

How to Cite:

EL MEHDAOUI, A., & RACHEDI, A. (2026). The role of training in the success of organizational change: Case Study: SONATRACH. *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(8), 836–851. Retrieved from <https://ijeponline.org/index.php/journal/article/view/1375>

The role of training in the success of organizational change: Case Study: SONATRACH

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Abstract---This article examines the contribution of training to the success of organizational change within the Algerian oil & gas, SONATRACH. More specifically, it assesses the extent to which training practices support employees in embracing organizational transformations. The research is based on a review of the literature, reinforced by a quantitative empirical study. The data collected through a questionnaire were analyzed using the R software. The results show that training significantly improves employees' understanding of the vision and objectives of change. However, its influence is applied indirectly with a coherent and complementary set of human resource management practices.

Keywords---training, organizational change, human resource management practices, change management, SONATRACH.

JEL classification: M53, M12, O15

Introduction

The determinants of successful organizational change have been widely examined in management research, creating multiple process-based and descriptive models that specify the plans, procedures, actions, and behaviors required for effective and integrated change management.

Human resource management (HRM) practices can facilitate and often directly enable the implementation of change. Recruitment identifies change agents in line with organizational objectives; motivation supports the commitment expected by leaders and managers; performance management and skills development enable

lessons to be learnt at the end of any change project, whilst communication fosters cohesion and promotes a culture of change that reduces the resistance it generates.

All these HR practices create an environment conducive to the acceptance and success of change. Among them, training plays a particularly important role, as it is the HR practice most frequently highlighted in studies on change management. Seen as a major determinant of understanding change, training also fosters employee acceptance and involvement. It enables employees to perceive and understand the vision and strategy set out by top management, as well as the organization's desired future state. As a result, it helps highlights and clarifying the positive benefits of change, both at an organizational and individual level.

In this framework, the study analyzes the role of training in supporting organizational change projects by identifying the success factors on which training has a direct impact within an Algerian organization. Therefore, it seems necessary to examine the actual impact of training on the success of organizational change particularly within the Algerian context while answering to the following question: To what extent does training contribute to the success of organizational change projects within an Algerian organization?

In order to answer this research question, we formulate the three following hypotheses:

- H1: Training enables employees to better understand the vision, the strategy of senior management and the objectives of organizational change.
- H2: Training promotes employee buy-in and involvement in change projects.
- H3: Training helps reduce resistance by developing the necessary skills and clarifying the positive impacts of change at both organizational and individual level.

The article is structured in a step by step manner to provide a better understanding of the role of training in the success of organizational change. Firstly, it sets out the theoretical foundations of organizational change and the strategic role of HR as a facilitator of change. The study then examines the main HRM practices employed in the process, with particular emphasis on training. The last part (the empirical part) is dedicated to the empirical study with the aim of identifying the relationship between team training and the success of change projects at SONATRACH, before discussing the results and limitations, while suggesting recommendations for future research.

I. Literature Review: The Role of HR and Training in Supporting Organizational Change

This literature review is structured in two parts. Firstly, it examines the role of HR as a strategic facilitator of change. Secondly, it analyzes training as a means we will analyze training as a means of fostering buy-in for change, as well as the roles of the various stakeholders in this process.

1. The HR Function as a Facilitator of Change

Several studies have examined the role of HR in organizational change (Ghosh & Puliken, 2025; Karimova, 2025; Khan & Waseem, 2025; Nirmala & Ananth, 2018;

Raeder & Bokova, 2019; Sivaraman et al., 2019; Ullah, 2012). These studies converge on the idea that HR must move beyond administrative responsibilities and become a strategic partner, employee advocate, mediator, and change agent. Raeder and Bokova (2019) gave an initial insight on how HR practices shape affective, normative, and continuance commitment to organizational change. When considered separately, only communication and autonomy are significantly associated with affective commitment. When treated as an aligned system, however, HR practices are positively associated with affective and normative commitment and reduce continuance commitment, which represents constrained rather than voluntary support. Their findings highlight the importance of coherent, mutually reinforcing HR arrangements.

Based on this approach, Ullah (2012) similarly argues that permanent change, globalization, and intensified competition have transformed the role of HR professionals. Since successful transformation depends heavily on employee acceptance, HR must mediate between management and employees, explain the rationale and benefits of change, motivate and involve staff, and intervene throughout the process. Drawing on Lewin's model, it identifies three phases of change: preparation, implementation, and stabilization. HR must play an active role at each of these stages to ensure the process's success. Furthermore, they must foster an organizational culture that is conducive to change.

Similarly, Karimova's research (2025) shows that the same strategic transition is occurring in Uzbekistan amid economic, digital, and institutional reforms. Based on mixed method approach combining surveys, interviews, and documentary analysis, the study reports a strong relationship between strategic HR involvement and organizational performance. Companies where HR is involved from the very outset of change planning demonstrate agility, motivation and reform success. The analysis is reinforced by other researches such as the one of Lewin (1951), Kotter (1995), Adkar (2006), and Ulrich (1997) which highlight the importance of internal communication, leadership, culture, digital tools, and HR analytics.

In the Pakistani context, Khan and Waseem (2025) found out that internal organizational factors positively influence change management, whereas external factors have no significant direct effect. Structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of human social capital mediate the relationship between change drivers and the change process. Organizational effectiveness improves when HR acts as a moderator and facilitator capable of planning, organizing, implementing, and sustaining transformation.

Nirmala and Ananth (2018) compare Indian (national) and foreign (multinational) companies operating in India. In an unstable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment, HR readiness was assessed through involvement, transition management, training, post-implementation evaluation, and HR competencies. Foreign firms were found to be generally more mature and more likely open to dedicate HR staff to change, invest in training, and evaluate outcomes. The authors nevertheless emphasize that all organizations require continuous communication, trust, employee training at every level, and a more agile and human-centered approach.

Sivaraman, Saikia, and Rana (2019) also demonstrated that HR translates strategic direction into concrete action. Based on responses from 124 participants, HR was found to be operating as a strategic change agent, an intermediate-level driver, and an operational implementation actor. HR involvement contributes positively through training, communication, employee support, and key competencies such as active listening, analytical thinking, negotiation, adaptability, proactivity, and emotional intelligence.

Finally, Ghosh and Puliken (2025) emphasize HR's early involvement in assessing employee readiness, identifying competency needs, anticipating resistance, and ensuring clear communication about the objectives and implication. By using Ulrich's framework, they describe HR as a strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion, and change agent. They conclude that successful organizational change relies on effective planning, transparent communication, continuous employee support, and active workforce engagement, making HR a key driver of sustainable organizational transformation.

2. Training, Appropriation of Change, and the Role of Actors

Organizational change cannot be reduced to a strategic decision, a new tool, or a prescribed procedure. It is a complex, gradual, and collective process that alters competencies, representations, routines, relationships, and the meaning attached to action. The success of change depends less on the formal quality of the project than on organizations' ability to create the conditions for employees to take ownership of it. However, this ownership requires communication, support and participation, as well as training, as those involved must understand the change, learn how to use it and integrate it into their day-to-day practices.

Errida and Lotfi (2021) shows that the success of organizational change depends on a combination of factors. They identify several key dimensions: a clear vision, strong leadership, regular communication, stakeholder engagement, motivation, resistance management, and performance monitoring. From which training emerges as a key lever, not merely because it imparts technical knowledge, but because it enables employees to reduce their uncertainties, overcome their fears and develop the skills needed to embrace the new practices.

Conversely, Nouiker (2021) argues that organizational change cannot be driven solely by senior management or an isolated project leader. While senior leaders articulate the vision, project managers organize implementation, and middle managers act simultaneously as recipients and relays. In other words, middle managers must first appropriate change themselves before explaining and translating it for their teams. Training and guidance help them mediate, reduce resistance, and maintain engagement and ensure business continuity throughout the change process.

Vandangeon-Derumez and Autissier (2012) emphasize that appropriation is also developed through collective learning spaces. Their SNCF case study shows that learning networks allow employees to exchange, experiment, reflect, and jointly produce new practices. These networks promote cross-functional interaction, creativity, recognition, and commitment, although their effects remain limited

unless learning is diffused and connected to other management arrangements, particularly project management.

Cuvelier and Caroly (2009) demonstrate that employees do not simply apply newly prescribed procedures: they interpret and adapt them to real work constraints. Consequently, the between prescription and practice may often reveal practical intelligence rather than resistance. The authors emphasize that effective training should go beyond procedural instruction by explaining the rationale behind new practices and encouraging professional dialogue to promote genuine understanding and commitment.

Ologeanu-Taddei et al. (2015) distinguish enforced adoption from authentic appropriation arguing that mandatory minimal use of a system does not mean that employees understand or incorporate it; it may instead result in workarounds, underuse, and errors. Authentic appropriation requires meaningfulness, organizational support, participation in defining rules of use, training in mastery of the tool, and adaptation to operational realities.

Overall, the literature identifies three key conditions for appropriation: a clear vision and explanation of the reasons for change; the involvement of stakeholders at all organisational level; and training and collective-learning tailored to real work. Supporting this view, Chalal (2017) found, in his study of 60 CEVITAL employees that strategic change reshapes competency requirements and that training aligned with strategic orientation supports adaptation and organizational objectives. Training should therefore be perceived as a strategic investment in competitiveness, adaptation, and sustainable success.

II. Empirical Study: Field Survey

1. Organizational Context

The study was conducted during the final quarter of 2025 within SONATRACH, an Algerian oil and gas company.

SONATRACH was selected because of its economic role, diverse workforce, and extensive experience in managing organizational change. The fieldwork focused on the Corporate Strategy, Planning and Economics Directorate, which oversees strategic planning, performance management, economic and organizational studies, performance management, and document-governance policy. Participants included employees, managers, and executives from General Management units who had been involved in organizational change initiatives.

2. Research Objective

Consistent with the research question, the empirical study assesses the impact of HRM practices, with a particular focus on training and its impact on success of organizational change. It has been conducted to be part of broader doctoral research on the role of HRM in organizational transformation, the study specifically investigated training practices at SONATRACH.

3. Methodological Approach

A quantitative survey was conducted among 72 SONATRACH employees, executives, and managers from different units. Data were collected using a

structured questionnaire based mainly on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The constructs included change-related training, internal communication, employee participation and involvement, resistance reduction, change intensity, and overall change success.

The data were processed with R software. Descriptive statistics were initially used to examine response patterns and respondents’ perceptions. Measurement quality was then assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin index, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity, thereby evaluating internal consistency and suitability for factor analysis.

Regression analyses were conducted to examine whether training improves understanding through internal communication, reinforces participation and involvement, and contribute to reducing resistance. A mediation model was used to assess whether internal communication transmits the effect of training to change success; the indirect effect was evaluated with 5,000 bootstrap replications. A Moderation analysis further explored whether the effect of training varies with perceived change intensity. Finally, multiple regression estimated training’s unique contribution alongside communication, employee participation, evaluation and recognition, and strategic HR leadership.

The analysis is based on 72 complete responses. Composite scores were the means of the items associated with each construct on a scale from 1 to 5. Given the cross-sectional nature of the survey, regression coefficients should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than evidence of causal relationships. Unstandardized coefficients (B) represent the expected change in the dependent score for a one-unit increase in a predictor; standardized coefficients (β) facilitate comparison among predictors in the same model.

III. Results and Interpretation

Before examining relationships among the study variables, Figure 1 illustrates respondents’ perceptions of change-related training arrangements.

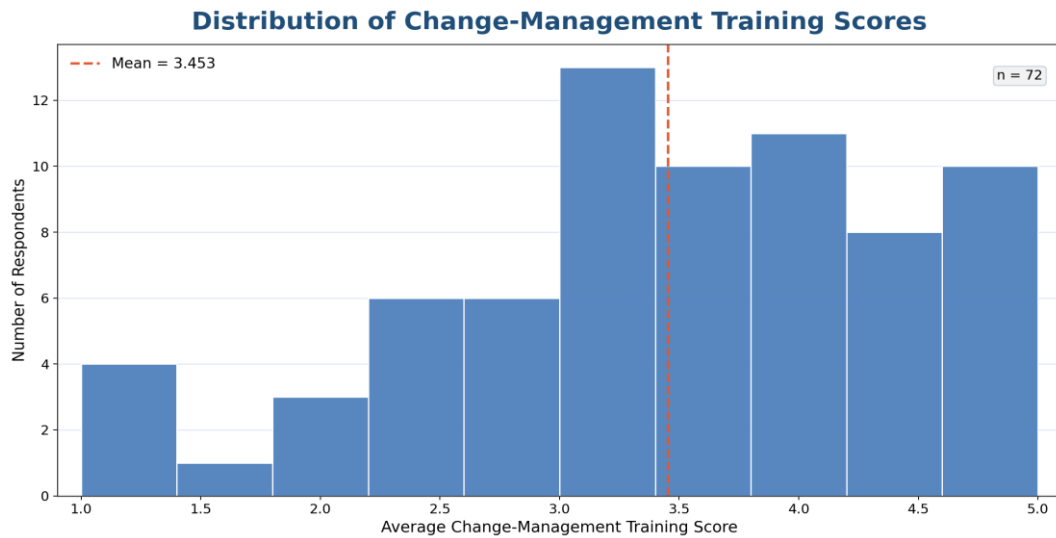


Figure 1. Distribution of the Change-Related Training Score
Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data (2026).

Interpretation of Figure 1

The mean training score is 3.453 (SD = 1.042), which is above the neutral midpoint and suggests an overall positive perception of change-related training. However, the distribution spans the full scale. This dispersion reveals heterogeneous experiences: some employees perceive preparation for change as insufficient, whereas others report receiving substantial support. The variability is analytically useful because it provides the relationships between training and key dimensions of change success to be estimated. Figure 2 extends this initial description by examining the association between perceived training and internal communication.

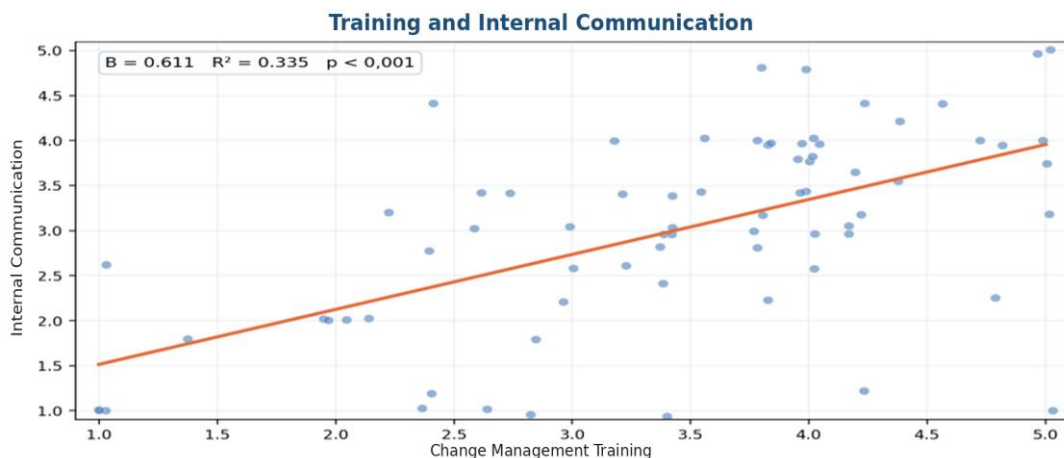


Figure 2. Relationship Between Training and Internal Communication
Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data (2026)

Interpretation of Figure 2

Training is positively associated with internal communication ($B = 0.611$; 95% CI [0.405, 0.816]; $t = 5.937$; $p < .001$), and the model explains 33.5% of the variance in communication. A one-point increase in training is associated, on average, with a 0.611-point increase in employees' perceived clarity and consistency of communication. These findings suggest that training initiatives serve not only as skill-development mechanisms but also as channels for clarifying the vision, objectives, and rationale of organizational change. Although residual normality is slightly imperfect, the effect remains substantial and the heteroscedasticity test is not significant. H1 regarding understanding of the vision and informational clarity is supported.

To identify the mechanism underlying this relationship, Figure 3 presents the mediation model in which internal communication transmits part of training's association with change management.

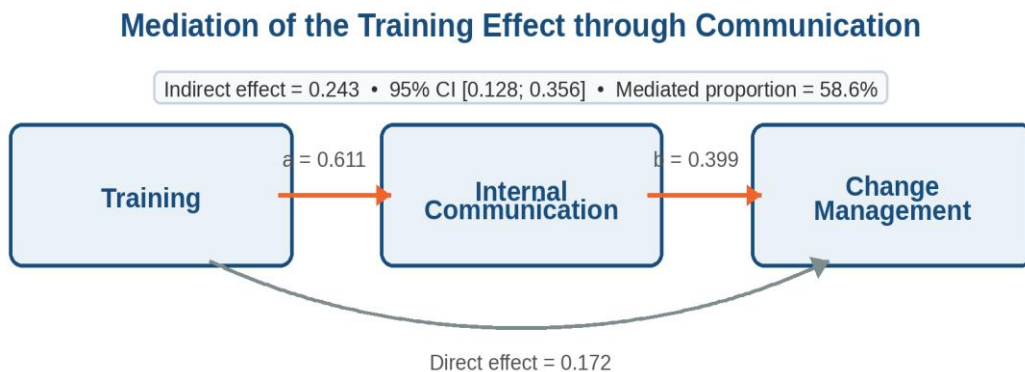


Figure 3. Mediation of the Effect of Training Through Communication

Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data (2026).

Interpretation of Figure 3

The indirect effect of training on change management through communication is 0.243. The 95% bootstrap confidence interval [0.128, 0.356] excludes zero, supporting statistical mediation. Approximately 58.6% of the estimated total effect of training is transmitted through internal communication. The remaining direct effect is positive (0.172), which is consistent with partial mediation: training operates partly through sensemaking and information dissemination, although other mechanisms may also intervene. Given the cross-sectional design of the study, "mediation" should be interpreted as a statistical mechanism consistent with the theoretical model rather than definitive causal proof. Figure 4 then examines whether training is also associated with employee acceptance, participation, and involvement in transformation projects.

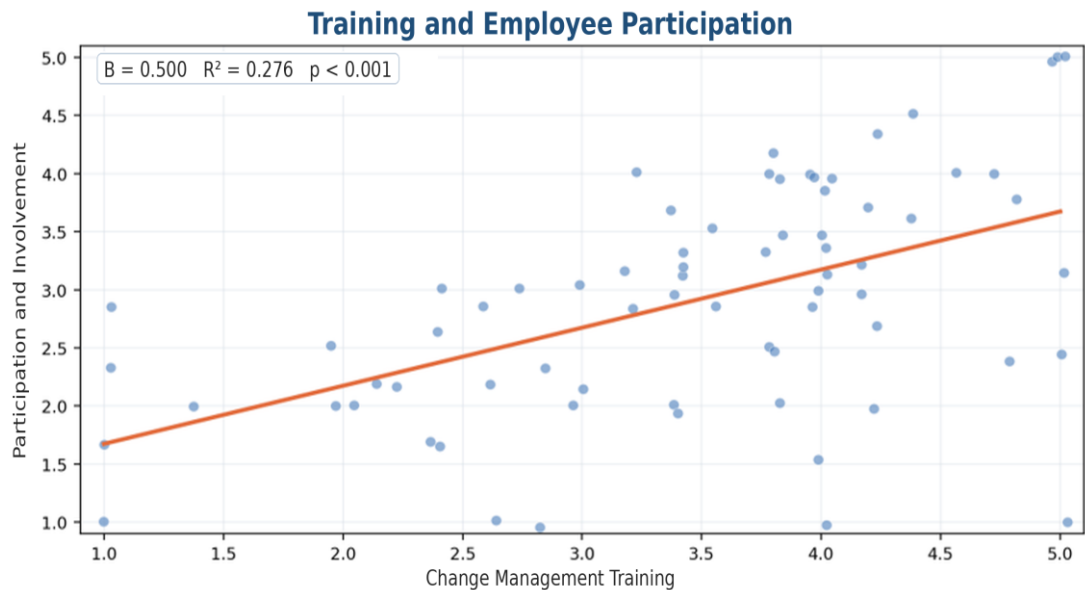


Figure 4. Relationship Between Training and Employee Participation–Involvement
Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data (2026)

Interpretation of Figure 4

The relationship between training and employee participation is positive and highly significant ($B = 0.500$; 95% CI [0.307, 0.693]; $t = 5.168$; $p < .001$). Training explains 27.6% of the variance in participation and involvement. These findings suggest that effective preparation reduces uncertainty, enhances employees' perceived competence, and encourages active engagement in change initiatives. Diagnostic tests nevertheless indicate heteroscedasticity and slight residual non-normality; therefore, robust standard are recommended for publication. H2 is supported, subject to this diagnostic qualification.

To examine the factors that limit opposition to change, Figure 5 compares the specific effects of training, internal communication, and competency development on employees' acceptance of change.

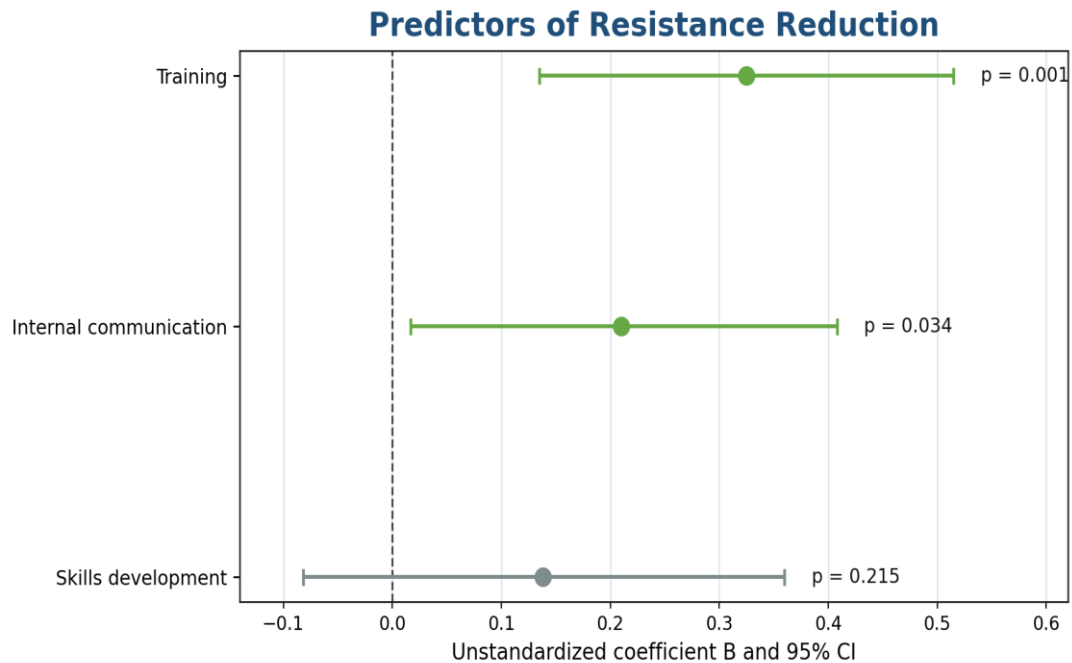


Figure 5. Predictors of Resistance Reduction
Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data (2026)

Interpretation of Figure 5

The model explains 48.1% of the variance in resistance reduction and is globally significant, $F(3, 68) = 21.02$, $p < .001$. Training has a positive and significant unique effect ($B = 0.324$, $p = .001$), as does internal communication ($B = 0.212$, $p = .034$). In contrast, competency development does not remain significant when other variables are controlled ($B = 0.138$, $p = .215$). These findings suggest that training and communication are complementary: training provides resources for adaptation, while communication reduces uncertainty and clarifies meaning. Model diagnostics are satisfactory and collinearity remains acceptable. H3 is supported. Figure 6 assesses whether perceived change intensity modifies the influence of training on change success.

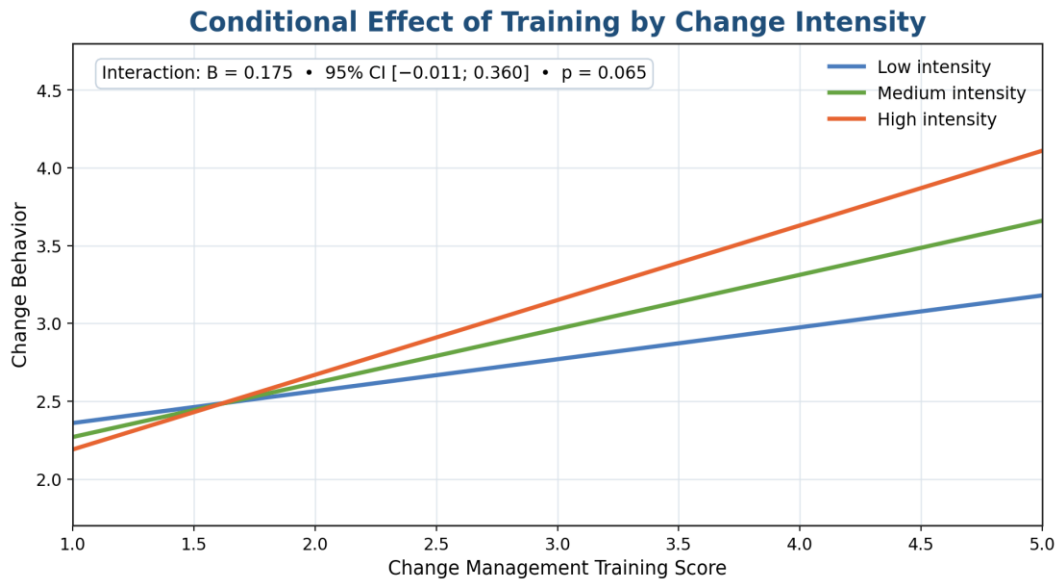


Figure 6. Moderating Effect of Change Intensity
Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data (2026)

Interpretation of Figure 6

The moderation model is globally significant and explains 43.1% of the variance in change management. The Training $\times$ Intensity interaction is positive ($B = 0.175$), but its 95% confidence interval $[-0.011, 0.360]$ includes zero and $p = .065$. Although, the slopes suggest that the relationship between training and change success may become stronger as perceived change intensity increases; however, the conventional 5% threshold is not met. The pattern may be described as marginal or exploratory at the 10% level, but not statistically demonstrated moderation. H4 is therefore not supported at the 5% significance level. Finally, Figure 7 places training within the broader system of HR practices and compares the relative contribution of the five principal HR levers to overall change success.

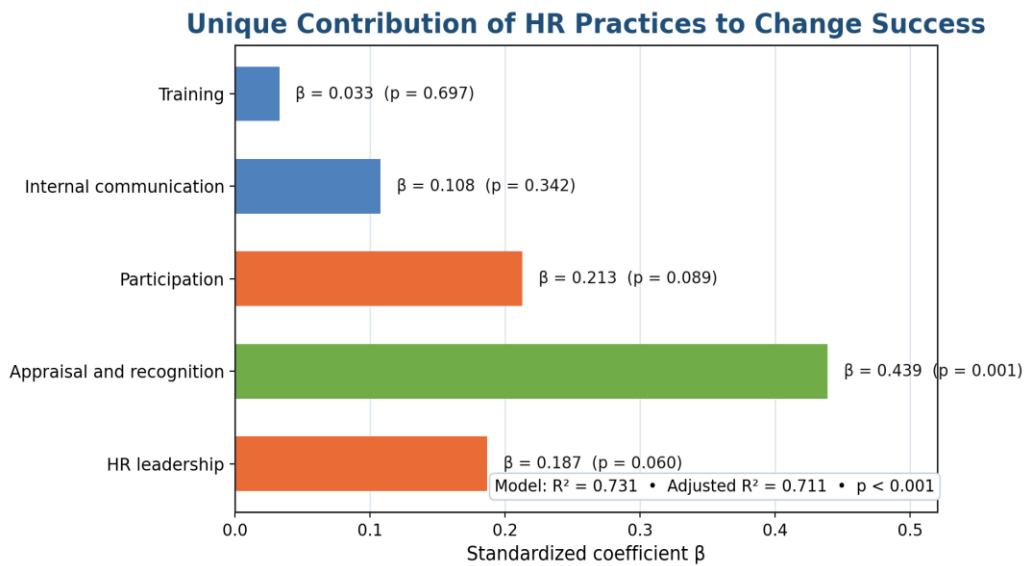


Figure 7. Contribution of HR Practices in the Global Model
Source: Authors' elaboration based on survey data (2026)

Interpretation of Figure 7

The five-predictor model explains 73.1% of the variance in change success (adjusted $R^2 = .711$; $F(5, 66) = 35.87$; $p < .001$). Among the factors, Evaluation and recognition emerge as the only statistically significant predictor ($\beta = .439$; $p < .001$). Employee participation ($\beta = .213$; $p = .089$) and strategic HR leadership ($\beta = .187$; $p = .060$) show marginal contributions. Whereas communication ($\beta = .108$; $p = .342$) and training ($\beta = .033$; $p = .697$) have no significant effect when the other practices are controlled.

This result does not imply that training is ineffective. Previous analyses show that training influence is mediated and complementary. Furthermore, the moderate collinearity among predictors also calls for caution when interpreting isolated contributions.

Summary of Findings

The results establish an important distinction between training's isolated association and its conditional contribution within an integrated HR system. When considered separately or independently, training is positively associated with better communication, stronger participation, and reduced resistance, and much of its effect on change management passes through internal communication.

In the global model, however, its unique direct contribution becomes non-significant, while evaluation and recognition dominate. Training should consequently be combined with regular communication, participation mechanisms, visible HR leadership, and coherent recognition practices.

Scientifically, the results support a complementarity model rather than a single-lever explanation.

IV. Discussion of the Results

H1: Training and Understanding of the Vision

The findings confirm the theoretical proposition that training plays a critical role in understanding change and helps employees grasp top management's vision and strategic objectives. These results are consistent with Chalal's (2017) findings at CEVITAL, that showed that training aligned with corporate strategy enhances employees' understanding and appropriation of strategic orientations. At SONATRACH context, a one-unit increase in training is associated with a 0.611-point improvement in the perceived clarity of strategic objectives highlighting the contribution of training to sensemaking during transformation processes.

H2: Training, Acceptance, and Involvement

The evidence indicates that investment in training translates into measurable employee involvement. This supports the view of Raeder and Bokova (2019) who argue that training transforms a top-down prescription into accepted appropriation by strengthening employee participation and both affective and normative commitment, as advanced by.

H3: Mediation and Resistance Reduction

The results also converge with Errida and Lotfi's argument that training reduces uncertainty and resistance and also with Cuvelier and Caroly's observation that training fails when procedures are presented without explaining their meaning. At SONATRACH, training reduces resistance largely because it supports communication, contextualization, and sensemaking; 58.6% of the estimated effect is statistically mediated by communication.

Contextual Effect of Change Intensity

The R analyses suggest that the more the environment is perceived as volatile or the transformation as intense, the more training may become important. This pattern is consistent with the permanent need for adaptation emphasized by Nirmala and Ananth (2018) and Sivaraman et al. (2019). Nevertheless, since the interaction p-value is .065, the contextual effect remains exploratory rather than confirmed at the 5% level.

Decisions on the Hypotheses

H1: Training and understanding/communication: supported.

H2: Training and acceptance-involvement: supported, subject to diagnostic qualifications.

H3: Training and resistance reduction: supported.

Remark

Moderation by change intensity: not confirmed at the 5% level; exploratory tendency only.

Training's global direct effect: non-significant after controlling for the other HR practices.

V. General Discussion

The study highlights the important role of training in supporting organizational change. Training improves understanding of objectives, promotes employee acceptance and involvement, and helps reduce resistance. By developing knowledge and clarifying expectations, it contributes to the cognitive readiness that Armenakis and Harris (2002) identify as essential to successful transformation.

Training also strengthens employees' self-efficacy and confidence when facing new organizational requirements, which is consistent with Kotter (1995) and Hiatt (2006). By providing employees with the needed resources for change, it supports engagement and limits withdrawal or opposition. In Lewin's (1951) model, training also contributes to "unfreezing" existing behaviors by reducing apprehension and uncertainty.

Contrary to the initial theoretical expectation, training is not a significant direct determinant of overall change success when analyzed jointly with other HR practices. Its effect appears to operate mainly through internal communication, employee involvement, and strategic HR leadership. This finding reflects the complex and multidimensional nature of change: while training prepares employees, but recognition, managerial support, and participation in decisions may more directly determine whether transformation succeeds.

The moderation pattern further suggests that training may become more important during major changes involving substantial modifications to work practices, although this result remains statistically exploratory. From a managerial perspective, organizations should not treat training as an isolated action. It should be integrated into a broader change-support strategy combining communication, participation, leadership, and recognition.

Conclusion and Research Perspectives

Overall, the findings confirm that HRM practices play an essential role in organizational change, but their influence is neither homogenous nor exclusively direct. Evaluation and recognition are the strongest direct determinants, while training mainly reinforces understanding, acceptance, involvement, and resistance reduction through indirect pathways. Strategic HR leadership and employee participation also support transformation. Therefore, an integrated HRM configuration combining recognition practices, leadership support, communication, participation, and competency development appears to provide the most favorable conditions for sustainable change.

Several limitations qualify these conclusions. The sample is relatively small ($n = 72$), despite a strong response rate of 70%, and the number of parameters in regression and interaction models may reduce power, particularly for marginal effects involving HR leadership and participation. Access constraints and confidentiality also limited dissemination of the questionnaire.

The purposive sample was drawn from a single organization. Although this ensured respondents' direct experience of change, it restricts generalization to other sectors, especially outside Algeria's hydrocarbon industry and public economic sector. The cross-sectional design also prevents strict causal inference and cannot capture how perceptions evolve before, during, and after implementation.

Future studies should extend this work using larger, multi-organizational samples and longitudinal designs. Particular attention should be given to the mediating roles of communication, engagement, and readiness for change, as well as to moderators such as organizational culture, change type, leadership style, and sector. Comparative research would further clarify the contextual conditions under which training produces its strongest contribution to successful organizational change.

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