

Motivating middle managers in context of organizational change: insights from Algerian public companies

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Abstract :

Organizational change is a pervasive phenomenon that requires adaptive responses from managers at all levels, especially middle managers who serve as key intermediaries between senior management and frontline employees. The aim of this paper is to study the motivation of middle managers facing organizational change. More specifically, it aims to identify the levers used by senior managers in Algerian public companies to motivate middle managers in the face of organizational change. Our field study focused on six public companies, each of which had undergone one type of organizational change. The data was obtained from the completed questionnaires and interviews conducted with managers. Results shows that the motivational practices used by senior managers do influence the motivation of middle managers in the context of change, but other influencing factors emerged, such as the nature of the change itself, the situation of the company, and the type of change.

Keywords : organizational change, middle managers, motivation, senior managers, Algerian public companies

Jel Classification Codes : D22, M10, M12, M54, D23, L32

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of organizational change, several researchers took an interest in it (Autissier, Vandangeon, & Vas, 2010). Particular attention is paid to the actors involved in the change process, i.e., senior managers, middle managers, and front-line managers.

Middle managers are responsible for implementing new policies and initiatives and play a key role in translating the strategic vision into concrete actions. The motivation of middle managers during these transitions can greatly influence the success or failure of change initiatives. Understanding the factors that influence employee motivation is essential to create favorable environment to change; it can increase employee engagement, reduce resistance, and improve overall organizational performance. The literature illustrates the crucial function of middle managers in managing the complexities of organizational change. Through their strategic engagement, sensemaking abilities, and emotional regulation, middle managers have a profound impact on the effectiveness of change initiatives, bridging the gap between strategic vision and operational realities. The extensive research underscores the strategic importance of middle managers and calls for further investigation into enhancing their contributions to organizational change.

The study focused on Algerian public companies, undergoing reforms for decades. We focused our study of the levers (or practices) used by senior managers to motivate middle managers in a context of change. Thus: **What levers do senior managers in public companies use to motivate middle managers in the face of organizational change?** This question gives rise to two hypotheses:

H1: Senior managers use financial and non-financial levers to motivate middle managers in the face of organizational change.

H2: Communication, recognition, involvement, fair assessment, mobilization of resources, and autonomy are non-financial levers used by senior managers to motivate middle managers in the face of organizational change.

This paper contains a theoretical section aimed to clarify organizational change. Particular attention is paid to motivating middle managers facing change. The empirical part discusses the practices used by the top managers of the companies surveyed to motivate middle managers.

2. Theoretical framework:

2.1. Presentation of key concepts

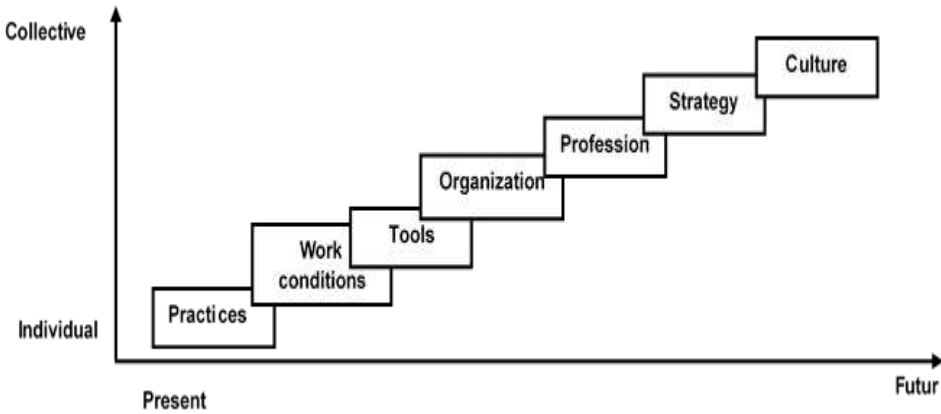
2.1.1. Organizational change and its management:

Nothing is permanent except change.

Inevitable, **change** is part of the daily life of organizations. The availability of research on change has not yet enabled a unanimous definition to be drawn up (Azzarradi & Fikri, 2021). It is therefore more appropriate to focus on a simple explanation from (Pesqueux & Triboulois, 2004), who state that the concept of change is present in many disciplines, but when we talk about organizational change, we are applying it to the field of organizations. According to (Nurcan, Barrios, & Rolland, 2002), change is a process of transformation that takes an organization from its current state to a desirable future state. (Autissier & Moutot, 2013) see this change as a pendulum swing between a known existing and a promised future, materializing in an imbalance between the known and the unknown. Risk-taking and the difficulty of moving towards the unknown explain the fear of change. According to (Thiebaud M., 1998), change is a passage that may be inevitable, i.e., the inescapable consequence of laws and processes beyond our control; it may be organized or planned by the hierarchy to achieve predetermined results; or it may emerge from social, political, and cultural processes initiated by a few local players who gradually organize themselves.

To define what constitutes organizational change, some authors (Maschino & Fournier-Dussault, 2005; Collettere, Schneider, & Lauzier, 2013; Autissier & Moutot, 2013; Alexandre-Bailly, et al., 2013; Caille, & Thys, 2014) look at areas of change. According to these authors, change applies to a wide range of objects, such as staff practices, work procedures, services or products offered, strategies, operating modes, skills, technologies, structures, roles and responsibilities, culture, attitudes, governance, status, and many other aspects (Collettere, Schneider, & Lauzier, 2013). The figure below clearly illustrates this idea.

Fig 1. Domain of change



Source: adapted from (Autissier & Moutot, 2013).

Various factors involve organizational change. It is often necessary for organizations to adapt to internal or external pressures, such as market shifts, Competitive pressures in the market and evolving consumer expectations, technological advancements, changes in leadership, low levels of employee engagement or elevated turnover rates...

Change management is a series of continuous and long-term efforts aimed at improving the organization's capabilities to introduce innovation, keep pace with development, and enable it to solve its problems and face its challenges. Change management is a process carried out by leaders within a well-thought-out plan for a specific period that is implemented with precision and thoughtful coordination, to achieve the desired goals of change, through the human resources and the material and technical capabilities available in organizations. Effective management of organizational change is essential for achieving seamless transitions and reducing employee resistance. This process requires meticulous planning, clear communication, and effective implementation to promote acceptance and adaptability among team members. Several models have been proposed by authors. In the literature, we noticed the recurring presence of a three-phase model such as Lewin model (Lewin K. , 1947a; Lewin K. , 1947b; Lewin K. , 1952; Lewin K. , 1975) or (Weick, 1969) and also an eight-phase model like (Kotter, 1996).

Studying group dynamics, Lewin apprehends the group as a system in a quasi-stationary state and distinguished between two opposing forces: some favorable to change and others favorable to stability. The equilibrium is

obtained by equal intensity forces, even if they have opposite directions. The change in equilibrium state then occurs in two ways:

1. By increasing the intensity or the number of driving forces, favorable to change.
2. Or by decreasing the intensity of the forces restricting change or forces for stability.

Lewin's model is foundational framework in change management, based on three phases of change. It underscores the necessity of not only having a strategic plan but also possessing a profound comprehension of human behavior and the dynamics within groups for successful change. By tackling both the forces that drive change and those that impede it, organizations can foster an environment that is favorable for effective transformation. The three stages are:

1. **UNFREEZING:** This initial period is questioning phase. It prepares the organization for change by creating awareness of the need for it. It involves challenging the current status quo and addressing any resistance to change.
2. **MOVEMENT (CHANGE):** The actual transition occurs in this stage with exploration of new practices, structures or processes for the employees and discussions of whose deemed ineffective.
3. **REFREEZING:** This last phase reinforces and roots the modifications implemented in the earlier stage, ensuring their integration into the organizational culture. Change is anchored in daily operations.

This model finds extensive applicability across multiple sectors, such as business, education, and healthcare, facilitating organizations in navigating transitions with efficiency and ease. Lewin's Change Model offers a systematic framework for managing organizational change, emphasizing the importance of preparation, effective implementation, and the sustainability of the change process.

There are several typologies of change, including (Giroux, 1991), based on the characteristics of the change:

Extent determines the scope of the change within the organization. Change can be global (affecting the entire organization) or partial (concerning a unit or part of the organization). Depth determines the intensity of

transformation. Change can be major (radical, disruptive) or marginal (incremental, improvement-oriented). Pace (or rhythm) determines the speed of implementation. Change can be rapid (revolution responding to an emergency) or slow (gradual).

2.1.2. Top managers and middle managers:

The literature on the management structure of organizations fundamentally divides the organizational configuration either as being made up of senior managers and middle managers:

(Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992), (Huy, 2001), (Balogun, 2003), (Ikävalko & Aaltone, 2001), (Knuyt, 2013), (Landberg, 2009), (Blackburn & Bonaventure, 2013); or with an additional layer called “frontline managers” (Bagad, 2009), (Carre H., 1991), (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), (Guilmot & Vas, 2011), (Codo, 2010), (Rouzies & Vogler, 2005).

For the purposes of this article, we adopt the first logic, which divides organizations into two organizational layers only. Concerning the definition of these two categories of managers, and despite the fact that there is currently no clear and unanimous definition, we have relied on the definition of (Huy, 2001) and that of (Katembach & Smith, 1993), to situate what are senior managers and middle managers in our empirical study. (Katembach & Smith, 1993) define senior managers as a small group (less than twenty people) with complementary skills, committed to a common purpose, performance objectives, and an approach for which they hold themselves accountable. (Huy, 2001) defines middle managers as any manager two levels below the Chief Executive Officer and one level above the frontline operational staff. To this end, and since our research focuses on public companies belonging to groups, we considered as senior managers all managers who are at group level, starting with the CEO of the group up to the CEO of the subsidiary, and middle managers all managers who are below the CEO of the subsidiary.

2.2 Previous studies

Middle management plays a crucial role as change agents in organizational change, facilitating strategic involvement, sensemaking, and emotional balancing to ensure effective implementation, as demonstrated by studies like : (Côté & Denis, 2018) (Balogun & Johson, Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sensemaking, 2004), or (Quy Nguyen, 2001).

Why interest to middle management in context of change?

Research on the strategic functions of middle management features their significant impact on the development of organizational strategies and overall performance. Middle managers play a crucial role by advocating for initiatives originating from subordinate levels, integrating information for higher management, and enabling the implementation of strategic change (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). The literature review helps to highlight some insights:

- ✓ **Strategic Engagement and Mediating Function:** middle managers serve as a crucial link between senior management and the workforce, facilitating the alignment of strategic objectives with operational activities. Their participation in strategic change initiatives is vital for connecting the vision of senior leaders with the performance of frontline employees, thereby playing a significant role in the success of change efforts (Côté & Denis, 2018; Buss & Kuyvenhoven, 2011).
- ✓ **Interpretation and Communication:** middle managers are instrumental in interpreting, conveying, and contextualizing changes for their teams, which helps to mitigate uncertainty and promote employee engagement. The process of sensemaking is consistently acknowledged as a means through which they foster understanding and facilitate transitions (Balogun & Johson, Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sensemaking, 2004).
- ✓ **Challenges of Dual Responsibilities:** these managers encounter conflicts stemming from the dual expectations to oversee both strategic and operational responsibilities, which requires them to navigate and balance competing demands effectively (Kras, Rudes, & Taxman, 2015).
- ✓ **Emotional and Cultural Considerations:** the ability to manage emotions is essential for addressing the emotional reactions to change and maintaining organizational stability through emotional regulation (Quy Nguyen, 2001; Rouleau, 2005).
- ✓ **Empowerment and Transformational Leadership:** enhancing the empowerment of middle managers strengthens their roles as transformational leaders, enabling them to implement change initiatives more successfully. Research indicates the necessity for

structural modifications to alleviate systemic barriers and bolster the empowerment and influence of middle managers in the context of organizational change (Letierce, Mills, & Arnaud, 2023).

In summary, the current body of literature highlights the significant transformative role of middle managers in organizational change, focusing on the strategic, communicative, and emotional dimensions of their responsibilities.

Middle managers play important roles in the context of change, they also challenge difficulties.

(Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997) point out that the inconsistency between the words and actions of top managers can undermine the meaning-making process in middle management and lead to a gap between management's intentions and what happens on the ground. (Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 2000) point out that, as the recipients of communications, insufficient or poor-quality information for these managers leads to problems, including mistrust of change on the part of these managers. (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006) have highlighted uncertainty as one of the difficulties encountered by these managers during change. Before the change is implemented, uncertainty is focused on the strategic design of the change, whereas during implementation, uncertainty is linked to the appropriate procedures to be implemented. (Conway & Monks, 2011) pointed the difficulties that middle managers have in managing top-down and bottom-up change. The additional workload and tensions created by managing the interface between top-down and bottom-up change can lead to additional workload and stress for these managers. (Alis & Fergelot, 2012) have highlighted the difficulty that middle managers have in sensemaking a change that is a source of anxiety for employees and which they themselves may share. Emphasis is also placed on the discomfort these managers feel when confronted with staff discomfort, as well as their defense mechanisms. (Alis & Fergelot, 2012) listed challenges face by middle managers:

- ✓ Bureaucratic Constraints: Middle managers often operate within rigid bureaucratic frameworks, which can limit their autonomy and ability to influence strategic outcomes.

- ✓ Pressure from Multiple Sources: They face pressures from both superiors and subordinates, necessitating a careful balancing act to maintain productivity and morale during change processes.
- ✓ Need for Support: To effectively fulfill their roles, middle managers require support from upper management, including adequate resources and encouragement to engage in strategic thinking.

For (Fergelot, 2015), the real difficulty lies in supporting negative change where the middle manager is faced with the discomfort of employees and defense mechanisms. According to (Boon, 2015), these managers are often caught in the middle; they are expected to explain the change to their staff and support it, but they also have to deal with questions and resistance and keep their department running.

Faced with these difficulties, other authors mentioned the need to motivate them.

(Veillet, 1995) points out that the key factors motivating middle managers in the context of change are achievement, recognition, and the work itself. (Balogun, 2003) states that for these managers to play their roles in change, they must commit to personal change through awareness of change and their responsibilities. This awareness is facilitated by horizontal communication between these managers as well as vertical communication with their superiors. (Balogun, 2003) shows that these managers will need to communicate with their colleagues, gather information, ask questions, exchange experiences and stories as they try to interpret what is expected of them in the change. These exchanges can be accompanied by more formalized communication with senior managers to provide them with guidance on their role within the change. In the same vein, (Colerette, 2010) emphasized the following actions:

- Organization of meetings between senior managers and middle managers to specify the role expected of these managers, the results hoped for, and the methodology.
- Discussing the reasons behind the new solutions put forward, rather than remaining focused on the objectives pursued.
- Avoiding keeping information at senior manager level, as this creates mistrust among middle managers and is an impediment to successful change.

- Avoid overloading middle managers with information. Top managers should focus on a limited number of ideas, especially in complex changes.
- Ensure the direct involvement of senior managers. This becomes very important to compensate for the shortcomings of middle managers.
- Avoid the mistake of top managers putting a strong emphasis on communication at the beginning of a change, after which their investment in communication declines markedly.

To motivate middle managers in the face of change, (Knuyt, 2013) suggests:

- ✓ Involving middle managers in change as early as possible.
- ✓ A good communication plan will help convey information to these managers. You need to explain to them their decision-making playing field and what is being decided by management.
- ✓ Learning and coaching programs tailored to the needs of these managers will need to be scheduled during the implementation phase of the transformation.
- ✓ Encourage middle managers to speak up, act and put forward their ideas.

According to (Johnson & Härtel, 2014), middle managers need motivation from top management, with an emphasis on actions like:

- ✓ Include these managers in defining and implementing the change program.
- ✓ Ensure that communication recognize the important leadership role that these managers play in implementing change.
- ✓ Provide contextualized training and development and proportionate support to refine skills as the change is implemented.
- ✓ Develop timely communication and provide details to these managers and their teams to allow for improvisation in the vector or scope of change.

(Ben Delhouma Sghairi, 2016) suggests that real support, monitoring, training, and coaching must be provided by senior management for middle managers to ensure their motivation and commitment to change.

Based on studies, we highlight five main practices available to senior managers to motivate middle managers in the face of change:

1. Involving middle managers in the preparation and implementation of change.
2. Developing clear and detailed communication with these managers about the change.
3. Recognition of the roles played by them in ensuring the success of the change.
4. Fairness in the evaluation of managers efforts in implementing the change. The impression that senior management is not evaluating their efforts fairly can demotivate them.
5. Middle managers must receive support from top managers in the form of approval and autonomy to act.

We based our questionnaire on these practices. Other levers have been highlighted by other researchers as factors capable to motivate employees, but not necessarily in the context of change, such as financial levers and the mobilization of resources. We added them to our survey.

3. Methods

The empirical research is based on the case study method, using a quantitative-qualitative study and various data collection and analysis tools.

3.1 Research framework

Our study concerned Algerian public companies that had undergone changes. Our research subject requires an in-depth study (Caille & Thys, 2014) ta, a limited number of companies were targeted. Thus, of the twenty or so companies approached to carry out our survey, six agreed to receive us. Our choice of public companies is justified by the considerable number of organizational changes they have undergone from several decades.

We notify the complex evolution of Algerian economic public sector, where major reforms made the flexibility of companies a fundamental requirement to ensure its sustainability. Over decades, several organizational changes have taken place: downsizing, mergers and acquisitions, privatizations, launch of new products, etc. These changes have taken place in these and other circumstances (scarcity of resources, tense social situation, and security problems, dependance on IMF guidelines), creating difficulties for these companies, particularly their managers with supervisory tasks.

3.2 Data collection, analysis tools and sample

Different data collection and analysis tools were used: observations, content analysis of company documents, an interview guide and a questionnaire for middle managers, and statistical analysis using SPSS v. 20.0.

3.2.1 The interview guide

The aim of this guide, which contained thirteen questions, is to obtain an explanation of the change (objectives, causes, difficulties, etc.) from the managers interviewed. This helps to obtain more information to go deeper into the data from the questionnaires collected.

3.2.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire contains 4 sections that each has a scope:

1. Identify the nature of the change, its depth and the roles played by middle managers and top managers.
2. Prove the motivation of middle managers during change.
3. Understand the levers used by senior managers to motivate middle managers in the face of this change: financial (salaries and bonuses) and non-financial (recognition, fairness in evaluation, communication, involvement, autonomy, resources mobilized).
4. Gather sociodemographic information about the respondent.

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is calculated. It is 0.90, which is considered very satisfactory. While testing the validity of the questionnaire, the inter-item correlation is calculated. The set of correlations is measured by multiple correlation using the Pearson coefficient, which is significant in the range of 0.05 and 0.01.

3.2.3 Characteristics of interviewees

To conduct the present research, the questionnaires were sent to 81 managers. 65 questionnaires had been returned (80% of response rate).

The sample comprises managers (workshop managers, section heads, service managers, department heads, central directors, and division heads), including 16 managers from NAFTAL, 15 from FONDAL, 10 from LTP Ouest, 9 from KARAKIB, 8 from DRE MEI, and 7 from DMO SADEG, for a total of 65 managers distributed across the 6 surveyed entities. We notice the predominantly male representation (over two-thirds), experienced (more than 11 years of experience), the educated (mostly university graduates), and mature (over 40 years old).

4. Cases studies

4.1 Presentation

The companies studied are:

1) DRE-MEI:

The Electrical Repair Department MEI, abbreviated as "DRE-MEI," is a company that has belonged to the MEI Subsidiary of the large SONEGAS Group since 2013, following a Merger and Acquisition. Before, it was called the Electrical Equipment Repair Workshop, abbreviated as ARMEL. It is located in Senia Industrial Zone in Oran and specializes in the repair of engines, transformers, and pumps.

2) FONDAL unit in Oran:

The former Algerian Foundries of Oran (formerly ALFON SPA) is a subsidiary of the industrial group FONDAL located in Oran (Gambetta). The latter specializes in production and marketing of foundry products (castings of cast iron, steel, and non-ferrous metals). After the absorption merger of the FONDAL group by the IMETAL group, its subsidiaries became production units, including ALFON.

3) DMO -SADEG:

The SADEG Maintenance Department specializes mainly in the repair of MV/LV transformers. It is composed of three divisions: DM Center, DM East, and DM West, where we conducted our study in Oran (Boulanger). Before belonging to SADEG (before its absorption merger by SADEG), it belonged to MEI SONEGAS following an absorption merger, but this situation lasted only two years.

4) KAHRAKIB TABEL:

The low voltage electrical manufacturing unit called "TABEL," referring to the designation Electrical Panel, is a production department belonging to the KAHRAKIB subsidiary of the SONEGAS group. This production unit, which specializes in the manufacturing of LV (Low Voltage) electrical panels, is located in Oran, catering to a clientele from various industrial, tertiary, residential, and public distribution sectors.

5) LTP OUEST:

Located in Oran, the Laboratory of Public Works of the West (LTPO) is a subsidiary of the GEICA Group. It is an engineering office tasked with geotechnical studies, expertise, and quality control of construction materials

(buildings, civil engineering structures, and roads). LTP OUEST has units and branches located in different cities in Algeria.

6) NAFTAL:

NAFTAL is a subsidiary of the SONATRACH group, responsible of marketing and distribution of petroleum products and derivatives on the national market. To conduct our field study in this major subsidiary of SONATRACH, we visited the following NAFTAL structures: District Fuel in Oran, GPL District in Oran, NAFTAL Depot CDS 317 in Oran.

4.2 Organizational changes experienced by the studied companies

We are here providing a description of the organizational changes experienced by the six Algerian public companies.

DRE MEI (formerly ARMEL) underwent a merger. She transitioned from a situation where it was an autonomous company belonging to the SGP CABLEC group under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry to a situation where it became a department belonging to the MEI company of the SONELGAZ group, under the supervision of the Ministry of Energy and Mines.

ALFON involves the merger of its parent company, the FONDAL Group, with the larger entity known as IMETAL. The FONDAL group, whose main activity is the production and marketing of foundry products, has become a subsidiary of the IMETAL group, and its subsidiaries have become production units, including ALFON. The naming of the subsidiaries has changed. ALFON became: the FONDAL Oran unit.

DMO SADEG, previously known as the MEI transformation unit, has been integrated into SADEG. It is essential to highlight that the SADEG Subsidiary plays a crucial role in one of the key functions of SONELGAZ, namely the distribution of electricity and gas.

TABEL KAHRAKIB experiences the launch of two new strategic products: "Shelters" and "skids." These are mobile electricity production units intended to cover the entire national territory, particularly the extreme Algerian south. TABEL is pioneering company and continues to be the sole entity on a national level that has engaged in the manufacturing, installation, transportation, assembly, commissioning, and maintenance of these products since 2017.

LTP Ouest undergone the implementation of a new organizational structure through the merger of its general management and its unit in Oran, which is located nearby. The change was accompanied by the elimination of unit director position in Oran and creation of new central director positions. Following this change, this subsidiary experienced a fragmentation of the Oran unit into several central departments, each responsible for functionally overseeing the other production units of the LTP Ouest.

NAFTAL experiences the implementation of a unified Integrated Management System (IMS) within its three business branches (fuel, commercial, LPG). These branches had previously committed to implementing a Quality Management System but at a very different pace, which created a certain imbalance between the branches, and prompted senior managers to decide to stop the duality and embark on the establishment of a unified IMS between these branches.

4.3 Characteristics of Organizational Change

The companies surveyed are of different sizes, from various sectors, and have experienced different types of changes. Four types of changes have been highlighted:

- The mergers and acquisitions experienced by DRE MEI, DMO SADEG, and FONDAL Oran.
- The launch of new products by TABEL KAHRAKIB.
- The establishment of a new organizational structure within LTP Ouest.
- The implementation of a unified Integrated Management System within the company NAFTAL.

The main characteristics of the changes experienced by the six companies are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Characteristics of change in studied companies

Organizational change	WHO ?	WHY?	WHAT? (Type of change- (Giroux, 1991)	WHY ? (Objectives)	HOW ? (Actions)
Mergers and absorptions	DRE MEI (2013)	Recovery of public companies	Range: global Depth: major Rhythm: slow	- Centralization of business management - Mutualization and rationalization of costs	- Centralization of decisions at the subsidiary level. - Revision of the organization chart and positions of responsibility. - Adoption of new work procedures.
	FONDAL (2016)	Restructuration			
	DMO SADEG (2020)	Restructuration			
New products	TABEL KAHRAKIB (2017)	Request from the government to resolve the problem of power cuts in the far south.	Range: global Depth: major Rhythm: fast	- Acquisition of new growth markets characterized mainly by the absence of national competition	- Extension of the work site, acquisition of new technologies (e.g., AMADA equipment), and the mobilization of new means of transport and handling. - Review of working methods (alternation between teams); - Recruitment, training of employees and the extension of work teams (e.g., methods office).
New organizational structure	LTP Ouest (2018)	The CEO's desire to put in place a new structure to resolve the dysfunctions of the old structure.	Range: global Depth: major Rhythm: slow	- Rationalization of costs and pooling of resources	-Centralization of decisions at the general management level. - Mobilization of new technologies (Intranet and ERP) to facilitate communication between structures. - Renewal of technical equipment for study and lab areas (key areas).
Integrated Management system IMS	NAFTAL (2017)	The CEO's desire to address the imbalance observed between NAFTAL branches in terms of QMS certification.	Range: global Depth: major Rhythm: slow	- Continuous improvement of internal operations and its image on the international market	-Deployment of the IMS to staff - Implementation and/or updating of new instructions, work procedures and new quality documents. - Monitoring of the progress of the structures in terms of application of the IMS by sending internal auditors. - Signing of partnership agreements with companies - Creation of new structures (e.g., Metrology Department), and mobilization of new resources to meet the requirements of the IMS.

Source: authors

5. Results and discussion:

5.1 The motivation of middle managers during the phases of change

Table 3 presents the evolution of the motivation of middle managers by company, during the three phases of change (Announcement, Implementation, Stabilization), using the Calculated Average (CA) and the Theoretical Average (TA).

Table 2. Motivation of middle managers during the phases of change

Company	Organizational change	Managers	Announcement			Implementation			Stabilization		
			CA	TA	Observation	CA	TA	Observation	CA	TA	Observation
DRE MEI	Mergers-acquisition	08	5	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)	2,5	3	Not very motivated (CA < TA)	2,12	3	Not very motivated (CA < TA)
FONDAL ORAN		15	3,2	3	Motivated (CA > TA)	2,33	3	Not very motivated (CA < TA)	1,93	3	Demotivated (CA < TA)
DMO SADEG		07	5	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)	1	3	Demotivated (CA < TA)	-	-	-
LTP Ouest	New organizational structure	10	4,2	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)	4,3	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)	4,8	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)
TABEL	New product	9	5	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)	5	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)	5	3	Highly Motivated (CA > TA)
NAFTAL	Integrated Management System	16	2,75	3	Not very motivated (CA < TA)	2	3	Not very motivated (CA < TA)	-	-	-

Source: authors

The calculated motivation of the middle managers of DMO SADEG and NAFTAL is absent in the stabilization phase because at the time of the study, the changes were in the implementation phase.

From table 2, we notice different situations from one company to another: DRE-MEI and the FONDAL Oran unit, having experienced the same type of change being the merger, the motivation of the managers decreased throughout the process, whereas for the DMO SADEG, also having the same change, the motivation of the intermediate managers dropped (the calculated average went from 5 to 1) during the first two phases.

NAFTAL, which experienced the implementation of a unified Integrated Management System across its branches, motivation decreased during the first two phases of the process. For TABEL that experienced a different change regarding the launch of new products, the motivation of middle managers remained consistently stable and very important throughout the entire change process (the calculated average is equal to 5). For LTP Ouest, which experienced the implementation of a new organizational structure, the motivation of the managers continuously increased throughout the entire change process.

5.2. Discussion

The study of the motivation levers for middle managers in a changing context has allowed us to observe different situations from one company to another:

- KAHRAKIB TABEL where middle managers were highly motivated throughout the entire change process, senior managers used financial motivation levers (Shelter Bonuses, Collective PRC Bonuses, Individual Bonuses) and non-financial ones (Hypothesis 1 confirmed). Indeed, the six non-financial motivation levers studied were used, namely: communication, recognition, involvement, fairness in evaluation, mobilization of necessary resources, and even autonomy (Hypothesis 2 confirmed), which helped absorb all kinds of resistance. The managers of TABEL also emphasized the nature of the change, which, according to them, was not painful. From the beginning, this change was clear and beneficial for them and their company (gaining new profitable markets characterized by the absence of national competition, no threats of job losses, the possibility of receiving financial rewards, etc.).

- The LTP Ouest where the motivation of middle managers evolved throughout the change process, senior managers used financial motivation levers (off-grid salaries and a variable portion for central directors, company cars, and free chips) and non-financial levers (Hypothesis 1 confirmed). Indeed, among the six non-financial motivation levers studied, five were used, namely: communication, recognition, involvement, evaluation equity, and resource mobilization (Hypothesis 2 partially confirmed). The managers agreed that they did not benefit from autonomy during this change. Some resistance certainly existed, but according to the interviewees, it was not

alarming enough to create obstacles for the CEO in motivating the managers to face the change.

- The FONDAL production unit, where the motivation of middle managers decreased throughout the change process, the senior managers only used non-financial motivation levers (Hypothesis 1 partially confirmed). Indeed, among the six non-financial motivation levers, only four were used: communication, recognition, involvement, and autonomy (Hypothesis 2 partially confirmed). The managers agreed that during the change, they did not benefit from autonomy, the resources mobilized were not sufficient, and the senior managers were not fair in evaluating their efforts. The managers declare that the decisions accompanying the merger have worsened the financial situation of the company and worsened the conditions of work (obsolescence of production means, buildings, and production workshops, shortage of raw materials due to debts, delay in salary payments, etc.). This also contributed to the demotivation of managers who had supervisory tasks.

- DRE MEI where the motivation of middle managers decreased during the change process, senior managers did not use either financial or non-financial motivation levers (Hypothesis 1 refuted). Indeed, among the six non-financial motivation levers studied, none were used (Hypothesis 2 disproved). Regarding communication, only two actions were used (organizing a general assembly to announce and explain the usefulness of the change and a few coordination meetings). The focus is also on scheduling some training sessions to refine managers skills so that they are adapted to the needs of change. Indeed, after years marked by financial difficulties, DRE MEI was able, thanks to this merger, to survive and preserve nearly 75 jobs. The company finds its financial balance, and the employees were able to benefit from advantageous salaries after their alignment with the MEI scales. But that was not enough to increase their motivation. Managers put in a lot of effort during the transition (establishing new work procedures, frequent trips to the management in city of M'sila to attend coordination meetings, etc.).

- NAFTAL, where the motivation of middle managers has decreased throughout the change process, the senior managers did not use either financial or non-financial motivation levers (Hypothesis 1 is refuted). Among the six non-financial motivation levers studied, none were used (Hypothesis 2 disproved). But by checking through levers, we noticed the use of a few

actions. Managers emphasize the use of certain actions to encourage their involvement (providing them with a suggestion box and an improvement sheet to propose adjustments related to the documents and work procedures accompanying the QMS, etc.), communication (encouraging coordination meetings and discussions among managers to ensure a clear understanding of the change, etc.), and the mobilization of resources deemed insufficient. The managers highlighted other reasons for their demotivation: the slow implementation of the IMS (integrated management system) following COVID-19, the succession of several CEOs at the helm of NAFTAL, the size of the company, and the considerable number of its structures. According to the managers interviewed, the senior officials saw the QMS as a continuation of the old system, and they were satisfied with a few actions promoting communication and manager involvement, neglecting the workload overload caused by frequent coordination meetings, the repetitive arrival of auditors, etc.

- DMO SADEG where the motivation of middle managers declined during the change process, senior managers did not use either financial or non-financial motivation levers (Hypothesis 1 is refuted). Indeed, among the six non-financial motivation levers studied, none were used (Hypothesis 2 refuted), except for a few communication actions (coordination meetings to overcome difficulties) and messages of recognition. A factor of demotivation for middle managers has been identified as the ambiguity of the change experienced by this company. Because if we return to the characteristics of mergers, it involves a rapprochement between two companies with the aim of quickly capturing market shares, increasing visibility among new clients, and diversifying activities (MEIER & SCHIER, 2009: 24). In the case of DMO SADEG, none of these goals were pursued. According to the interviewees, since this merger, they have been deprived of providing services outside of SADEG, which has prevented them from gaining new market shares or diversifying their activities. This company has previously experienced a similarly unclear absorption merger with MEI SONELGAZ within the last two years.

6. Conclusion:

Our study highlights several points:

The nature of change. An imposed change such as mergers and acquisitions mandated by the authorities as part of the restructuring of the industrial sector is often difficult for middle managers to accept, especially when it is accompanied by decisions poorly made by these managers (revision of positions of responsibility, centralization of decisions, etc.). Which negatively affects motivation and sometimes even when the levers are used, they have no effect.

The situation of the company. A difficult financial situation that persists during change negatively affects the motivation of middle managers and sometimes even when the levers are used, they become ineffective (the case of FONDAL unit in Oran). On the contrary, a favorable financial situation can also negatively influence the motivation of middle managers, especially when they feel that the company has not rewarded the efforts made and has not mobilized the necessary resources to support this change (NAFTAL and DRE MEI cases).

The type of change. When the company embarks on a change deemed useful for its future and beneficial for its employees, such as the launch of profitable new products (case of TABEL KAHRAKIB), the motivation of middle managers becomes easy, and the use of levers finds fertile ground to develop their motivation. Finally, our results confirm the views of some authors and contradict others.

The senior managers of TABEL KAHRAKIB and LTP Ouest, using financial and non-financial motivation, succeeded in maintaining high motivation during the three phases of the change. This confirms the viewpoints of some authors: (Veillet, 1995), (Balogun, 2003), (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006), (Colerette, 2010), (Knuyt, 2013), (Johnson & Härtel, 2014). The views of these authors were also confirmed by the cases of DRE MEI, DMO SADEG, and NAFTAL in the sense that the motivation of their middle managers in a change context decreased during the three phases of change, as their senior managers did not use financial and non-financial motivation levers. While the case of FONDAL unit in Oran did not match with these research works, as despite the use of some practices to motivate middle managers in the face of change, the motivation of these managers decreased during the change process.

Even if interest, this paper has limits specially in three ways: predominantly qualitative, limited by context specifics (Algerian public companies), and limited to case study context.

Our research opens several research perspectives: variety of roles and challenges in specific contexts (sectors, organizational types), systematic factors impacting the effectiveness and/or motivation of middle managers, methods to empower middle managers to enhance their ability to lead change initiatives, leadership styles most effective for middle managers in navigating organizational change, the role of culture and emotional intelligence of middle managers in influencing the success of change initiatives, systemic and structural changes are necessary within organizations supporting middle managers during organizational change. Future research should examine multi-level relationships between organizational controls, sensemaking, and strategic outcomes. These questions underline how rich middle management roles are and the wide range of challenges arising across organizational change. Looking into these questions provides practical insights into ways in which middle managers' performance in various change contexts can be heightened.

7. References

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