

Resistance to ERP implementation as a catalyst for organizational change: case study of two private companies in the province of Bejaia

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Received date 2026-02-10

Acceptance date 2026-05-07

Abstract:

Resistance to organizational change remains a key factor in the failure or weakening of ERP implementation projects, yet its concrete forms are still poorly documented in Algerian private companies. Drawing on Bareil's (2004) model of concern phases, classic change management frameworks (Lewin; Kotter/ADKAR), and theories of technological resistance (status quo bias, technostress), this article examines passive resistance during ERP implementation in two Algerian firms: SARL Ibrahim et Fils/Ifri and SARL Very Net. Using a qualitative approach based on 16 semi-structured interviews, the study identifies several passive resistance behaviors, including a return to old practices, slowness in task execution, neglect of new responsibilities, parallel practices, weak support, and blind obedience. These behaviors are linked to a change perceived as imposed within a highly hierarchical managerial context that limits employee autonomy and reinforces inertia. The study contributes to a better understanding of passive resistance in ERP projects by emphasizing the role of organizational context in Algerian private companies.

Keywords: organisational change; passive resistance ; ERP ; concern phase model ; Algerian private companies ; Bejaia.

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Introduction

Organizational change has become a permanent feature of organizations facing an increasingly unstable economic, technological, and institutional environment. Market transformations, process digitization, and intensified competition require companies to regularly review their structures, management methods, and information systems to maintain or improve their performance and competitiveness (Furxhi, 2021). In this context, the adoption of new integrated management systems, particularly enterprise resource planning (ERP) software packages, has become a major lever for organizational transformation and a strategic issue of paramount importance (Soh et al., 2000 ; Mahar et al., 2020).

However, the literature shows that these projects are far from being systematically successful. Numerous studies highlight the complexity of ERP projects, their high cost, and the frequency of partial or total failures, often linked to difficulties in aligning the system with organizational processes, the quality of management, and, above all, the reaction of end users (Soh et al., 2000 ; Mahar et al., 2020 ; Saeed et al., 2021 ; Harun et al., 2022). Recent literature confirms that employee resistance is one of the main factors contributing to the failure or underperformance of ERP projects, along with technical challenges and integration issues (Kwahk & Lee, 2008 ; Harun et al., 2023 ; Siddiqui et al., 2023 ; Limon & Sarker, 2023).

From the employees' point of view, any change project – and especially an ERP project that alters work routines, responsibilities, and information flows – is often perceived as a challenge to the status quo. The literature on resistance to change highlights that individuals frequently associate change with potential loss: loss of job security, influence, recognition of skills, established social relationships, or professional territories (Zafar & Naveed, 2014; Furxhi, 2021; Sendrea, 2023). These perceptions fuel a variety of behaviors, ranging from open opposition to more discreet forms of non-cooperation, slowdowns, or withdrawal, which can be described as active or passive resistance (Ali et al., 2016 ; Şendrea, 2023).

Research in information systems shows that user resistance to technology can manifest itself explicitly (rejection, protest, sabotage) or implicitly (minimal use, misuse, inertia), and that it is often a rational response to changes that are perceived as threatening, poorly explained, or insufficiently supported (Ali et al. 2016). In the case of ERP, this resistance is frequently linked to a lack of preparation for change, a lack of training, an unfavorable organizational climate (low support, limited communication), and a feeling of incompetence in the face of the new system (Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Azouri et al., 2022; Akrong et al., 2022; Zuma & Sibindi, 2023).

In Algeria, a growing number of private companies are embarking on ERP implementation projects in order to improve control over their processes, enhance information traceability, and align themselves with national and international market competitiveness standards. However, little research has been done on how employees in these companies experience these transformations and the concrete forms their resistance takes, particularly passive resistance, in contexts marked by strong hierarchical structures and specific managerial practices.

It is in this context that the present study was conducted in two private companies in the wilaya of Bejaia that have implemented an ERP system. The article has two objectives: 1) to identify the behaviors through which employees express their resistance to the implementation of an ERP, considered a major organizational change, and 2) to characterize the forms of active/passive resistance that manifest themselves through these behaviors, placing them in the specific context of Algerian private companies.

1. Economic climate

Organizational change is now both essential and inevitable within organizations. Continuous social, economic, industrial, and technological changes are forcing companies to

constantly adapt to new organizational contexts. In this context, the adoption and implementation of new management systems, such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, is becoming crucial to the sustainability and competitiveness of companies.

However, this transformation process is often accompanied by a recurring phenomenon: resistance to organizational change. Change is often poorly understood by employees, who tend to see it as a threat to their situation and their achievements. They thus associate it with the concept of "loss": loss of job security, areas of influence, mastered skills, established social relationships, or even professional territory (Bareil, 2004). These concerns lead those affected by the change to develop implicit or explicit behaviors towards it.

In this regard, Bareil's (2004) model of concern phases provides a theoretical framework for understanding how actors experience and express their resistance to organizational change. This model distinguishes between two main forms of resistance to change: passive resistance and active resistance. The behaviors adopted by employees fall into one or the other of these forms, which we will present later in this article (see Table 2). More broadly, the literature on organizational change (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1996; Hiatt, 2006) and technological resistance (status quo bias, technostress) emphasizes that the implementation of an ERP system constitutes a major technological and organizational change, likely to generate significant tensions and strong defensive reactions.

The very definition of the concept of "resistance to change" remains ambivalent. On the one hand, it is frequently equated with a set of negative behaviors, where individuals openly oppose the initiators of change and seek to undermine it, sometimes through visible and confrontational actions. On the other hand, resistance can be interpreted as a legitimate reaction by those affected, aimed at expressing their concerns, fears, or misunderstandings. From this second perspective, it is up to managers to recognize these manifestations, listen to them, and seek out their root causes (Bareil, 2004), rather than dismissing them out of hand.

The implementation of ERP within companies is thus widely documented as a high-risk process, with many projects failing or results that fall short of expectations (Soparnot, 2013). Resistance to organizational change, therefore, appears to be one of the major factors likely to weaken or even compromise these transformation projects. In Algeria, companies are engaged in a process of acquiring and deploying ERP systems in order to better align themselves with the requirements of national and international markets. It is in this context that our study was conducted in two private companies in the wilaya of Bejaia: SARL Ibrahim et Fils (Ifri), located in Ouzellaguen, and SARL Very Net, located in Akbou.

Our research question was therefore constructed at the intersection of this theoretical framework and the lessons learned from a preliminary exploratory survey: how do Ifri and Very Net employees express their resistance to the implementation of an ERP system as an organizational change project, and what forms of resistance are reflected in these behaviors?

2. Literature review

Individuals most often oppose changes that directly affect them, particularly when they perceive a threat to their achievements, status, or routines (Furxhi, 2021; Obina & Adenike, 2022; Şendrea, 2023; Hubbart, 2023). This opposition manifests itself in the early stages of the project through behaviors that reflect resistance to change, which has been identified as one of the main factors in the failure of transformation initiatives (Bateh et al., 2013; Darmawan & Siti, 2020; Furxhi, 2021; Warrick, 2023).

The issue of resistance to change was introduced by Coch & French (1948), who were the first to raise it in their article "Overcoming Resistance to Change". During their work at the Harwood Manufacturing plant, they focused primarily on workers' attitudes towards changes in production methods. They presented resistance to change as a combination of individual reactions linked to feelings of frustration and collective reactions resulting from group-induced forces. For them, change is better accepted when individuals participate in its design.

Therefore, to overcome resistance, change initiators must use participatory methods in the organizational change process (Coch & French, 1948).

For his part, Lewin (1951) explains that resistance arises when individuals do not understand the reasons behind the changes that the organization wants to introduce. It also arises when individuals' routines are affected by the change in question (Pesqueux, 2020). Resistance to change stems from individuals' attachment to group norms. With his theory of force fields, he presents resistance to change as a direct reaction to the forces initiating change (Vas & Vande Velde, 2000). To this end, he demonstrates that for change to be successful, these norms must be addressed. He distinguishes between two methods: increasing the forces that promote (propulsive) change and decreasing the forces that constrain (restrictive) change. These forces create balance within the organization and maintain a stable situation. Although he believes that increasing and decreasing these forces are both methods of convincing individuals to change, he favors decreasing the forces that restrict change, as this reduces attachment to norms and facilitates decrystallization. It is more effective and easier to reduce resistance to change by modifying the social norms of the group than by reducing individuals' attachment to these norms. However, his work does not develop in detail the reasons for and forms of resistance to change encountered (Vas & Vande Velde, 2000).

Unlike Lewin, Lawrence (1969) took a detailed interest in the causes and effects of resistance to change. He adds understanding of the nature of resistance to the participation and involvement of individuals in the change process. Understanding the very nature of resistance is the key to the problem and the solution for overcoming resistance and achieving successful change. (Vas & Vande Velde, 2000, p. 3).

Although there is a wealth of studies and research on change, particularly in the social sciences and management sciences, Vas (2005) confirms that we do not have a universally accepted theory or definition of change. Since change is caught up in the web of scientific definitions, researchers and practitioners also disagree on a unified definition of the concept of resistance to organizational change, because "there exists no clear consensus about what is actually meant by the construct, 'resistance to change'" (Schiffer, 2011, p. 2).

Resistance to organizational change differs according to the authors' perspectives and contexts: "some approach it negatively, others positively" (Zahaf & Benyahia, 2021, p. 855). Aktouf informs us that "change itself is nothing more than a question of understanding and acceptance" (Aktouf, 2003, p. 17), indicating that a lack of understanding and acceptance of change will only lead to refusal, inertia, and resistance.

These behaviors can be visible and direct (open criticism, conflict, sabotage, explicit refusal) or invisible and indirect (inertia, withdrawal, absenteeism, decreased commitment), but in both cases they aim to maintain the status quo (Bateh, Castaneda & Farah, 2013; Furxhi, 2021; Warrick, 2022; Hubbart, 2023). Recent literature thus concurs with the distinction between active and passive resistance, emphasizing that passive forms, although less apparent, can significantly slow down the change process (Bateh, Castaneda & Farah, 2013; DuBose & Mayo, 2020; Warrick, 2022; Sendrea, 2023).

Contemporary research confirms that resistance is often linked to fear of the unknown, feelings of loss of control, fear of not being able to master new requirements or losing benefits (status, power, job security) (Darmawan & Azizah, 2020; Obina & Adenike, 2022; Hubbart, 2023; Sendrea, 2023). When employees expect to benefit from change, they tend to support it; when they anticipate losses, they adopt negative attitudes and may even refuse to accept change (Obina & Adenike, 2022; Sendrea, 2023).

Finally, several authors emphasize that resistance should not be seen solely as a dysfunction, but also as a legitimate signal that reveals problems in the design of change and opens up a more constructive dialogue between managers and employees (Bateh, Castaneda, and Farah, 2013; Warrick, 2022; Bagrationi & Gordienko, 2024). From this perspective,

understanding active and passive forms of resistance becomes a central issue in organizational change management.

3. Forms of resistance to organizational change

Resistance is mostly seen as a violent and obvious reaction from those who are against change. Resistance can take many forms, whether obvious or hidden. It should be noted that "resistance" is a concept that evokes something positive and productive; "it has a positive connotation" (Carton, 2011, p. 11). When I resist fatigue in order to finish my work, it is seen as a productive gesture that serves to restore order to my affairs. In nature, plants resist climatic conditions in order to survive and fulfil the role for which they are designed. In the context of organizations, the concept of resistance is distorted from this reality and becomes a black spot in every company and for all initiators of change, who see those who resist as antagonists who slow down progress (Carton, 2011). "As soon as a recipient seems to say or do something that does not go in the direction of what is expected, they are labelled as resistant to change" (Bareil, Managing the human aspect of change, 2004, p. 65). As soon as it is heard or seen in the company, it is directly associated with a negative attitude, whereas it may simply be a sign of vitality among the members of the organization. (Collerette et al., Managing Change, 2022). In this context, the reactions and concerns of those affected by change are not really understood and are not taken into account by those promoting change.

There are many forms of resistance to change, and authors continue to identify forms that increasingly reveal the sources and causes of this resistance (Collerette and Schneider, 1995 ; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002 ; Orth, 2002 ; Lapointe and Rivard, 2005 ; Meyer et al., 2007). This resistance can be observed in individuals' behavior, as behavior "refers to activities that can be observed by others" (Pesqueux, 2020). Each type of behavior corresponds to a particular form of resistance. Carton (2011) presents four forms of resistance: inertia, argumentation, revolt, and sabotage. However, (Collerette et al., 1997) list 21 behaviors considered to be manifestations of resistance to change, either directly or indirectly, which could be described as active and passive resistance, respectively. The following table summarizes the behaviors of individuals in situations of change within a company.

Table 01: "Behaviors in response to change"

Collerette and Schneider (1995)	Indifference	Active opponent	Passive opponent	Ambivalent	Passive supporter	Active supporter
Herscovitch and Meyer (2002); Meyer et al. (2007)	Active resistance	Passive resistance	Resigned conformity	Cooperation	Active support/champion	
Orth (2002)	Active resistance	Passive resistance	Passive support	Active support		
Lapointe and Rivard (2005)	Aggressive resistance	Active resistance	Passive resistance	Apathy	Neutrality	Acceptance
Boffo (2005)	Rebellious practices	Limited practices	Conformist practices	Sophisticated practices		
Chreim (2006b)	Ambivalence	Opposition/avoidance	Resigned conformity	Acceptance		
Auttissier and Moutot (2007)	Opposition	Passive	Proactive			
Soparnot (2009)	Combative	Observer	Conformist	Opportunistic		

Source : based on Bareil, 2010, p. 159

This table presents a range of behaviors exhibited by individuals when faced with change, ranging from negative behaviors (opposition, neutrality, and resistance) to positive behaviors towards change (acceptance, adoption, and support). In the case of negative behaviors, we note that the majority of the authors mentioned converge in describing two particular forms of resistance: active resistance and passive resistance.

As a result, Bareil (2004) provides us with a relevant analytical framework based on his model of phases of concern, which helps us to distinguish between active and passive resistance, whether individual or collective, based on the behavior exhibited by individuals in situations of change.

Table 02: “Manifestations of resistance to change”

Resistance to change	Individual	Collective
Active	Refusal to perform a task	Strike
	Request that raises doubts	Sabotage
	Refusal to attend training	Complaint
	Recriminations and disputes	Grievance (intense union activity)
	Immediate criticism	Conflict
	Procrastination	Distortion of facts
	Insubordination	Demand
	Voluntary departure	
Passive	Return to old methods; status quo	Slowing down of work
	Indifference	Blocking of information or decisions
	Slowness	Rumours
	Forgetting new responsibilities	High staff turnover
	Parallel practices	Blind obedience
	Absenteeism	
	Inadequate support	
	Resources not provided	

Source: compiled by Bareil, 2004, p. 67.

In a study conducted at a Brazilian company on employee group dynamics during ERP implementation, Galery & Petrini show that employees attempted to preserve the status quo in the face of management-imposed ERP implementation. This was done by project managers who became aware of the problems generated by the ERP system early on and did not change their strategy to avoid them. They adopted passive resistance, or what these authors referred to as veiled opposition to the project, by following its guidelines explicitly but without committing to them. No one resisted openly, and no one really committed to the project.

Few studies have been conducted in Algeria to determine the forms of resistance to organizational change. Nevertheless, we can cite the study by Ameer & Chouabbi (2019) on

worker resistance to organizational development in Algerian public institutions. This study analyses the forms of resistance to organizational change adopted by employees to oppose change. The results show that passive resistance is not present in Algerian public institutions. Employees favor active resistance, believing that in order for their concerns to be taken into account by company managers, they must actively resist. The behaviors observed in this study are: increased hostility among employees towards the initiators of change; trade union action; illness; absenteeism; tardiness; strikes; complaints; and recriminations.

The study by Slimani & Boukrif (2017) on the role of actors in a change process involving the implementation of an ERP system in an Algerian public company (ALCOST) analyses the attitudes and reactions of actors to change, with a particular focus on their resistance. To do this, they conducted a case study by accompanying the company in the ERP implementation process and used various techniques (observations, interviews, and questionnaires). The results of this study show that both active and passive forms of resistance manifested themselves during the implementation of the ERP. Active resistance was expressed through a single behavior, namely 'job transfer'. Passive resistance was expressed through several behaviors, including employees showing that they accept the change when in fact they do not (deficient support), using the new and old systems at the same time with a preference for the latter (parallel practices), resorting to old methods, forgetting to use the ERP on the pretext that they are not used to it, and delays in completing tasks (slowness).

In these two Algerian studies, we find contradictory results, with Ameer & Chouabbi (2019) informing us that the resistance shown is active, while Slimani & Boukrif (2017) show that it is passive resistance. The common point between these two studies is that they were conducted in public institutions. These institutions are known for their strong union membership, which enables them to act and negotiate with management on the working environment and conditions (Ameer & Chouabbi, 2019, p. 659). Nevertheless, Slimani and Boukrif (2017) show that passive resistance in the company they surveyed can be explained by the company's-imposed command style and the inferior status of employees. They state that "All decisions in this company depend on the CEO, who considers employees to be mere executors who must apply instructions and directives, without any room for negotiation or even freedom of expression" (Slimani & Boukrif, 2017, p. 112).

Through the objectives we have formulated for our research question. This article is motivated, on the one hand, by the verification of the results of these studies on the forms of resistance to organizational change manifested in the two private companies in the wilaya of Bejaia mentioned above, and, on the other hand, by the comparison of the forms of this resistance to organizational change resulting from ERP implementation projects in Algerian private and public companies.

4. Study methodology

This study adopts a qualitative design to analyze the forms of resistance to organizational change associated with the implementation of ERP systems in two Algerian private companies. The choice of a qualitative approach is justified by the interpretative and contextualized nature of the subject, which focuses on the meanings attributed by actors to techno-organizational change, something that is difficult to grasp using purely quantitative approaches (Palinkas, 2014; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Nassaji, 2020; Im et al., 2023).

The multiple case study focuses on SARL Ibrahim et Fils (Ifri), located in the Ouzellaguen industrial zone, and SARL Very Net, located in the Taharacht (Akbou) industrial zone, both located in the Wilaya of Bejaia. These organizations have respectively deployed the SAGE X3 and SAP ERPs, which had been operational for four and six years at the time of data collection. This time lag allows us to observe stabilized behaviors of resistance and (non) appropriation of the system.

4.1. Methodological strategy and epistemological positioning

The study takes an interpretative approach, focusing on an in-depth understanding of users' experiences and perceptions rather than statistical generalization (Sovacool et al., 2018; Nassaji, 2020). The objective is to document, based on the actors' discourses, the concrete manifestations of resistance to change and their articulation with the conceptual framework used (active and passive resistance behaviors).

In this context, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main data collection technique. This technique allows for a rigorous thematic focus while leaving room for flexibility to explore emerging dimensions, which is considered a major asset for producing rich and relevant qualitative data (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Safi et al., 2018).

4.2. Survey design and sampling strategy

The sampling method chosen was purposeful sampling, which is suitable for qualitative research in sociology when the objective is to maximize the relevance and depth of information rather than statistical representativeness (Palinkas, 2014; Subedi, 2021; Bouncken et al., 2025). The selection criteria were as follows: 1) being directly involved in the use of ERP in daily activities; 2) occupying a variety of organizational positions (end users, local managers, functional managers, IT staff) to capture a diversity of viewpoints.

A total of 16 individual interviews were conducted, including 9 at Ifri and 7 at Very Net. This number is consistent with the recommendations in the literature for qualitative case studies seeking an in-depth understanding, where the emphasis is on information saturation rather than on a fixed threshold (Bouncken et al., 2025). Saturation was deemed to have been reached when new interviews no longer produced substantially new codes or resistance behaviors compared to Bareil's framework.

The interviews, which lasted an average of approximately 35 minutes, were conducted in the workplace, in spaces that ensured confidentiality and comfort, conditions recognized as conducive to obtaining reflective and dense data (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Johnson et al., 2020).

4.3. Development of the interview guide

The interview guide was constructed deductively based on Bareil's behavioral model of resistance to change (2004), supplemented by literature on resistance to technology and organizational change. In accordance with the recommendations for semi-structured interviews, the behaviors listed by Bareil were translated into open-ended questions designed to elicit concrete accounts of work episodes and situations of change.

The guide was structured around two main themes:

- Behaviors associated with active resistance;
- Behaviors associated with passive resistance.

The questions did not impose an individual or collective framework a priori, in order to allow the relevant level of analysis (individual, team, department, organization) to emerge freely. The guide was pre-tested with two respondents (not included in the final sample) to verify the clarity of the wording and the ability of the questions to elicit precise descriptions, in accordance with good practice in qualitative interviews.

4.4. Data collection procedure and rigor considerations

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and then transcribed verbatim, a step considered essential to ensure data accuracy and enable detailed analysis. The anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of their comments were guaranteed; the names of individuals and departments were systematically pseudonymized.

In order to reinforce the credibility of the results, several principles of rigor specific to qualitative research were applied: maintaining a research log detailing methodological decisions, clarifying the criteria for participant inclusion, explaining the link between the theoretical framework and the collection tools, and systematic coding procedures.

4.5. Data analysis strategy

Data analysis was based on a thematic analysis combining deductive and inductive approaches, in accordance with recommendations for the rigorous implementation of qualitative analyses (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Im et al., 2023). The transcripts were imported into MAXQDA software, which was used to organize, code, and compare segments of discourse.

The analysis was carried out in several stages:

- Familiarization with the data through iterative readings of the transcripts, allowing for an initial identification of salient themes;
- Initial deductive coding, using the categories from Bareil's model (active vs. passive resistance) and the associated list of behaviors as a starting point;
- Inductive refinement and enrichment of the codes to capture any unexpected forms of resistance or contextual variations in the expression of behaviors;
- Grouping into themes and sub-themes corresponding to types of behavior (presence/absence of active and passive resistance behaviors, specific modalities in each company);
- Inter-case comparison (Ifri vs Very Net) to identify convergences and divergences in resistance patterns.

This process, which alternates between breaking down and reassembling data, aligns with the step-by-step qualitative analysis models described in the literature (compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, concluding) (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Im et al., 2023). The aim was to ensure explicit analytical traceability between verbatim quotes, codes, themes, and interpretations, which is essential for transparency and transferability of results in qualitative research.

5. Results

5.1. Behaviors demonstrating active resistance

Based on Bareil's model (2004), fifteen behaviors were selected as indicators of active resistance: refusal to perform a task; requests that raise doubts; refusal to attend training; recriminations and protests; immediate criticism; procrastination; insubordination; voluntary departure; strike action; sabotage; complaints; grievances (intense trade union activity); conflict; distortion of facts; demands.

Analysis of the sixteen interviews reveals none of these behaviors in the two companies studied. In other words, no explicit, direct, or confrontational form of resistance appears in the accounts collected. Employees report no refusal to perform tasks, no boycotts of training, and no collective actions such as strikes or open protests against the ERP project.

This absence of active resistance is understandable given the imposed, hierarchical, and unilateral nature of the change. The respondents' comments converge to emphasize that the decision to implement an ERP system is made exclusively by senior management and leaves no room for negotiation. An employee of Very Net sums up this power asymmetry as follows: "The decision to purchase an ERP system comes from above, so if the director decides to buy it, we have no choice but to follow suit." Similarly, an IT specialist at Ifri highlights the implicit sanctions associated with any open challenge: "If an employee did not want to work with the ERP or did not accept the change, they could find themselves in a situation where they had to change jobs or worse."

The high financial cost of the project further reinforces this injunction to comply. A department manager at Very Net emphasizes the irreversibility of the technological choice: "The company has allocated a huge budget for the acquisition of the ERP, so it is up to the employees to adapt to it."

These excerpts suggest that active resistance is less absent than inhibited: the power structure, the threat of repositioning or exclusion, and the strong managerial legitimization of

the project reduce the likelihood of visible protest behavior. Resistance then shifts to more discreet forms, which directly relates to the theme of passive resistance.

5.2. Behaviors indicating passive resistance

Thirteen behaviors were identified as passive resistance: returning to old methods (status quo); indifference; slowness; forgetting new responsibilities; parallel practices; absenteeism; poor support; resources not granted; slowing down work; blocking information/decisions; rumors ; high turnover; blind obedience.

Empirical data reveal six behaviors in this category in both companies:

- Return to old working methods (status quo);
- Slowness in performing tasks;
- Parallel practices between the old system and ERP;
- Failure to work with the ERP system;
- Lack of support for the project;
- Blind obedience.

The return to old methods and parallel practices is attributed to insufficient mastery of the ERP and a strong attachment to previous routines. The head of information systems at Very Net observes: "Users find it difficult to break away from their old habits, which leads them to ignore the ERP and continue working with our old applications."

This recurring use of the old system is accompanied by increased slowness in task execution, which manifests itself in delays and additional workload due to the duplication of operations across two environments. This slowness is also linked to what respondents describe as forgetting to work with the ERP system during periods of high pressure. A user from Ifri's production department explains: "Sometimes, when I'm under pressure and trying to finish my tasks, I completely forget that we have a new ERP system, so to be efficient in my work, I use the old system directly, and you could say unconsciously. In the best-case scenario, I use the ERP system, but often I find myself in a situation that forces me to resort to the old one."

Beyond usage, the material highlights a lack of support for the project. A majority of interviewees explicitly express their distance from the ERP: "I don't fully support this ERP integration project; I don't see its added value or how it contributes to the efficiency of my work."

Finally, blind obedience appears to be the behavioral translation of the hierarchical constraint already mentioned. Several users in both companies describe their position as follows: "The decision came from above, so as subordinates, we have no say in the matter. We either accept it or we leave. So technically, we try to do everything we're asked to do."

Taken together, these elements show that, while there is no explicit protest, the change provokes reactions of withdrawal, circumvention, and forced compliance: a return to the technical status quo, under-use of the ERP, duplication of procedures, and superficial adherence. Resistance to change is not visible in the form of open conflict, but is embedded in everyday practices, in the way employees adjust, minimize, or neutralize the use of ERP while appearing to comply with the expectations of management.

6. Discussion

Based on the interviews, the study highlights six behaviors of resistance – return to old methods (status quo), slowness, forgetting new responsibilities, parallel practices, deficient support, and blind obedience – all of which fall under passive resistance in the sense of Bareil's model (2004), and identifies none of the behaviors associated with active resistance.

6.1. Contained" resistance in a context of imposed change

The absence of active resistance should not be interpreted as acceptance of change, but rather as the result of a context of imposed change, hierarchical and lacking in dialogue. The literature on IS shows that, in contexts where use is constrained, and there is little room for

manoeuvre, resistance tends to shift towards more discreet, behavioral, and difficult-to-observe forms (slowdowns, detours, underuse) rather than towards direct opposition (Ali et al., 2016; Laumer et al., 2016; Cinite & Duxbury, 2018). The interviewees' comments clearly highlight this top-down approach: the decision "comes from above", "the decision was made from above", and "either we accept it, or we leave". This configuration is consistent with analyses linking hierarchical culture, centralization of power, and low readiness for change, which are conducive to superficial acceptance combined with withdrawal or circumvention behaviors (Drummond et al., 2017; Nilsen et al., 2019; Westover, 2025).

6.2. The centrality of passive forms of resistance in ERP projects

The six behaviors identified reinforce several findings in the literature on ERP resistance. On the one hand, the return to old methods, slowness, parallel practices and failure to work with the new system refer to what many studies describe as a form of "silent" or "routine" resistance, which slows down the realization of expected benefits without ever taking the form of declared opposition (Ali et al., 2016; Drummond et al., 2017; Pulluru, 2025). User resistance, which is often passive, can become a major source of failure or underperformance in IT projects when organizations fail to recognize it and analyze it as a warning sign (Ali et al., 2016).

In ERP systems, functional complexity, process reconfiguration requirements, and the cognitive load associated with the new tool frequently contribute to these circumvention behaviors, particularly when training, guidance, and support measures are perceived as insufficient (Drummond et al., 2017; Pulluru, 2025). Employee comments confirm this: "I completely forget that we have a new ERP system" or "I just use the old system" reflect a pragmatic decision: under time pressure, employees favor the tools they are familiar with, even if this contradicts official requirements.

On the other hand, the lack of support and blind obedience observed are consistent with research showing that a lack of emotional commitment to change can coexist with apparent behavioral compliance, producing configurations of "compliance without commitment" (Foster, 2010; Nilsen et al., 2019; Feng et al., 2023; Westover, 2025). The research on organizational justice and resistance to change emphasizes that a low sense of procedural justice (non-involvement, unilateral decisions, top-down communication) and perceived limited organizational support are strongly associated with attitudes of withdrawal or resignation rather than constructive engagement (Rehman et al., 2021; Feng, Cooper, and Zhu, 2021; Westover, 2025). Our results illustrate this phenomenon: employees "do what they are asked to do" but say they "do not see the added value" of ERP and do not fully support the project.

6.3. Convergences and divergences with research on Algerian companies

The results differ in part from those reported in the context of Algerian public enterprises. Ameer & Chouabbi (2019) highlight rather active resistance in public enterprises, particularly in organizations with strong trade union presence and high levels of identification with the institution. This configuration brings resistance closer to a form of collective speaking out or open negotiation of change, which can be interpreted as a form of "critical engagement" rather than pure destructive opposition (Cinite & Duxbury, 2018).

Conversely, our cases are more similar to the profiles highlighted by Slimani & Boukrif (2017), which are characterized by mainly passive resistance. The "request for a change of position," which they interpret as active, can, in light of the typologies of resistance, be read as disguised resistance (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2006, p. 593) or an avoidance strategy (Cinite & Duxbury, 2018; Obina, 2022). These differences suggest that the nature of ownership (public/private), the role of trade unions and the strength of labor collectives shape the available repertoires of resistance: in highly unionized public enterprises, collective protest

and open resistance are more "dicible"; in private companies, which are more hierarchical and less protected, resistance tends to be "privatized" in everyday micro-practices.

6.4. Theoretical implications

On a theoretical level, the study makes at least three contributions. i) It operationalizes Bareil's model in a context of techno-organizational change (ERP) in the Algerian private sector, showing that the grid of resistance behaviors makes it possible to highlight forms of resistance that are often overlooked by approaches focused on open protest. ii) It contributes to the debate on the value of resistance. It shows that resistance does not take the form of hostile actions but rather practices of maintaining the status quo. iii) The results invite us to rethink the link between the absence of active resistance and the success of change. The ERP literature reminds us that the absence of visible contestation does not guarantee either the appropriation or the performance of the system; on the contrary, "superficial" adoption can mask latent resistance that results in productivity losses, data entry errors, partial use of features, or decisions based on incomplete data (Ali et al., 2016; Drummond, Araujo and Borges, 2017; Pulluru, 2025).

Conclusion

The study highlights a specific pattern of resistance to change in two Algerian private companies faced with the implementation of an ERP system: the prevalence of passive forms of resistance, against a backdrop of strong hierarchical constraints and low employee participation. Theoretically, it illustrates the relevance of analytical frameworks that distinguish between active and passive dimensions of resistance, and is consistent with research that encourages recognition of resistance as a useful indicator of dysfunction in the change process rather than as an individual "flaw". Empirically, the work remains exploratory: it is based on two cases and 16 interviews, in a context where ERP systems have been in place for several years, which may influence memory and the reconstruction of behaviors. The results are therefore not generalizable but describe specific dynamics.

Several avenues for further research appear: i) expanding the sample to other sectors, regions and types of organization (public/private, size, level of unionization) to systematically compare resistance profiles; ii) more finely articulate behavioral data with key contextual variables identified in the literature; iii) conduct a longitudinal analysis of the evolution of responses to change between the implementation phase and the routine phase.

Such research would contribute to a better understanding not only of "whether" employees resist, but also of how, when, and under what conditions this resistance can be transformed into a resource for more robust and legitimate ERP projects.

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