

# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AMONG UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES IN THE POST-COVID ERA

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**Abstract:** *This study investigated the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and resistance to change among university personnel in the post-COVID era. The research focused on an academic college in Northern Mindanao, the Philippines, utilizing a descriptive-correlational approach. The survey instrument included sections assessing socio-demographic profiles and resistance to change. The socio-demographic analysis revealed a balanced gender distribution, predominantly young adults below 30 years old, with a majority employed on a Contract of Service and Job Order basis. Notably, 45.28% of respondents expressed neutrality towards change. No significant gender-based difference in resistance to change was found, but a substantial difference was observed based on employment nature, indicating that Job Order/Contract of Service personnel were more resistant. Correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship between age and resistance to change, suggesting that older employees were less resistant. However, economic status and length of service did not exhibit a correlation. Additionally, the study established age as a significant predictor for resistance to change, indicating that resistance decreases by 0.42 points for every additional year in age. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of considering socio-demographic factors, particularly age, in understanding and managing employee resistance to change in the post-COVID academic setting.*

**Keywords:** Demographic Profile, Resistance to Change, University Personnel

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unforeseen challenges to global higher education. This led to significant changes in how universities operate, requiring adaptation from employees. Understanding how employees respond to these changes is crucial, especially considering their socio-demographic backgrounds.

With the wide array of transitions brought about by the pandemic to the contemporary workplace, the socio-demographic attributes of individuals significantly influence how employees respond to organizational change efforts [1]. Sociodemographic characteristics encompass various factors including age, ethnicity, sex, socioeconomic status and other measurable attributes that describe an individual within a society. Findings of Hall and Dornan [2] indicate that increased age is significantly associated with higher levels of satisfaction, which ripple to the holistic capacity and openness of employees for the implementation of necessary interventions in the organization.

As infusion of transitions in organization triggered considerable interpersonal and professional hurdles [3], resistance to change is defined as the employee conduct which aims to test, disrupt or overturn principal expectations, ideals and authority dynamics [4]. Lewin [5] proposed that resistance to change can be understood as a systematic obstacle. In his argument, organizations function as systems that maintain equilibrium through opposing forces [6].

The pandemic intensified these challenges, testing institutions' ability to implement modifications amidst resistance. Employee cooperation plays a vital role in organizational success, especially when they feel supported and obliged to contribute positively.

To support higher education institutions in adjusting to modern organizational trends, it's crucial to implement effective strategies and policies that gain support from the

workforce. As institutions navigate change, generating evidence-based insights and recommendations for cultivating a positive work environment is essential. This research aimed to examine how the socio-demographic traits of university employees relate to their resistance to change, particularly in the post-COVID era.

## 2. Methods

This descriptive-correlational study was conducted in an academic college of a state university in Northern Mindanao, Philippines from April to May 2023. The people who took part in the survey were both part-time and full-time staff members of the college during the Second Semester of the 2022-2023 School Year. The teaching staff included faculty members who teach at least 6 units of classes and don't have a supervisory role. Non-teaching staff were those who work directly under the dean's supervision. To select participants for the survey, a simple random sampling method was used. The researcher used an online tool to figure out how many people should participate. It suggested a minimum of 51 respondents out of a total population of 58. However, 53 staff members agreed to take part in the survey.

The questionnaire, divided into two sections, aimed to gather information necessary for meeting the research goals. The first section focused on the faculty's demographic details, including age, gender, employment type, monthly income, and years of service. The second section assessed personnel resistance to change using a questionnaire by Oreg [7], employing a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The questionnaire's total scale reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated to be 0.92.

The gathered data were arranged, analyzed, and presented visually using tables and graphs. Statistical methods, such as frequency distribution, mean calculation, t-tests, Analysis of

Variance (ANOVA), Pearson’s correlation, and simple linear regression, were used to examine and interpret the data.

**3. Results and Discussion**

*3.1 Socio-demographic Profile of the University Employees*

In terms of sex, majority of the respondents (54.72%) are female. However, this number is not too far from the number of males which is 45.28% of the workforce. This only shows that both sexes are of equal footing in the workplace.

In terms of Age, most of the respondents are under the age of 30. This comprised almost 70% of them. This is followed by ages 30-39 with 13.21%, then 40-49 with 9.43 and 50 or older with 7.55%. This only shows that the workforce of the University is composed of mostly young adults.

In terms of the respondents’ nature of employment, majority of them (71.70%) are Contract of Service and Job Order personnel. This is followed by temporary with 5.66% and Permanent with 22.64%. This contract of service (COS) personnel refers to the Contracting Service Faculty whose contracts are renewed every semester, which is composed of five (5) months per semester and two (2) semesters per year. Since the University does not offer midyear classes, COS faculty are not employed for two months per year. The Job Order (JO) personnel, on the other hand, refer to employees handling clerical works and their contracts are renewed every three (3) months. This only implies that most of the respondent-employees do not hold plantilla or regular position in the University.

Respondents’ nature of employment is connected to their economic status. Since most of them are not holding regular position, majority (75.47%) are then receiving as Low Middle Income. This is followed by Upper Middle with 9.43% and Upper Income with 7.55%. It is noteworthy that 5.66% of the respondents are Low Income. Moreover, only one (1) respondent can be categorized as Middle Income. This implies that most of the employees have an income of Php 19,040 to Php 38,080

In terms of length of service, 84.90% are on their 1-5 years in the University. It is important to note that most of the respondents are under the age of 30 and are young adults. Some of them have this job as their first and still consider themselves as novice in the field. This is followed by 5.66% who are already serving the University for 26-30 years; followed by 3.77% who are already 16-20 years in service. Further, for 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 21-25, only one (1) respondent belong in each of these categories.

Findings of Sikh and Gls [8] highlighted the positive and significant connections between demographic characteristics and readiness for change. These provide valuable insights for management professionals, human resources practitioners, organizational development specialists, and change agents.

*3.2 Level of Resistance to Change of the University Employees*

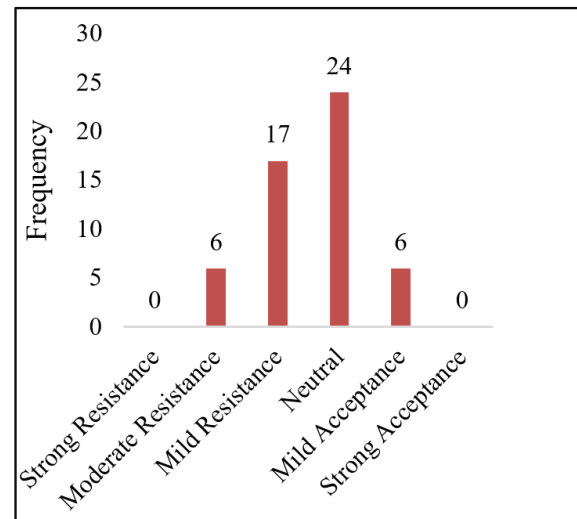
Table 1 displays the grand mean of respondents’ resistance to change. As shown, the grand mean is equal to 3.58 which is interpreted as slightly agreeing. The significance attributed to change has elevated its status to a principal obligation of organizational leaders, as evidenced by the emergence of the

transformational leader [9] [10] [11]. To further provide employees level on resistance to change, Figure 1 below shows their frequency distribution on this variable.

**Table 1. Respondents’ Resistance to Change (N = 53)**

Resistance to Change	Grand Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
	3.58	1.25	Slightly Agree

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of the employees’ level of resistance to change. Most of them, 24 out of 53 employees, are neutral (45.28%) which showed that they are neither resistant nor accretive to changes. This is followed by mild resistance which composed about one-third of the total respondents (32.08%). An equal number of respondents are considered moderate resistance and mild acceptance. It is noteworthy that no one can be described to have strong resistance and/or strong acceptance.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of Respondents’ Level of Resistance to Change

As shown in Figure 1, majority of the respondents neither support nor oppose changes. This could have been because the respondents pre-occupied on their roles and obligations in the University. It is important to note that the data gathering was done only a few weeks before the final examination and the respondents were crafting their table of specifications (TOS) and final examination questions in preparation. Since changes in the system are already out of their work, they do not see it as something that should be given an urgency. However, a third of the respondents, though uncertain, are still open for new ideas. As much as conceptualizing changes is not part of their main tasks, if there would be any changes, they are open for it. Moreover, as much as there 11.32% which translates to 6 respondents, are skeptical and have concerns to changes, the same number are open to initiatives and are willing to adapt to changes if there would be any. Srivastava and Agrawal [12] put forward the proposition that burnout can have an impact on employees’ resistance to

change. When individuals are burned out, they often feel depleted and lack the energy or motivation to embrace and adapt to new changes. This can lead to a reluctance to engage in or support organizational changes, as they may perceive these changes as additional stressors or demands that they are not equipped to handle. According to Chung *et al.* [13], when employees feel that their concerns and perspectives are valued and taken into consideration, they are more likely to embrace and support organizational change.

**3.3 Difference in the Resistance to Change of University Employees**

Independent t-test was used to assess the difference in the resistance to change of the employees in terms of their sex. On the other hand, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) determined the difference of their nature of employment as categorized as COS/JO, temporary and permanent.

As shown in Table 2, in terms of Sex, no significant difference was found. This is evident from the t-test for independent means result with a p-value of 0.36. This signifies that both male and female have almost the same level of resistance to changes. However, in terms of nature of employment, tested using the analysis of variance (ANOVA), a significant difference was found. The p-value result of 0.01 tests at 5% level of significance leads to the conclusion that a difference exists between the three categories. The employees categorized under JO/COS have a higher mean among the three categories with means that they have higher resistance to change. This only signifies that JO/COS is significantly more resistant than the others.

Shefer *et al.* [14] delved into the concept of resistance to change, highlighting the idea that not all individuals are willing or supportive of the changing gender dynamics and the growing empowerment of women. The authors emphasized that as society progresses towards more equitable gender relations and women gain increased power, there are still individuals who resist or oppose these transformations.

In the study conducted by Kunze et al. [15], the results indicated that two specific factors, namely tenure and occupational status, were identified as boundary conditions that influence the difference being examined. They imply that these factors need to be considered when considering the effects or dynamics of the variables being studied.

**Table 2. Difference in the resistance to change of personnel in terms of sex and nature of employment**

Categories	Mean	Standard Deviation	p-Value
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	62.5	12.77	0.36
Female	59.41	11.42	
<b>Nature of Employment</b>			
JO/COS	64.17	10.14	0.01*
Permanent	55.4	13.85	
Temporary	48.67	6.11	

\*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

**3.4 Relationship between Socio-demographic Profile and Resistance to Change**

Table 3 displays the correlation result between employees' resistance to change and their socio-demographic profile, specifically, age, economic status and length of service. It

was found that with a Pearson Correlation of  $-0.31$  and a p-value of 0.02, Age is a significant correlate. This shows that there exists a moderate negative relationship between the two variables. On one hand, economic status and length of service do not have relationship with resistance to change. To test if age predicts resistance to change, a regression analysis is done as displayed in Table 7.

The finding supports and strengthens the findings of Kunze *et al.* [15], whose research revealed a negative correlation between age and resistance to change (RTC). This means that as individuals get older, they tend to exhibit lower levels of resistance to change. The results indicate that younger individuals may be more resistant to change compared to older individuals. However, this finding contradicts the assertions made by Tuckman and Lorge [16]. According to Tuckman and Lorge [16], as individuals become less capable of functioning independently in the community, they are more likely to develop negative attitudes towards change. They proposed that with reduced independence, individuals may hold onto familiar and established routines, becoming resistant to change.

**Table 3. Relationship of age, income and length of service with resistance to change**

Variables	Computed r	Interpretation	p-value
Age	-.31	Moderate Negative Relationship	.02*
Economic Status	-.08	Trivial Negative Relationship	.55
Length of Service	-.17	Weak Negative Relationship	.21

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**3.5 Role of Socio-Demographic Characteristics as Predictors of Resistance to Change**

Sikh and Glis [8] emphasized that this knowledge holds significant value by offering valuable insights to various professionals such as management professionals, human resources practitioners, organizational development specialists, and change agents. Table 4 shows that age is a significant predictor of employees' resistance to change (RTC). The regression model  $Y=73.64 - .42 X$  where Y is the employees' resistance to change and X is their age is significant ( $F=5.39, p=.02$ ) and fit. With this, Y (resistance to change) is expected to decrease by 0.42 point for every unit additional year increase in X (age).

Moreover, with a coefficient of determination of 0.096, this means that 9.6% of the variability of the respondents' resistance to change can be explained by their age. The remaining 90.4% may be attributed to other factors or variables which are not covered in the present study. These insights can assist these professionals in assessing, designing, and evaluating both new and existing programs that aim to facilitate organizational change. Additionally, as suggested by Kunze et al. [15], there is a significant link between resistance to change (RTC) and individual job performance. This indicates that age indirectly impacts job performance through its influence on resistance to change, implying a mediating mechanism.

**Table 4. Regression analysis on age and RTC**

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Age	-.42	.18	-2.32	.02*
Constant	73.64	5.75	12.80	.00*
Standard Error of Estimate = 11.55		R-square = .096		R =
.30		F = 5.39		

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

With age as a predictor of resistance to change, it can be concluded that biological and emotional maturity associated with age are among the factors that can explain the relationship. The work experiences can be considered as the interventions that can affect the facilitation of change among the employees, although in the study, length of service in years does not have significant relationship with resistance to change. Meanwhile, the personnel with permanent tenure in the university are apparently less resistant than the JO/COS employees, which may also be attributed to the employment benefits brought about by the provisions as a government employee. Hence, it is recommended that organizations and institutions, particularly those in the education sector, should consider the individual and highly personal nature of change as a process. This understanding should inform the development of interventions and support mechanisms that consider the diverse experiences and needs of employees, particularly in relation to their age, work experiences, and employment status. Additionally, the findings suggest the importance of fostering high-quality social exchange relationships and providing favorable resources and benefits to employees. This can contribute to reducing resistance to change and enhancing institutional productivity.

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