Emotional Intelligence and Personality Variables as Drivers of Teachers' Attitudes towards Organisational Change in Nigerian Public Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the psychological determinants of teachers' attitudes towards organisational change in Nigerian public secondary schools, focusing on emotional intelligence (EI) and personality traits that have typically been investigated in isolation. Drawing on Salovey and Mayer's ability model of emotional intelligence, the Big Five personality theory and Lewin's change management model, the paper proposes the EPAC (Emotional intelligence–Personality–Attitude towards Change) Model as an integrative conceptual framework. In this model, Big Five personality traits function as distal dispositional antecedents that shape baseline receptivity to change, while EI abilities serve as proximal mechanisms that mediate the affective processing of reform demands. Teachers' cognitive, affective and behavioural attitudes towards change constitute the dynamic outcome, evolving across Lewin's unfreezing, movement and refreezing stages. Through a synthesis of recent empirical and theoretical literature, the paper advances five propositions linking personality, EI and change attitudes, and discusses their theoretical, policy and practical implications for educational management in Nigeria. It argues that sustainable reform implementation depends not only on policy design but also on teachers' psychological readiness, and recommends that the Ministry of Education, State Universal Basic Education Boards and school administrators adopt emotionally responsive, personality-sensitive change management strategies. The EPAC Model is presented as a theoretically grounded and empirically testable framework for future research in Nigerian and analogous African educational contexts.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Big Five Personality Traits, Teachers' Attitudes towards Change, Organisational Change, Public Secondary Schools, EPAC Model.

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, educational systems are confronted with mounting pressures from technological advancements, policy reforms, and post-pandemic restructuring, all of which have amplified the frequency and complexity of organisational change in schools (Li et al., 2024). The successful implementation of such change is contingent not merely on policy directives, but critically on the attitudinal disposition of teachers, the principal agents of change within school organisations. Globally, teachers' attitudes towards organisational change range from enthusiastic acceptance to entrenched resistance and these dispositions are significantly shaped by individual psychological variables (Paloş et al., 2022). Among the most influential are emotional intelligence (EI) and personality traits, which have attracted considerable scholarly attention as determinants of change-related attitudes and behaviours.

Emotional intelligence, broadly defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage and utilise emotions in oneself and others, has been consistently associated with adaptive organisational behaviour and receptivity to change (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022). A systematic review by Gómez-Leal et al. (2022) established that EI is foundational to effective school leadership, while Li et al. (2024), drawing on data from 768 teachers in China, demonstrated that EI directly predicts teachers' organisational commitment through psychological well-being. Mukhtar and Fook (2020), in a study of 360 Malaysian secondary school teachers, confirmed that EI significantly influenced teachers' cognitive, affective and behavioural orientations towards change, with higher EI associated with more favourable change attitudes. Complementarily, the Big Five personality traits: openness,

conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (OCEAN), have been recognised as stable dispositional antecedents of change attitudes. Paloş et al. (2022) found that conscientiousness significantly predicted change attitudes among 321 Romanian teachers, while high neuroticism was consistently associated with resistance. Despite these parallel findings, no integrative framework currently models EI and Big Five traits as joint predictors of teachers' change attitudes.

In Africa, educational reform implementation at the school level continues to face significant attitudinal resistance rooted in teacher disempowerment, distrust and non-participatory management practices. In West Africa, Ghana's Leaders in Teaching (LiT) reform programme demonstrated that sustainable systemic change across 731 secondary schools depended substantially on the psychological readiness of over 160,000 in-service teachers (T-TEL, 2023), reinforcing the case for psychologically informed change management across the subregion. In Nigeria, secondary education has undergone recurring policy reforms, including National Policy on Education revisions, the UBE Act and NERDC curriculum overhauls, yet implementation at the school level has remained notoriously inconsistent. Nigerian teachers face significant implementation challenges that fuel attitudinal resistance (Babajide & Smith, 2022). This paper addresses the resulting gap through the proposed EPAC (Emotional intelligence–Personality–Attitude towards Change) Model. This paper is conceptual in nature and does not involve primary data collection; its contribution lies in theoretical synthesis and model development, and it therefore departs from the empirical reporting sequence (methodology/results) typically expected of primary studies, in line with the theoretical and empirical paper categories the journal accepts.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the centrality of teachers in organisational change, the psychological determinants of their change-related attitudes remain insufficiently theorised within Nigerian public secondary schools. Three problems motivate this paper: (i) the absence of a unified framework integrating EI and personality as co-predictors of Nigerian teachers' change attitudes; (ii) the uncritical transplantation of Western change models into Nigerian policy discourse without interrogating their psychological assumptions; and (iii) the failure to theorise the cognitive, affective and behavioural structure of change orientation within a secondary school framework. Without such a framework, administrators lack the theoretical tools to predict and manage teachers' readiness for change.

Objectives of the Study

This paper develops the EPAC Model to articulate the relationships between emotional intelligence, Big Five personality traits and teachers' attitudes towards organisational change in Nigerian public secondary schools, and specifically aims to:

1. Examine the conceptual relationships between EI and teachers' attitudes towards organisational change in secondary schools.

2. Elucidate how the Big Five personality traits (OCEAN) are theoretically positioned as determinants of teachers' change attitudes.

3. Analyse the interplay between EI and personality traits in shaping teachers' cognitive, affective and behavioural change orientations.

4. Propose the EPAC Model as an original integrative conceptual framework contextualised within Nigerian public secondary schools.

5. Derive evidence-based implications for policy, school administration and future empirical research.

Significance of the Study

This paper contributes theoretically by proposing the EPAC Model, to the best of the authors' knowledge, the first integration of EI and Big Five personality traits as joint predictors of teachers' change attitudes in the Nigerian secondary education. Methodologically, it offers a scaffold of measurable constructs for future

quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods research in a system enrolling over 15 million secondary pupils in 2023 alone across 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (World Bank, 2023). Practically, it equips school leaders to design psychologically informed change strategies that reduce resistance and improve implementation fidelity. From a policy standpoint, it offers a framework for embedding psychological-readiness assessment into pre-reform planning, and contributes to Afrocentric educational management scholarship grounded in Nigeria's institutional realities.

Conceptual Clarifications

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a psychological construct that assists in identifying, processing and regulating emotions by facilitating emotional behaviours of individuals and assists them in creating positive and beneficial interpersonal relationships with others. It refers to a cluster of interrelated abilities involved in perceiving, facilitating, understanding and managing emotions in oneself and others in ways that guide thought and action (Ding et al., 2024).

Three principal theoretical traditions have shaped its conceptualization: the *ability model* of Mayer et al. (2025), which views EI as emotion-related cognitive abilities; the *mixed model*, which incorporates emotional competencies with personality and motivational characteristics; and the *trait model,* which operationalises EI as emotion-related self-perceptions assessed through self-report scales (Ding et al., 2024). This paper adopts the ability model because it conceptualises EI as a distinct and developable capacity for perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions.

Personality Variables (The Big Five Personality Traits)

The Five-Factor Model (FFM), or OCEAN framework, is the most validated and cross-culturally robust framework for operationalising personality in organisational research (Dimitriou & Galanakis, 2022). The five dimensions are: Openness to Experience (curiosity, sensitivity and receptiveness to novelty), Conscientiousness (self-discipline, goal-directedness and reliability), Extraversion (sociability, assertiveness and positive affect), Agreeableness (cooperativeness and empathy), and Neuroticism (tendency to experience negative emotional states such as anxiety, irritability and emotional instability). Conscientiousness is the most consistent predictor of job performance and of positive change attitudes, while neuroticism predicts resistance (Dimitriou & Galanakis, 2022; Paloş et al., 2022). Hernando-Jorge and Fernández-Mesa (2024), in a large-scale study of 7,463 researchers, reported significant positive relationships between openness, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness and EI, while neuroticism was negatively associated with EI scores. In this paper, each of the five OCEAN traits is operationalised as a distinct dispositional predictor of teachers' cognitive, affective and behavioural orientations towards organisational change.

Teachers' Attitudes towards Organisational Change

Attitudes towards organisational change are multidimensional, comprising three analytically distinct components: the cognitive dimension (beliefs about the necessity, utility and personal benefit of change), the affective dimension (emotional responses to change) and the behavioural dimension (predispositions to support or oppose change initiatives). This tripartite framework was empirically validated in the teacher population through the Teacher Attitudes Towards Change (TATC) scale developed by Kin and Kareem, and widely applied in educational change research. Mukhtar and Fook (2020) confirmed among 360 Malaysian secondary school teachers that attitudinal responses to change are significantly shaped by individual psychological characteristics, including EI. In Nigeria, teachers' change attitudes skew towards resistance, driven primarily by exclusion from planning processes, perceived inequity and distrust of administrative leadership (Babajide & Smith, 2022). Teachers' attitudes are operationalised along the three-dimensional TATC framework, distinguishing cognitive evaluation, affective response and behavioural intention as interrelated but analytically separable dimensions.

Organisational Change in Secondary Schools

Organisational change in schools refers to intentional and structured modifications in goals, structures, processes, roles or cultural norms, undertaken in response to internal inefficiencies or external pressures with the aim of improving institutional performance and student outcomes (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021). In secondary schools, such change may manifest across several domains: curriculum redesign; administrative and governance reforms; technology integration; assessment restructuring; staffing realignments and changes in organisational culture and professional norms. Such interventions frequently fail not for methodological reasons but because of deeper mismatches in how change is conceptualised and implemented (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021). Aldridge and McLure (2023) identified teacher psychological readiness, leadership quality and school climate as the most critical facilitating factors for successful reform implementation. Teacher-level psychological variables, particularly EI and personality traits, therefore constitute a primary explanatory layer for why organisational change succeeds or fails in Nigerian public secondary schools.

The Nexus between Emotional Intelligence, Personality Variables and Teachers' Attitudes towards Organisational Change

EI and personality traits are substantially interrelated: all five OCEAN traits significantly predict EI, with openness, conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness positively associated and neuroticism negatively associated, positioning personality as a distal antecedent and EI as a proximal mechanism (Hernando-Jorge & Fernández-Mesa, 2024).

Both constructs independently and jointly contribute to explaining teachers' attitudes towards organisational change. Emotional intelligence enables teachers to reappraise change-related threats as challenges, regulate anxiety during transitions and maintain constructive engagement with colleagues and administrators (Mukhtar & Fook, 2020). Similarly, the Big Five personality traits shape teachers' dispositional orientations towards change. High neuroticism may predispose teachers to anxiety and avoidance, whereas openness encourages curiosity and receptiveness to reform. Conscientiousness supports sustained implementation efforts, agreeableness facilitates collaborative engagement, and extraversion encourages proactive participation in reform activities (Paloş et al., 2022).

Within the EPAC Model, personality is conceptualised as a distal antecedent, while emotional intelligence serves as a proximal mediating mechanism through which personality-related dispositions influence teachers' cognitive, affective and behavioural attitudes towards organisational change. Specifically, teachers' emotional intelligence may determine how effectively their underlying personality dispositions are translated into adaptive emotional responses when confronted with reform demands. Consequently, emotional intelligence is positioned exclusively as a mediator rather than a moderator in the proposed framework. This conceptual distinction provides a clearer explanation of the relationship between personality and teachers' change attitudes, particularly within the resource-constrained and institutionally complex environment of Nigerian public primary schools (Babajide & Smith, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

The four-branch Ability Model, articulated by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and validated through the MSCEIT 2 programme (Mayer et al., 2025), defines EI as a genuine cognitive ability, not a personality trait, organised hierarchically across perceiving, facilitating, understanding and managing emotion, with higher-order branches presupposing lower-order competence. For the EPAC Model, teachers higher in understanding and managing emotions are better equipped to regulate change-induced anxiety, reframe reform threats as challenges and sustain collaborative engagement during implementation (Mukhtar & Fook, 2020).

The Big Five Personality Theory (Five-Factor Model)

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) developed by McCrae and Costa remains the most validated framework for describing personality (Angelini, 2023). It posits five biologically grounded dimensions (OCEAN). It anchors

the EPAC Model on two grounds: first, each trait predicts a distinct change-attitude profile, with openness and conscientiousness positively predicting change acceptance and neuroticism predicting resistance (Paloş et al., 2022); second, FFM traits serve as distal antecedents of EI itself and neuroticism is negatively associated (Hernando-Jorge & Fernández-Mesa, 2024).

Lewin's Change Management Model

Kurt Lewin's three-stage model: unfreeze, change (movement), refreeze, provides the structural scaffold for the EPAC Model's stage-specific predictions (Hussain et al., 2018). Unfreezing destabilises existing attitudes and builds readiness; the change stage demands active engagement; refreezing institutionalises new practices. Teacher resistance differs markedly by stage, minimal during unfreezing but large during change and refreezing (Nurhasanah et al., 2026). The EPAC Model maps distinct personality-EI configurations onto each stage: high openness and emotional perception skills dominate unfreezing; conscientiousness and emotion-management sustain effort during change; agreeableness and relationship-management consolidate reform during refreezing.

The EPAC Model integrates the three theoretical perspectives into a unified explanatory framework. The Big Five personality traits constitute relatively stable dispositional antecedents that influence teachers' baseline receptiveness to organisational change. These dispositions are expressed through emotional processing abilities, with emotional intelligence serving as the proximal mediating mechanism connecting personality to teachers' attitudes towards change. The resulting attitudes encompass cognitive evaluations, affective responses and behavioural intentions. Lewin's three stages of unfreezing, movement and refreezing provide the process-oriented context within which these relationships can be understood. Thus, the model distinguishes the psychological pathways linking personality, emotional intelligence and change attitudes from the stages through which organisational change unfolds.

Conceptual Review and Position Arguments

Emotional Intelligence as a Driver of Teachers' Change Attitudes

Higher-EI teachers regulate change-induced anxiety more effectively, reappraise reform threats as challenges and sustain positive relational engagement during transitions (Mukhtar & Fook, 2020), with self-awareness and relationship management building the trust required for collaborative reform (Gómez-Leal et al., 2022). The EPAC Model positions EI as a psychological enabler across all three change-attitude dimensions.

Big Five Personality Traits as Predictors of Teachers' Change Attitudes

Openness most consistently predicts positive cognitive evaluation of reform; conscientiousness predicts sustained implementation effort; agreeableness facilitates cooperative participation; and extraversion supports proactive engagement. Neuroticism is the strongest negative predictor, with high-neuroticism teachers experiencing change as threatening and producing behavioural resistance (Paloş et al., 2022).

The Interplay between Emotional Intelligence and Personality

EI and personality interact dually: personality shapes emotional processing (openness promotes curiosity-driven engagement; neuroticism amplifies reactivity), while EI transmits the influence of these dispositions to attitudes (Hernando-Jorge & Fernández-Mesa, 2024). Personality therefore influences change attitudes indirectly through EI (personality → EI → attitude): high neuroticism tends to lower emotion-management ability, which weakens a teacher’s capacity to regulate change-induced anxiety and increases resistance, whereas stronger emotion-management ability carries the effects of favourable traits into more positive attitudes (Mayer et al., 2025); collective teacher efficacy, closely related to EI, similarly mediates the link between leadership and organisational resilience (Zadok et al., 2024).

Other Organisational Factors Influencing Teachers' Attitudes towards Organisational Change

Although emotional intelligence and personality provide important psychological explanations for teachers' attitudes towards organisational change, these attitudes are also influenced by broader organisational conditions.

In particular, organisational trust, leadership style and resource adequacy constitute important contextual factors that may shape teachers' willingness to accept, support and participate in educational reforms.

Organisational trust represents an important foundation for teachers' readiness to embrace change. Teachers' confidence in the integrity, competence and fairness of school administrators can influence their perceptions of proposed reforms and their willingness to cooperate during periods of organisational uncertainty. Zayim and Kondakci (2015), in their study of public school teachers in Turkey, established empirical relationships between organisational trust and the cognitive, emotional and intentional dimensions of teachers' readiness for change. Similarly, Kondakci et al. (2017) demonstrated that contextual and process-related factors, including trust, social interaction, participative management and knowledge sharing, are relevant to understanding teachers' readiness for change. These findings suggest that teachers' responses to organisational reforms cannot be explained exclusively through their individual psychological dispositions; the quality of relationships and trust within the school environment also matters.

Leadership style is another significant organisational factor influencing teachers' attitudes towards change. School administrators are responsible for communicating reform objectives, facilitating participation and creating an environment that encourages teachers to embrace new institutional expectations. Mukhtar and Fook (2020), in their study of 360 secondary school teachers in Malaysia, found positive relationships between perceived leadership styles, emotional intelligence and teachers' attitudes towards organisational change. Similarly, Kin et al. (2018), examining 936 teachers from 47 secondary schools in Malaysia, established significant relationships between principals' change leadership competencies, teachers' change beliefs and their attitudes towards change. Their findings particularly demonstrated the importance of school principals' leadership competencies in strengthening teachers' beliefs and positive orientations towards organisational reforms. These studies reinforce the argument that leadership practices may facilitate or constrain the expression of teachers' psychological readiness for change.

Furthermore, the adequacy of organisational resources constitutes an important condition for successful change implementation. Teachers may demonstrate willingness to embrace educational reforms but experience difficulties when the necessary instructional materials, technological facilities, funding, professional development opportunities and administrative support are unavailable. In the Nigerian context, Babajide and Smith (2022), investigating teachers' challenges in the introduction and implementation of systemic change in the primary school system, identified inadequate funding, teacher demotivation, poor communication and insufficient stakeholder involvement among the challenges affecting educational change. Although their study focused on the primary school system, its findings provide relevant contextual evidence of the institutional difficulties that may also affect reform implementation in Nigerian public secondary schools. Such constraints suggest that negative responses to educational change may sometimes reflect genuine institutional limitations rather than teachers' personality characteristics or emotional competencies alone.

Taken together, these organisational factors provide important complementary explanations for teachers' attitudes towards organisational change. While the EPAC Model primarily focuses on personality and emotional intelligence as individual psychological antecedents and mechanisms, organisational trust, leadership practices and resource adequacy represent contextual conditions that may influence how these individual characteristics translate into attitudes and responses to reform. Their recognition does not diminish the explanatory contribution of the proposed model; rather, it identifies important organisational conditions that future empirical investigations should consider when examining the relationships among personality, emotional intelligence and teachers' attitudes towards organisational change.

Contextual Realities and Implications for Teacher Psychological Readiness

Nigerian public secondary education spans 36 states and the FCT, serving over 15 million enrolled students (World Bank, 2023), yet remains beset by chronic systemic challenges, including overcrowding, understaffing and limited professional development (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2024). Policy instability, frequent curriculum revisions, leadership turnover and abrupt reversals produce reform fatigue, a disposition that anticipates failure and rationalises non-engagement, while inadequate infrastructure and political interference in appointments further destabilise change environments (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2024; Babajide & Smith, 2022).

Nigeria's education sector has continued to experience curriculum and policy reforms aimed at making education more responsive to contemporary social, economic and technological demands. Recent developments, including the revision of the Basic Education Curriculum and the introduction of a competency-based orientation, require teachers to adjust their instructional approaches, professional competencies and attitudes towards institutional change (Ekwukoma & Osamiro, 2026). However, the effectiveness of such reforms depends not only on policy formulation but also on teachers' capacity to translate curriculum expectations into classroom practices. Evidence from Nigerian schools indicates that alignment among curriculum standards, classroom instruction and assessment remains an important implementation concern (Adeniran et al., 2025). These developments demonstrate that curriculum reforms constitute significant sources of organisational change for teachers, whose willingness and psychological readiness to embrace new expectations may be influenced by their emotional intelligence and personality characteristics.

These conditions of uncertainty, distrust and resource deprivation are precisely where EI and favourable personality configurations become most consequential as coping resources. Teachers with high EI, low neuroticism, high conscientiousness and high openness best sustain engagement and implementation fidelity when material supports are absent (Li et al., 2024), and resilience, closely related to EI and personality stability, robustly predicts well-being and commitment in high-stress settings (Phyo et al., 2026). The EPAC Model's core position is therefore that investing in teachers' emotional and psychological capital is structurally necessary, not optional, for durable reform implementation in Nigerian public secondary schools.

The implementation of educational reforms in Nigeria also takes place within a changing national policy environment characterised by curriculum revisions, the integration of digital technologies into teaching and learning, and continuing efforts to improve the quality of basic and secondary education. Developments associated with the implementation of revised curricula by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), the Universal Basic Education programme and evolving teacher professional development initiatives place additional expectations on teachers and school administrators. These developments require teachers not only to acquire new professional competencies but also to adjust psychologically and emotionally to changing instructional and administrative demands.

Furthermore, the application of the EPAC Model should recognise the institutional diversity of Nigerian public secondary education. Teachers in federal and state-owned schools may encounter different administrative structures, reform priorities and resource conditions. Similarly, urban and rural schools may differ considerably in their access to instructional materials, digital facilities, professional development opportunities and administrative support. These differences may influence how teachers' personality dispositions and emotional intelligence translate into attitudes towards organisational change. Consequently, although the EPAC Model provides a common theoretical framework, its application and empirical validation should account for differences across geopolitical zones, states, school ownership arrangements and rural–urban settings.

The EPAC Model: A Proposed Conceptual Framework

Rationale

Although EI and personality traits have independently been shown to predict favourable employee outcomes (Doğru, 2022; Wilmot & Ones, 2021), no integrative framework has jointly examined their influence on teachers' attitudes towards organisational change in the Nigerian public secondary school context. The EPAC Model addresses this gap, an integrative positioning especially salient where policy-driven change is frequently implemented under limited participation and systemic resource constraints (Warrick, 2023).

Component and Structural Logic

The Model comprises three interrelated components. **Emotional Intelligence (E)**, drawing on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) four-branch model, is the psychological resource teachers deploy when confronted with change demands. **Personality (P),** drawing on the Five-Factor Model, is a stable dispositional filter conditioning baseline receptivity prior to emotional processing: openness and conscientiousness are facilitative; neuroticism is inhibitory. **Attitudes towards Change (AC)** is the dynamic outcome produced by the interaction of both

components across Lewin's three stages. The structural logic is unidirectional: personality preconditions emotional processing, EI mediates the appraisal of change demands, and the resulting attitude governs behavioural engagement with reform.

Hypothesised Propositions of the EPAC Model

The following propositions are derived from this structural logic:

a) Big Five personality traits, particularly openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism, significantly predict teachers' EI abilities;

b) EI abilities significantly and positively predict attitudes towards organisational change, with emotion management as the most proximal predictor (Doğru, 2022);

c) personality traits independently predict change attitudes beyond EI (Wilmot & Ones, 2021);

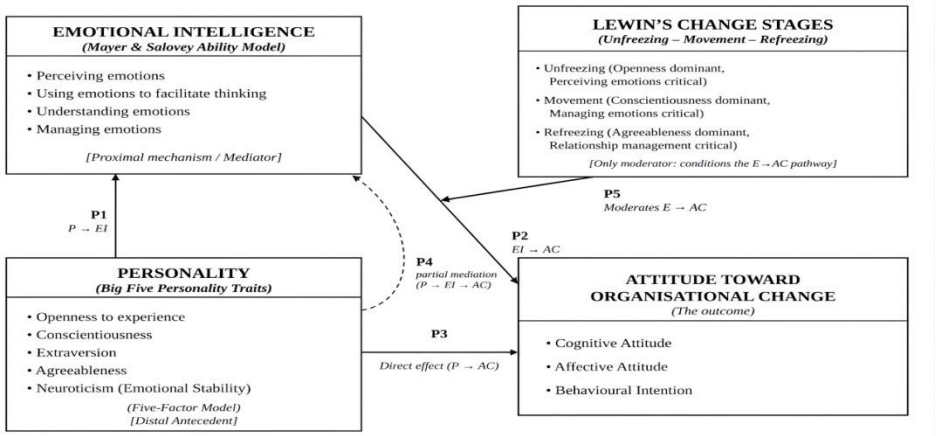
d) EI partially mediates the relationship between personality and attitudes towards change; and

e) The relationships among personality traits, emotional intelligence and teachers' attitudes towards organisational change may vary across the unfreezing, movement and refreezing stages of organisational change.

Operationalisation and Measurement of the EPAC Model

The EPAC Model provides a basis for future empirical investigation of the relationships among teachers' personality traits, emotional intelligence and attitudes towards organisational change. In such studies, emotional intelligence could be assessed using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), while the Big Five Inventory-2 (BFI-2) could be used to assess the five major personality dimensions (Mayer et al., 2003; Soto & John, 2017). Teachers' attitudes towards organisational change could be measured using the Teacher Attitude Towards Change (TATC) scale (Kin & Kareem, 2017), a self-report instrument with cognitive, affective and behavioural subscales. However, the suitability and cultural relevance of the selected instruments should be established before their application among Nigerian public secondary school teachers. Empirical studies could then examine the proposed relationships, including the mediating role of emotional intelligence.

Figure 1 The EPAC (Emotional Intelligence-Personality-Attitudes towards Organisational Change) Conceptual Model.



Source: Researcher's Design (2026).

Figure 1 shows the proposed relationships among personality, emotional intelligence and teachers' attitude towards orgaisatioal change. Personality traits serve as a distal antecedent that predicts Emotional Intelligence (P1) and also influences teachers' attitudes towards change directly (P3). Emotional Intelligence, grounded in the Ability Model, predicts attitudes towards change (P2) and partially mediates the effect of Personality on attitudes (P4; P → EI → AC). Lewin's change stage (unfreezing, movement, refreezing) is the only moderator

in the model: it conditions the strength of the EI → attitude pathway, with EI becoming more influential during the movement and refreezing stages (P5).

Implications

Theoretically, the EPAC Model integrates ability-based EI, dispositional personality and a process-oriented change framework into a single structure, repositioning change attitude as a dynamic, stage-dependent outcome rather than a static trait. For policy, reform success cannot be assumed from policy design alone: curriculum and teacher-development policy should incorporate EI training and psychologically informed change communication. For school administration, leaders should integrate EI development into staff training, adopt personality-sensitive communication during reform, and provide structured support to sustain morale and reduce resistance.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its theoretical contribution, the paper has certain limitations that should be acknowledged:

1. The manuscript is conceptual in nature and is based on a synthesis of existing theoretical and empirical literature rather than primary data collected from Nigerian public secondary school teachers. Consequently, the proposed relationships among personality, emotional intelligence and teachers' attitudes towards organisational change have not been empirically established within the Nigerian educational context.

2. Although the EPAC Model integrates established theoretical perspectives, its explanatory and predictive capacity remains subject to empirical validation. The proposed mediating role of emotional intelligence and the relationships among the model's constructs require further investigation using appropriate research designs and validated measurement instruments.

3. The model primarily emphasises individual psychological characteristics and does not comprehensively incorporate all possible organisational and contextual determinants of teachers' change attitudes, including organisational trust, leadership practices, perceived organisational support and resource adequacy. Future research should therefore examine these factors alongside the central constructs of the EPAC Model. Empirical investigations across different Nigerian states, geopolitical zones and categories of public secondary schools would provide a stronger basis for assessing the model's applicability and generalisability.

CONCLUSION

Teachers' attitudes towards organisational change in Nigerian public secondary schools cannot be adequately explained by examining emotional intelligence or personality in isolation. By integrating Mayer and Salovey's ability model, the Big Five personality theory and Lewin's change management model, the EPAC Model offers a theoretically grounded framework in which personality constitutes a distal dispositional antecedent, emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between personality and teachers' change attitudes, and Lewin's three stages provide the process-oriented context for understanding these relationships. The model further recognises that organisational trust, leadership practices and resource adequacy may influence teachers' responses to reform.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, the EPAC Model has implications for educational policy and school administration, particularly within a system where reform implementation is frequently affected by inadequate psychological preparation and institutional constraints. The framework provides a foundation for future empirical investigations into the psychological and organisational determinants of teachers' attitudes towards change. Its propositions should be tested across diverse Nigerian public secondary school settings to establish its explanatory capacity and practical applicability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper makes the following recommendations:

For the Ministry of Education and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs)

1. Integrate emotional intelligence development into pre-service and in-service teacher training curricula, in collaboration with Colleges and Faculties of Education.

2. Mandate psychologically informed change-management training for education officers and establish structured feedback channels for teachers during reform implementation.

For Teacher Education Institutions

3. Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education should incorporate emotional intelligence, personality awareness and organisational change preparedness into teacher education programmes to equip prospective teachers with the psychological competencies required to respond constructively to educational reforms.

For School Principals, Administrators and Future Educational Researchers

4. Model emotionally intelligent leadership and adapt change communication to staff personality differences, reassuring change-averse colleagues while leveraging change-receptive staff as informal champions.

5. Institutionalise new practices gradually through mentorship and consistent reinforcement, while creating safe, non-punitive spaces for staff to express concerns about reform.

6. Educational researchers should empirically examine the EPAC Model across public secondary schools in different geopolitical ad socio-economic contexts in Nigeria to establish its applicability, predictive capacity and possible contextual variations.

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