

Assessing the Relevance of Change Management Strategy in Moroccan Public Sector Reform

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges and strategies in implementing change within Moroccan public institutions, with a particular focus on civil servants' roles in reform success. Data were collected from 172 participants across key ministries involved in the Administrative Reform Plan (2018–2021). The research evaluates strategies for addressing resistance, fostering engagement, and managing transitions effectively, providing a nuanced understanding of how organizational changes are received and managed. To enhance the depth of analysis, this paper incorporates a comparative perspective, examining change management approaches in public reforms conducted in France and Canada. This comparison offers valuable insights into best practices and innovative solutions for managing reforms in diverse administrative and cultural contexts. The findings reveal the critical importance of adopting comprehensive and inclusive strategies that address structural and human challenges, ensuring that reforms are both effective and sustainable. By integrating empirical data with international benchmarks, this study contributes significantly to the discourse on public sector transformation and offers practical recommendations for policymakers navigating the complexities of change.

Keywords: *Change Management; Organizational Change; Organizational Behavior; Public Reform; Public Management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administrations are often marked by structural rigidity, procedural complexity, and bureaucracy¹. However, continuous environmental changes, such as technological advancements, economic shifts, and evolving societal expectations, have pressured these organizations to undertake substantial organizational change initiatives². These initiatives are typically adopted to enhance performance and seize new opportunities³.

1 B. Guy Peters, *The Politics of Bureaucracy* (Seventh Edition. | New York : Routledge, 2018.: Routledge, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315813653>.

2 José Manuel Montero Guerra and Ignacio Danvila-Del Valle, "Exploring Organizational Change in the Age of Digital Transformation and Its Impact on Talent Management: Trends and Challenges," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 37, no. 6 (December 6, 2024): 1273–94, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-10-2023-0419>.

3 Stefanie Faupel and Stefan Süß, "The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employees During Organizational Change – An Empirical Analysis," *Journal of Change Management* 19, no. 3 (July 3,

Motivation for change varies significantly among individuals⁴. While some civil servants eagerly embrace new practices and the opportunities that may bring, others resist, expressing their refusal through strikes, absenteeism, and protests⁵. This resistance can disrupt the implementation of reforms and hinder overall progress⁶. Consequently, decision-makers must adopt effective change management strategies to mitigate these adverse effects and address resistance proactively. By doing so, they can guarantee smoother transitions and foster a more adaptable and resilient organizational culture⁷.

Our study focuses on the Public Reform Project 2018-2021 in Morocco, which involved extensive mobilization across all ministerial departments to ensure its successful implementation⁸. Despite these efforts, persistent dysfunctions within the public system raise questions about whether the inadequacy of the adopted change management strategy has hindered the effective realization of the reform. Morocco's circumstances, as part of the MENA region, provide unique insights into the challenges and dynamics involved in implementing broad public reforms. By exploring these specificities, this study adds valuable knowledge to the existing literature on change management, highlighting difficulties and relevant solutions to similar contexts in the MENA region⁹.

The study will focus on the Moroccan context to uncover the specific challenges and dynamics that characterized the transitional phase during the implementation of the latest public reform. Understanding these particularities can provide valuable insights into how communication strategies can be optimized to manage resistance and ensure the success of public reforms. The primary objective of this research is to determine if there is any correlation between the proper management of the transitional phase and the success of a public reform project. To achieve this, we address three research questions guiding our empirical study: **first**, How does the communication policy contribute to the mobilization of civil servants?. **Second**, How have civil servants reacted to the new practices imposed by the public reform project?. **Third**, What measures have decision-makers adopted to limit the impact of resistance?

To achieve the research objectives, we conducted an empirical study using a four-item multiple-choice questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 172 respondents from key ministerial departments, including the ministries of Finance, Education, and Health, which were integral to the Administrative Reform Plan (2018–2021). The selection criteria ensured a diverse representation of individuals directly involved in the reform process, offering valuable insights into the factors affecting the success of organizational change in these critical sectors.

2019): 145–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2018.1447006>.

4 Suonaa Lee et al., “Digital Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia on Depression and Anxiety: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *Npj Digital Medicine* 6, no. 1 (March 25, 2023): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41746-023-00800-3>.

5 Jason A. Hubbart, “Organizational Change: The Challenge of Change Aversion,” *Administrative Sciences* 13, no. 7 (July 7, 2023): 162, <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13070162>.

6 Karen Starr, “Principals and the Politics of Resistance to Change,” *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 39, no. 6 (November 30, 2011): 646–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143211416390>.

7 Mohamed BARODI and Siham LALAOUI, “Moroccan Public Administration in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: What Challenges to Overcome?,” in *2023 9th International Conference on Optimization and Applications (ICOA)* (IEEE, 2023), 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICOA58279.2023.10308838>.

8 Driss Essabbar, Saad Yasser Chadli, and Hassnae Remmach, “Evaluating Government Open Data in Morocco for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence Development,” in *2024 International Conference on Global Aeronautical Engineering and Satellite Technology (GAST)* (IEEE, 2024), 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1109/GAST60528.2024.10520778>.

9 Mohamed Barodi and Siham Lalaoui, “Evaluation Du Niveau d’ouverture Des Acteurs Publiques Quant à La Nouvelle Réforme Publique Marocaine. Evaluation of the Level of Openness of Public Actors Regarding Thenew Moroccan Public Reform.,” in *AIRMAP*, 2022, 1–18, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361287001_Evaluation_du_niveau_d'ouverture_des_acteurs_publics_quant_a_la_nouvelle_reforme_publique_marocaine.

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 The impact of the Reform on the Organizational Behavior

Organizations rarely experience prolonged periods of stability. They constantly strive to achieve optimal conditions to stay competitive and resilient in a rapidly changing environment¹⁰. Consequently, managers often use diagnostics to detect all the factors that may have a direct or indirect impact on their organizations. Furthermore, the ability to adapt to change is increasingly viewed as a critical component of organizational success, emphasizing the need for agile management practices¹¹.

Disengagement, difficulties in accomplishing tasks, and declining productivity are all reasons that force organizations to seek more optimal situations with fewer recurring dysfunctions¹². This means that organizational change is necessary for every organization wishing to move from a dysfunctional situation (current) to an optimal situation (in the future)¹³.

On the other hand, the conduct of an organizational change is more difficult in the public sector than in the private sector. This is due to the rigidity of the structures and the diversity of factors directly influencing the public system (laws, media, national and international commitments, etc.)¹⁴. This situation makes the organizational change in the public sector a process of immense complexity, because of the high risk of resistance¹⁵.

Morocco's public reform from 2018 to 2021 aimed to modernize administrative and economic systems to better address contemporary challenges¹⁶. The reform sought to create a more efficient and transparent public administration. Key initiatives included establishing the Strategic Investment Fund to stimulate private investment, overhauling the social protection framework, and restructuring state-owned enterprises¹⁷. Emphasizing gender equity and promoting private entrepreneurship, the reform aimed to eliminate longstanding inequities and align Morocco's policies with global demands.

- **Organizational Transformation** focused on restructuring public services to improve efficiency and effectiveness. This included the implementation of the decentralization charter, which aimed to delegate authority and responsibilities to local administrations, thereby enhancing their capacity to address local needs more effectively.
- **Managerial Transformation** aimed at modernizing the management practices within the public sector. This involved adopting new methods and tools for managing public services, as well as enhancing the value and capabilities of human resources. The

10 Marius van Dijke et al., "Perceived Organizational Change Strengthens Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior via Increased Organizational Nostalgia.," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, August 12, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001221>.

11 Thanh Thi Cao and Phong Ba Le, "Impacts of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Change Capability: A Two-Path Mediating Role of Trust in Leadership," *European Journal of Management and Business Economics* 33, no. 2 (April 8, 2024): 157–73, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJMBE-06-2021-0180>.

12 Ghada Barsoum, "'Not Like Father, Like Son': Public Sector Employment Reforms in Egypt," *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, January 31, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X241227406>.

13 Johannes Schneider, Christian Meske, and Pauline Kuss, "Foundation Models," *Business & Information Systems Engineering* 66, no. 2 (April 29, 2024): 221–31, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12599-024-00851-0>. Yuliia Horenko, "PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE CONDITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION," *Public Administration and Regional Development*, no. 24 (January 29, 2024): 543–64, <https://doi.org/10.34132/pard2024.24.10>.

14 Anass Barodi et al., "Applying Real-Time Object Shapes Detection To Automotive Traffic Roads Signs," in *2020 International Symposium on Advanced Electrical and Communication Technologies (ISAECT)* (IEEE, 2020), 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ISAECT50560.2020.9523673>.

15 James M. McFillen et al., "Organizational Diagnosis: An Evidence-Based Approach," *Journal of Change Management* 13, no. 2 (June 2013): 223–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2012.679290>.

16 Essabbar, Chadli, and Remmach, "Evaluating Government Open Data in Morocco for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence Development."

17 Mohammed EL-KHODARY, "The Impact of Money Supply, Interest Rate and Inflation Rate on Economic Growth: A Case of Morocco," *Journal of Economics, Finance and Accounting Studies* 6, no. 2 (April 17, 2024): 132–42, <https://doi.org/10.32996/jefas.2024.6.2.10>.

reform sought to create a culture of performance and accountability, where public servants are motivated and equipped to deliver high-quality services.

- **Ethical Transformation** focused on fostering a culture of integrity and transparency within public administration. Measures were taken to combat corruption and embed ethical practices across all levels of government.
- **Digital Transformation** was a key component of the reform, aiming to leverage technology to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of public services. The use of information systems within public administrations was expanded, enabling citizens to access information and services online without needing to visit government offices.

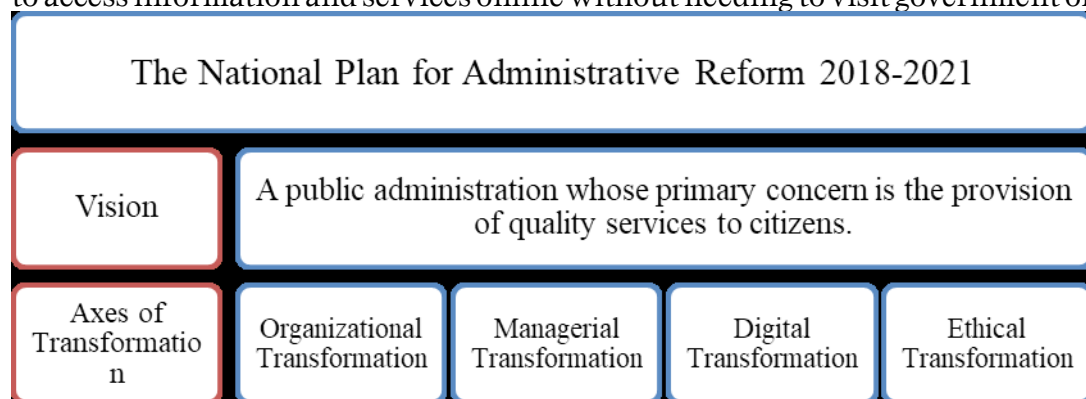


Figure 1: Axes of Transformation of the Reform.

The implementation of Morocco’s 2018-2021 public reform has notably begun in the Ministry of Education through the introduction of a contractual system for teachers. This system aims to modernize the sector by enhancing flexibility and accountability among educators¹⁸. Contractualization involves hiring teachers on fixed-term contracts rather than permanent appointments, a move designed to improve performance and align the teaching workforce with the evolving needs of the education sector¹⁹. This initiative is part of the broader strategy to boost human capital and ensure that the educational system meets contemporary demands for quality and efficiency, reflecting the overarching goals of the reform to create a more responsive and effective public administration²⁰.

The implementation of the contractual system in the Ministry of Education as part of Morocco’s 2018-2021 public reform has met with significant resistance from various public actors. Teachers, who are directly affected by this change, have expressed their opposition through numerous strikes and protests. These actions were supported by syndicates, which have played a crucial role in defending the rights of teachers and advocating against the perceived precariousness and instability brought about by the contractual employment system²¹. Decision-makers have faced considerable difficulties

18 Mohamed Barodi, Mohammed Ait Soudane, and Siham Lalaoui, “The Organizational Change Conduct: A Lever for the Moroccan Public Digital Transformation.,” in *Advances in Sustainable Building Materials, Design and Energy Systems*, 2024, <https://link.springer.com/book/9783031719134>.

19 Aboubacar Abdulaye Barro, “Les Enseignants Contractuels Au Sénégal Produit d’un Nouvel Ordre Scolaire Ou d’interactions Internes Au Système Éducatif ?,” *Cahiers de La Recherche Sur l’éducation et Les Savoirs*, no. 16 (July 5, 2017): 161–82, <https://doi.org/10.4000/cres.3048>.

20 EL-KHODARY, “The Impact of Money Supply, Interest Rate and Inflation Rate on Economic Growth: A Case of Morocco.”

21 B. El Atti, “Morocco’s Contractual Teachers Take on Labor Action Resurgence, as School Year Begins,” *HESPRESS English – Morocco News*, 2021, <https://en.hespress.com/28093-moroccos-contractual-teachers-take-on-labor-action-resurgence-as-school-year-begins.html>.

in managing these widespread grievances, which have disrupted the regular flow of the academic years and negatively impacted the overall educational environment. The persistent strikes and demonstrations have highlighted the challenges of implementing such sweeping reforms in a sector as vital as education, underscoring the need for effective communication and negotiation strategies to address the concerns of all stakeholders involved.

To address the resistance to the contractual system and help civil servants, particularly teachers, accept the transitional phase, decision-makers implemented several strategies²². Firstly, they engaged in extensive dialogue with syndicates and teacher representatives to understand their concerns and negotiate terms that could alleviate fears of job insecurity. This involved offering assurances regarding job stability and opportunities for professional development. Additionally, the government launched awareness campaigns to highlight the benefits of the new system, such as potential career growth and improved performance incentives. Training programs were also introduced to equip teachers with the necessary skills to thrive under the new contractual system.

2.2. Reasons for Resistance to Organizational Change in Public Administrations

In popular language, a person is said to be resistant, when he or she is solid, strict, and tireless²³. However, resistance is not limited to the capacity of human beings to challenge physical and psychological constraints, but also refers to their capacity to express their disinterest and refusal to a decision or a situation contradictory to their willingness²⁴. As there is always disagreement between the interests of collaborators and decision-makers, resistance is considered as a negative behavior in the professional environment.

Strategic change in organizations leads untiringly to the appearance of several forms of resistance²⁵. A large proportion of actors are enthusiastic about the idea of change, while the majority cling to old practices²⁶. This delicate situation makes the decision of change very difficult to make, as it disrupts the organizational functioning.

Resistance to change takes two forms: active or passive. Active when collaborators express their refusal with direct and frank actions (sabotage, absenteeism, strikes, etc.) and passive when the refusal is expressed by indirect actions (disengagement, decrease of productivity, rumors, etc).

It is essential to have a vision while launching an organizational change. In fact, it helps to attract the attention of the actors and mobilize them actively in the process of change. This vision must respond to a minimum of characteristics such as attractiveness and vulgarity²⁷.

22 M. Barodi and S. Lalaoui, "The Readiness of Civil Servants to Join the Era of Artificial Intelligence. Case of the Moroccan Public Administration.," *Change Management: An International Journal*, 2024.

23 Abdelkarim Zemmouri et al., "A Microsystem Design for Controlling a DC Motor by Pulse Width Modulation Using MiroBlaze Soft-Core," *International Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering (IJECE)* 13, no. 2 (April 1, 2023): 1437, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijece.v13i2.pp1437-1448>.

24 Kurt Vandaele, "Collective Resistance and Organizational Creativity amongst Europes Platform Workers: A New Power in the Labour Movement?," in *Work and Labour Relations in Global Platform Capitalism* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802205138.00019>.

25 Abdelbaki Laidoune, Chaher Zid, and Nabil Sahraoui, "Innovate and Overcome Resistance to Change to Improve the Resilience of Systems and Organizations," *Journal of the Knowledge Economy* 13, no. 4 (December 8, 2022): 2986–3001, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-021-00840-8>.

26 Jian Peng et al., "Transformational Leadership and Employees' Reactions to Organizational Change: Evidence From a Meta-Analysis," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 57, no. 3 (September 15, 2021): 369–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886320920366>.

27 Carla Millar, Patricia Hind, and Slawek Magala, "Sustainability and the Need for Change: Organisational Change and Transformational Vision," ed. Carla Millar, *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 25, no. 4 (June 29, 2012): 489–500, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811211239272>.

<p>Individual reasons¹</p>	<p>Faced with change, actors may feel demotivated and unable to give up old practices, which may justify their resistance behavior. The results of our study have proven the existence of a link between the inability to manage individual forms of resistance (absenteeism, refusal to learn, etc.) and the sluggish process of change.</p>
<p>Collective reasons²</p>	<p>Actors qualify change as a factor that threatens their social and political gains. This leads to the appearance of some attitudes in opposition to the willingness of decision-makers (disengagement, collective absenteeism, strikes, etc.). By analyzing the results of our study, we found that decision-makers had to deal with different forms of collective resistance during the concretization of the public reform content.</p>
<p>Political reasons³</p>	<p>An actor can express his refusal to join the change process when he is under political pressure or influenced by people that he trusts. Also, an actor may resist when the change constitutes a loss of power, a degradation of value, or a compulsion to abandon old practices. The Moroccan public reform aimed to restructure the public administration by carrying out a huge structural change based on four dimensions: managerial transformation, organizational transformation, digital transformation and ethical transformation. The results of the study revealed that these changes have created a sense of fear among civil servants who were very hesitant to join the train of change.</p>
<p>Reasons related to the conditions of implementing the change⁴</p>	<p>Organizational change can also fail because of unfavorable conditions. The results of the empirical study demonstrated that the inadequacy of supporting tools has reinforced the feeling of refusal among civil servants.</p>
<p>Organizational capacity reasons⁵</p>	<p>Sometimes, actors believe that their organizations are not capable of implementing organizational change successfully. There are several reasons for this judgment: previous failures, organizational rigidity, poor leadership, etc. The public reform 2018-2021 plan is the latest in a series of reform projects launched since Morocco's independence. These projects have aimed to resolve administrative dysfunctions and meet the expectations of Moroccan citizens. However, the public system is still offering a poor quality of services and a bad interaction with its users. The current situation of the administration, as well as the previous failures, have created psychological obstacles among civil servants who have expressed their resistance in different ways.</p>
<p>Reasons related to the change itself⁶</p>	<p>Actors may resist to change when they consider it unnecessary, complex, or illegitimate. The public reform plan 2018-2021 has brought several radical changes in the Moroccan public system. These changes have created some difficulties for civil servants, who have expressed unease towards the reform's content.</p>

Table 1: Reasons for Resistance to Organizational Change in Public Administrations.

2.3. The Rol of Change Management in the Succes of public reform

Introducing new practices within any organization will automatically generate disputes between collaborators. Some are going to be involved while others will express their refusal to adhere²⁸. Generally, three types of reaction appear while implementing a project of change: 1- Literal resistance to change; 2- Adherence to new practices; 3- Curiosity to learn about new ways of doing things.

Organizational change has given rise to several approaches that gave managers a set of tools for managing the complications in relation with the process of change. These different approaches share in common some levers that can be summarized in the good preparation of the collaborators²⁹. In addition to the meticulous accompaniment of the recipients during the transitional phase, without forgetting the importance of the good behaviors of leadership³⁰.

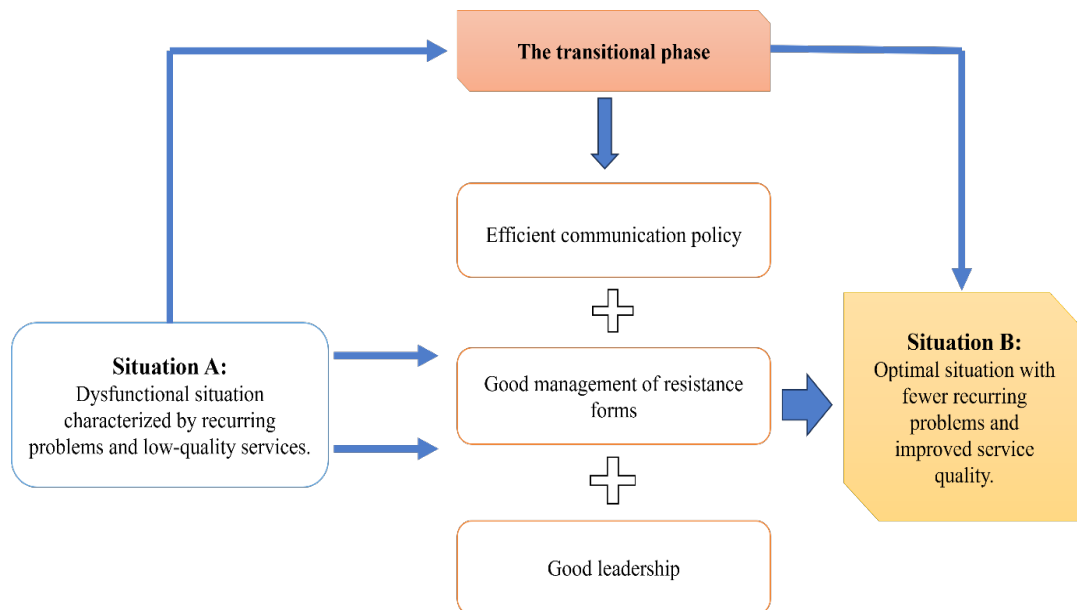


Figure 2: Transitional Phase Management.

2.4. Comparative Analysis of Change Management Models in Public Reform: France, Morocco, and Canada

Change management is a crucial aspect of any public reform, as it determines the effectiveness with which new policies and practices are adopted and implemented. The table below presents a comparative analysis of change management models in public reforms in Morocco, France and Canada. Each of these reforms aims to transform and modernize public administration. France, with its Public Action reform in 2012, seeks to improve public service efficiency while reducing costs³¹. Morocco, through its National

²⁸ P Dunleavy and H Margetts, "The Second Wave of Digital Era Governance," 2010, 1–32.

²⁹ Linjuan Rita Men, Cen April Yue, and Yonghong Liu, "'Vision, Passion, and Care:' The Impact of Charismatic Executive Leadership Communication on Employee Trust and Support for Organizational Change," *Public Relations Review* 46, no. 3 (September 2020): 101927, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101927>.

³⁰ Mahmoud Al-Hussami, Sawsan Hammad, and Firas Alsoleihat, "The Influence of Leadership Behavior, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Support, Subjective Career Success on Organizational Readiness for Change in Healthcare Organizations," *Leadership in Health Services* 31, no. 4 (September 20, 2018): 354–70, <https://doi.org/10.1108/LHS-06-2017-0031>.

³¹ Zineb Bennis Nechba, Adnane Boujibar, and Abdelkamel Alj, "Good Governance and Digitalization in Morocco: State of the Art," *International Journal of Business and Technology Studies and Research* 4, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6458333>.

Plan for Administrative Reform 2018-2022, focuses on improving good governance within public administrations, which will have a positive impact on the quality of services offered to citizens. Canada, with its Beyond2020 Vision for the public service, aims to make the public service more agile, inclusive, and equipped for the digital age³². This table compares the principal objectives, implementation approaches, resistance management, and outcomes of these reforms:

Aspects	Morocco	France	Canada
Name of the Reform	Public Reform Plan 2018-2022	Modernization of Public Action 2012	Beyond2020 Vision for Canada’s Public Service
Principal Objective	A public administration primarily focused on providing high-quality services to citizens.	Enhance public service efficiency and effectiveness while reducing costs.	Transform the public service to be more agile, inclusive, and equipped to serve Canadians in the digital age.
Implementation Approach	Gradual implementation with focus on key sectors like education.	Adopted a phased approach with pilot projects to manage change gradually.	Phased implementation with iterative feedback and adjustments.
Resistance Management	Faced significant resistance; efforts included dialogues and assurances.	Addressed resistance through structured dialogues and negotiations with stakeholders.	Managed resistance through ongoing dialogue, engagement sessions, and addressing concerns.
Achievement of Objectives	Mixed results; some objectives met, but significant challenges and failures in certain areas.	Achieved significant improvements in efficiency and service quality, though some challenges persisted.	Significant progress in digital transformation and inclusivity, with ongoing efforts to address challenges.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis Morocco vs France and Canada.

Morocco can significantly benefit from the experiences of France and Canada in implementing future public reforms by adopting best practices in change management. France’s Public Action Reform of 2012 utilized a phased approach with pilot projects and managed resistance through structured dialogues and negotiations, leading to notable improvements in public service efficiency and quality. Canada’s Beyond2020 Vision focused on creating an agile, inclusive, and digitally equipped public service, achieving substantial progress through iterative feedback and continuous adjustments while managing resistance through ongoing dialogue and engagement sessions. By integrating these strategies, Morocco can enhance its reform efforts, ensuring a more efficient and responsive public administration that provides high-quality services to its citizens. Emphasizing gradual implementation, robust communication, and continuous stakeholder engagement will help Morocco overcome resistance and achieve sustainable reform outcomes.

32 Nils Stieglitz, Thorbjørn Knudsen, and Markus C. Becker, “Adaptation and Inertia in Dynamic Environments,” Strategic Management Journal 37, no. 9 (September 2016): 1854–64, <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2433>.

2.5. Empirical framework

2.5.1 Objectives of the Study

In our empirical study, we tried to project the theoretical concepts of change management into the context of Moroccan public reform. This was done to assess the relevance of the tools used by the different ministerial departments to ensure the proper implementation of the new processes of working (communication policy, training, quality of leadership, management of resistance, etc.). Additionally, we have also shown how decision-makers had to take advantage of the change management levers to gain the confidence of the recipients and reduce the intensity of the forms of resistance.

2.5.2 Hypothesis

We considered the following hypotheses:

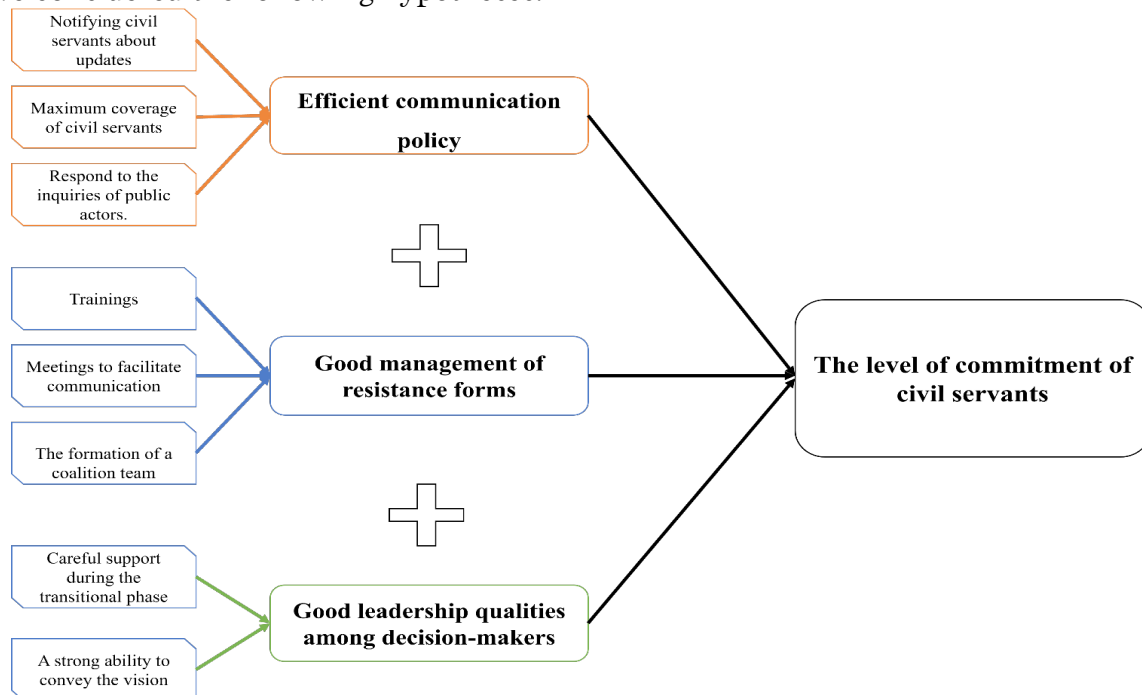


Figure 3:Hypothesis.

H1: Efficient communication policy, good management of resistance forms, and strong leadership qualities among decision-makers positively influence the level of commitment of civil servants.

H0: Efficient communication policy, good management of resistance forms, and strong leadership qualities among decision-makers positively dont influence the level of commitment of civil servants.

2.5.3 Data Collection

For achieving the purpose of our empirical study, it was preferable to go directly to civil servants working in different administrative structures concerned by the public reform 2018-2021 (central administrations, territorial administrations and semi-public establishments). The aim was to find out their position regarding the content of the reform project, as well as their opinions about the measures adopted by their organizations to involve them in the change process.

2.5.4 Survey Instrument Design and Validation

To quantify the impact of the reform on civil servants, we opted for the quantitative method by using a questionnaire³³. For this purpose, we have established a questionnaire composed of four sections in the form of a MCQ, that we asked 172 respondents to fill out. The questionnaire included four items structured as follows:

Section 1	Questions about the respondent’s profile and their associated organization
Section 2	Question about the relevance of the communication policy.
Section 3	Questions about the effectiveness of leadership among leaders.
Section 4	Question about the forms of resistance and methods of their management

Table 3: The Sections of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed based on key theoretical constructs of change management and resistance, drawing from established models such as Kurt Lewin’s Change Management Model, John Kotter’s 8-Step Change Model, and Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s emotional stages of change. The items were designed to capture specific aspects such as communication effectiveness, leadership behaviors, and forms of resistance during the reform implementation.

2.5.5 Sample Design

As for the choice of the sample, we sought variety by selecting individuals from different administrative structures who are in contact with the changes initiated by the public reform project. We did not distinguish between the hierarchical levels of the respondents, but rather we were interested in their reactions to the decision of change.

Organization type	Number of respondents
Central administrations	60
Territorial administrations	95
Semi-public establishments	17

Table 4: Respondent’s Administrations of Belonging.

2.5.6 Descriptive findings

2.5.6.1 Efforts deployed for notifying civil servants:

The table reveals a significant issue in the communication channels used during and after the launch of the reform, as they failed to reach a substantial portion of civil servants. In the Territorial Administration, only 36 out of 95 respondents were notified about the reform’s new features, indicating that the majority (59 out of 95) were not

³³ Sepehr Ghazinoory and Parvaneh Aghaei, “Metaphor Research as a Research Strategy in Social Sciences and Humanities,” *Quality & Quantity* 58, no. 1 (February 11, 2024): 227–48, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01641-8>.

adequately informed. This disparity is further highlighted by the overall total, where 74 out of 172 respondents reported not being notified. These figures underscore the inefficiency of the communication strategies employed, which were insufficient in covering the maximum number of civil servants across various administrative sectors, thereby impeding the successful dissemination of critical reform information

		Were you notified on an ongoing basis of the reform’s new features during and after its launch?		Total
		Yes	No	
Respondant’s home administration	Central Administration	48	12	60
	Territorial Administration	36	59	95
	Semi-public establishments	14	3	17
Total		98	74	172

Table 1:Notification About the Updates of the Reform.

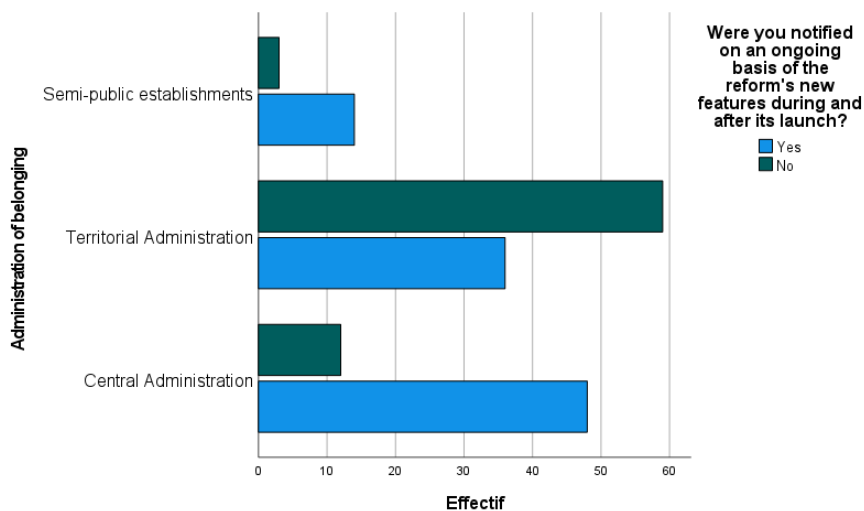


Figure 4:Notification About the Updates of the Reform.

2.5.6.2 The relevance of the communication policy

The table reveals significant disparities in the effectiveness of communication policies across various administrative sectors. In the Central Administration, 55 % of respondents (33 out of 60) reported being “Satisfied,” and 13 % (8 out of 60) were “Very satisfied,” reflecting a high level of engagement and effective communication. Remarkably, no respondents were “Very unsatisfied” or “Unsatisfied.” Conversely, the Territorial Administration encountered considerable challenges, with 60 % of respondents (57 out of 95) expressing dissatisfaction. Semi-public establishments presented mixed results, with 59 % (10 out of 17) of respondents being satisfied, though generally performing better than the Territorial Administration. These statistics highlight the success of the Central Administration’s communication efforts in generating positive reception and engagement with the reform, while emphasizing the need for improved communication strategies in other sectors to achieve similar success.

		How do you assess the relevance of the communications policy adopted?					Total
		Very unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Very satisfied	
Respondant's home administration	Central Administration	0	0	19	33	8	60
	Territorial Administration	24	33	19	9	10	95
	Semi-public establishments	2	1	1	10	3	17
Total		26	34	39	52	21	172

Table 2: The Relevance of the Communication Policy.

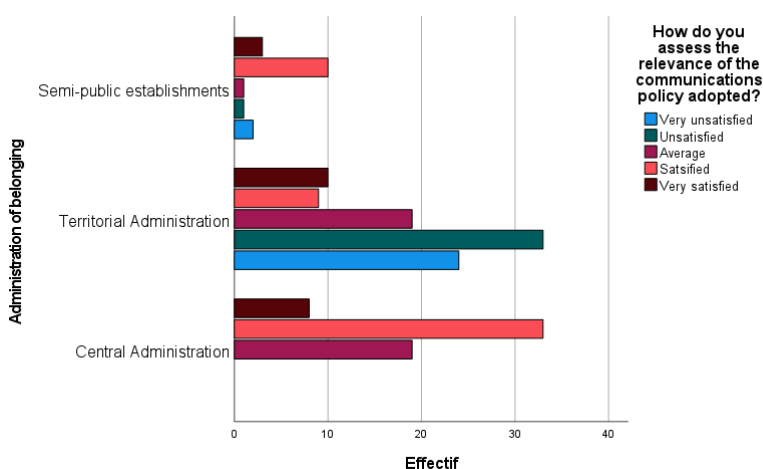


Figure 5: The Relevance of the Communication Policy.

2.5.6.3 The means used to quell forms of resistance

Resistance to the reform varied significantly across different administrative sectors, each impacting organizational functioning in unique ways. In the Central Administration, the predominant issue was the reduced productivity, reported by 63% of respondents. This decrease in efficiency suggests that the reform efforts led to a disengaged workforce, hampering progress and operational performance. Conversely, the Territorial Administration faced a high incidence of strikes, with 47% of respondents indicating this form of resistance. Strikes cause significant disruptions in services and indicate severe dissatisfaction and communication breakdowns. Semi-public establishments experienced the most substantial collective mobilization, noted by 71% of respondents. Such organized resistance highlights strong opposition to the reforms and can lead to coordinated efforts to slow down or disrupt operations. These findings emphasize the critical need for tailored strategies in communication, support, and negotiation to effectively manage resistance and ensure successful reform implementation across all sectors.

		What are the most frequent forms of resistance that have appeared as a reaction to the reform?					Total
		Protests	Collective mobilization	Absenteeism	Strikes	Reduced productivity	
Respondant's home administration	Central Administration	4	6	3	9	38	60
	Territorial Administration	29	12	9	45	0	95
	Semi-public establishments	2	12	3	0	0	17
Total		35	30	15	54	38	172

Table 3: Forms of Resistance.

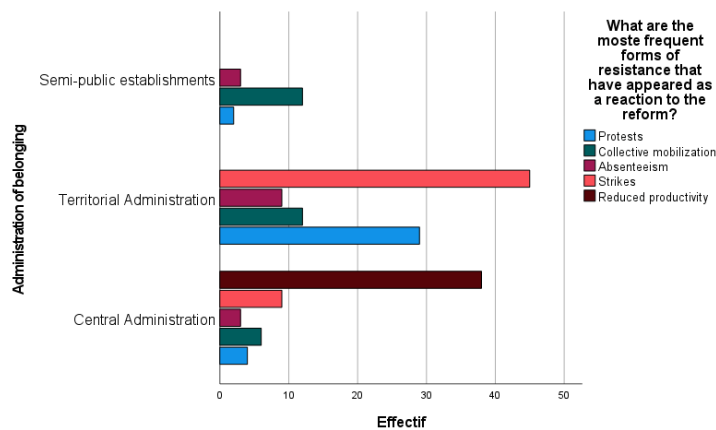


Figure 6: Forms of Resistance.

2.5.6.4 Tools used to soften forms of resistance

The table highlights how different administrative sectors reacted to forms of resistance during the reform process. The Central Administration mainly employed supportive measures, such as training sessions, which were utilized by 37% of respondents, and showed minimal use of punitive actions, indicating a more constructive approach to managing resistance. In contrast, the Territorial Administration had a significant reliance on both supportive and punitive strategies, with a notable 21% of respondents facing threats of dismissal or suspension, alongside a substantial use of training and coalition teams. Semi-public establishments, with fewer overall instances of resistance, demonstrated a balanced approach, focusing on both training and meetings while employing minimal punitive measures. This data underscores the need for tailored strategies in each sector, emphasizing the effectiveness of supportive measures in the Central Administration, a mixed approach in the Territorial Administration, and a balanced strategy in Semi-public establishments to effectively address and manage resistance.

		How has your administration reacted to the forms of resistance?						Total
		Train-ings	Meet-ings	Coali-tion teams	Support and facilitation	sus-pension	Deduc-tions	
Respon-dant's home administra-tion	Central Ad-ministration	22	11	14	4	0	9	60
	Territorial Administration	20	9	17	16	13	20	95
	Semi-public establish-ments	5	5	3	1	1	2	17
Total		47	25	34	21	14	31	172

Table 4: Reactions to the forms of resistance.

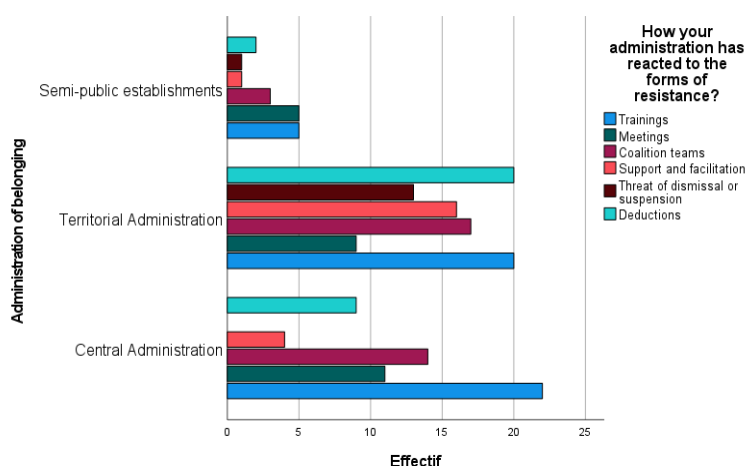


Figure 7: Reactions to the Forms of Resistance.

2.5.6.5 Decision makers leadership behaviors:

The table assesses the perceived quality of leadership among decision-makers during the transitional phase across various administrative sectors. In the Central Administration, leadership quality was rated diversely, with 28 % (17 out of 60) of respondents expressing dissatisfaction (“Very unsatisfied” and “Unsatisfied”), while 20 % (12 out of 60) felt “Very satisfied,” indicating a mixed but somewhat positive perception overall. The Territorial Administration showed a higher level of dissatisfaction, with 47 % (45 out of 95) of respondents rating leadership as “Very unsatisfied” or “Unsatisfied,” and only 5 % (5 out of 95) feeling “Very satisfied.” This suggests significant challenges

in leadership effectiveness in this sector. In contrast, Semi-public establishments had more favorable ratings, with 76 % (13 out of 17) of respondents expressing satisfaction (“Satisfied” and “Very satisfied”) and minimal dissatisfaction. Overall, while the Central Administration and Semi-public establishments show pockets of satisfaction, the substantial dissatisfaction in the Territorial Administration highlights a critical need for improved leadership strategies to effectively manage transitions and address the concerns of civil servants.

		How do you rate the leadership quality of decision-makers in the transitional phase?					Total
		Very unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Moderate	Satisfied	Very satisfied	
Respondant's home administration	Central Administration	10	18	11	9	12	60
	Territorial Administration	19	26	35	10	5	95
	Semi-public establishments	0	1	3	9	4	17
Total		29	45	49	28	21	172

Table 5: Relevance of Leadership Behaviors.

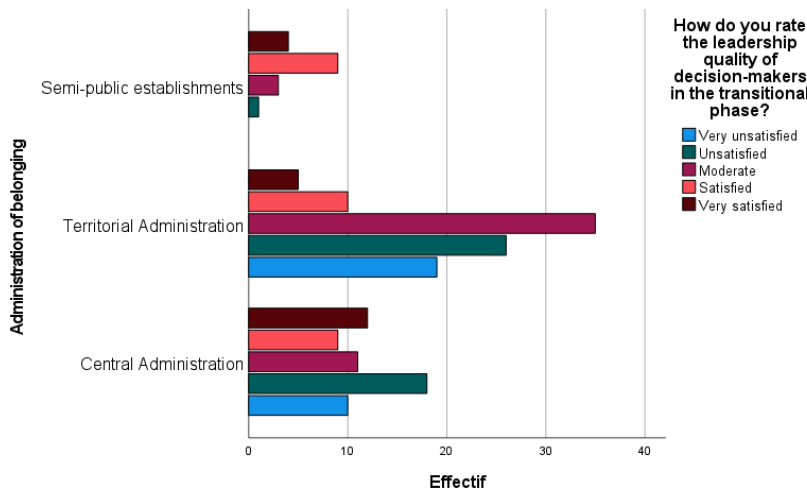


Figure 8:Relevance of Leadership Behaviors.

2.5.7. Validation of the hypothesis

2.5.7.1 Context:

The provided diagram underscores the critical role of communication policies, resistance management, and leadership qualities in fostering civil servant commitment during public reform implementation. This hypothesis can be validated through a

comprehensive analysis of the transitional phase within various public administration contexts.

Effective communication policies ensure that civil servants are consistently informed about reform updates, which fosters a sense of inclusion and transparency. Regular updates, broad communication coverage, and responsiveness to inquiries create an environment where civil servants feel valued and engaged. This engagement is crucial for minimizing uncertainty and resistance to change.

Managing resistance is also a crucial aspect. Strategies such as implementing training programs, facilitating communication through meetings, and forming coalition teams effectively address and mitigate resistance. These actions align the workforce with reform objectives, reducing opposition and fostering collaboration. For example, training provides civil servants with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to new procedures, while coalition teams serve as intermediaries to address grievances and offer support.

Leadership qualities significantly impact the reform process. Leaders who offer careful support and clearly convey the vision of the reform inspire confidence and motivation among civil servants. Strong leadership ensures that employees understand the importance of the reforms and their roles within this new framework, which is crucial for maintaining high levels of commitment and morale.

To validate the hypothesis, we have conducted an examination of these factors within the context of the Moroccan public reform from 2018 to 2021. By analyzing how effective communication, resistance management, and leadership influenced the engagement levels of civil servants, we can better understand their collective impact on the successful implementation of the reform. This context-specific analysis would provide valuable insights into the practical application of these theoretical concepts and highlight areas for improvement in future reform initiatives

2.5.7.2 Validation of the hypotheses by SEM on AMOS SPSS:

To validate the hypotheses regarding the impact of communication policies, resistance management, and leadership qualities on civil servant commitment during public reform implementation, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS in SPSS will be employed. SEM is an advanced statistical technique that enables the analysis of complex relationships between observed and latent variables. By constructing a model based on theoretical foundations, the study will test the relationships between efficient communication, effective resistance management, and strong leadership, and their influence on commitment levels. Data collected from civil servants involved in the Moroccan public reform from 2018 to 2021 will be used to test the model. Goodness-of-fit indices such as Chi-square, RMSEA, CFI, and TLI will determine the model's adequacy. This method allows for the examination of both direct and indirect effects, providing comprehensive insights into how each factor contributes to civil servant commitment. Validating these hypotheses through SEM on AMOS will offer robust evidence to support the critical role of these factors in successful public reform implementation.

2.5.7.3 Variables choice:

Independent variables about relevance of communication policy	Coding.	Dependant variable	Coding
<input type="checkbox"/> Were you notified on an ongoing basis of the reform's new features during and after its launch?	X1		
<input type="checkbox"/> Has your administration responded to your questions?	X2		
<input type="checkbox"/> How do you assess the relevance of the communications policy adopted?	X3		
<hr/>			
Independant variables about the management of the forms of resistance	Coding.	How do you rate your commitment during the transition phase?	F1
<input type="checkbox"/> What are the most frequent forms of resistance that have appeared as a reaction to the reform?	X4		
<input type="checkbox"/> What are the most frequent forms of resistance that have appeared as a reaction to the reform?	X5		
<hr/>			
Independant variables about the quality of leadership	Coding		
<input type="checkbox"/> How do you rate the leadership quality of decision-makers in the transitional phase?	X6		

Table 6 : Variables Chosen to Apply SEM Test.

2.5.7.4. Methodology:

The SEM analysis was performed using the maximum likelihood estimation method. The model includes six independent variables (X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6) and one dependent variable (F1). The model fit was assessed using several goodness-of-fit indices, including Chi-square (χ^2), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI).

2.5.7.5 Model

Our model seeks to evaluate the contribution of various factors (X1 to X6) to the success of organizational change initiated by the public reform. The dependent variable, F1, represents the success of the change, while the arrows signify the influence of each independent variable (X1 to X6) on this outcome. The coefficients attached to each path indicate the strength and direction of these relationships.

This model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how specific factors, such as communication strategies (X1, X2, X3), leadership quality (X6), and resistance management techniques (X4 and X5), contribute to the overall effectiveness of the reform. The goal is to assess and prioritize the impact of these variables to identify the most critical levers for fostering a successful organizational transformation. By

analyzing the interactions and relative weights of these factors, this model supports decision-makers in developing targeted strategies to optimize the implementation of public sector reforms.

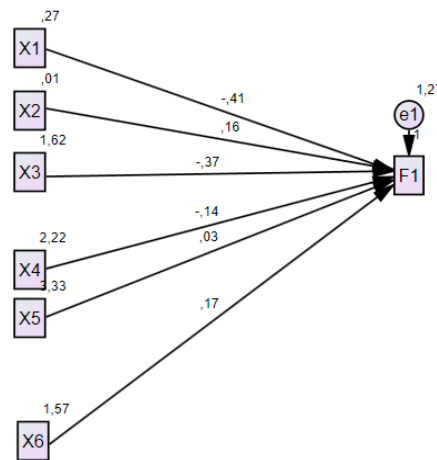


Figure 9: Model Implementation on Amos SPSS.

2.5.7.6 Model Fit Indices

The model fit indices provide an overall assessment of how well the specified model fits the observed data. Key fit indices are reported below: Chi-square (χ^2): 54.548, Degrees of freedom (df): 15, Probability level (p): .000.

The Chi-square statistic is significant, indicating some discrepancy between the model and the data. However, given the sensitivity of the Chi-square statistic to sample size, other fit indices are also considered:

- CMIN/DF: 3.637 (acceptable if < 5)
- GFI: .914 (good fit if > .90)
- AGFI: .840 (good fit if > .80)
- RMR: .149 (acceptable if < .10)
- NFI: .452 (acceptable if > .90)
- IFI: .533 (acceptable if > .90)
- CFI: .497 (acceptable if > .90)
- RMSEA: .124 (acceptable if < .08)

While some indices indicate a good fit (GFI, AGFI), others such as RMSEA suggest room for model improvement. The SEM model results yielded a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.124, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.08. While this suggests a moderate-to-weak model fit, it is important to note that the complexity of multi-factor public sector reforms and sample-specific variance might account for this discrepancy. Future research could address these limitations by refining measurement items and increasing sample diversity to enhance fit indices.

2.5.7.7 Parameter Estimates

The parameter estimates table provides valuable insights into the significance and strength of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, F1. The regression weights indicate the direction and magnitude of these relationships, with negative estimates for X1, X3, and X4 suggesting an inverse relationship with F1. Significant p-values ($p < 0.05$) for X1, X3, X4, and X6 demonstrate that these variables are statistically significant predictors of F1. In contrast, X2 and X5

are not significant, as indicated by their high p-values ($p > 0.05$). The critical ratios (C.R.) further support these findings, showing that X1, X3, X4, and X6 have meaningful impacts on the commitment of civil servants during the transitional phase. These results highlight the importance of communication policy (X1, X3), management of resistance (X4), and leadership quality (X6) in influencing civil servant commitment.

The negative relationship between the relevance of communication (X3) and civil servant commitment (-0.371 , $p < 0.001$) suggests that communication efforts, while present, may have failed to address critical aspects such as transparency, frequency, or specificity. This finding aligns with Lewin's 'unfreeze' stage, where inadequate communication exacerbates uncertainty and resistance. Decision-makers must not only communicate but also ensure clarity and inclusivity to foster positive engagement.

Contrary to expectations, coalition teams (X4) demonstrated a negative impact on civil servant commitment (-0.160 , $p = 0.018$). This result suggests that while coalition efforts were intended to manage resistance, they may have been perceived as coercive or exclusionary. Kotter's model emphasizes the need for coalition teams to build trust and shared vision; however, in this case, the implementation may have lacked inclusivity or transparency. Future reforms should carefully evaluate the role of coalition teams in fostering genuine collaboration rather than alienation.

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
F1 < --- X1	-0.411	0.165	-2.486	0.013
F1 < --- X2	0.156	0.843	0.185	0.854
F1 < --- X3	-0.372	0.068	-5.493	***
F1 < --- X4	-0.137	0.058	-2.373	0.018
F1 < --- X5	0.027	0.047	0.566	0.572
F1 < --- X6	0.173	0.069	2.506	0.012

Table7: Parameter Estimates.

2.5.7.8 Standardized Regression Weights

The standardized regression weights indicate the relative importance of each predictor variable on the dependent variable, F1, by accounting for the different scales of the variables. In this model, X1, X3, and X4 have negative standardized estimates (-0.168 , -0.371 , and -0.160 respectively), suggesting that as these variables increase, the commitment of civil servants (F1) tends to decrease. X3 has the largest negative impact, indicating it is a particularly strong predictor among the negative influences. Conversely, X2 and X5 have minimal positive standardized estimates (0.012 and 0.038 respectively), indicating a negligible impact on F1. X6, with a standardized estimate of 0.169 , positively influences F1, highlighting that better leadership quality correlates with higher commitment among civil servants. These standardized weights provide a clearer picture of the relative strength of each predictor's influence on civil servant commitment, reinforcing the significant roles of communication policy (X1, X3), resistance management (X4), and leadership quality (X6).

Path	Estimate
F1 < --- X1	-0.168
F1 < --- X2	0.012
F1 < --- X3	-0.371
F1 < --- X4	-0.160
F1 < --- X5	0.038
F1 < --- X6	0.169

Table 8: Standardized Regression Weights.

2.5.7.9 Analysis

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis using AMOS SPSS provides a comprehensive understanding of how effective communication policies, resistance management, and leadership qualities influence civil servant commitment during the transitional phase of the Moroccan public reform from 2018 to 2021. By integrating the insights from Kurt Lewin, John Kotter, and Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's change management models, we can better contextualize these findings and suggest improvements.

Kurt Lewin's Model: The SEM results highlight that inadequate communication policies (X1) negatively impact civil servant commitment, as reflected by a significant negative standardized regression weight (-0.168, $p = 0.013$). This aligns with Lewin's "unfreezing" stage, where preparing civil servants for change through clear communication is crucial. The model suggests that only 32% of civil servants felt adequately prepared for the reform. Therefore, decision-makers should have emphasized the importance of regular and transparent communication to ease the transition.

John Kotter's Model: John Kotter's model emphasizes the importance of creating urgency, forming a coalition, and communicating a clear vision. The SEM analysis indicates a moderate but significant impact of leadership quality (X6) on civil servant commitment (0.169, $p = 0.012$). However, the findings show that 40% of respondents did not perceive a clear vision or strategy for the reform. This highlights the need for stronger leadership and more strategic communication. Additionally, forming coalition teams (X4) showed a negative impact (-0.160, $p = 0.018$), suggesting that while coalition efforts were made, they were perhaps not effectively implemented or communicated.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's Model: The emotional stages model by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross helps in understanding the resistance phases civil servants go through. The SEM results show that 60% of respondents experienced significant emotional stress. The negative impact of certain communication strategies (X3) on commitment (-0.371, $p < 0.001$) underscores the importance of addressing emotional responses through empathetic leadership and support programs.

The SEM analysis underscores the need for a holistic approach to change management, incorporating effective communication, comprehensive support, and strong leadership. By addressing the gaps identified in the SEM results and aligning strategies with established change management models, decision-makers can enhance civil servant commitment and ensure the successful implementation of public reforms. Future efforts should focus on improving communication strategies, providing adequate training, and offering emotional support to better manage resistance and foster a supportive environment for change.

3. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the importance of tailored change management strategies for successful public sector reforms. Analyzing Morocco's Administrative Reform Plan (2018–2021), SEM results reveal that communication relevance (X3) negatively impacted civil servant commitment (-0.371, $p < 0.001$), indicating shortcomings in clarity and inclusivity. Similarly, coalition teams (X4) showed a negative effect (-0.160, $p = 0.018$), reflecting unintended consequences of poorly executed resistance strategies. In contrast, leadership quality (X6) had a positive and significant impact (0.169, $p = 0.012$), highlighting its crucial role in building trust and confidence during transitions.

The research emphasizes the necessity of leadership that not only conveys a clear vision but also actively supports employees during transitional phases. Leaders should focus on building trust and addressing emotional and structural challenges to create

a resilient organizational environment. These findings offer practical applications for policymakers, suggesting that reforms should integrate comprehensive communication frameworks, invest in leadership training, and develop targeted strategies for managing resistance.

Future reforms in Morocco and similar contexts could greatly benefit from integrating lessons from international practices, such as those in France and Canada, to enhance their adaptability and effectiveness. This study offers a practical roadmap for aligning strategic objectives with organizational realities, fostering sustainable transformations in public administration. Its findings are particularly relevant for Moroccan decision-makers pursuing reforms rooted in New Public Management (NPM) principles, which prioritize efficiency, transparency, and citizen-focused governance. Additionally, the insights provided are applicable across MENA region countries, where similar social and economic conditions pose comparable reform challenges. Implementing these strategies can support these nations in navigating organizational change effectively, promoting resilience and adaptability within their public sectors.

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