satisfaction, innovation capacity, and customer loyalty (Steve, 2019). The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm (Barney, 1991) posits that sustainable performance stems from unique internal resources and capabilities such as skilled personnel, leadership quality, and organizational culture that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. From this theoretical standpoint, effective change management practices constitute a strategic internal capability that enhances adaptability and, consequently, long-term performance.

Empirical evidence underscores the positive link between effective change management and improved organizational performance. For instance, Akinbode and Alaka (2022) reported that SMEs in Lagos State that adopted structured change management practices experienced a 25% increase in productivity and customer satisfaction. Similarly, Moloi et al. (2021) found

that South African SMEs that emphasized communication and leadership involvement during change processes achieved higher employee morale and service quality. These findings confirm that the success of change initiatives depends largely on leadership commitment, employee participation, and communication effectiveness. However, despite the growing recognition of change management as a critical driver of competitiveness, there remains a scarcity of empirical studies focusing on SMEs within Akwa Ibom State—particularly within the hospitality sector where change resistance and resource limitations are prevalent.

The hospitality industry, encompassing hotels, restaurants, and tourism-related businesses, represents one of the fastest-growing sectors in Akwa Ibom State. It plays a pivotal role in the state's economic diversification efforts, attracting investments and creating employment opportunities. However, the sector faces persistent challenges such as high operational costs, workforce turnover, and technological disruptions. These challenges necessitate the adoption of proactive change management strategies to enhance efficiency, service quality, and customer satisfaction. Yet, many hospitality firms lack formal structures for managing change, relying instead on ad-hoc managerial decisions that often lead to employee resistance and reduced performance.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine the relationship between change management and organizational performance in hospitality firms within Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study focuses on how key dimensions of change management change readiness assessment, leadership commitment, communication, employee engagement, and training influence performance outcomes such as profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction. By grounding its analysis in established change management theories and the RBV framework, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how SMEs can leverage internal capabilities to achieve sustainable growth.

Ultimately, this research contributes to bridging the empirical gap on change management practices in the hospitality sector of Akwa Ibom State. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and managers on how to design and implement effective change strategies that foster adaptability, innovation, and long-term organizational success in an increasingly volatile business environment.

Statement of the problem

Hospitality firms play a crucial role in stimulating economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and promoting regional development within Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Despite their socio-economic importance, many of these firms face persistent challenges such as limited financial resources, managerial inefficiencies, technological disruptions, and resistance to innovation all of which undermine their performance and sustainability (Moloi et al., 2021). While change management has been widely recognized as an essential strategy for organizational adaptation and competitiveness, hospitality firms in the district often lack structured frameworks to effectively plan, implement, and sustain change. Consequently, change initiatives are frequently executed in an uncoordinated manner, resulting in operational inefficiencies, employee dissatisfaction, service inconsistencies, and declining competitiveness.

Several critical elements of change management that directly influence organizational performance remain inadequately addressed in local hospitality firms. For instance, change readiness assessment, which serves as a diagnostic tool for evaluating organizational preparedness before implementing transformation, is often neglected. The absence of

readiness evaluation causes a mismatch between change initiatives and organizational capacity, leading to suboptimal or counterproductive outcomes (Vakola, 2016). Recent studies affirm that organizational readiness strongly predicts the successful adoption of innovation within tourism and hospitality sectors (Alghizzawi et al., 2024). Similarly, leadership commitment, which is central to successful change execution, remains weak in many firms. Leaders often fail to communicate a clear vision, allocate adequate resources, or sustain accountability throughout the change process. Empirical findings reveal that transformational leadership behaviors that inspire and empower employees significantly enhance engagement, morale, and organizational performance (Gogoi, 2023).

Furthermore, poor communication continues to hinder the effectiveness of change management in hospitality firms. Ineffective information flow and delayed dissemination of change-related messages foster uncertainty, resistance, and misinformation among employees. Studies conducted within Nigerian hospitality contexts have identified inadequate communication and lack of staff involvement as major barriers to successful change implementation (Okafor & Okeke, 2023). In addition, employee engagement is often minimal, as workers are seldom involved in decision-making or consulted during the planning and execution of change initiatives. This lack of involvement reduces ownership, lowers morale, and negatively impacts service delivery. Evidence indicates that employee engagement when supported by proactive leadership substantially improves service quality and overall organizational performance (Kovacova et al., 2025). Similarly, inadequate training prevents employees from acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge required to adapt to new systems, technologies, and service standards. Without continuous training, employees become resistant to change, thereby weakening service quality and customer satisfaction. Research confirms that training acts as a strategic enabler that mitigates resistance and strengthens change outcomes in Nigerian hospitality settings (Okafor & Okeke, 2023).

Collectively, these deficiencies insufficient readiness assessment, weak leadership commitment, ineffective communication, low employee engagement, and inadequate training undermine the ability of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District to adapt effectively to environmental changes, enhance productivity, and sustain competitive performance. Although prior studies have established the positive relationship between change management and organizational performance, there is a paucity of empirical evidence on how these specific components of change management influence the performance of hospitality firms within this region. This gap in empirical knowledge limits the ability of managers to design evidence-based change strategies that foster adaptability, innovation, and long-term growth.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between change management practices specifically change readiness assessment, leadership commitment, communication, employee engagement, and training and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. The outcome of this study is expected to provide actionable insights for improving managerial practices, strengthening employee participation, and enhancing the overall performance and sustainability of hospitality enterprises in the region.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between change management and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To examine the relationship between change readiness assessment and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.
- ii. To examine the relationship between leadership commitment and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Research questions

- i. What is the relationship between change readiness assessment and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?
- ii. What is the relationship between leadership commitment and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?

Research Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following research questions;

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between change readiness assessment and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between leadership commitment and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Significance of the Study

Change is no longer an option but a necessity for organizations seeking to survive in today's volatile and competitive business environment. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially those within the hospitality sector in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, the capacity to manage change effectively has become a defining factor for sustainability and growth. This study is therefore significant as it interrogates how structured change management practices influence performance outcomes, with a focus on readiness, leadership, communication, employee engagement, and training as central variables.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study enriched existing literature by situating widely recognized change management frameworks within a local, developing-economy context. Much of the available scholarship tends to focus on large corporations in advanced economies, creating a knowledge gap regarding how smaller, resource-limited firms adapt to change. By examining the interaction between change readiness assessment, leadership commitment, communication channels, employee participation, and capacity-building initiatives, this research extends the boundaries of theory. It demonstrates the adaptability of global change management concepts to culturally diverse and economically constrained settings, providing a nuanced understanding of how change can be managed effectively in SMEs. This makes the study an important reference point for scholars and researchers seeking to advance comparative and cross-cultural investigations in organizational studies.

On the empirical front, the study offers practical insights for managers, SME owners, policymakers, and development stakeholders in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The findings will provide evidence-based strategies for overcoming common challenges such as economic volatility, limited access to resources, and resistance to innovation. Specifically, it will highlight the role of readiness assessments in preparing firms for change, the importance of leadership commitment in sustaining transformation, the necessity of clear communication, the value of engaging employees in the change process, and the role of training in building competence. By articulating how these factors translate into improved profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction, and innovation, the study equips hospitality firms with actionable pathways to enhance performance.

Furthermore, the significance of this research extended beyond the immediate context of hospitality firms. It offered valuable lessons for government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and business support institutions involved in SME development, providing guidance for policy formulation, training programs, and leadership development initiatives. At the same time, it benefits scholars and future researchers by supplying a foundation for further empirical work, case studies, and comparative research across regions and industries. Ultimately, the study contributes to bridging the gap between theory and practice, enhancing SME resilience, and fostering socio-economic development within Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District and beyond.

Scope of the Study

Content Scope: The study focused on investigating the relationship between change management and organizational performance. Specifically, it examined key dimensions of change management - such as change readiness, leadership commitment, effective communication, employee engagement, and training - and how these techniques influence organizational performance.

Unit/Analytical Scope: The primary units of analysis for this study were individuals occupying managerial and administrative roles within hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. This included managers, supervisors, and administrative staff who are directly involved in organizational change processes and are capable of providing relevant data on change implementation and performance outcomes.

Geographical Scope: Geographically, the study was confined to hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The focus is on registered hospitality firms operating within Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, which represented a growing hub of hotel business activities in the state.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provided valuable insights into the relationship between change management practices and organizational performance in hospitality firms within Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, it is not without its limitations. A major limitation lay on the geographical scope, as the research was restricted to a single senatorial district. Although the findings were contextually relevant, they may not fully represent hospitality firms in other senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State or in Nigeria at large, where socio-cultural, institutional, and market-related factors may present different dynamics. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on the hospitality sector narrowed the generalizability of the results, as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in other industries may adopt or experience change management differently.

Another important limitation arose from the research design and methodology. The study relied heavily on questionnaires and interviews, which are subject to personal bias, selective memory, and respondents' willingness to provide honest and accurate information. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the research restricted its ability to measure the long-term impact of change management practices on organizational performance. A further methodological limitation is associated with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) as the main statistical tool for data analysis. While PPMC is useful in establishing the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables, it does not account for causality, nonlinear relationships, or the potential influence of confounding variables. This limitation may reduce the robustness of the findings and underscores the need for more

advanced statistical techniques such as regression analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), or mixed-method approaches in future studies.

Finally, the study examined only five dimensions of change management -readiness, leadership, communication, engagement, and training - while omitting other potentially significant factors. Influences such as organizational culture, leadership styles, employee resistance to change, technological integration, regulatory frameworks, and external market forces were not captured, thereby limiting the comprehensiveness of the study. To overcome these gaps, future research should broaden the geographical scope, include multiple SME sectors, employ longitudinal designs, and adopt more sophisticated statistical methods to provide richer insights into how change management practices shape organizational performance in diverse and dynamic business contexts.

Operational Definition of Terms

Change readiness assessment: refers to the systematic process of evaluating an organization's preparedness - cognitively, emotionally, and structurally - to undertake and successfully implement change.

Change management: A systematic process aimed at guiding an organization through transitions, ensuring smooth implementation of changes to achieve strategic goals and minimize resistance.

Organizational performance: The measure of how effectively and efficiently an organization achieves its goals, using both financial (e.g., profitability) and non-financial (e.g., customer satisfaction) metrics.

SMEs (small and medium enterprises): Enterprises characterized by their size, typically defined by a specific number of employees and revenue thresholds, contributing significantly to economic growth and employment.

Training: Structured programs designed to improve employees' skills and capabilities, ensuring they are equipped to manage and adapt to changes in organizational processes and systems.

Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

A conceptual framework is the diagrammatic presentation of variables, showing the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variables. In this study, the independent variable is; ergonomics and the dependent variables is organizational performance.

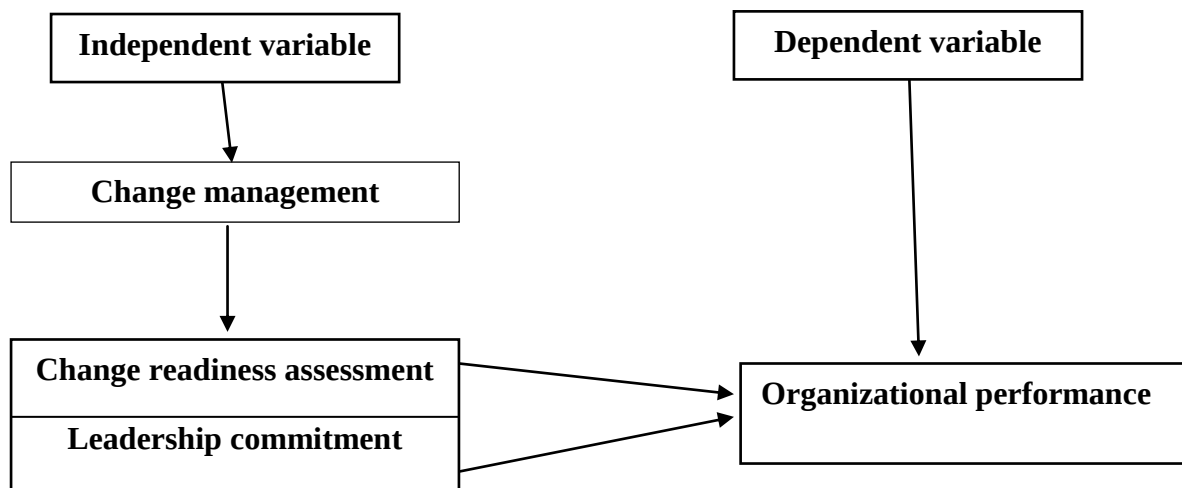


Figure 2.1: Conceptual model of the study
Source: Researcher (2025)

The Concept of change management

Change management is the structured approach employed by organizations to transition from a current state to a desired future state. It involves preparing, equipping, and supporting individuals, teams, and organizations to adopt change effectively. This concept has become increasingly critical in today's dynamic and competitive business environment, where adaptability is essential for survival and growth. Successful change management requires a combination of leadership, strategic planning, employee engagement, communication, and evaluation processes to achieve desired outcomes while minimizing resistance. According to Akpaetor & Madubuike (2022), strategic change is an integral part of contemporary business operation. Change management has been defined by various scholars, each emphasizing distinct aspects. Kotter (1996) views it as guiding organizations and individuals through transitions to achieve goals, highlighting leadership's role in driving change. Hayes (2018) emphasizes structured approaches to managing change, focusing on reducing resistance and aligning efforts with strategic objectives. Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2019) see it as integrating people, processes, and tools for sustainable change. Hiatt (2006) stresses equipping individuals to adopt change successfully, while Moloi et al. (2021) focus on planning and communication to enhance transitions and performance. These definitions collectively underline the importance of leadership, communication, and structured planning in ensuring successful organizational transformation.

Change management encompasses both reactive and proactive strategies to address internal and external challenges. Reactive change focuses on responding to crises, such as economic downturns or competitive threats, while proactive change anticipates future trends and adjusts operations accordingly. According to Hayes (2018), effective change management involves not only addressing technical aspects, such as restructuring or technological upgrades, but also managing human factors, including resistance and emotional reactions to change.

Numerous models and theories have shaped the understanding and application of change management. One prominent model is Lewin's Change Management Model, which outlines three key stages: unfreezing, transitioning, and refreezing (Lewin, 1951). These

stages emphasize breaking down old habits, implementing new practices, and stabilizing these changes within the organization. Similarly, Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model highlights the importance of creating urgency, building a guiding coalition, and institutionalizing change through strategic actions (Kotter, 1996). These frameworks underscore the importance of leadership, communication, and employee involvement in driving successful transitions.

Leadership, communication, and employee engagement are crucial to effective change management. Leaders articulate the vision, motivate employees, and build trust, fostering smoother transitions (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2019). Communication ensures clarity and stakeholder alignment, reducing resistance and boosting engagement through strategies like updates and feedback forums (Moloi et al., 2021). Additionally, involving employees in decision-making and providing training enhances adaptability and reduces anxiety, leading to successful implementation of changes and improved organizational efficiency (Akinbode & Alaka, 2022).

Despite its importance, change management is fraught with challenges, including resistance to change, inadequate resources, and lack of leadership commitment. Resistance often arises due to fear of the unknown, loss of control, or perceived threats to job security. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of empathy, effective communication, and strong leadership. Additionally, the lack of financial or technical resources can hinder the implementation of change initiatives, particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Change management is an essential organizational process that facilitates adaptation and growth in a dynamic business environment. By leveraging key components such as leadership, communication, employee engagement, and training, organizations can successfully navigate transitions and achieve their strategic goals. While challenges such as resistance and resource constraints persist, a well-structured change management framework can drive performance and ensure long-term success. As organizations face increasing pressure to remain competitive, the role of effective change management cannot be overstated.

Dimensions of Change Management

The dimensions of change management - change readiness, leadership, communication, employee engagement, and training - are deeply interconnected. Effective leadership ensures clear communication, which in turn fosters employee engagement. Engaged employees are more receptive to training and development, enhancing their adaptability. Together, these elements create a robust framework for managing change, ensuring that organizations can navigate transitions effectively and achieve sustainable performance improvements as analyzed by Armenakis et al., (1993), Al-Haddad & Kotnour (2019) Moloi et al. (2021), as well as Akinbode and Alaka (2022).

i. Change Readiness Assessment

Change readiness assessment is a vital element of change management that focuses on evaluating how prepared an organization is—both structurally and psychologically - to undergo transformation. It involves assessing the willingness, capacity, and capability of employees and leaders to engage in and sustain the proposed change (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993). The process examines critical factors such as leadership commitment, employee mindset, communication effectiveness, organizational culture, and the availability of resources necessary for implementation (Holt *et al.*, 2007). As a diagnostic tool, change readiness assessment helps managers identify potential barriers and enablers of change before full-scale

implementation begins. It ensures that change strategies are aligned with the organization's current realities and that necessary support systems are in place. Without such assessment, organizations risk encountering resistance, misalignment, or failure during the change process (Rafferty *et al.*, 2013). Within the broader scope of change management, readiness assessment lays the foundation for successful planning, employee engagement, and leadership responsiveness. By proactively evaluating readiness, organizations increase their chances of achieving smoother transitions, higher acceptance rates, and ultimately, improved organisational performance.

ii. Leadership Commitment

Leadership is the driving force behind successful organizational change. Effective leaders provide a clear vision of the desired future state, ensuring alignment with the organization's strategic objectives. They serve as role models, demonstrating commitment to change and fostering trust among employees. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, innovation, and individualized support, has been shown to have a significant impact on the success of change initiatives (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2019). Leaders also play a crucial role in managing resistance by listening to employee concerns and addressing them proactively. By fostering a culture of transparency and collaboration, leaders help create an environment where employees feel empowered to embrace change. Furthermore, leaders must exhibit emotional intelligence to understand the challenges faced by employees during transitions and provide the necessary support, thereby reducing fear and enhancing adaptability.

Concept of organizational performance

The concept of organizational performance refers to the assessment and measurement of how effectively an organization is achieving its goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. It encompasses a wide range of factors that contribute to an organization's success and effectiveness in both the short and long term (Dimitri, 2020). For businesses, organizational performance refers to how well an organization is doing in reaching its vision, mission, and goals. Assessing organizational performance is a vital aspect of strategic management. Organizational performance is the capacity of an organization, institution, or business to produce desired results with a minimum expenditure of energy, time, money, personnel, materiel, etc. (Lambert, 2017).

Organizational performance goes beyond just financial metrics and includes various dimensions such as financial health, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, innovation, and social responsibility. These dimensions provide a comprehensive view of an organization's overall health and its ability to deliver value to stakeholders (Ayodele, 2022).

Ultimately, the concept of organizational performance emphasizes the need for a holistic and balanced approach to success. It is not just about financial gains, but also about delivering value to customers, creating a positive workplace culture, fostering innovation, and being socially responsible. Organizations that excel in all these dimensions are better positioned for sustainable growth and long-term success (Ayodele, 2022).

2.1.6 Change Readiness Assessment and Organisational Performance

In the contemporary business environment marked by constant innovation, globalization, and technological disruption, the ability of an organization to adapt to change is critical to its long-term success. Effective change management has thus become an essential component of organizational strategy, with the readiness of an organization to

embrace change emerging as a pivotal determinant of successful transformation (Holt *et al.*, 2007). Change readiness assessment is a diagnostic tool used to evaluate how well-prepared an organization is, both structurally and psychologically, to implement change. This readiness significantly influences organisational performance outcomes such as efficiency, productivity, employee morale, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage (Lines *et al.*, 2022).

Change readiness assessment is a strategic evaluation of an organization's capacity, willingness, and preparedness to undergo change. Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) define change readiness as "cognitive precursor to resistance or support for change," emphasizing the psychological state of individuals and the organization as a whole. Readiness encompasses perceptions of the need for change, confidence in the proposed change, belief in leadership competence, and the availability of resources to facilitate the transition (Holt *et al.*, 2007).

The relationship between change readiness and organisational performance can be situated within Lewin's Change Model (1947) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Lewin's model posits that change involves three stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. The unfreezing stage aligns with readiness assessment, where an organization prepares psychologically and structurally for change. Ajzen's theory, on the other hand, explains that individuals' behavioral intentions (such as willingness to support organizational change) are influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—factors embedded in readiness assessments. Furthermore, Armenakis *et al.*'s (1993) change message framework emphasizes that effective change implementation depends on how well leaders communicate the five beliefs of readiness (discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, and valence) to organizational members. These theoretical models collectively suggest that readiness is a prerequisite for successful change, which in turn drives performance.

Empirical studies provide substantial support for the proposition that change readiness significantly influences organizational performance. Holt *et al.* (2007), in a validation study of the change readiness assessment instrument, found a strong positive correlation between high levels of readiness and the successful implementation of change initiatives in healthcare organizations. Similarly, Choi and Ruona (2011) examined the mediating role of change readiness in public sector reform and discovered that departments that conducted systematic readiness assessments reported higher performance outcomes post-change than those that did not. Their study concluded that readiness assessment improves not only the change process but also the tangible outputs of organizational activities.

Change readiness assessment is a critical precursor to successful organizational change and has a significant positive influence on organisational performance. By evaluating an organization's psychological and structural preparedness, change readiness assessments help align people, processes, and systems to the demands of change. The theoretical frameworks of Lewin, Ajzen, and Armenakis, as well as empirical studies, affirm that readiness is not only necessary for change success but also essential for achieving enhanced performance outcomes. Organizations that invest in readiness assessments position themselves for more adaptive, agile, and resilient futures. For policymakers, managers, and change agents, integrating readiness assessments into change strategies is not optional - it is indispensable for driving sustainable organizational performance.

Leadership commitment and organizational performance

Leadership commitment, as a critical component of change management, significantly influences organizational performance by driving alignment, enhancing employee engagement, and ensuring the achievement of strategic goals. In the context of change management, leadership commitment refers to the willingness of organizational leaders to actively support, guide, and sustain initiatives aimed at transforming processes, behaviors, or systems (Ferl, 2021). Leadership commitment involves the consistent involvement of leaders in articulating visions, modeling desired behaviors, and allocating resources to facilitate change. Leaders are central to creating a sense of urgency, fostering trust, and ensuring that all stakeholders align with the organization's objectives. According to Kotter's model of change, leadership plays a vital role in establishing a guiding coalition, creating a compelling vision, and embedding new practices into the organizational culture.

Empirical evidence reinforces the significance of leadership commitment in change management. A study by Ngobeni *et al.* (2021) found that South African organizations that demonstrated strong leadership commitment during change processes achieved higher levels of employee engagement and productivity. Leadership commitment fosters a culture of adaptability, enabling organizations to respond effectively to dynamic market conditions. Organizational performance, often measured by financial outcomes, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee productivity (Ray, 2021), is deeply influenced by leadership commitment. Committed leaders ensure that change initiatives align with organizational goals, thereby reducing resistance and enhancing overall effectiveness. Research by Akinbode and Alaka (2022) highlights that SMEs with highly committed leadership experienced increased employee productivity and innovation due to better alignment between individual efforts and organizational objectives. In addition to improving employee morale, leadership commitment enhances operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Leaders who demonstrate commitment allocate resources effectively, proactively address challenges, and streamline processes, thereby minimizing disruptions during change implementation. Operational efficiency translates into consistent service delivery, boosting customer confidence. Furthermore, committed leaders exhibit agility in responding to shifting customer needs, strengthening customer relationships and fostering loyalty. Collectively, these factors drive sustained organizational performance, demonstrating the indispensable role of leadership commitment in change management (Ferl, 2021).

Empirical studies substantiate these claims. For instance, research by Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2019) showed that organizations with transformational leaders - those who inspire and motivate - achieved a 20% increase in financial performance post-change compared to those with less committed leadership. The findings highlight that leadership commitment not only drives successful change implementation but also sustains competitive advantage.

The influence of leadership commitment on organizational performance operates through several mechanisms. Committed leaders articulate a clear vision for change, aligning organizational efforts with strategic goals to enhance focus and efficiency. Their transparent communication fosters trust and ensures stakeholders understand the rationale for change (Moloi *et al.*, 2021). By empowering employees through training and development, leaders boost confidence and productivity. Additionally, during crises, committed leaders effectively navigate challenges like resistance and disruptions, mitigating risks and ensuring performance stability, thus driving sustained organizational success (Ibor, 2020).

While leadership commitment is crucial, sustaining it presents challenges. Wayne (2017) opined that leaders often face competing priorities, limited resources, and resistance

from employees or other stakeholders. Additionally, the fast-paced nature of modern business environments requires leaders to balance immediate operational demands with long-term strategic goals. Addressing these challenges necessitates ongoing leadership development, the cultivation of a supportive organizational culture, and the implementation of robust change management frameworks. Leadership commitment, as a cornerstone of change management, plays a pivotal role in enhancing organizational performance. By fostering trust, aligning efforts with strategic objectives, and empowering employees, committed leaders drive successful change implementation and ensure sustained organizational success. Empirical evidence highlights the transformative impact of leadership commitment on key performance metrics such as productivity, innovation, and customer satisfaction. As organizations continue to navigate complex and dynamic environments, leadership commitment will remain an indispensable factor in achieving long-term growth and competitiveness.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Various theories that are relevant to change management and organizational performance have been propounded by different scholars. For the purpose of this study the Kotter's 8-step change model by John Kotter (1996) is adopted.

2.2.1 Kotter's 8-step change model by John Kotter (1996)

John P. Kotter, a Harvard Business School professor, introduced the 8-Step Change Model in his seminal work *Leading Change* (1996), later revised in *Accelerate* (2014). The model emerged from over a decade of research on why organizational transformation efforts often fail. Kotter concluded that most failures stem from neglecting the human dimension of change, poor sequencing of actions, and inadequate leadership engagement. The model provides a systematic, people-centered, and leadership-driven framework for achieving successful organizational change. It emphasizes that transformation is not a one-time event but a process that unfolds in sequential and interrelated stages. In the hospitality industry, where service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational adaptability are central to performance, this model offers practical guidance for navigating competitive pressures and changing guest expectations.

Kotter's framework focuses on mobilizing commitment, creating alignment, and embedding change into organizational culture. It views change leadership rather than mere change management - as the core driver of sustainable transformation (Kotter, 1996; Kotter, 2014). While it prescribes eight sequential stages, Kotter acknowledges that overlaps occur in practice, and leaders must adapt the steps to contextual realities. The model is particularly relevant for service-oriented organizations, where employee engagement and customer-facing changes must be carefully managed to avoid disruption.

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model has been widely supported in both theory and practice due to its structured and practical approach to implementing change across various industries, including hospitality. The model's emphasis on establishing a sense of urgency and building a guiding coalition has been found to significantly enhance employee buy-in and leadership alignment, which are critical for service-based organizations (Kotter, 1996; Gill, 2023). Empirical evidence from Oreg *et al.* (2011) demonstrates that organizations adopting Kotter's framework report higher rates of change success compared to those using less structured approaches, largely due to its clear, step-by-step guidance. In the hotel sector, Hussain *et al.* (2018) found that implementing Kotter's steps - particularly the communication of a clear vision and empowerment of employees - led to measurable improvements in service delivery and guest satisfaction. For hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, where competition and customer expectations are high, the model's structured nature can

provide managers with a roadmap to navigate complex operational and cultural transformations effectively.

Despite its wide acceptance, Kotter's 8-Step Change Model has been criticized for being overly linear and prescriptive, making it less adaptable to dynamic business environments such as the hospitality industry, where change often occurs unpredictably (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2022). Critics argue that the model assumes that change follows a fixed, sequential order, whereas in reality, change processes may be iterative, overlapping, and cyclical (Burnes, 2017). This limitation can present challenges for hotel managers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, who may need to respond to sudden market shifts, guest preferences, or competitive pressures without necessarily following all eight steps in sequence. Furthermore, the model is often seen as being overly focused on top-down leadership and does not sufficiently integrate bottom-up innovation and employee-driven change initiatives (By, 2023). In service-oriented contexts like hospitality firms, where front-line staff interactions significantly impact performance, this lack of emphasis on grassroots participation may hinder full adoption and sustainability of change efforts.

Application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model to the study

This research is anchored on Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, which serves as the guiding theoretical framework for understanding and examining the relationship between change management and organisational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The model provides a structured and people-centered approach to initiating, implementing, and sustaining change, making it particularly relevant to the hospitality sector where service quality, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction are critical performance indicators. By following the sequential steps of creating urgency, building a guiding coalition, formulating a strategic vision, enlisting a volunteer army, removing barriers, generating short-term wins, sustaining acceleration, and embedding change into the organisational culture, hotel managers can systematically address resistance, mobilise employee commitment, and ensure long-term operational improvements. In the context of this study, Kotter's framework offers a practical lens through which change management practices in hospitality firms can be assessed, while also providing a theoretical basis for evaluating how these practices influence measurable outcomes such as occupancy rates, guest satisfaction scores, repeat patronage, and overall profitability. Anchoring the research on this model ensures that the investigation is grounded in a well-established theory with proven applicability in service-oriented industries, thereby strengthening both the academic validity and practical relevance of the study.

2.3 Empirical Review

Adams (2025) investigated the effect of change management on organizational performance among small businesses in Lagos. The research collected data from 500 participants. The sample size was determined using the stratified sampling technique to ensure diverse representation across various business sectors. Data analysis was performed utilizing multiple regression analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative insights. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between change management and organizational performance. The study recommended that small businesses adopt structured change management practices tailored to their operational contexts. These include regular employee training, transparent communication strategies, and leadership commitment to facilitating change.

Kelos (2025) investigated the effect of change management on organizational performance in retail firms in South Africa. The study surveyed 400 employees and utilized a

mixed-methods approach, with data analyzed using multiple regression and content analysis. Findings showed a positive impact of structured change processes on productivity, supported by leadership commitment, effective communication, employee engagement, and training. The study recommended regular feedback loops, digital communication tools, and leadership training programs to enhance change outcomes.

Hernandez (2025) examined the role of change management in fostering innovation in tech startups in Brazil. Data collected from 350 participants through surveys and interviews were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results highlighted the importance of leadership vision and employee engagement in driving innovation. Recommendations included implementing dynamic training modules, open communication platforms, and leadership workshops focused on adaptive strategies.

Effiong, Brownson & Udo(2025) studied on ergonomics and employees' engagement of Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS), Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study population comprised 227 staff members of Excellence Community Education Welfare Scheme (ECEWS) across all branches in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test two hypotheses using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The result showed that there is a positive significant relationship between role clarity and employees' engagement with a correlation coefficient of $R_{x2} = 0.651$ and there is significant relationship between workforce-training and employees' engagement with a correlation coefficient of $R_{x6} = 0.769$.

Jameson (2024) investigated the effect of change management on organizational performance among medium-scale enterprises in Abuja. The study used data from 300 participants collected through structured questionnaires and focus group discussions. A purposive sampling technique was employed to target sectors experiencing high organizational change. The research design was descriptive, and the data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for quantitative data and narrative analysis for qualitative insights. The findings revealed a moderate but significant positive relationship between change management practices and organizational performance. It recommended government intervention to provide resources and tools to support medium-scale enterprises in adapting to change effectively.

Lee (2024) explored the effect of change management on organizational resilience in manufacturing firms in South Korea. Using a longitudinal study design, data from 370 employees were analyzed with path analysis. Leadership commitment, coupled with consistent communication and employee empowerment through training, was found to significantly improve resilience. The study recommended developing scenario-based training, leadership mentoring programs, and transparent feedback systems to manage change effectively.

Osei and Boateng (2024) assessed change management approaches in Ghanaian banking institutions. Using a qualitative design, data were collected from senior managers through focus group discussions and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed that clear communication and digital transformation were essential for sustainability. The study concluded that lack of digital integration hindered operational efficiency and recommended improved communication and technology-driven change.

Okoro (2024) investigated change management in agricultural SMEs in Ghana. Data from 300 participants were analyzed through thematic and descriptive statistical methods. Effective communication, leadership involvement, and training programs were identified as

crucial to improving productivity. The study advised establishing farmer-centered training modules and leadership engagement plans.

Chinwendu (2024) assessed the effects of change management practices on organizational survival in the pharmaceutical industry in Nigeria, using May & Baker Nigeria Plc as a case study. The study utilized a descriptive case study research design. The target population was 700 employees, and a sample of 140 employees was selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The study found that change management practices are critical for the survival of pharmaceutical companies. It recommended adopting innovative research and development strategies to ensure survival in a competitive market.

Martins (2023) studied change management's impact on profit margins in Canadian retail firms. Surveys from 400 participants were analyzed using logistic regression. Findings emphasized the role of leadership-driven training programs and transparent communication in achieving higher profit margins. Recommendations included integrating AI-driven communication tools and employee feedback mechanisms.

Uchegbue and Ugwu (2023) conducted a study titled effect of change management on the performance of SMEs in Enugu State. The objective was to examine how leadership alignment and communication strategies influence performance in small and medium enterprises. The study used a descriptive survey method involving 248 respondents across selected SMEs, and data were analyzed using Z-tests. Findings revealed that leadership alignment ($Z = 6.541, p < .05$) and effective communication ($Z = 5.525, p < .05$) had significant positive effects on organizational output, employee development, and profitability. The study concluded that aligning leadership and fostering open communication channels improve organizational performance. It recommended that SMEs implement proactive change frameworks supported by leadership and continuous improvement strategies.

Prosci (2023) discussed "Change Management for Sustainability," focusing on how change management can be a potent tool in executing sustainability strategies effectively. The study utilized a qualitative approach, collecting data through case studies and expert interviews. Findings highlighted that integrating change management with sustainability initiatives leads to more effective implementation. The study concluded that change management is crucial for sustainability transformations and recommended its integration into sustainability strategies.

Okeke, Nwankwo, and Uche (2023) studied change management and organizational performance in selected manufacturing companies in Anambra State, aiming to assess the effect of change management elements such as technology, strategy, and leadership. The researchers surveyed 286 employees and analyzed the data using Lewin's Three-Step Model. Results indicated that technological changes, strategic change approaches, and leadership transformation significantly improved productivity and competitiveness. The study concluded that effective change management drives organizational success. It recommended that managers provide training on new technologies and align leadership vision with change objectives.

Akpaetor & Madubuike (2022) Studied Critical Success Factors and Strategic Change Management in Selected Deposit Money Banks in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The study is an attempt to assess critical success factors and strategic change management in selected deposit money banks in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis. The results from the analysis revealed that the studied variables

showed positive and significant relationship with strategic change management in the selected deposit money banks in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

2.4 Research Gap

While numerous studies have explored the relationship between change management and organizational performance across various sectors and geographical locations, a notable gap exists in the context of hospitality sector within Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, Nigeria. For instance, Adams (2025) examined change management in Lagos-based SMEs, highlighting the importance of structured practices such as communication, training, and leadership commitment, but the findings may not fully apply to the unique business environment in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Similarly, Jameson (2024) focused on medium-scale enterprises in Abuja, emphasizing proactive change strategies and government support, yet the study targeted only sectors with high organizational change, excluding general hotels. Other studies such as those by Ahmed (2024) and Brown (2024) concentrated on logistics industry, respectively, with a focus on operational performance and customer satisfaction, leaving a gap in understanding how change management affects broader organizational performance in the hospitality sector.

Additionally, while international studies by Kelos (2025), Hernandez (2025), and Lee (2024) offered valuable insights into change management in South Africa, Brazil, and South Korea, their contexts differ significantly from Nigeria's economic, cultural, and structural realities. Most existing research has concentrated on large or specialized firms, using various models such as regression and structural equation modeling, yet few have combined a localized focus with practical relevance for SMEs in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Moreover, many of these studies emphasize individual components of change management (e.g., leadership or training) without holistically examining how multiple dimensions - such as communication, resistance management, and employee engagement - collectively influence organizational performance. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the effect of change management practices on organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, thereby providing context-specific insights that can inform policy and practice.

Research Design

A survey research design was adopted to examine the relationship between change management and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. This design was considered appropriate because it enables the collection of detailed and factual information from a defined population, providing insights into individual and group perceptions about existing organizational practices. It was also justified for this study as it allows the researcher to describe and analyze real-life conditions how change management practices influence performance within a natural business setting without manipulating variables.

Population of the study

The population of this study comprised management staff of registered hospitality firms operating within Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Records from the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and online hospitality directories such as Hotels.ng (2025) indicate that seventy-six (76) hospitality firms including hotels, guest houses, and resorts are actively operating across local government areas such as Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim, Obot Akara, and Ika. Preliminary estimates show that these firms collectively employ approximately 232 management personnel, including general managers, departmental heads, supervisors, and administrative officers, forming the total study population.

This population was considered appropriate because management staff play a strategic role in initiating, implementing, and sustaining organizational change. Their decisions directly affect performance outcomes such as productivity, service quality, and customer satisfaction. As emphasized by Kotter (1996) and the Prosci ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2003), managers act as critical change agents who bridge strategy and execution. Thus, selecting this group as the study population was justified, as they possess the knowledge and experience necessary to provide reliable insights into the relationship between change management and organizational performance.

Sampling size determination

The sample size for this study was statistically determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for known populations, which provides a simplified method for deriving a representative sample at a specified level of precision. The formula is expressed as:

Where:

n = Sample Size

N = Population Size (232)

e = Margin of Error (5%)

1 = Theoretical Constant

Thus: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

$$n = \frac{232}{1 + 232(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{232}{1 + 232(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{232}{1 + 0.58}$$

$$n = \frac{232}{1.58}$$

$$n = 147$$

Thus, the sample size for this study was 147 respondents.

This number was considered adequate and representative of the total population of 232 management staff in the seventy-six (76) registered hospitality firms within Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. The choice of this statistical approach is justified because the Taro Yamane formula ensures a scientifically valid sample size, balancing precision with practicality. It provides a level of confidence (95%) suitable for generalizing findings to the entire study population while maintaining manageable data collection scope.

Sampling technique

The study employed simple random sampling to select respondents. A complete sampling frame of all management staff (N = 232) across the 27 hospitality firms listed in Table 3.1 was compiled. Each staff member was assigned a unique number and 147 numbers were drawn at random using a random-number generator to produce an unbiased sample in which every individual had an equal probability of selection. The questionnaires were then administered only to the randomly selected staff. Simple random sampling was chosen to

minimize selection bias and to support the statistical assumptions required for Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Sources and method of data collection

The study depended entirely on primary data. The primary data were obtained from structured questionnaire that were administered to the sampled respondents. The questionnaire which contained close-ended questions was administered to staff of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Test of reliability

To establish the reliability of the instrument, 60 copies of the research instrument were administered to 60 employees in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha method of reliability testing.

Table 3.1: The Reliability Indexes of Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Test-retest	Internal consistency
Change readiness assessment	4	.83	.86	Good
Leadership commitment	4	.92	.90	Excellent

Source: Researcher's computation (2025)

From the table above, the data collected for each of the variables of change management - change readiness assessment (CRA), Leadership commitment(LC) and Communication (CN), were all greater than sixty percent (60%) which showed that they were all reliable to this study using the Cronbach's Alpha Statistics. CRA had .86% and LC had 90%. The number of items showed that the numbers of questions in each of the variables were four (4). Thus, other analyses can be conducted on the sourced data.

Test of validity

The face validity and content validity of the research instrument was determined after thorough evaluation by the supervisor and other experts in the field of management. Their suggestions and recommendations for improvement would be use to review and improve on the research instrument; by so doing, the validity of the instrument was assured.

Measurements/operationalization of variables

This study centered on change management and organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. The independent variable - change management - was measured using five dimensions: change readiness assessment, leadership commitment, communication, training, and employee engagement. Equally, the dependent variable was organizational performance. These variables were operationalized as shown below:

Table 3.2: Measurement and Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Dimensions / Constructs	Source / Adapted Scale	No. of Items Used	Sample Questionnaire Items
Independent Variable: Change Management	Change Readiness Assessment	Holt et al. (2007), <i>Readiness for Organizational Change Scale</i>	4	1. Employees in this organization understand the reasons for organizational change. 2. There is a clear strategy in place to guide change processes. 3. Management effectively assesses potential risks before implementing change. 4. The organization regularly evaluates its readiness before introducing change.
	Leadership Commitment	Hersey et al. (2008); Armenakis & Harris (2009)	4	1. Leaders' active involvement in change initiatives boosts performance. 2. Committed leadership helps reduce resistance to change. 3. Leadership commitment fosters a culture of trust that improves performance. 4. The leadership team's commitment contributes to successful implementation of strategic goals.
Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance	Organizational Performance	Delaney & Huselid (1996)	4	1. The organization has experienced improved productivity since recent changes. 2. The organization adapts effectively to changes in the business environment. 3. The organization has become more competitive since adopting change strategies. 4. Employee performance has improved due to recent change initiatives.

Source: Researcher's compilation (2025)

Method of data analysis

Descriptive and inferential analytical tools were used while analyzing the generated data. Accordingly, the null hypotheses that was formulated for this study was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

3.10 Decision rule

The decision rules in the use of both t-statistic and the F-statistic were as follows:

1. Reject null hypothesis rejected if the probability value (p-value) is less than the correlation coefficient at 5% level of significance
2. Accept null hypothesis when the probability value (p-value) is greater than the correlation coefficient at 5% level of significance.

Data Presentation

In this subsection of the study, the computed data in line with the relevant attributes of this study were presented.

The analyses of the data collected were as follows:

Table 4.1.1 Distribution of questionnaire/response rate

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Distributed Questionnaires	147	100.0
Returned & Valid Questionnaires	132	89.8
Unreturned/Invalid Questionnaires	15	10.2
Total	147	100.0

Source: Researcher's field survey, (2025)

From Table 4.1.1, a total of 147 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the sampled staff of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Out of these, 132 copies were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 89.8%. This high response rate was achieved through consistent follow-up and reminders to the respondents.

Table 4.1.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	74	56.1
	Female	58	43.9
Total		132	100
Age	18–25 years	26	19.7
	26–35 years	48	36.4
	36–45 years	38	28.8
	46 years and above	20	15.1
Total		132	100
Educational Qualification	SSCE/Equivalent	18	13.6
	OND/NCE	28	21.2
	HND/Bachelor's Degree	64	48.5
	Postgraduate	22	16.7
Total		132	100
Position	Manager	18	13.6
	Supervisor	32	24.2
	Administrative Staff	82	62.1
Total		132	100
Length of Service	Less than 1 year	14	10.6
	1–5 years	56	42.4
	6–10 years	38	28.8
	Above 10 years	24	18.2
Total		132	100

Source: Field survey (2025)

From table 4.1.2, the gender distribution shows that male respondents (56.1%) slightly outnumber female respondents (43.9%), suggesting a moderately male-dominated workforce in the hospitality firms studied.

In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents (36.4%) were aged 26–35 years, followed by 28.8% in the 36–45 years bracket. This indicates that the workforce is largely composed of young and middle-aged adults who are within their most productive years. Only 15.1% were 46 years and above, while 19.7% were between 18–25 years, showing a relatively small number of older employees and fresh entrants.

Regarding educational qualifications, the majority (48.5%) held HND or Bachelor's degrees, followed by 21.2% with OND/NCE. This suggests that the hospitality industry in the area employs a relatively educated workforce, with a significant proportion (16.7%) possessing postgraduate qualifications, indicating advanced professional training.

In terms of job positions, administrative staff made up the largest group (62.1%), followed by supervisors (24.2%) and managers (13.6%). This structure reflects a typical organizational pyramid in hospitality businesses, where operational-level staff outnumber those in supervisory and managerial positions.

Length of service analysis revealed that most respondents (42.4%) had worked for between 1–5 years, showing a high rate of relatively recent employment. This could indicate either staff turnover or expansion in the sector. Meanwhile, 28.8% had 6–10 years of experience, 18.2% had worked for over 10 years, and only 10.6% were relatively new employees with less than a year of service.

Data analysis

This section discussed the frequency of respondents' responses to each of the questions classified according to the research variables together with their specific percentage. This was done as follows: -

Table 4.2.1: Analysis of responses on change readiness assessment

Change readiness assessment	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Total	Mean	Standard deviation
Employees in this organization understand the reasons for organizational change.	42 (31.8%)	82 (62.2%)	6 (4.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.5%)	132 (100%)	4.23	0.704
There is a clear strategy in place to guide change processes in the organization.	1 (46%)	67 (51%)	2 (1.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.5%)	132 (100%)	4.39	0.681
Management effectively assesses the potential risks before implementing change.	54 (40.9%)	71 (53.8%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	3 (2.3%)	132 (100%)	4.31	0.740
This organization regularly evaluates its readiness before introducing change.	66 (50%)	52 (39%)	10 (8%)	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	132 (100%)	4.33	0.763
Average							4.32	0.722

Source: Field survey (2025)

Table 4.2.1 showed the respondents views on change readiness assessment. On “employees in this organization understand the reasons for organizational change” out of 132 respondents, 42 (31.8%) strongly agreed and 82 (62.1%) agreed, indicating that the vast majority of employees are aware of why organizational changes occur. Only 6 respondents (4.5%) were undecided, while none disagreed, and just 2 respondents (1.5%) strongly disagreed. The high mean score of 4.23 and low standard deviation (0.704) reflect strong consensus and minimal variation in responses.

On “There is a clear strategy in place to guide change processes in the organization” a total of 61 respondents (46%) strongly agreed and 67 (51%) agreed, showing a dominant perception that change processes are guided by a clear strategy. Only 2 respondents (2%) were undecided, none disagreed, and 2 respondents (2%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.39 and standard deviation (0.681) indicate a high level of agreement with very little divergence in opinion.

On “management effectively assesses the potential risks before implementing change”. Here, 54 respondents (41%) strongly agreed and 71 (54%) agreed, suggesting broad confidence in management’s risk assessment practices during change. Four respondents (3%) were undecided, none disagreed, and 3 respondents (2%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.31 and standard deviation (0.740) reflect consistent agreement with only slight variability in views.

In the case of “This organization regularly evaluates its readiness before introducing change”, 66 respondents (50%) strongly agreed and 52 (39%) agreed, reflecting strong belief that readiness assessments are regularly conducted before implementing change. Ten respondents (8%) were undecided, none disagreed, and 4 respondents (3.0%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.33 and standard deviation (0.763) demonstrate high agreement with modest variation.

The average mean across the four items is 4.32, indicating a very high overall agreement with the change readiness statements. The average standard deviation (0.722) is low, suggesting that opinions were consistent across respondents indicating that change readiness assessment has significant relationship on organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Table 4.2.2: Analysis of responses on leadership commitment

Leadership commitment	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Total	Mean	Standard deviation
Leaders' active involvement in change initiatives boosts employee performance.	55 (41.7%)	73 (55.3%)	2 (1.5%)	2 1.5%	0 (0%)	132 (100%)	4.37	0.6
Committed leadership helps in reducing resistance to organizational change	61 (46.2%)	67 (50.8%)	3 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	132 (100%)	4.42	0.62
Leadership commitment fosters a culture of trust, which directly improves organizational performance.	54 (40.9%)	73 (55.3%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	132 (100%)	4.36	0.62
The leadership team’s commitment to change contributes to the successful implementation of strategic goals.	55 (41.7%)	72 (54.5%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	132 (100%)	4.36	0.62
Average							4.38	0.62

Source: Field survey (2025)

In table 4.2.2, the analysis of the four statements on leadership commitment revealed a generally high level of agreement among respondents that leadership engagement plays a crucial role in organizational change and performance. Leaders' active involvement in change initiatives boosts employee performance recorded a mean score of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.60, indicating strong agreement and relatively consistent opinions across respondents. With 41.7% strongly agreeing and 55.3% agreeing, it is evident that leadership participation is seen as a motivational and performance-enhancing factor.

Committed leadership helps in reducing resistance to organizational change had the highest mean (4.42) among the four statements, with 46.21% strongly agreeing and 50.76% agreeing. The low standard deviation (0.62) reflects minimal variation in responses, showing that respondents almost unanimously view leadership commitment as a key tool for overcoming change resistance.

Leadership commitment fosters a culture of trust, which directly improves organizational performance scored a mean of 4.36, with the highest proportion of agreement (55.3%) and 40.91% strongly agreeing. This suggests that trust-building is perceived as an important leadership role in sustaining performance during change.

The leadership team's commitment to change contributes to the successful implementation of strategic goals also scored 4.36 mean, with 41.7% strongly agreeing and 54.55% agreeing, reflecting broad consensus that leadership plays a decisive role in aligning change initiatives with strategic objectives.

Overall, the average mean of 4.38 across all items and an average standard deviation of 0.62 indicate that leadership commitment has significant relationship on organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Table 4.2.3: Analysis of responses on organizational performance

Organizational performance	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Total	Mean	Standard deviation
The organization has experienced improved productivity since recent changes were implemented	50 (38%)	72 (55%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	7 (5%)	132 (100%)	4.20	0.92
Our organization adapts effectively to changes in the business environment.	61 (46%)	67 (51%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	132 (100%)	4.42	0.62
The organization has become more competitive in its market since adopting change strategies.	61 (46%)	68 (52%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	132 (100%)	4.44	0.54
Employee performance has improved as a result of recent change initiatives.	65 (50%)	53 (40%)	11 (8%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	132 (100%)	4.34	0.82
Average							4.35	0.73

Source: Field survey (2025)

The results in table 4.2.3 clearly demonstrate a strong positive perception of change management on overall performance. For the statement "The organization has experienced improved productivity since recent changes were implemented," 50 respondents (38%)

strongly agreed, 72 (55%) agreed, 3 (2%) were undecided, and 7 (5%) strongly disagreed. No respondents disagreed. This statement recorded a mean score of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.92, indicating a generally favorable view of productivity improvements, though with some variation in responses.

Regarding the statement "Our organization adapts effectively to changes in the business environment," 61 respondents (46%) strongly agreed, 67 (51%) agreed, 3 (2%) were undecided, and 1 (1%) strongly disagreed. No respondents disagreed. The mean score was 4.42 with a standard deviation of 0.62, reflecting strong consensus that the organization is agile and responsive to external changes.

For the statement "The organization has become more competitive in its market since adopting change strategies," 61 respondents (46%) strongly agreed, 68 (52%) agreed, and 3 (2%) were undecided. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. This item recorded the highest mean score of 4.44 with the lowest standard deviation of 0.54, indicating a high level of agreement and very little variability in opinions.

On the statement "Employee performance has improved as a result of recent change initiatives," 65 respondents (50%) strongly agreed, 53 (40%) agreed, 11 (8%) were undecided, and 3 (2%) strongly disagreed. No respondents disagreed. This item had a mean score of 4.34 and a standard deviation of 0.82, showing a strong positive response with slightly more diversity in opinion compared to other statements.

Overall, the average mean score across all four items was 4.35, with an average standard deviation of 0.73. These results suggest that respondents generally perceive change management as having a positive impact on organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Test of Hypotheses

This section of the study test and interpret the null hypotheses that were formulated in chapter one of this study.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between change readiness assessment and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Table 4.3.1: Correlation analysis

Variables	Method	CRA	OP
CRA	Pearson correlation	1	0.817
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	132	132
OP	Pearson correlation	0.817	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	132	132

Source: Researcher's computation (2025)

From Table 4.3.1, it was observed that the relationship between change readiness assessment and organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District was 81.7%. The p-value computed showed that the relationship between the two variables was significant. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship change readiness assessment and organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District was rejected and the alternative hypothesis

which states that there is significant relationship between change readiness assessment and organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District was accepted as p-value computed was less than 5% level of significance.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between leadership commitment and organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Table 4.3.2: Correlation analysis

Variables	Method	LC	OP
LC	Pearson correlation	1	0.915
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	132	132
OP	Pearson correlation	0.915	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	132	132

Source: Researcher's computation (2025)

From Table 4.3.2, it was observed that the relationship between leadership commitment and organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District was 91.5%. The p-value computed showed that the relationship between the two variables was significant. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship leadership commitment and organizational performance inhospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District was rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states that there is significant relationship between leadership commitment and organizational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District was accepted as p-value computed was less than 5% level of significance.

Discussion of the findings

After the test of hypotheses, some major findings were made. The findings are discussed in this section of the study as shown below:

4.4.1 Change readiness assessment and organisational performance

The result from Table 4.3.1 revealed a strong positive relationship between change readiness assessment and organisational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District, with a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.817. This high correlation indicates that when hospitality firms assess and understand their readiness for change, they are more likely to experience improved organisational outcomes. Readiness assessment equips firms with the foresight to anticipate challenges, mobilize resources, and align their human capital toward change objectives. It also enhances employee confidence and lowers resistance, creating a conducive environment for transformation.

This finding is supported by Nwachukwu and Emeka (2022), whose study on SMEs in Port Harcourt demonstrated that organizations with structured readiness assessment frameworks experienced faster implementation cycles and better performance metrics. Similarly, Obiora (2022) found that change readiness - measured by employee preparedness, cultural alignment, and resource availability - had a statistically significant effect on innovation and goal attainment in SMEs across South-South Nigeria. In contrast, Aliyu (2021) noted that SMEs that neglected readiness assessments frequently encountered bottlenecks during transitions, which affected staff morale and project delivery. These findings

emphasize that assessing readiness is not a preliminary formality but a critical determinant of successful organisational change and sustained performance.

Leadership commitment and organisational performance

The result from Table 4.3.2 revealed a very strong positive relationship between leadership commitment and organisational performance in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District, with a PPMC coefficient of 0.915. This result signifies that the more committed the leadership is during change initiatives, the higher the chances of achieving positive performance outcomes in hospitality firms. Leadership commitment ensures the availability of resources, strategic direction, and employee motivation throughout the change process. In the hospitality firm's context, where leadership is often closely tied to ownership, committed leaders serve as both change drivers and cultural anchors.

This finding is consistent with the empirical work of Obi and Ezeugo (2021), who discovered that leadership engagement in change planning, monitoring, and communication led to measurable improvements in profitability and operational efficiency in SMEs in Enugu. Likewise, Okorie and Daramola (2023) found that leadership visibility and decisiveness during organizational change were critical for aligning teams and minimizing disruptions. On the other hand, Adebayo (2020) in a comparative study of successful and struggling SMEs in Lagos reported that lack of leadership commitment often manifested in unclear priorities and poor follow-through, which derailed change initiatives and negatively affected performance. These studies collectively affirm that leadership commitment is indispensable to driving effective change and achieving sustainable performance.

Summary of the findings

The following were the summary of the study from the analysis:

- i. There was positive and significant relationship between change readiness assessment and organizational performance (OP) ($P\text{-value} < 0.05$) in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.
- ii. There was positive and significant relationship between leadership commitment and organizational performance (OP) ($P\text{-value} < 0.05$) in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that successful change management and improved organisational performance among hospitality businesses in the Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District depend on a strong leadership commitment and an efficient change readiness assessment. Organisations can reduce ambiguity and resistance by clarifying the goal and process of change through a methodical evaluation of employees' preparedness for change that is backed by open, honest, and two-way communication. Furthermore, visible leadership commitment - expressed via employee engagement in decision-making, recognition, and meaningful participation - fosters trust and enhances employees' readiness to support change projects. In order to attain sustainable development and long-term operational success, hospitality companies must consciously incorporate readiness assessment, leadership commitment, and employee involvement into their change management frameworks.

Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings of this study, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Hospitality firms' owners and managers should institutionalize periodic change readiness assessments before implementing any change initiative. This will help identify potential resistance, resource gaps, and organizational strengths, allowing for better planning and execution.
2. Hospitality firms should prioritize active involvement from top management in change initiatives. Leadership commitment plays a crucial role in aligning organizational goals with employee efforts, and committed leaders should regularly communicate the vision for change, motivate employees, and allocate necessary resources.

Contributions to knowledge

This study made several significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge on change management and organisational performance, particularly within the context of hospitality firms in Nigeria:

1. The study fills a geographical and contextual gap by providing empirical data on how change management practices influence organisational performance in hospitality firms located in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Previous studies have often concentrated on larger corporations or SMEs in major commercial cities like Lagos or Abuja, leaving out insights from emerging business hubs like Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.
2. By demonstrating a strong positive correlation between change readiness assessment and organisational performance, the study adds to empirical literature that supports the strategic value of readiness evaluation in the change process. It affirms that proactively assessing organisational preparedness is key to performance outcomes in dynamic business environments.
3. The study confirms that leadership commitment is a highly significant driver of organisational performance during change, especially in hospitality firms where leadership and ownership structures are closely linked. It contributes to the understanding of leadership roles not only as figureheads but as active facilitators of successful transformation.

5.5 Suggestions for further studies

From the findings of this study, other areas that were not covered in the present study were suggested for further studies as stated below:

1. This study focused on in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District, it was suggested that future studies should extend the scope of the study and explore other organizations in Nigeria including the private sector organizations in order to be able to generalize the conclusions to organizations in Nigeria.
2. Change management and organizational performance of hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom State should be researched with the inclusion of other variables for organizational performance.
3. Change management and organizational performance of listed companies in Nigeria should be investigated by other researcher(s).
4. Change management and organizational performance of quoted manufacturing companies in Nigeria should be researched further.

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APPENDIX

SECTION A

PERSONAL DATA

Please tick (✓) the appropriate options.

- | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Sex: | Male | ☐ |
| | Female | ☐ |
| 2. Age: | 20-25 years | ☐ |
| | 26-35 years | ☐ |
| | 36-45 years | ☐ |
| | 46-55 years | ☐ |
| | Above 55 years | ☐ |
| 3. Educational qualification: | | |
| | NCE/OND | ☐ |
| | B.Sc/B.A/HND | ☐ |
| | M.Sc./MBA/LLM | ☐ |
| | Others | ☐ |
| 4. Position: | Junior Staff | ☐ |
| | Senior Staff | ☐ |
| | Middle-level | ☐ |
| | Top-level | ☐ |
| 5. Length of service in the organization: | | |
| | 1- 5 years | ☐ |
| | 6- 10 years | ☐ |
| | Above 10 years | ☐ |

SECTION B

Please respond to the following research related questions by ticking (✓) in the appropriate box for each question. Select only one response per question.

SA = Strongly Agree,

A = Agree,

U= Undecided,

D = Disagree,

SD =Strongly Disagree.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD
A	Change readiness assessment					
1.	Employees in this organization understand the reasons for organizational change.					
2.	There is a clear strategy in place to guide change processes in the organization.					
3.	Management effectively assesses the potential risks before implementing change.					
4.	This organization regularly evaluates its readiness before introducing change.					
B	Leadership commitment	SA	A	U	D	SD
5.	Leaders' active involvement in change initiatives boosts employee performance.					
6.	Committed leadership helps in reducing resistance to organizational change					
7.	Leadership commitment fosters a culture of trust, which directly improves organizational performance.					
8.	The leadership team's commitment to change contributes to the successful implementation of strategic goals.					
F	Organizational performance	SA	A	U	D	SD
21	The organization has experienced improved productivity since recent changes were implemented					
22	Our organization adapts effectively to changes in the business environment.					
23	The organization has become more competitive in its market since adopting change strategies.					
24	Employee performance has improved as a result of recent change initiatives.					