

Institutional rigidity refers to the inability or unwillingness of an institution to adapt to new circumstances, ideas, or demands — often due to entrenched structures, norms, or bureaucratic inertia.

□ Key Characteristics: Resistance to change – Even in the face of clear evidence or need – “We've always done it this way”

Hierarchical control – Decisions concentrated at the top – Little room for bottom-up innovation

Bureaucratic overload – Excessive procedures, paperwork, and approvals – Prioritization of form over function

Conformity culture – Dissent is punished or ignored – Innovation is viewed as disruption

□ Implications: Delayed reforms (e.g., outdated medical protocols or IT systems)

Frustration among staff, especially younger or more dynamic professionals

Loss of talent due to inflexibility or lack of voice

Reputational stagnation — inability to remain competitive or relevant

□ Example in a hospital: An institutional culture that automatically dismisses junior input, refuses to update surgical planning systems, or delays implementing evidence-based protocols despite new data, is demonstrating institutional rigidity.

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