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Evaluation the Model of Reduction in Organizational Inertia in the Department of Education

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Abstract
In today's dynamic educational landscape, organizations are required to continuously adapt to social and technological transformations. However, organizational inertia often acts as a major barrier that slows innovation and reform. The present *mixed-method* research aimed to design and empirically validate a model for reducing organizational inertia in the Department of Education of Shiraz. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with educational management experts were analyzed thematically to extract the key dimensions of inertia reduction. In the quantitative phase, the proposed model was examined using a descriptive–survey design. The statistical population included all female teachers working in the four educational districts of Shiraz during 2025, from whom 240 participants were selected through multi-stage cluster random sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire developed based on qualitative findings. The validity of the instrument was confirmed through expert review, and its reliability was verified using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Smart PLS 3 software. The results identified four main dimensions—enhancement of organizational infrastructure, improvement of organizational processes, development of teachers' individual capabilities, and strengthening of administrators' competencies—as the most significant contributors to reducing organizational inertia. Among these, the dimensions of infrastructure enhancement and process improvement had the strongest impact. The findings highlight the importance of adopting flexible structures, transformational leadership, and learning-oriented organizational cultures to enhance adaptability and innovation in educational organizations.

Keywords: Organizational inertia, educational management, mixed-method research, confirmatory factor analysis, Smart PLS

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Introduction

In today's era of rapid and unpredictable transformation, educational organizations are under growing pressure to adapt, innovate, and evolve. Advances in science and technology, together with shifting social and cultural expectations, have fundamentally reshaped what societies demand from their educational systems. Education is no longer limited to the transfer of knowledge; rather, it must cultivate creativity, critical thinking, adaptability, and lifelong learning. As the foundation of human capital development, the education system determines a nation's intellectual, cultural, and economic progress. Its capacity to respond effectively to environmental change is, therefore, a key indicator of national sustainability and development. Despite this strategic importance, many public educational institutions remain resistant to reform. A major source of this rigidity lies in *organizational inertia*—the persistent tendency of organizations to maintain existing structures and routines even when change is needed (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). Inertia can arise from structural rigidity, bureaucratic decision-making, or cultural and psychological resistance among employees. When such conditions persist, organizations lose their flexibility, innovation declines, and adaptation becomes increasingly difficult (Schein, 2006). Within education, inertia leads to outdated teaching methods, ineffective management practices, and weak adoption of new technologies and pedagogical models (Bayati, Soleimani, & Ahmadi, 2019).

Organizational inertia is not a sudden phenomenon but rather the outcome of long-term behavioral and structural accumulation. Scholars identify three key dimensions: cognitive (limitations in recognizing new realities), emotional (fear of instability or uncertainty), and structural (institutionalized routines that restrict flexibility) (Hassanjad, 2020). These dimensions reinforce one another and gradually form a culture of conformity that discourages proactive change.

In Iran's educational system, manifestations of organizational inertia are particularly visible. Centralized decision-making, rigid hierarchies, and bureaucratic procedures restrict schools' ability to innovate. Teachers and administrators often view reforms as externally imposed, which leads to skepticism and passive resistance (Hashemi, Ranjbar, & Beghaei, 2019). In addition, limited opportunities for professional development and inequitable reward systems reduce motivation and organizational commitment (Gholtash & Shafiipour, 2022). Consequently, many educational reforms either fail to be implemented or lose effectiveness midway. This challenge is especially critical in a context where education plays a central role in national development. Research indicates that organizational inertia can directly lower teacher performance, hinder curriculum innovation, and weaken managerial efficiency

(Bayati et al., 2019; Riasati, Rezaei Khatouni, & Bahjat, 2024). International findings support this view, showing that organizations with high inertia display low adaptability and are less likely to survive in changing environments (Weber, 1947; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). Therefore, identifying the mechanisms that reduce inertia and promote organizational agility has become a central concern for educational policymakers and scholars. Although recent studies have examined inertia conceptually, most have lacked empirical validation within Iran's unique cultural and administrative context. There is still a need for a data-driven, context-based model that statistically identifies the factors contributing to the reduction of inertia in educational settings. Addressing this gap requires a systematic approach that integrates theoretical understanding with quantitative evidence to highlight practical strategies for enhancing adaptability, learning, and leadership effectiveness. Accordingly, the present study aims to design and empirically validate a model for reducing organizational inertia in the Department of Education of Shiraz. The proposed model focuses on four interrelated dimensions: (1) enhancement of organizational infrastructure, (2) improvement of organizational processes, (3) development of teachers' individual capabilities, and (4) strengthening of school administrators' competencies.

The study is guided by the following central question:

What are the key factors that reduce organizational inertia in the Department of Education of Shiraz, and how do these factors contribute to adaptability and transformation within the organization?

By exploring this question, the research seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to provide actionable recommendations for developing dynamic, responsive, and innovation-oriented educational organizations capable of meeting the demands of the modern era.

Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

Organizational inertia is recognized as one of the most significant barriers to organizational transformation. This phenomenon refers to the internal resistance of organizational structures to change and can hinder innovation, performance improvement, and productivity gains. In dynamic and competitive environments, an organization's ability to respond swiftly to external changes is critical. However, organizations suffering from inertia often rigidly adhere to the status quo and resist adopting innovations (Sharma, 2000). This behavior is typically reinforced by factors such as rigid structures, conservative cultures,

traditional leadership styles, and fear of the unknown, ultimately leading to diminished effectiveness and organizational inefficiency.

Structural Causes of Organizational Inertia

Rigid and bureaucratic organizational structures are among the primary causes of organizational inertia. Structures that emphasize fixed rules, strict hierarchies, and centralized power reduce an organization's flexibility. Such organizations resist any form of change or reform, remaining loyal to traditional procedures. In his classic analysis of bureaucracy, Weber (1947) notes that organizations with inflexible rules and hierarchical structures are prone to diminished creativity, slower decision-making, and ultimately an inability to adapt to environmental shifts.

Cultural Dimensions of Inertia

From a cultural perspective, when an organizational culture is rooted in conservatism, unquestioning obedience to authority, and risk aversion, employees are unlikely to propose innovative ideas or implement new solutions. Closed cultures typically oppose change, viewing any unconventional ideas as threats to stability (Schein, 2006). In such environments, organizations become trapped in cycles of repeating outdated practices, leading to latent dissatisfaction, declining productivity, and eventual gradual decline.

Psychological and Behavioral Barriers

The psychological dimensions of organizational inertia are highly significant. Employees often resist change due to fear of uncertainty, insufficient skills for adaptation, or negative experiences from past reforms (Sharma, 2000). This fear fosters distrust and resistance to transformation, while limited training opportunities further reinforce inertia.

Leadership and Managerial Influence

Leadership style plays a pivotal role in either sustaining or reducing organizational inertia. Traditional leadership, focused on control and preserving existing structures, naturally favors the status quo. In contrast, transformational leadership—emphasizing shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and active employee participation—encourages change and fosters a learning-oriented culture (Bass & Avolio, 1995).

Evolutionary Theory and Organizational Survival

The organizational ecology theory (Hannan & Freeman, 1984) views inertia as a critical factor in organizational survival. Similar to natural selection, organizations that adapt to environmental changes endure, while those unable to reduce inertia face long-term decline. In this perspective, inertia is not merely resistance to change but also an indicator of organizational misalignment with its environment.

Organizational Inertia in Iran's Education System

- In Iran, particularly in the education system, clear manifestations of organizational inertia are evident. Complex hierarchies, opaque decision-making, excessive centralization, and reliance on traditional teaching and management methods have resulted in stagnation and an inability to respond to socio-technological changes (Ebrahimi, n.d.; Gholtash & Shafiipour, 2022). Many teachers and school administrators perceive educational reforms as threats to stability, reacting to change with skepticism. This is consistent with findings by Hashemi, Mashinchi, and Gholtash (2023), who highlighted that rigid educational paradigms and failure to integrate cultural and contextual elements into curriculum design deepen institutional inertia.

- **Strategies for Mitigating Inertia in Educational Systems**

- Research suggests that multidimensional interventions are necessary to reduce inertia in educational systems:

- **At the individual level**: Continuous teacher training, motivation, professional empowerment, and fostering positive attitudes toward change. Gholtash, Karimi, and Aghili (2023) emphasized the mediating role of self-efficacy and psychological capital in enhancing innovative job performance, which directly counters resistance to change among teachers.

- **At the structural level**: Decentralization, flexible structures, and revising decision-making processes. Hashemi, Ranjbar, and Beghaei (2019) demonstrated that blended learning models can improve organizational flexibility and promote adaptive practices within schools, offering a viable approach to reducing structural inertia.

- **At the managerial level**: Replacing traditional leadership with transformational approaches, promoting participatory environments, and enhancing transparency (Shams, 2017; Gholtash & Hosseini, 2023). Leaders who understand both pedagogical and managerial dynamics are more likely to initiate and sustain change.

- Complementary measures include:

- Cultivating a learning-oriented organizational culture.

- Encouraging innovation and supporting new ideas (Hashemi, 2022).
- Leveraging technological infrastructure.
- Implementing material and non-material incentives for change advocates (Kotter, 1996).
- Facilitating open dialogue, interorganizational collaboration, and continuous process evaluation (Hashemi et al., 2023).
- These strategies collectively address the multi-layered nature of inertia and align with both national and international perspectives on educational transformation.
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Research Design

This study employed an applied research design with a quantitative, descriptive–survey approach to identify and analyze the factors that reduce organizational inertia among female teachers in the Department of Education of Shiraz. The purpose was to empirically test and validate a conceptual model that had been previously developed through a qualitative exploratory phase of research. The quantitative phase focused on verifying the relationships among the main components of the model and assessing their relative influence on organizational adaptability and responsiveness.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire constructed based on the findings of the prior qualitative phase and the finalized conceptual framework. The instrument consisted of 38 items, each rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Very Low (1)* to *Very High (5)*. The questionnaire covered four major dimensions: (1) enhancement of organizational infrastructure, (2) improvement of organizational processes, (3) development of teachers' individual capabilities, and (4) strengthening of school administrators' competencies.To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed and refined by a panel of specialists in educational management and organizational behavior. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) coefficients, all of which exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was also confirmed, as the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were greater than 0.50.

Study Population and Sampling

The statistical population comprised all female teachers working in the four educational districts of Shiraz during the 2025 academic year. Considering the large size and geographical dispersion of the population, a multi-stage cluster random sampling method was adopted to ensure representativeness.

1. In the first stage, two districts—District 1 and District 4—were randomly selected.

2. In the second stage, six schools were randomly chosen from each district.

3. In the final stage, the questionnaire was distributed among all teachers in the selected schools.

Out of 240 distributed questionnaires, 225 were returned fully completed and suitable for analysis, resulting in a 93.7% response rate. According to Cochran's formula, this sample size was statistically sufficient for inferential analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted in two stages using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions, were applied to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and overall variable trends.
For inferential analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were performed using SmartPLS 3 software. The analytical process included:

1. ***Evaluation of the measurement model,*** assessing the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the latent constructs; and

2. ***Evaluation of the structural model,*** estimating path coefficients, significance levels (t-values), and the overall goodness of fit (GoF).

These procedures provided a rigorous empirical test of the proposed model and identified the most influential dimensions contributing to the reduction of organizational inertia.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were carefully observed throughout all stages of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Formal approval for conducting the study was obtained from the Department of Education of Shiraz prior to data collection.

Table 1. Components of the Conceptual Model for Reducing Organizational Inertia in Education and Training in Shiraz

Basic themes	Organizing themes	Comprehensive theme
Organizational Chart Revision /Reduction of Job Burnout Enhancement of Teachers' Job Satisfaction/ Development of Effective Communication Channels / Improvement of Compensation System and Teachers' Welfare Facilities / Commitment to Organizational Agility / Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning / Reduction of Organizational Apathy and Indifference Senior Management Support for Organizational Infrastructure Reform / Promotion of Organizational Justice / Implementation of Meritocracy System	Upgrading organizational infrastructure	Organizational Inertia Reduction Model for Shiraz Department of Education
Strategic Human Resource Management / Effective Problem-Solving and Decision-Making / Continuous Training for Teachers and Administrators / Development of Participatory Management / Reform of Internal Organizational Policies and Regulations / Implementation of Feedback Systems and Appropriate Reward-Discipline Mechanisms / Alignment Training for Individual and Organizational Goals / Analysis of Upstream Documents in Line with Environmental Needs	Improving Organizational Processes	
Reducing Fear of Change / Increasing Motivation / Enhancing Individual Organizational Commitment / Improving Work Ethics and Responsibility / Reducing Job Stress / Boosting Individual Morale Enhancing Personal Productivity / Decreasing Employee Resistance to Change	Developing teachers' individual capabilities	

Training school administrators in teacher support methods / Developing administrators' knowledge and attitudes toward change / Clarifying the change process by administrators / Training in providing effective feedback to teachers / Enhancing administrators' skills in selecting effective leadership styles / Developing a culture of accepting new changes in the organization / Training on how to encourage teachers to develop innovative teaching methods / Teaching optimal utilization of school's political climate / Raising teachers' awareness about change outcomes / Promoting a culture of healthy competition	Improving the competence of school administrators	

Research Findings

Demographic data of the participants—such as age, educational level, and years of teaching experience—were collected during the survey. However, these variables were not included in the main analysis because they were not central to the research objectives and did not significantly influence the key findings.To provide an initial overview of the study variables, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed for all components of the proposed model.

Table2: Mean and standard deviation of research components

Research variables	Average	Standard deviation	Research variables	Average	Standard deviation
Organizational chart reform	4/07	0 /90	Improving work conscience and responsibility	4/11	0 /75
Reducing burnout	4/05	0 /92	Reducing job stress	4/18	0 /76
Commitment to organizational agility	3/91	0 /94	Improving individual morale	4/12	0 /84
Organizational knowledge management and learning	3/86	0 /95	Improving individual productivity	4/07	0 /90
Reducing organizational inertia and apathy	4/06	0 /87	Reducing employee resistance to change	4/09	0 /94
Supporting senior managers in reforming	4/02	0 /91	Training school administrators on	4/17	0 /90

organizational infrastructure			how to support teachers		
Increasing organizational justice	4/13	0 /80	Developing knowledge and attitudes of change administrators	3/35	0 /92
Establishing a meritocracy system	4/06	0 /86	Clarify the changing process by managers	4/06	0 /87
Strategic human resource management	3/97	1 /01	Training to provide effective feedback to teachers	4/02	0 /91
Effective problem solving and decision making	4/06	0 /93	Improving managers' skills in choosing an effective leadership style	4/13	0 /93
Continuous training of teachers and managers	3/86	0 /96	Developing a culture of accepting new changes in the organization	4/32	0 /94
Developing participatory management	3/85	1 /07	Training how to encourage teachers to develop new teaching methods	3/90	0/89
Amending internal organizational rules and regulations	4/06	0 /93	Training to optimally use the political climate of the school environment	4/22	0 /93
Establishing a feedback system and appropriate punishment and reward system	3/92	0 /91	Informing teachers of the results of change	3/67	0 /98
Training to align individual and organizational goals	4	0 /93	Promoting a culture of healthy competition	3/81	0 /78
Analyzing and reviewing upstream documents in	4/03	0 /88	Increasing motivation	4/17	0 /88

accordance with environmental needs					
Reducing fear of change	4/04	0 /86	Improving individual organizational commitment	4/13	0 /78

As indicated in Table 2, most of the variables obtained relatively high mean scores, suggesting that teachers held positive perceptions toward the factors associated with reducing organizational inertia. The highest mean value (M = 4.32) corresponded to developing a culture of accepting new changes within the organization, whereas the lowest mean (M = 3.35) pertained to developing administrators' knowledge and attitudes toward change.These results indicate that while the educational culture among teachers in Shiraz schools is generally receptive to innovation, managerial awareness and preparedness for change remain comparatively weaker. This finding underscores the need for systematic leadership development and capacity-building programs to strengthen administrators' change-oriented competencies. Such emphasis on managerial readiness is consistent with previous evidence highlighting the role of transformational leadership and supportive management in enhancing organizational adaptability (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Kotter, 1996).

Table 3: Content validity test in the measurement model

Row	**Hidden variable**	**Cronbach's alpha reliability**	**Composite reliability**	**Mean extracted variance**	**Convergent validity**		
					AVE>0.5	CR>AVE	Approval status
1	Upgrading organizational infrastructure	0/668	0/740	0/473	0/571	0/761	Approved
2	Improving organizational processes	0/943	0/953	0/672	0/782	0/841	Approved
3	Developing teachers' individual capabilities	0/921	0/935	0/771	0/673	0/846	Approved
4	Improving the competence	0/932	0/943	0/665	0/612	0/761	Approved

	of school administrators	

Following the descriptive analysis, the measurement model was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in SmartPLS 3 to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs. Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) values for all four latent variables—organizational infrastructure enhancement, process improvement, teacher capability development, and administrator competence—exceeded the recommended thresholds ($\alpha > 0.70$, CR > 0.70, AVE > 0.50), confirming the internal consistency and convergent validity of the model.

Table 4: Examination of discriminant statistics in the measurement model

Reagent	Upgrading organizational infrastructure	Improving organizational processes	Developing teachers' individual capabilities	Improving the competence of school administrators
Upgrading organizational infrastructure	1			
Improving organizational processes	0/753	1		
Developing teachers' individual capabilities	0/610	0/728	1	
Improving the competence of school administrators	0/637	0/692	0/651	1

Discriminant validity was assessed through the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which demonstrated that the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its inter-construct correlations. This confirms that each latent variable captured distinct aspects of organizational inertia reduction.

The structural model was then examined to evaluate the hypothesized paths between the four main dimensions and the overall construct of organizational inertia reduction. All path coefficients were positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Among them, organizational infrastructure enhancement ($\beta = 0.41$) and organizational process improvement ($\beta = 0.38$) exhibited the strongest

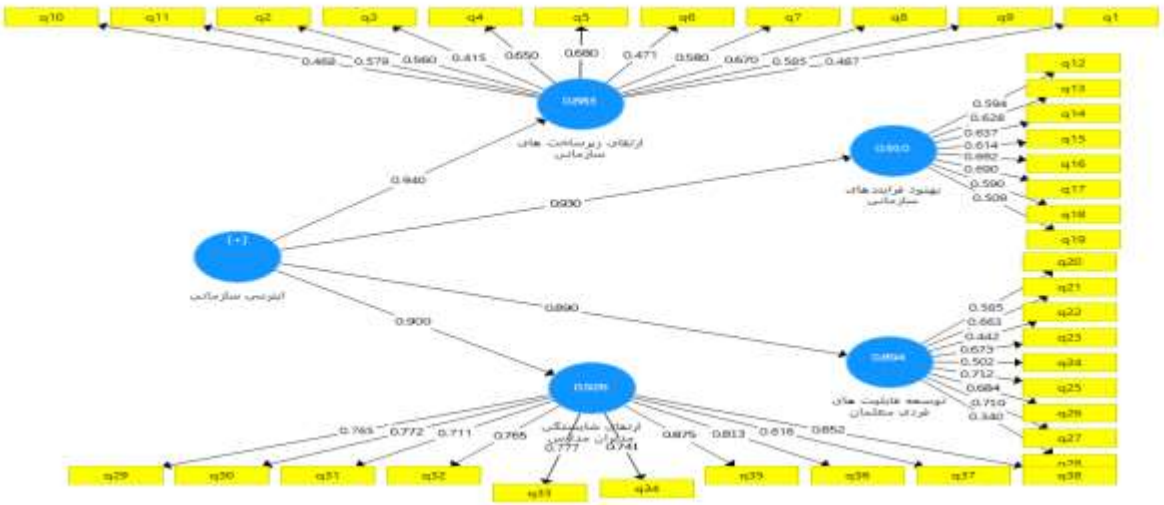

Figure 1. Structural model estimated using the PLS-SEM algorithm to examine the significance coefficients

standardized effects, followed by teachers' individual capability development (β = 0.29) and administrators' competence (β = 0.25).

These findings confirm that structural and procedural improvements serve as the foundation for increasing adaptability and responsiveness within the educational system, while human development and leadership competencies act as essential complementary factors. The validated model thus provides a robust empirical basis for reducing organizational inertia and promoting sustainable innovation in educational settings.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to design and empirically validate a model for reducing organizational inertia in the Shiraz Department of Education. The findings confirmed that organizational infrastructure and process improvement play the most influential roles in mitigating inertia, while human-capacity development and managerial competence function as complementary and reinforcing factors.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The strong effects of organizational infrastructure and process improvement demonstrate that structural design, decision-making mechanisms, and administrative systems shape the conditions under which teachers and managers either resist or embrace change (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Weber, 1947). Decentralized structures, clarified responsibilities, and transparent procedures reduce bureaucratic rigidity and enable timely responses to emerging educational needs (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Hung, 2015).

Enhancing organizational processes—such as participatory management, professional development, and continuous feedback—was also found to increase flexibility and organizational learning, reducing the persistence of outdated routines (Azizpour Lindi et al., 2015; Moradi & Shafiei, 2016). This result aligns with theories of adaptive organizations that emphasize procedural innovation as a mechanism for maintaining relevance in dynamic environments.

Human and Psychological Dimensions

Beyond structural aspects, the results highlight the importance of human and psychological dimensions in overcoming inertia. Teachers' empowerment, motivation, and reduced fear of change emerged as critical levers for innovation. These outcomes resonate with the job demands–resources framework and prior research linking psychological capital and self-efficacy to creative and adaptive performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Gholtash et al., 2023). Strengthening teachers' well-being and job satisfaction through fair evaluation systems and supportive working conditions can, therefore, foster readiness for reform and reduce defensive resistance (Braga et al., 2020; Faridi Zangir et al., 2021).

Leadership and Organizational Culture

Leadership style and organizational culture were also central to reducing inertia. Transformational leaders who communicate transparently, provide constructive feedback, and model change-oriented behavior promote trust and collective learning (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Schein, 2006; Taghipour Ghouri et al., 2022). Establishing knowledge-sharing routines and institutionalized learning mechanisms further strengthens the organization's adaptive capacity (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Jiang, 2023). Thus, leadership development should be viewed as a long-term investment in the system's ability to sustain innovation.

Practical Recommendations

Drawing from the results, several practical strategies are proposed for policymakers and educational leaders in the Shiraz Department of Education:

1. ***Organizational Simplification*:** Streamline administrative hierarchies and promote participatory decision-making to accelerate reform implementation.

2. ***Process Reforms:*** Establish transparent, performance-based evaluation and reward systems that connect classroom performance to organizational decision-making.

3. ***Capacity Building:*** Design continuous professional development programs emphasizing adaptive pedagogy, change management, and effective technology integration.

4. ***Knowledge Infrastructure:*** Create digital platforms and structured routines for sharing educational innovations across schools.

5. ***Leadership Development*****:** Train administrators in supportive and transformational leadership practices that enhance trust, communication, and responsiveness.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was limited to a cross-sectional design and a sample of female teachers in Shiraz. Therefore, causal interpretations should be made cautiously. Future research could adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to examine changes over time, extend the model to other provinces, and test moderating variables such as organizational culture, technological readiness, or leadership style. Expanding the sample to include both male and female educators may also improve generalizability.

Reducing organizational inertia in educational systems is a multifaceted process requiring alignment among structural, procedural, and human factors. Structural and process reforms form the foundation for adaptability, but their success depends on simultaneous investments in teacher empowerment and managerial competence. Together, these elements foster an agile, learning-oriented, and innovation-driven educational organization capable of meeting the demands of modern society.

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