



A REVIEW OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODELS IN DYNAMIC BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

Businesses now work in more dynamic business contexts that are marked by globalization, market volatility, stakeholder expectations that are always changing, and fast technology progress. Effective change management is now more important than ever to maintain organizational adaptation, resilience, and long-term competitiveness. Lewin's Three-Stage Model, Kotter's Eight-Step Model, the ADKAR Model, and the McKinsey 7-S Framework are among the prominent change management models that are critically examined in this review study in order to assess their applicability and relevance in dynamic organizational environments. The research analyzes these models in terms of their conceptual underpinnings, advantages, disadvantages, and aptitude for handling ongoing and complicated change via a methodical examination of the body of available literature.

According to the results, standard models provide useful structural advice, but in very chaotic conditions, their efficacy may be limited by their linear assumptions. On the other hand, by stressing organizational alignment, leadership participation, and employee engagement, people-centric and integrative models show more flexibility. The analysis indicates that firms functioning in dynamic contexts benefit from adopting adaptive and hybrid methods that combine components from several frameworks, since no single change management model is universally applicable. By providing a thorough synthesis of change management theories and emphasizing the significance of contextualized application in contemporary corporate contexts, this work advances both academic debate and managerial practice.

Keywords: - Lewin's model, Kotter's model, ADKAR, McKinsey 7-S.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations function in business contexts that are marked by globalization, competitive intensity, fast technical innovation, regulatory changes, and changing consumer expectations in the modern global economy. Because of these circumstances, organizational stability has become more precarious, and change has been raised from a strategic goal to a constant organizational need.



Effective change management has thus emerged as a crucial factor in determining an organization's competitive advantage, sustainability, and survival (Burnes, 2020). Because it offers systematic methods for managing changes while reducing resistance and optimizing performance results, change management has therefore become a key field within management and organizational studies.

The VUCA framework volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity is often used to characterize dynamic business settings because it encapsulates the unpredictability and interconnectedness of contemporary markets (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). Organizations in these situations must react quickly to external disturbances such labor diversity, economic crises, digital transformation, and changing social expectations. These forces force firms to undergo structural, behavioral, and cultural changes in addition to strategic ones. But according to actual data, a significant percentage of change projects fall short of their goals, usually as a result of weak leadership, poor planning, a lack of communication, and employee resistance (Kotter, 1996; Hughes, 2018). Scholarly and practical interest in change management models as instruments for directing organizational transformation has increased as a result of this ongoing difficulty.

Conceptual frameworks that describe the steps, procedures, and human elements involved in implementing change are offered by change management models. By providing organized direction on how people and organizations move from present states to desired future states, these models seek to assist managers and leaders in organizing, carrying out, and maintaining change projects (Cameron & Green, 2020). Many models have been created throughout time, each with unique theoretical underpinnings, presumptions on human behavior, and contextual uses. Lewin's Three-Stage Model, Kotter's Eight-Step Model, the ADKAR Model, McKinsey's 7-S Framework, and Bridges' Transition Model are notable examples of these. Even though these frameworks have been used extensively, there is still discussion over their applicability and efficacy in very dynamic contexts.

One of the first and most important frameworks, Lewin's Three-Stage Model, views change as a linear process that involves unfreezing current behaviors, putting change into practice, and refreezing new habits (Lewin, 1951). Critics contend that this model's presumption of organizational stability is incompatible with the ongoing and dynamic change circumstances of today, despite the fact that it established the groundwork for later change theories (Burnes, 2020).

A more thorough, leadership-driven strategy is provided by Kotter's Eight-Step Model, which



places an emphasis on communication, urgency, vision, and culture embedding (Kotter, 1996). Although many people consider Kotter's model to be thorough and useful, it has drawn criticism for its top-down approach and disregard for each person's psychological preparedness for change.

People-centric models like the ADKAR framework have become more popular in response to these constraints. The five components of the ADKAR model—awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement—are used to concentrate on personal improvement (Hiatt, 2006). This approach closely reflects the reality of modern organizations, where learning, adaptation, and employee involvement are essential for maintaining change. A systems-based approach to organizational transformation is provided by comprehensive frameworks like the McKinsey 7-S Model, which stress internal alignment across strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, personnel, and style (Waterman, Peters, & Phillips, 1980). These several models highlight how complex change management is and how there isn't a single, all-encompassing answer.

There are still a number of holes in the vast amount of literature on change management. First, a large portion of the literature now in publication looks at change models separately, with little comparison of how well they work in dynamic business settings. Second, the speed and complexity of contemporary organizational change may not be well captured by classic models, which were primarily created in more stable industrial environments (Hughes, 2018). Third, practitioners often use models in a mechanical manner without modifying them to account for contextual factors like company culture, leadership capacity, and turbulent environments. These difficulties underline the need of a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation of change management models that considers their advantages, disadvantages, and applicability in changing environments.

This review paper's objective is to methodically investigate and contrast the main change management models in light of how well-suited they are for dynamic corporate situations. The study attempts to assess how various models handle important aspects of change, including as adaptation, employee engagement, leadership positions, and sustainability of results, by combining ideas from foundational theories and recent studies. This study takes a contextual approach rather than promoting a single "best" paradigm, acknowledging that successful change management sometimes calls for a hybrid or adaptable strategy catered to particular organizational and environmental circumstances.

This review is important for audiences in academia and in real life. By critically examining established and new models in light of environmental dynamism, it advances the theoretical



conversation for academics. It provides practitioners with evidence-based insights to help them make well-informed choices when choosing or combining different change management frameworks. In the end, firms looking to manage uncertainty, take advantage of opportunities, and succeed over the long haul in a business environment that is becoming more and more dynamic must comprehend the relative merits of various change management approaches.

II. ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON

1. Conceptual Differences

Various models highlight different facets of transformation; some concentrate on process structure (Kotter), some on people (ADKAR), and others on broad organizational alignment (McKinsey 7-S).

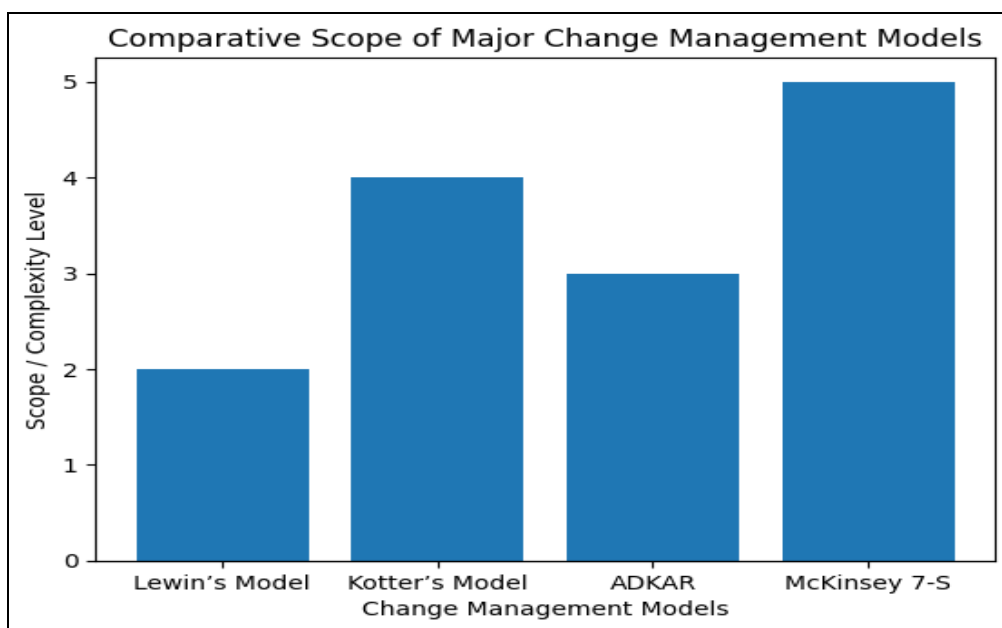
Table 1: Key Characteristics of Major Change Management Models

Model	Core Focus	Key Steps/Elements	Typical Use Case
Lewin's Model	Transition stages	Unfreeze → Change → Refreeze	Simple process transitions
Kotter's Model	Organizational transformation	8 sequential steps	Large, complex changes
ADKAR	Individual adoption	A-D-K-A-R	People-centric change
McKinsey 7-S	Organizational alignment	Strategy, Structure, Systems, ...	Strategic realignment

A number of essential traits that most change management models have in common help businesses plan, carry out, and maintain change especially in fast-paced commercial settings. One key feature is organized progression, which gives clarity and direction during uncertain times. This is because most models depict change as a series of phases or actions that take an organization from its current condition to a desired future state. The emphasis on leadership and vision, which highlights the importance of leaders in establishing urgency, outlining specific objectives, and inspiring staff to embrace change activities, is another crucial feature. A key component of all models is employee

participation and communication, which acknowledges that employee awareness, engagement, and acceptance are necessary for effective change and that open and ongoing communication may lessen resistance.

Furthermore, in order to attain sustainability, new behaviors must be ingrained in company culture, which is why many models emphasize the need of behavioral and cultural alignment. Adaptability is another essential quality, since modern change models increasingly recognize the necessity for flexibility to adjust to changing external circumstances rather than depending only on strict, linear procedures. Lastly, the majority of change management models emphasize the significance of assessment and reinforcement, concentrating on tracking development, rewarding desirable behaviors, and making necessary modifications to maintain long-term change results.



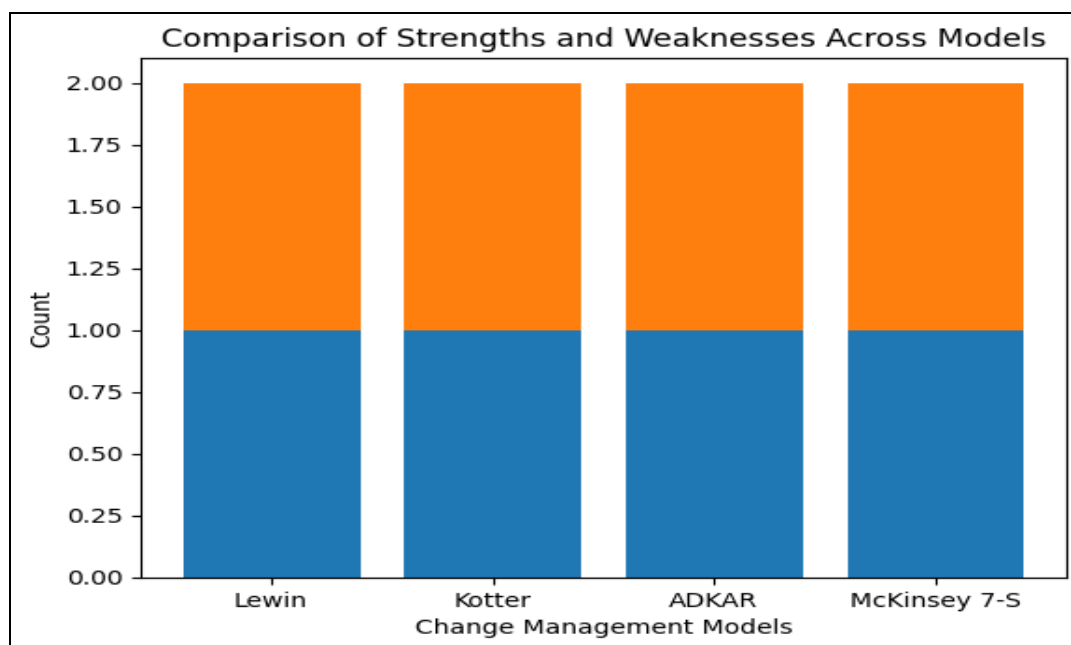
Graph 1: Comparative Scope of Major Change Management Models

Based on the breadth and application complexity of each major change management model, as determined by their usual use cases, the graph graphically compares them. Because Lewin's Model works well with straightforward process transitions, it represents reduced complexity. Since Kotter's Model deals with extensive organizational change, it exhibits more complexity. The ADKAR approach, which emphasizes individual adoption and people-centric transformation, holds a moderate attitude. The most complicated framework is the McKinsey 7-S Framework, which reflects its comprehensive and strategic approach to organizational reorganization.

Table 2: Strengths and Weaknesses

Model	Strengths	Weaknesses
Lewin	Simple, easy to understand	Too simple for continuous change
Kotter	Detailed and actionable	Top-down, may overlook individual needs
ADKAR	Individual-focused, reduces resistance	Linear, may neglect systemic context
McKinsey 7-S	Holistic organizational view	Complex to implement

Source: Comparative model review literature.



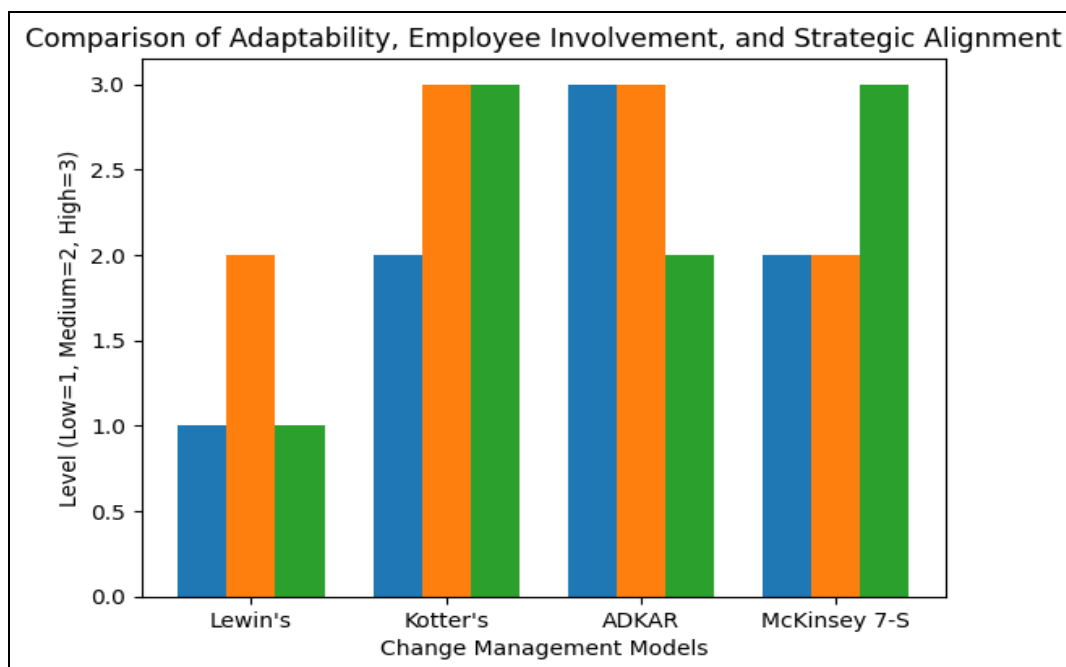
Graph 2: Comparison of Strengths and Weaknesses Across Models

The graph shows a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of the four popular change management models Lewin, Kotter, ADKAR, and McKinsey 7-S. Every model exhibits a balanced portrayal, emphasizing both a significant strength and a noteworthy flaw equally. This graphic comparison shows that each model has limits even if they all provide useful frameworks for handling organizational transformation. While more comprehensive models like McKinsey 7-S provide a holistic picture but are difficult to execute, simpler models like Lewin stress simplicity of

understanding but lack flexibility. In general, the graph highlights how important it is to choose models based on context.

Table 3: Dynamic Environment Suitability

Model	Adaptability	Employee Involvement	Strategic Alignment
Lewin's	Low	Medium	Low
Kotter's	Medium	High	High
ADKAR	High	High	Medium
McKinsey 7-S	Medium	Medium	High



Graph 3: Comparison of Adaptability, Employee Involvement, and Strategic Alignment

- The X-axis shows the four change management models.
- The Y-axis represents qualitative levels converted to numbers (Low = 1, Medium = 2, High = 3).



- Three bars per model compare Adaptability, Employee Involvement, and Strategic Alignment.

According to the graph, Kotter's model demonstrates great employee participation and strategic alignment, ADKAR stands out for high adaptability and employee involvement, and McKinsey 7-S stresses strategic alignment with moderate adaptability. Lewin's paradigm seems more straightforward, less flexible, and less strategically aligned.

III. DISCUSSION

Studies reveal that no one model is generally applicable to every situation. Because it emphasizes individual adoption, the ADKAR model often performs very well in people-centric change programs. Lewin's model provides a basis for comprehending fundamental change movement, whereas Kotter's model aids in organizing significant changes. Strategic analysis and alignment are supported by holistic frameworks such as McKinsey 7-S. Depending on the situation, practitioners often modify many models or hybrid techniques.

IV. CONCLUSION

Organizations that operate in dynamic and uncertain business settings nonetheless need to be able to handle change. Key change management models, such as Lewin's Three-Stage Model, Kotter's Eight-Step Model, the ADKAR Model, and the McKinsey 7-S Framework, have been reviewed in this study with an emphasis on their theoretical underpinnings, real-world applications, and applicability in modern organizational settings. The research shows that whereas early models like Lewin's provide a fundamental knowledge of change as a planned and sequential process, they often fall short in addressing the ongoing and non-linear character of change that contemporary companies must deal with. More extensive frameworks, like Kotter's model, are appropriate for complicated organizational change projects because they provide organized advice for large-scale changes by stressing leadership, communication, and cultural integration. In the meanwhile, employee involvement and behavioral adoption are crucial for lowering resistance and guaranteeing the durability of change, as shown by the ADKAR model's emphasis on individual awareness, competence, and reinforcement.

These models are further enhanced by the McKinsey 7-S framework, which offers a comprehensive viewpoint that harmonizes strategy, structure, and people components. However, their intricacy may make implementation difficult in hectic settings. All things considered, the analysis shows that no one change management model can adequately handle every aspect of change in changing



corporate environments. Adopting adaptable, hybrid strategies that use components from many models to meet particular organizational requirements and environmental circumstances instead yields the most benefits for firms. The capacity to modify change management procedures appropriately will continue to be crucial for attaining long-term organizational resilience and competitive advantage as corporate environments continue to change quickly as a result of technology innovation, globalization, and market instability.

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