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Transformational and Transactional Leaders and Their Role in Implementing the Kotter Change Management Model Ensuring Sustainable Change: An Empirical Study

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Abstract: A rapid pace of change presents an unforeseen and perpetual competitive challenge for organizations. Despite the existence of numerous change management models, organizational change leaders often encounter obstacles during the implementation phase that limit change effectiveness. This paper seeks to make a difference in managerial actions, specifically when implementing planned change, by directing them to use specific leadership actions during the change stage. While previous research has acknowledged the potential linkage between leadership and change effectiveness, a comprehensive exploration of this relationship within the realm of strategic change management remains lacking. This study aims to address this gap by comparing transactional and transformational leadership styles through the lens of the leadership-as-practice perspective. Specifically, this paper analyzes the alignment of these leadership styles with the Kotter model for implementing organizational change and investigates which leadership components or behaviors positively impact predetermined stages of change. Using the MLQ and a developed Kotter questionnaire, data was collected from 385 Lebanese employees working in SMEs experiencing change across the five provinces of Lebanon. PLS structural equation modeling was utilized to analyze the results, and the GoF value indicated that the study model is valid to be considered as a PLS global model. Our findings shed light on the dynamic interplay between leadership efficacy and distinct change stages. Rooted in the leadership-as-practice perspective, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of effective leadership's crucial role in navigating the multifaceted challenges of organizational change, offering insights for practitioners and scholars alike.

Keywords: planned change management; leadership as practice; sustainable change

Citation: Mouazen, A.M.; Hernández-Lara, A.B.; Abdallah, F.; Ramadan, M.; Chahine, J.; Baydoun, H.; Bou Zakhem, N. Transformational and Transactional Leaders and Their Role in Implementing the Kotter Change Management Model Ensuring Sustainable Change: An Empirical Study. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 16. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16010016

Academic Editor: Virginia Bodolica

Received: 29 October 2023
Revised: 1 December 2023
Accepted: 13 December 2023
Published: 19 December 2023

1. Introduction

For decades, academics have been interested in how organizations change. Within this realm, Kotter [1] envisioned change as a potent catalyst for orchestrating the metamorphosis of individuals, groups, and organizations towards a more promising and desirable future. Over time, myriad planned and unplanned change management models have emerged, offering guidance to managers navigating the multifaceted process of change implementation. Scholarly works in the field of organization development and change literature have been examined, highlighting their crucial contributions to the process of change [2–8]. Moreover, the significance of the Kotter change model has been demonstrated in several industries and activities, including the education sector [9,10], organizational learning [11], quality

management [12], and the healthcare industry [13,14]. Yet, an enigmatic gap persists—one that bridges the chasm between leadership styles and Kotter's seminal eight-stage change management model, a gap that is now particularly apt to be explored through the lens of leadership-as-practice (LAP) to ensure an organizations sustainability.

Despite the fact that Kotter and Cohen [15] confirm that effective implementation of the model is primarily dependent on leadership style and that a transformational leadership style is essential for sustainable performance [16], recent research has not investigated the link between leadership styles and Kotter's eight-stage change management model from a leadership-as-practice perspective. Previous research has addressed transformational leadership style and staff commitment to change as topics [17–20], as well as the type of change [21], transformational successful change implementation with respect to leadership and leadership skills [22], and leadership dimensions and the Kotter change model [23]. As a consequence, although earlier research has shown a substantial correlation between the competencies, abilities, talents, and behaviors of change agent leaders and the accomplishment or underachievement of organizational objectives and change [24,25], significant gaps remain. The majority of leadership studies that examined the link between organizational change and leadership, according to Yukl [26], failed to adequately illustrate the connection between leadership styles and change management models by failing to account for the complexity of internal processes, such as planned change efforts and execution. Likewise, no previous research has looked at the link between leadership styles, as proposed by Bass and Avolio [27], and the Kotter change management model [28]. To bridge this gap, this study endeavors to establish a link between these gaps by suggesting that, from a practical perspective, leaders adept in both transactional and transformational leadership styles are primed to proficiently facilitate the implementation of the Kotter change management model. This study contributes in two ways: practical and theoretical. In practical terms, it equips organizational leaders with useful strategies, methods, and leadership styles to make the Kotter change model effective within their specific organizational context and ensure sustainable change. Theoretically, it advances scholarly research by adding to our understanding of how leadership styles and the use of change models interact—an area that has not been explored much within the realm of leadership-as-practice (LAP). This study also invites further scholarly investigation and thought, particularly in various countries like the MENA region, where economic challenges or new development approaches can trigger significant organizational changes.

2. Literature Review

Kotter [28] introduced the 8-step Kotter change model (KCM) to help managers deal with change. People will not embrace change until they sense a need for it, according to Kotter and Cohen [15], who noted at the first phase, **"Creating a Sense of Urgency (SU)",** that examining market and environmental competition dynamics for available opportunities and potential threats might help identify this requirement. The second phase, **"Form a Powerful Coalition (PC)",** involves finding employees who can initiate change, convey objectives, establish teams, and convince coworkers to accept change. These employees should be forceful, knowledgeable, credible, and leadership oriented. In the third phase, **"Create a Vision and Strategy (VC)",** stakeholders in general are interested in the future; therefore, leaders must provide workers with direction, inspire them, and coordinate their efforts by articulating a practical, adaptable, desired, and communicative vision. The fourth phase, **"Communicate the Vision (CV)",** emphasizes the need to present and communicate the well-defined organizational vision in order to maintain the momentum of the transition process. To ensure that employees are informed of the necessity of the change and how it will be implemented, leaders should make use of all available channels of communication [4]. With regard to the fifth phase, **"Remove Obstacles (RO)",** Kotter suggested removing roadblocks, identifying those opposed to change, changing organizational policies, procedures, and structure, encouraging taking risks and innovative practices, and equipping staff with the necessary information, abilities, and tools to carry out

tasks in new ways. The sixth stage, **"Create Short-Term Wins (CSTW)",** aims to encourage staff by offering complimentary comments on their achievements throughout the early stages of change, as well as recognizing and rewarding them for their efforts. The seventh, **"Build on Change (BC)",** emphasizes the need for leaders to report on accomplishments and direct staff toward future improvements. By nurturing and persevering in the continuous change process, leaders also urge more workers to participate in it [29]. The eighth step, dubbed **"Anchoring Approaches in Culture (AC)",** pertains to incorporating the attained changes and modifications into new standards and procedures. These actions will increase productivity while also ensuring that the new practices are ingrained in the culture so that both new and experienced employees can use them [4].

Kotter's change model, in general, provides a realistic method for managing change. The model has all of the necessary components to lay the groundwork for success. Maintaining an open line of communication throughout the change process motivates workers to implement change and deflects resistance to participating in the process at various stages, supporting the implementation of change as a regular practice. However, given the importance of trust in change [30], if trust between workers, leaders, and the steering coalition is low, the strategy may not work well, especially in centralized conventional hierarchical organizations that need continual feedback on execution and implementation.

Sustainability has acted as a driving force for organizations, and leaders, to change; successful change implementation is strongly reliant on leadership [31]. Leadership has typically been seen as the outcomes of leadership, person leadership, process leadership, and position leadership, according to Grint [32] and Wood [33]. On the other hand, other academics argue leadership is more than just a person or a role; it is about a degree of passion and determination that unifies people under a common vision and objectives [34]. Drath and Palus [35] anticipate that future leaders must have traits such as the ability to inspire and persuade followers, as well as interpersonal skills and structured connections. Thus, communication between leaders and followers initiates the foundation of leadership [36,37] in order to significantly impact organizational processes [38]. Moreover, leaders who promote an optimistic outlook and positive mindset [39], encourage and train employees to acknowledge and embrace change [40], and validate those expected results [41]. These qualities define transformational leadership [38].

Academics have defined leadership as the power to persuade people to accomplish organizational objectives [42]. They hold that a leader's personality, traits, skills, and actions make up their leadership style [43], despite the plethora of leadership paradigms and theories available [44]. Bass [45] presented transformational and transactional leadership styles, which remain the most popular approaches in the fields of management and social science [46]. Three dimensions form the TRLS (transactional leadership style). **Contingent reward (CR)** relates to a leader's actions in rewarding and praising subordinates for their outstanding work and achievement of predetermined objectives. Leaders in **Active Management by Exception (MBEA)** actively monitor performance. Thus, when performance deviates from the set of norms and standards, the leader takes immediate remedial action. However, in **Passive Management by Exceptions (MBEP)**, leaders observe deviations from standards and rules and only interfere if the requirements are not fulfilled. Bass [45] recommended that change agents remain proactive throughout the transformation process. Accordingly, only the MBEA and CR pillars of the TRLS will be examined in relation to the KCM in this study. In contrast, four pillars of the **transformational leadership style (TFLS)** were addressed. Idealized influence indicates that charismatic and visionary leaders are credible, honest, and trusted, capable of inspiring and influencing others—either **by behaviors (IIB) or attributes (IIA)**—to follow the leader willingly and support their goals rather than their own. However, when leaders establish, communicate, and execute inspiring goals, they are referred to as **Inspirational Motivation (IM).** Leaders have a high degree of ambition, passion, and optimism, which has an impact on team spirit. Leaders assist followers to experience the importance of their work through communication. In order to harness their problem-solving and decision-making talents, **intellectual stimulation**

(IS) includes fostering and developing followers' creativity, inventiveness, and reasonable thinking. Through **individual consideration (IC),** the leader pays attention to advising, coaching, and nurturing followers, as well as developing their talents and competences, all while considering his or her own personal and professional requirements [47]. Providing a comprehensive review of leadership styles and change literature is beyond the purview of this work, but it has been established that more empirical evidence is needed on the role of a leader's actions and style in procedures for managing change [25], as well as attracting followers to participate in change [48]. Employee commitment, according to Kotter and Cohen [15], is critical during a transition. In this context, Herold et al. [19] conducted research on firms experiencing change in Western nations to examine the association between several leadership change techniques, approaches, behaviors, and practices, and employee commitment to the change process. Their findings revealed that transformational leadership has an advantage over change-specific leadership techniques in terms of employee commitment. Weiherl and Masal [20] confirmed this relationship in several business industries in their investigation. Additionally, Gelaidan and Ahmad [49] confirmed that the employee change commitment in public organizations in the Arabian region is likewise favorably correlated with transformational leadership. Additionally, they found that idealized influence and individual considerations strongly impact all aspects of employee commitment.

From a broad viewpoint, in a variety of fields, leadership concepts and organizational transformation have been well studied. For example, Lirong and Minxin [50] revealed that organizational change processes are positively impacted by transactional and transformational leadership styles, and der Voet, Kuipers, and Groeneveld [22] found that transformational leadership positively affects organizational change. What is more, Alqatawenh [17] exposed that empowerment, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation foster transformation processes. Der Voet [51] showed that transformational leadership enhances planned change approaches, particularly in emerging changes, in the same way as the Kotter model does. Extensive research has been conducted by Kakucha [52] on the relationship between Kurt Lewin's three-stage transformation model and the charismatic leadership style; however, this work lacked empirical investigation. Meanwhile, Bakari, Hunjra, and Niazi [53] applied SEM to investigate the link between Lewin's model and authentic leadership. However, Seijts and Gandz [23] went a step further by outlining a leader's traits, such as temperance, drive, humility, bravery, cooperation, integrity, humanism, transcendence, justice, judgment, and accountability. Afterwards, Seijts and Gandz [23] linked these dimensions to the Kotter change management model. In their research, they found that humility, integrity, justice, judgment, transcendence, humanity, temperance, and collaboration are essential to forming a powerful leading coalition. In the last step of Kotter's planned change model, the leader should demonstrate all the listed traits. According to Seijts and Gandz [23], their hypothesis was based on real-life occurrences involving senior executives from major corporations, rather than a quantitative investigation.

In this sense, leadership-as-practice (LAP) has emerged as a prominent framework that redefines leadership by shifting the focus from an individualistic approach to a collective and context-dependent perspective [54], especially indicating that leaders play a vital role in positioning their organizations to be more adaptable to new practices [55].

LAP emphasizes leadership as an enacted process embedded within day-to-day interactions and activities, challenging traditional notions of leadership as a set of fixed traits [56]. Effective organizational leaders play a crucial role in developing sustainable growth; they possess the ability to inspire and motivate their employees, encouraging them to embrace innovation and adapt to new challenges [57]. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and learning, leaders can ensure that their organization remains competitive and resilient in an ever-evolving business environment. Furthermore, leaders who prioritize change, sustainability, and organizational development understand the importance of balancing economic, environmental, and social factors that are nowadays considered to be the main business practices. Ultimately, their commitment to sustainable

organizational development sets an example for others to follow and contributes to a more sustainable future. By adopting sustainable change practices, leaders not only reduce their organization's negative impact on the environment but also attract socially conscious customers and investors who align with their values [58].

In the context of implementing change, on the one hand, leadership behaviors play an important role in the readiness for change, as outlined by Alolabi, Ayupp, and Dwaikat [59]. On the other hand, LAP holds particular relevance when linked to Kotter's change management model. Kotter's model, with its eight-stage framework, focuses on guiding organizations through successful change [28]. The alignment between LAP and Kotter's model is evident in their shared emphasis on leadership as a dynamic practice rather than a static concept. The synergy between LAP and Kotter's model becomes evident when exploring the implementation of change initiatives. LAP views leadership as an ongoing, collaborative process that involves multiple actors and practices [60]. This aligns with Kotter's emphasis on fostering a coalition of change agents and empowering employees to drive change [28]. Furthermore, LAP highlights the importance of the relational aspects of leadership, which echoes Kotter's call for creating a sense of urgency and building a guiding coalition to facilitate change [4]. Both approaches acknowledge the role of relationships and social dynamics in successful change implementation.

However, while LAP enriches our understanding of leadership practices, its connection to Kotter's model in ensuring organizational change sustainability has yet to be extensively explored. Research that bridges the two concepts can offer valuable insights into the practical application of LAP within change management initiatives. By integrating LAP principles with Kotter's model, organizations can create a more comprehensive and adaptable approach to changing leadership.

According to the literature, the mainstream of the research has investigated the connection between leadership traits, behaviors, skills, or styles and organizational change from a broad and general viewpoint. Furthermore, none of the studies on change models were empirically conducted from a practical perspective, aligning the results with the concept of leadership-as-practice (LAP). Accordingly, this study investigates the theoretical and empirical association between the Kotter eight-step change model, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership from a LAP perspective.

3. Hypotheses and Research Conceptual Model

3.1. Leadership Style at the First Change Stage

Transformational leaders see the future and set the vision by using their imagination [61]. Furthermore, transformational leaders have a good relationship with cognitive thinking and behavioral coping [62]. To encourage and persuade workers to understand the necessity of change, a sense of urgency is required [28].

By building trust and emotional attractiveness, role model leaders may inspire employees with a sense of purpose and convince them of a brighter future through IIA/IIB. The IS pillar in this case generates consciousness, thinking, and imagination, particularly in terms of conceiving, comprehending, and visualizing issues and their solutions; however, we found no relationship between the IM and IC pillars at this stage of change implementation. Based on this assumption, we hypothesize:

H1. *A transformational leadership style contributes positively to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this stage:

H1A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the sense of urgency stage of the KCM.*

H1B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

H1C. *Individual consideration does not contribute to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

H1D. *Inspirational motivation does not contribute to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

H1E. *Intellectual stimulation contributes positively to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

In terms of the transactional leadership style, Nass [43] stated that CR, like goal-path theory, may lay the groundwork for initiating structure. Antonakis and House [63] suggested that instrumental leader variables have an impact on more than just contingent reward. We argue that CR is favorably connected to SU. Based on this investigation, we hypothesize:

H2. *The transactional leadership style contributes positively to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this step:

H2A. *Contingent reward contributes positively to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

H2B. *Management by expectations does not contribute to the sense of urgency step of the KCM.*

3.2. Leadership Style at the Second Change Stage

Establishing responsibilities for tasks that are personally meaningful in a dynamic environment demands that leaders who manage the communication process ask the appropriate questions and involve the right individuals [64]. According to Kotter [1], the powerful coalition group that drives the transformation should possess the knowledge, abilities, expertise, and skills to keep the momentum and urgency going. Flawed members of the group are identified and are usually provided with early support to help them narrow or bridge the gap. Thus, IIA/IIB influence can provide pride in being a member of a change group with a common shared goal and vision. In order to attain the group's goal, IM practices generate excitement and foster team spirit. IS emphasizes finding solutions to difficulties relating to the group's common tasks and responsibilities, whereas IC includes assisting and training team members. Based on this assumption, we hypothesize:

H3. *The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the creating a powerful coalition step in the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this step:

H3A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

H3B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

H3C. *Individual considerations contribute positively to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

H3D. *Inspirational motivation contributes positively to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

H3E. *Intellectual stimulation does not contribute to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

According to Kotter [1], change leaders must constantly monitor and correct deviations in order to execute change; this might be aided by MBEA, particularly on a group level. Despite this, based on our view, there is no evidence of a connection between CR and the formation of a PC in the literature. Accordingly, we develop the following hypothesis:

H4. *The transactional leadership style contributes positively to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this step:

H4A. *Active management by expectations positively contributes to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

H4B. *Contingent rewards do not contribute to the creating a powerful coalition step of the KCM.*

3.3. Leadership Style at the Third Change Stage

To be endorsed, the future vision should be practical, clear, motivating, and include stakeholders' objectives. It should facilitate transformation and decision-making [1]. Through IIA/B and IM, the organization may gain collective strength and pride in addition to working toward interesting objectives. When it comes to vision, IC is critical for detecting coalition group concerns and problems, ambitions, and requirements, whereas IS encourages inventive thinking when it comes to creating new visions and objectives. Thus, we predict that:

H5. *The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the developing vision step in the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this step:

H5A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the creating vision step of the KCM.*

H5B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the creating vision step of the KCM.*

H5C. *Individual considerations contribute positively to the creating vision step of the KCM.*

H5D. *Inspirational motivation contributes positively to the creating vision step of the KCM.*

H5E. *Intellectual stimulation contributes positively to the creating vision step of the KCM.*

Indeed, when it comes to transactional leadership style pillars, MBEA and CR are unlikely to play a crucial role at this step, as they are mostly based on creative endeavor. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

H6. *The transactional leadership style does not contribute to the developing vision step of the KCM.*

Additionally, we developed the following sub-hypotheses:

H6A. *Active management by expectations does not contribute to the creating vision step of the KCM.*

H6B. *Contingent rewards do not contribute to the creating vision step of the KCM.*

3.4. Leadership Style at the Fourth Change Stage

Some employees still have issues that need to be addressed at this step. The role of the coalition leader is to effectively execute and convey the new vision so that it is understood and accepted; such activities seek to increase staff commitment to attaining it [15,29]. Employees will mimic the activities of powerful coalited leaders since they are viewed as role models who have gained the confidence and trust of their followers through IIA and IIB. Through IC, leaders should discuss their employees' concerns and fears honestly and openly. While reliant on IM and IS, leaders may exemplify confidence and boost inventiveness to go beyond and above expectations, in order to accomplish their ambitious communicated targets. With respect to this discussion, we drew the following hypothesis:

H7. *The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the communicating vision step in the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this step:

H7A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

H7B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

H7C. *Individual considerations contribute positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

H7D. *Inspirational motivation contributes positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

H7E. *Intellectual stimulation contributes positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

Employees that do well in meeting the communicated criteria can be offered a CR in exchange. Using MBEA, the leader may always keep an eye on any deviations at this step and take the necessary action. Accordingly, we predict the following:

H8. *The transactional leadership style contributes positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

Additionally, we developed the following sub-hypotheses:

H8A. *Active management by expectations contributes positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

H8B. *Contingent rewards contribute positively to the communicating vision step of the KCM.*

3.5. Leadership Style at the Fifth Change Stage

To ensure successful change implementation at this step, coalition leaders should address and remove obstacles to change such as job descriptions, organizational structure, hierarchy and reporting systems, employees' knowledge, abilities, and skills to carry out the tasks, and troublesome supervisors who continue to be resistant to change due to misconceptions about it, a lack of tolerance, and the belief that it will have little impact on the organization [65].

Transformational leadership fosters innovation [66]. Through IIA/B, leaders may inspire more confidence and enthusiasm among all staff members to encourage them to embrace the change; they may use IS to promote creativity in order to overcome structural and reporting obstacles; leaders can also rely on IM to bolster their self-assurance and

sense of direction; and they may use IC to address specific concerns, fears, and problems connected to work activities. With respect to this review, we hypothesize the following:

H9. *The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the removing obstacles step in the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this step:

H9A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

H9B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

H9C. *Individual considerations contribute positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

H9D. *Inspirational motivation contributes positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

H9E. *Intellectual stimulation contributes positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

As for the TRLS pillars, leaders may also rely on MBEA to address job-related activities and provide support when needed. Kotter [15] further noted that compensation and incentive programs may also be a change barrier; thus, providing CR can overcome this change barrier. Relating to this preview, we provide the following hypothesis:

H10. *The transactional leadership style contributes positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

Additionally, we developed the following sub-hypotheses:

H10A. *Active management by expectations contributes positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

H10B. *Contingent rewards contribute positively to the removing obstacles step of the KCM.*

3.6. Leadership Style at the Sixth Change Stage

Short-term achievements demonstrate a well-considered goal, appropriate judgments, and organizational improvements. They will also instill hope, inspire followers, and maintain a sense of urgency. From a different vantage point, they could also turn skeptics into active participants [29]. Due to the satisfaction of reaching objectives, attributed and behaviorally idealized influence would bolster the leader, and the guiding coalition would obtain greater authority, trust, and credibility. Inspirational motivation would be triggered to support the ongoing change. Moreover, the leaders should also utilize individual considerations and intellectual stimulation to keep track of new change-makers. Accordingly, we develop the following hypothesis:

H11. *The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step in the KCM.*

Additionally, we also developed the following sub-hypotheses with respect to this step:

H11A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

H11B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

H11C. *Intellectual stimulation contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

H11D. *Inspirational motivation contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

H11E. *Individual considerations contribute positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

At this step, positive feedback and prizes are given to acknowledge and inspire change agents [15], which may be accomplished through CR. Based on this, we hypothesize the following:

H12. *The transactional leadership style contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

Additionally, we developed the following sub-hypotheses:

H12A. *Active management by expectations contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

H12B. *Contingent rewards contribute positively to the creating short-term wins step of the KCM.*

3.7. Leadership Style at the Seventh Change Stage

Leaders sustain momentum and generate new objectives with emerging change contributors by reviewing processes that worked well and those that require refinement after each change step [15]. Based on what change leaders have accomplished in terms of followers' optimism, trust, and commitment to achieve objectives, we assume that they should employ both TFLS and TRLS to solidify and bolster success, establish new goals, and garnering wider support from change actors to achieve the comprehensive new vision. Thus, with respect to transformational leadership style, we develop the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses:

H13. *The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the building on change step in the KCM, whereas:*

H13A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the building on change step of the KCM.*

H13B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the building on change step of the KCM.*

H13C. *Individual considerations contribute positively to the building on change step of the KCM.*

H13D. *Inspirational motivation contributes positively to the building on change step of the KCM.*

H13E. *Intellectual stimulation contributes positively to the building on change step of the KCM.*

In terms of the transactional leadership style, the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses were developed:

H14. *The transactional leadership style contributes positively to the building on change step of the KCM, whereas:*

H14A. *Active management by expectations contributes positively to the building on change step of the KCM.*

H14B. *Contingent rewards contribute positively to the building on change step of the KCM.*

3.8. Leadership Style at the Last Change Stage

Studies by Springer and Tipu, Ryan, and Fantazy [67,68] found that a transformational style of leadership is successful in altering organizational culture. Change will not be sustainable until new behaviors and practices become ingrained in the organization's culture [69]. In this case, the activities of leaders should be focused on sharing new principles and tales of successful change, as well as strengthening team spirit and honoring change coalition leaders; TFLS may be used to implement such practices [15]. Based on this assumption, we developed the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses:

H15. *The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step in the KCM, whereas:*

H15A. *Attributed idealized influence contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM.*

H15B. *Behavioral idealized influence contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM.*

H15C. *Individual considerations contribute positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM.*

H15D. *Inspirational motivation contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM.*

H15E. *Intellectual stimulation contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM.*

In order to ingrain and sustain change, Kotter [4] advised that it be reinforced via rewards and recognitions and that leaders and steering coalitions continuously evaluate workers' attitudes and practices, which is considered a characteristic of transactional leadership style. Thus, we hypothesize:

H16. *The transactional leadership style contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM, whereas:*

H16A. *MBEA contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM.*

H16B. *CR contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step of the KCM.*

The following research model, which incorporates the discussed leadership styles and the Kotter eight-step change model, was developed to study the main two hypotheses listed below, based on the premise of the research gap in light of the theoretical analyses presented and the suggested hypotheses. This model is shown in Figure 1.

H_{TFLS}: *A positive correlation exists between the transformational leadership style and the Kotter model of organizational change management.*

H_{TRLS}: *A positive correlation exists between the transactional leadership style and the Kotter model of organizational change management.*

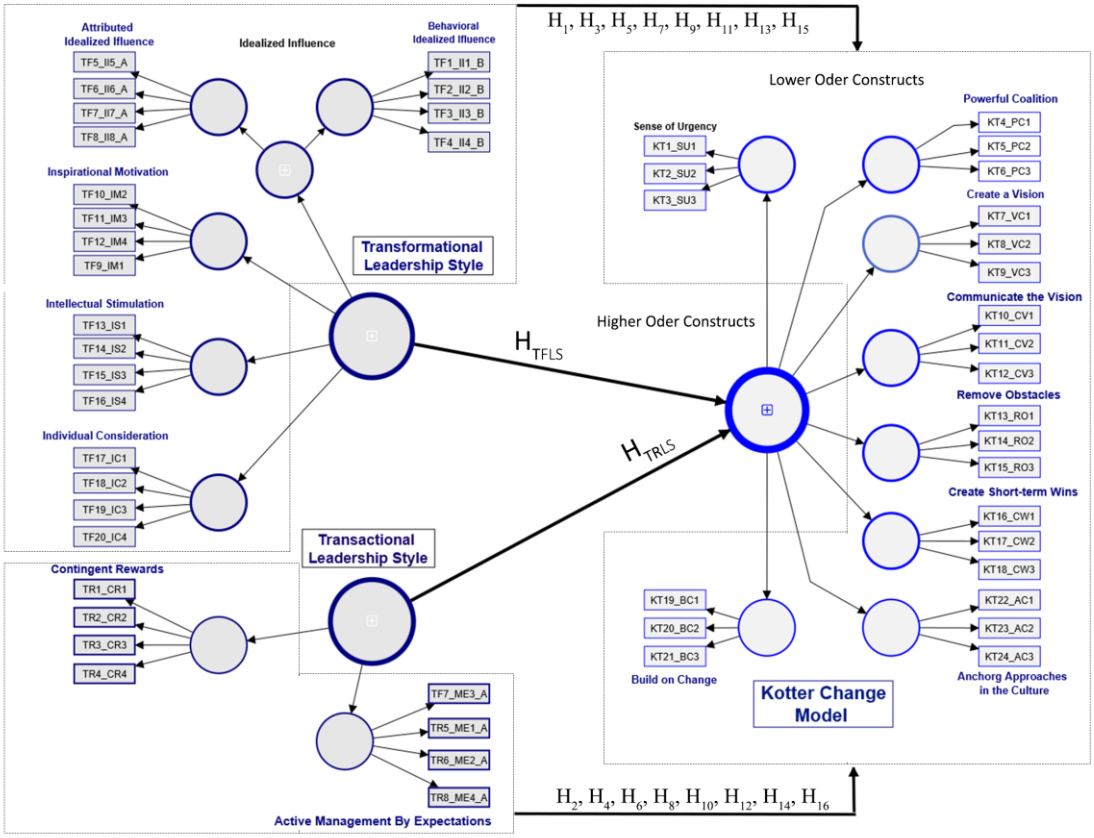

Figure 1. Conceptualized model.

4. Methodology

The study was conducted in Lebanon, an emerging nation that fulfills the criteria examined in this study. Lebanon is seen as an emerging economy that experiences a substantial outflow of highly skilled individuals and hosts over a million Syrian refugees [70]. The current situation in Lebanon is reminiscent of the events that occurred in 1990 due to the civil war, but with more severe and deteriorating aspects. Alongside the repercussions of the epidemic, the economic turmoil in Lebanon that commenced in October 2019 has necessitated that local organizations implement labor downsizing, salary reductions, and decreased working hours. Due to the significant devaluation of the Lebanese pound, this has exceeded 98%. For this reason, the government of Lebanon has discontinued subsidies for a significant portion of goods and services on the market. These conditions have had an adverse effect on the Lebanese market and community well-being. While some investors perceived these environmental conditions as a peril and have chosen to permanently depart the country and cease operations, others have responded in a contrasting manner. They viewed the adverse economic circumstances as a chance to alter their organization's strategies by several means, such as restructuring, product line changes, becoming entrepreneurs, and engaging in international business activities, taking into consideration the ecosystem that fosters the alternation of their strategy [71,72].

To guarantee the consistency of the sample, two steps of probabilistic cluster sampling were used. According to the sampling criteria established by [73], our sample size is 385 participants, as indicated in Table 1. Every province in Lebanon was considered to be a cluster, with sub-clusters exhibiting heterogeneity and cluster homogeneity throughout the

whole population. To reflect the sample size, random participants were chosen from SMEs experiencing change within sub-clusters.

Table 1. Sample Size Selection.

Province	Population	%	Sample Size
Mount Lebanon	1,508,720	38.08	147
North Lebanon	816,790.00	20.6	80
South Lebanon	724,646	18.29	70
Bekaa	533,201	13.45	50
Beirut	378,464	9.5	37
Total	3,961,821.00	100%	385

Confidence level 95%—margin of error 5%—0.05 significance level.

To substantiate the principles of the leadership-as-practice (LAP) theory, empirical data was meticulously gathered from leaders within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who exemplify practical leadership attributes and have traversed practical leadership stages firsthand.

Leadership was evaluated using the MLQ (5x) subordinate rating [74]. This tool provides 36 statements for TFLS and TRLS measurements. Several studies have evaluated the validity and reliability of this measurement tool, including those by Avolio, Bass and Jung and Rowold and Heinitz [75,76]. As for the Kotter change model, we used a total of 28 statements to evaluate each of the eight phases of change. Case studies, scholarly articles, and field notes published by Kotter and Rathgeber and Kotter and Cohen [15,29] served as the sources.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Four distinct statements were used to test each component of TFLS in part one. In addition, MBEA and CR of TRLS were measured using four distinct statements. Five anchor Likert scales were employed for these statements, ranging from "not at all", "once in a while", "sometimes", "fairly often", and "frequently" [74]. The Kotter change model was evaluated using 16 questions in the second section of the questionnaire, with three different statements being used to evaluate each step of the model. Respondents' opinions on the tactics their leaders employed throughout transformation were measured using a five-point Likert scale with five anchors ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Clusters were represented by the Lebanese provinces, while sub-clusters were represented by districts and cities within the provinces. To find SMEs, secondary sources such as Index Lebanon and the Yellow Pages were used. Face-to-face, email, or phone conversations were used to explain the objective of the study, confirm that they had experienced change, and obtain permission to interview their workers. To preserve privacy and avoid biases, a self-administered questionnaire approach was used. The pilot study conducted on 50 respondents yielded a way to fine-tune the questionnaire by having it translated into Arabic and rephrasing certain phrases, ensuring the clarity and validity of the questions. The data was then entered into Excel to be cleaned, followed by SmartPLS (V4) to run partial least square (PLS) analysis.

5. Results

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to evaluate reflective measurements without requiring the data distribution to be normal [77]. By using a two-step method, leadership styles and Kotter change model-reflecting indicators were developed as second-order constructs [78,79]. In order to test our assumptions and obtain an estimate for the model, we extracted the latent variables from the regression results of (first) lower-order constructs and imported them into a new dataset as indicators for (second) higher-order constructs.

In a reflective–reflective model, each of the indicator loadings, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and composite reliability are reported [80]. To enhance model validity and reliability, Hulland [81] recommends removing indicators with loadings below the 0.5 criterion. Yet, Wong [80] advised that if the indicator loading is less than 0.7, it should be removed, but if deletion does not increase construct validity and reliability, it should be avoided.

According to Chin, Marcolin, and Newsted [77], Gefen, Straub, and Boudreau [82], and Wong [80], internal consistency may be attained when the construct indicator loads and composite reliability meet a threshold value of 0.7. Further, average variance extracted (AVE) was utilized to verify convergent validity; an acceptable AVE threshold is greater than 0.5 [83].

Tables 2 and 3 depict indicator loads, composite reliability, Cronbach alpha, and AVE for the Kotter change model leadership styles and first- and second-order models, respectively. Loading values of model constructs varied from 0.7 to 0.9, with the lowest loading value found for inspirational motivation "TF10 IM2" at 0.6. In addition, significance at the 0.01 level in the *t*-test indicated that the measures accurately reflect the corresponding constructs [80]. Convergent validity and reliability evidence was found, with the AVE ranging from 0.6 to 0.70 [84]; furthermore, the value of Cronbach's alpha for each individual construct was more than 0.7, and the composite reliability for both the first- and second-order levels ranged from 0.8 to 0.9.

Testing the value correlation of possibly overlapping constructs is one way to determine the extent to which items discriminate across constructs or measure distinct concepts. Two methods can be followed to examine construct discriminant validity: The first is to compute the Sqrt. of construct AVE, whereas the AVE Sqrt. value of each construct load should be higher below and across other model constructs. The second is to compute the cross-loading, where the indicators that constitute a construct ought to load in their construct group higher than other construct indicator groups [77,83]. As depicted in Tables 4 and 5, indicator loads pertain to the first- and second-order constructs that meet the above criteria. Moreover, Table 6 proves that each construct has a Sqrt. of AVE that is higher than its correlation with other constructs, thus indicating a high level of discriminant validity.

Confidence intervals, t-values, R^2, F^2, standard β, and *p*-values were computed to test the hypotheses using the PLS bootstrapping method, applying the recommended 5000 bootstraps from Hair et al. [86] and Chin [87]. As shown in Figure 2.

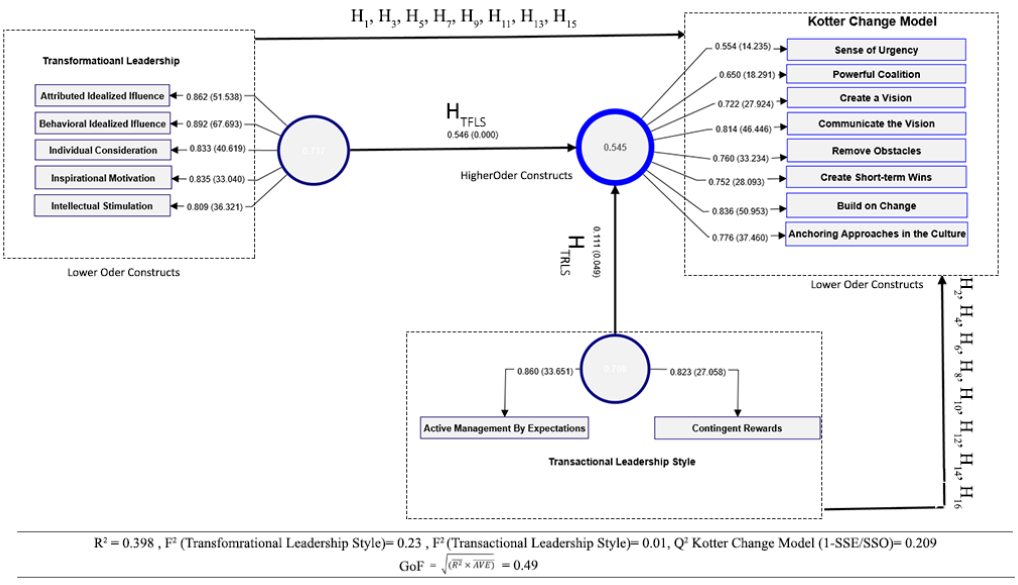

Figure 2. Research model results.

Table 2. Kotter model first- and second-order research model measurement.

Construct	Indicator		Loading [a]	T-Value	CA [b]	CR [c]	AVE [d]
Kotter Eight-Step Change Model	KT1_SU1	Stage 1	0.845	40.02 **	0.842	0.904	0.759
	KT2_SU2		0.894	80.31 **			
	KT3_SU3		0.874	74.67 **			
	KT4_PC1	Stage 2	0.828	37.04 **	0.772	0.868	0.687
	KT5_PC2		0.856	51.65 **			
	KT6_PC3		0.802	30.97 **			
	KT7_VC1	Stage 3	0.795	36.11 **	0.732	0.849	0.652
	KT8_VC2		0.828	49.16 **			
	KT9_VC3		0.798	35.48 **			
	KT10_CV1	Stage 4	0.793	37.83 **	0.704	0.836	0.631
	KT11_CV2		0.865	64.38 **			
	KT12_CV3		0.718	25.43 **			
	KT13_RO1	Stage 5	0.775	29.15 **	0.719	0.842	0.641
	KT14_RO2		0.795	34.33 **			
	KT15_RO3		0.83	39.98 **			
	KT16_CW1	Stage 6	0.864	55.67 **	0.767	0.866	0.683
	KT17_CW2		0.824	47.88 **			
	KT18_CW3		0.789	32.54 **			
	KT19_BC1	Stage 7	0.729	19.9 **	0.71	0.838	0.633
	KT20_BC2		0.83	43.16 **			
	KT21_BC3		0.824	50.34 **			
	KT22_AC1	Stage 8	0.842	52.43 **	0.82	0.893	0.735
	KT23_AC2		0.874	67.38 **			
	KT24_AC3		0.857	50.84 **			
	Second Order				**0.87**	**0.904**	**0.545**

[a] **Factor loading** > 0.5 indicates indicator reliability [81]. [b] **CA:** Cronbach's alpha > 0.7 indicates indicator reliability [77]. [c] **CR:** composite reliability > 0.7 [82]. [d] **AVE**: average variance extracted > 0.5 indicated convergent validity [80,83,85]. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3. Leadership styles first- and second-order research model measurement.

Construct	Indicator		Loading [a]	T-Value	CA [b]	CR [c]	AVE [d]
Transformational Leadership Style	TF1_II1_B	Idealized Influence Behavior	0.734	24.14 **	0.771	0.853	0.592
	TF2_II2_B		0.789	38.41 **			
	TF3_II3_B		0.791	34.43 **			
	TF4_II4_B		0.8	37.6 **			
	TF5_II5_A	Idealized Influence Attribute	0.842	56.16 **	0.784	0.861	0.607
	TF6_II6_A		0.77	28.74 **			
	TF7_II7_A		0.744	27.92 **			
	TF8_II8_A		0.716	17.00 **			
	TF9_IM1	Inspirational Motivation	0.801	35.74 **	0.737	0.835	0.561
	TF10_IM2		0.63	14.16 **			
	TF11_IM3		0.759	27.23 **			
	TF12_IM4		0.792	36.54 **			
	TF13_IS1	Intellectual Stimulation	0.737	22.79 **	0.723	0.828	0.547
	TF14_IS2		0.734	26.38 **			
	TF15_IS3		0.694	16.67 **			
	TF16_IS4		0.79	38.29 **			
	TF17_IC1	Individual Consideration	0.71	21.06 **	0.758	0.846	0.579
	TF18_IC2		0.737	22.09 **			
	TF19_IC3		0.792	35.16 **			
	TF20_IC4		0.8	41.16 **			
	Second order				**0.901**	**0.927**	**0.717**

Table 3. *Cont.*

Construct	Indicator		Loading [a]	T-Value	CA [b]	CR [c]	AVE [d]
Transactional Leadership Style	TR1_CR1	Contingent Reward	0.784	35.79 **	0.775	0.856	0.597
	TR2_CR2		0.755	21.87 **			
	TR3_CR3		0.784	23.29 **			
	TR4_CR4		0.767	21.08 **			
	TR5_ME1_A	Management By Expectation	0.783	35.29 **	0.711	0.822	0.536
	TR6_ME2_A		0.725	30.24 **			
	TR7_ME3_A		0.72	37.18 **			
	TR8_ME4_A		0.697	30.08 **			
	Second order				**0.79**	**0.82**	**0.708**

[a] **Factor loading** > 0.5 indicates indicator reliability [81]. [b] **CA:** Cronbach's alpha > 0.7 indicates indicator reliability [77]. [c] **CR:** composite reliability > 0.7 [82]. [d] **AVE**: average variance extracted > 0.5 indicated convergent validity [80,83,85]. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4. First-Order Indicator Cross-Loadings.

Indicator	Construct														
	IIB	**IIA**	**IM**	**IS**	**IC**	**CR**	**MBEA**	**SU**	**PC**	**VC**	**CV**	**RO**	**CW**	**BC**	**AC**
TF1_II1_B	**0.73**	0.47	0.63	0.47	0.47	0.37	0.44	0.25	0.21	0.27	0.29	0.33	0.28	0.36	0.33
TF2_II2_B	**0.79**	0.55	0.56	0.42	0.50	0.35	0.40	0.27	0.29	0.35	0.37	0.34	0.35	0.45	0.47
TF3_II3_B	**0.79**	0.59	0.57	0.44	0.49	0.37	0.32	0.26	0.36	0.37	0.35	0.33	0.31	0.42	0.35
TF4_II4_B	**0.80**	0.61	0.56	0.56	0.69	0.51	0.42	0.18	0.37	0.29	0.33	0.34	0.30	0.37	0.34
TF5_II5_A	0.68	**0.84**	0.57	0.59	0.58	0.46	0.42	0.19	0.40	0.35	0.34	0.37	0.32	0.49	0.41
TF6_II6_A	0.54	**0.77**	0.44	0.47	0.48	0.41	0.31	0.14	0.36	0.35	0.33	0.35	0.24	0.46	0.33
TF7_II7_A	0.55	**0.74**	0.71	0.48	0.48	0.35	0.36	0.21	0.24	0.21	0.23	0.25	0.24	0.33	0.27
TF8_II8_A	0.39	**0.72**	0.37	0.30	0.39	0.28	0.23	0.12	0.34	0.17	0.20	0.28	0.17	0.27	0.26
TF9_IM1	0.58	0.53	**0.80**	0.44	0.45	0.34	0.33	0.17	0.19	0.22	0.19	0.24	0.19	0.26	0.23
TF10_IM2	0.39	0.39	**0.65**	0.34	0.29	0.24	0.38	0.16	0.11	0.20	0.18	0.28	0.15	0.27	0.25

Table 4. *Cont.*

Indicator	Construct														
	IIB	**IIA**	**IM**	**IS**	**IC**	**CR**	**MBEA**	**SU**	**PC**	**VC**	**CV**	**RO**	**CW**	**BC**	**AC**
TF11_IM3	0.70	0.47	**0.76**	0.44	0.48	0.33	0.43	0.25	0.24	0.31	0.31	0.35	0.33	0.34	0.32
TF12_IM4	0.53	0.64	**0.79**	0.47	0.49	0.35	0.39	0.22	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.30	0.24	0.32	0.30
TF13_IS1	0.38	0.44	0.38	**0.74**	0.52	0.42	0.54	0.28	0.31	0.28	0.37	0.42	0.29	0.42	0.34
TF14_IS2	0.44	0.45	0.47	**0.73**	0.37	0.46	0.29	0.26	0.18	0.25	0.23	0.29	0.18	0.26	0.23
TF15_IS3	0.44	0.43	0.42	**0.69**	0.41	0.36	0.45	0.19	0.27	0.33	0.28	0.33	0.29	0.43	0.36
TF16_IS4	0.53	0.50	0.42	**0.79**	0.50	0.42	0.38	0.20	0.31	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.29	0.43	0.32
TF17_IC1	0.42	0.38	0.40	0.50	**0.71**	0.58	0.46	0.22	0.32	0.23	0.30	0.35	0.23	0.31	0.32
TF18_IC2	0.48	0.44	0.41	0.34	**0.74**	0.39	0.30	0.24	0.32	0.17	0.26	0.20	0.21	0.23	0.24
TF19_IC3	0.63	0.53	0.45	0.46	**0.79**	0.52	0.37	0.24	0.37	0.30	0.33	0.32	0.27	0.32	0.30
TF20_IC4	0.57	0.56	0.49	0.54	**0.80**	0.51	0.40	0.25	0.38	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	0.37	0.33
TR1_CR1	0.45	0.39	0.29	0.39	0.55	**0.78**	0.24	0.17	0.25	0.17	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.25	0.23
TR2_CR2	0.36	0.42	0.34	0.39	0.46	**0.76**	0.39	0.27	0.35	0.24	0.31	0.24	0.31	0.25	0.21
TR3_CR3	0.42	0.37	0.31	0.47	0.59	**0.78**	0.39	0.24	0.25	0.21	0.27	0.28	0.19	0.27	0.27
TR4_CR4	0.38	0.34	0.37	0.49	0.43	**0.77**	0.26	0.21	0.20	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.18	0.17	0.16
TR5_ME1_A	0.38	0.34	0.42	0.57	0.43	0.32	**0.78**	0.25	0.24	0.23	0.28	0.36	0.25	0.36	0.38
TR6_ME2_A	0.47	0.32	0.48	0.37	0.38	0.25	**0.73**	0.21	0.21	0.18	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.25	0.21
TR7_ME3_A	0.26	0.23	0.24	0.28	0.26	0.29	**0.72**	0.20	0.21	0.20	0.25	0.28	0.20	0.21	0.21
TR8_ME4_A	0.37	0.38	0.35	0.41	0.38	0.35	**0.70**	0.12	0.25	0.22	0.27	0.23	0.18	0.26	0.24
KT1_SU1	0.24	0.18	0.23	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.16	**0.85**	0.25	0.29	0.30	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.22
KT2_SU2	0.29	0.19	0.23	0.28	0.29	0.24	0.24	**0.89**	0.29	0.33	0.41	0.38	0.37	0.33	0.34
KT3_SU3	0.26	0.20	0.24	0.32	0.30	0.29	0.28	**0.87**	0.24	0.30	0.34	0.34	0.29	0.29	0.31
KT4_PC1	0.40	0.40	0.29	0.33	0.40	0.32	0.29	0.20	**0.83**	0.27	0.30	0.41	0.53	0.38	0.37
KT5_PC2	0.25	0.31	0.17	0.29	0.31	0.22	0.21	0.28	**0.86**	0.30	0.37	0.35	0.43	0.37	0.29
KT6_PC3	0.34	0.36	0.24	0.28	0.44	0.31	0.29	0.27	**0.80**	0.24	0.34	0.30	0.38	0.39	0.26
KT7_VC1	0.33	0.31	0.32	0.32	0.35	0.26	0.23	0.33	0.24	**0.80**	0.59	0.37	0.33	0.45	0.39

Table 4. *Cont.*

Indicator	Construct														
	IIB	**IIA**	**IM**	**IS**	**IC**	**CR**	**MBEA**	**SU**	**PC**	**VC**	**CV**	**RO**	**CW**	**BC**	**AC**
KT8_VC2	0.36	0.34	0.30	0.35	0.28	0.21	0.20	0.25	0.34	**0.83**	0.49	0.36	0.34	0.52	0.37
KT9_VC3	0.29	0.22	0.21	0.30	0.21	0.16	0.26	0.26	0.20	**0.80**	0.61	0.33	0.32	0.42	0.36
KT10_CV1	0.38	0.36	0.32	0.34	0.37	0.29	0.28	0.37	0.28	0.55	**0.79**	0.45	0.39	0.51	0.44
KT11_CV2	0.38	0.31	0.26	0.38	0.39	0.29	0.35	0.34	0.43	0.51	**0.87**	0.42	0.54	0.54	0.46
KT12_CV3	0.26	0.18	0.17	0.26	0.21	0.17	0.21	0.27	0.25	0.62	**0.72**	0.38	0.39	0.46	0.42
KT13_RO1	0.39	0.36	0.33	0.40	0.36	0.29	0.38	0.25	0.38	0.34	0.42	**0.78**	0.36	0.39	0.51
KT14_RO2	0.36	0.33	0.33	0.37	0.30	0.20	0.29	0.34	0.30	0.39	0.41	**0.80**	0.40	0.54	0.48
KT15_RO3	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.35	0.30	0.23	0.25	0.30	0.36	0.32	0.43	**0.83**	0.47	0.42	0.41
KT16_CW1	0.35	0.28	0.29	0.33	0.30	0.26	0.25	0.39	0.40	0.35	0.52	0.43	**0.86**	0.50	0.46
KT17_CW2	0.30	0.23	0.21	0.28	0.25	0.22	0.24	0.25	0.38	0.39	0.50	0.46	**0.82**	0.52	0.44
KT18_CW3	0.34	0.31	0.27	0.26	0.32	0.24	0.23	0.21	0.59	0.28	0.36	0.38	**0.79**	0.38	0.38
KT19_BC1	0.33	0.34	0.29	0.35	0.25	0.20	0.19	0.12	0.30	0.49	0.52	0.35	0.41	**0.73**	0.40
KT20_BC2	0.40	0.40	0.30	0.43	0.30	0.19	0.32	0.25	0.38	0.44	0.49	0.44	0.48	**0.83**	0.66
KT21_BC3	0.48	0.48	0.36	0.46	0.41	0.32	0.36	0.42	0.41	0.46	0.51	0.55	0.47	**0.82**	0.52
KT22_AC1	0.40	0.35	0.32	0.35	0.34	0.26	0.34	0.26	0.29	0.40	0.47	0.45	0.38	0.47	**0.84**
KT23_AC2	0.44	0.39	0.33	0.38	0.33	0.22	0.33	0.27	0.34	0.40	0.47	0.51	0.45	0.71	**0.87**
KT24_AC3	0.38	0.34	0.30	0.36	0.34	0.26	0.26	0.34	0.33	0.40	0.49	0.53	0.49	0.53	**0.86**

IIB: idealize influence behavioral, **IIA**: idealized influence attributed, **IM**: inspirational motivation, **IS**: intellectual stimulation, **IC**: individual consideration, **MBEA**: management by expectations active, **CR**: contingent rewards, **SU**: sense of urgency, **PC**: powerful coalition, **VC**: create a vision, **CV**: communicate vision, **RO**: remove obstacles, **CW**: create short term wins, **BC**: build on change, **AC**: anchor changes in culture.

Table 5. Second-Order Construct Item Cross-Loadings.

Indicator	Construct	Transformational Leadership Style	Transactional Leadership Style	Kotter Change Model
TF1 till TF20	IIA	**0.862**	0.55	0.523
	IIB	**0.892**	0.605	0.575
	IC	**0.834**	0.68	0.525
	IS	**0.809**	0.665	0.557
	IM	**0.835**	0.555	0.456
TR1 till TR8	MBEA	0.591	**0.859**	0.448
	CR	0.63	**0.823**	0.403
KT1 till KT24	SU	0.337	0.327	**0.559**
	PC	0.458	0.388	**0.651**
	VC	0.44	0.325	**0.721**
	CV	0.46	0.403	**0.815**
	RO	0.496	0.405	**0.76**
	CW	0.411	0.345	**0.753**
	BC	0.56	0.402	**0.833**
	AC	0.494	0.384	**0.774**

Table 7 summarizes the results for the proposed hypotheses H1, H3, H5, H7, H9, H11, H13, and H15 and their corresponding sub-hypotheses that predict the relationship between each of the transformational leadership styles and its pillars with each step of the Kotter change management model. The results indicated that The transformational leadership style (TFLS) contributes positively to the sense of urgency step as proposed by H1, with $\beta = 0.34$, $t(385) = 7.1$, $p < 0.01$. The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the creating a powerful coalition step as proposed by H3, with $\beta = 0.46$, $t(385) = 9.5$, $p < 0.01$. Next, The TFLS also contributes positively to the developing vision step as proposed by H5, with $\beta = 0.44$, $t(385) = 9.8$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, The TFLS contributes positively to the communicating vision step as proposed by H7, with $\beta = 0.46$, $t(385) = 10.6$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, The TFLS contributes positively to the removing obstacles step as proposed by H9, with $\beta = 0.49$, $t(385) = 12.4$, $p < 0.01$. Next, The TFLS contributes positively to the creating short-term wins step as proposed by H11, with $\beta = 0.41$, $t(385) = 8.8$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, The TFLS contributes positively to the building on change step as proposed by H13, with $\beta = 0.56$, $t(385) = 15$, $p < 0.01$. Finally, The transformational leadership style contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in culture step in the KCM as proposed by H15, with $\beta = 0.49$, $t(385) = 12.4$, $p < 0.01$.

The first main hypothesis H_{TFLS} proposed that a positive correlation exists between the transformational leadership style and the Kotter model of organizational change management. The hypothesis was accepted, indicating a significant variance proportion of the TFLS on the KCM, with $R^2 = 0.39$, $F(1,385) = 0.647$, $p < 0.01$. As depicted in Table 8.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Fornell and Lacker Criteria.

	Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1	Active Management by Expectations	**0.73**																	
2	Anchoring Approaches in Culture	0.36	**0.86**																
3	Attributed Idealized Influence	0.44	0.42	**0.77**															
4	Behavioral Idealized Influence	0.50	0.48	0.71	**0.78**														
5	Build on Change	0.37	0.67	0.51	0.51	**0.80**													
6	Communicate the Vision	0.36	0.55	0.36	0.43	0.64	**0.79**												
7	Contingent Rewards	0.42	0.28	0.49	0.52	0.30	0.32	**0.77**											
8	Create Short-Term Wins	0.29	0.51	0.33	0.40	0.57	0.56	0.29	**0.83**										
9	Create a Vision	0.29	0.46	0.36	0.41	0.58	0.70	0.26	0.41	**0.81**									
10	Individual Consideration	0.50	0.39	0.64	0.70	0.41	0.41	0.66	0.35	0.35	**0.76**								
11	Inspirational Motivation	0.51	0.37	0.69	0.74	0.40	0.31	0.42	0.31	0.34	0.58	**0.75**							
12	Intellectual Stimulation	0.56	0.42	0.62	0.61	0.52	0.42	0.56	0.35	0.40	0.61	0.57	**0.74**						
13	Powerful Coalition	0.31	0.37	0.43	0.40	0.46	0.41	0.34	0.54	0.32	0.46	0.28	0.36	**0.83**					
14	Remove Obstacles	0.38	0.58	0.41	0.43	0.57	0.52	0.30	0.51	0.44	0.40	0.39	0.46	0.43	**0.80**				
15	Sense of Urgency	0.26	0.34	0.22	0.31	0.34	0.41	0.29	0.35	0.35	0.31	0.27	0.31	0.30	0.37	**0.87**			
16	Kotter Change Model																**0.74**		
17	Transactional Leadership Style						**Second Order Model Discriminant Validity**										0.51	**0.84**	
18	Transformational Leadership Style																0.63	0.72	**0.85**

The diagonal is the square root of the AVE of the latent variables and indicates the highest in any column or row.

Table 9 summarizes the results for the proposed hypotheses H2, H4, H6, H8, H10, H12, H14, and H16, and their corresponding sub-hypotheses that predict the relationship between the TRLS and its pillars with each step of the Kotter change management model. As the results showed, The transactional leadership style (TRLS) contributes positively to the sense of urgency step of the KCM as proposed by H2, with $\beta = 0.37$, $t(385) = 8.3$, $p < 0.01$. The TRLS contributes positively to creating a powerful coalition as proposed by H4, with $\beta = 0.38$, $t(385) = 8.2$, $p < 0.01$. However, The TRLS showed a positive contribution opposite to the proposed hypothesis H6, with $\beta = 0.32$, $t(385) = 6.5$, $p < 0.01$. With respect to H8, The TRLS contributes positively to communicating vision with $\beta = 0.40$, $t(385) = 9.04$, $p < 0.01$. As proposed by H10, The TRLS contributes positively to removing obstacles with $\beta = 0.39$, $t(385) = 9.2$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, The TRLS contributes positively to creating short-term wins, as proposed by H12, with $\beta = 0.34$, $t(385) = 7.42$, $p < 0.01$. Next, transformational leadership style contributes positively to anchoring approaches as proposed by H15, with $\beta = 0.39$, $t(385) = 8.7$, $p < 0.01$. Finally, as proposed by H16, the transactional leadership style contributes positively to the anchoring approaches in the culture step of the KCM, with $\beta = 0.32$, $t(385) = 7.1$, $p < 0.01$.

With respect to the sub-hypotheses developed for the transactional leadership style developed (see Table 9), the results indicated that H8A, H10A, and H16A were accepted with $p \leq 0.01$. Additionally, H4A, H14A, H12B, H14B, and H16B were also accepted with $p \leq 0.05$. However, H1A, H6A, H12A, H11A, H1B, H4B, H7B, H8B, and H10B, were rejected for $p > 0.05$. The findings suggest that contingent rewards are crucial throughout the last three steps of the change model, whereas active management by expectation positively contributes to forming coalitions, removing obstacles, building on change, and anchoring approaches into the culture.

The second main hypothesis $\mathbf{H_{TRLS}}$ proposes that a positive correlation exists between the transactional leadership style and the Kotter model of organizational change management. The hypothesis was accepted, indicating a significant variance proportion of the TRLS on the KCM, with $R^2 = 0.25$, $F(1,385) = 0.258$, $p < 0.05$. As depicted in Table 10.

Table 7. Hypotheses Results (relationship between transformational leadership components and the Kotter change model stages).

	IIA				IIB				IC				IM				IS				Transformational Leadership Style				
	Hyp.	**Std. β**	**T**	***p***	**Hyp.**	**Std. β**	**T**	***p***	**Hyp.**	**Std. β**	**T**	***p***	**Hyp.**	**Std. β**	**T**	***p***	**Hyp.**	**Std. β**	**T Value**	***p***	**Hyp.**	**Std. β**	**T**	**F^2**	***p***
SU	**H1A**	0.14	1.58 *	**0.05**	**H1B**	0.12	1.4 *	0.05	**H1C**	0.10	1.15	0.13	**H1D**	0.07	0.81	0.21	**H1E**	0.14	1.56 *	**0.05**	**H1**	0.34	7.1 **	0.13	0.00
PC	**H3A**	0.26	3.1 **	**0.00**	**H3B**	0.10	1.3 *	**0.04**	**H3C**	0.25	3.1 **	**0.00**	**H3D**	0.21	2.7 **	**0.00**	**H3E**	0.02	0.35	0.36	**H3**	0.46	9.5 **	0.26	**0.00**
VC	**H5A**	0.04	0.73	0.23	**H5B**	0.20	2.3 **	**0.01**	**H5C**	0.04	0.70	0.24	**H5D**	0.01	0.06	0.48	**H5E**	0.22	3.2 **	**0.00**	**H5**	0.44	9.8 **	0.24	**0.00**
CV	**H7A**	0.03	0.45	0.33	**H7B**	0.24	2.9 **	**0.00**	**H7C**	0.13	1.9 *	**0.03**	**H7D**	0.12	1.70 *	**0.04**	**H7E**	0.17	2.4 **	**0.01**	**H7**	0.46	10.6 **	0.26	**0.00**
RO	**H9A**	0.07	0.93	0.18	**H9B**	0.13	1.5 *	**0.05**	**H9C**	0.12	2.0 **	**0.02**	**H9D**	0.03	0.39	0.35	**H9E**	0.24	3.5 **	**0.00**	**H9**	0.49	12.4 **	0.32	**0.00**
CW	**H11A**	0.01	0.20	0.42	**H11B**	0.25	2.6 **	**0.01**	**H11C**	0.05	0.68	0.25	**H11D**	0.11	1.70 *	**0.04**	**H11E**	0.12	1.71 *	**0.04**	**H11**	0.41	8.8 **	0.20	**0.00**
BC	**H13A**	0.25	3.7 **	**0.00**	**H13B**	0.29	3.9 **	**0.00**	**H13C**	0.04	0.55	0.29	**H13D**	0.14	2.2 **	**0.01**	**H13E**	0.29	4.6 **	**0.00**	**H13**	0.56	15 **	0.45	**0.00**
AC	**H15A**	0.11	1.5 *	**0.05**	**H15B**	0.30	3.4 **	**0.00**	**H15C**	0.20	2.3 **	**0.02**	**H15D**	0.09	1.04	0.15	**H15E**	0.16	2.7 **	**0.00**	**H15**	0.49	12.4 **	0.32	**0.00**

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ of the two-tailed test with 0.05 sig. level. **Legend**: **IIB**: idealize influence behavioral, **IIA**: idealized influence attributed, **IM**: inspirational motivation, **IS**: intellectual stimulation, **IC**: individual consideration, **MBEA**: management by expectations active, **CR**: contingent rewards, **SU**: sense of urgency, **PC**: powerful coalition, **VC**: create a vision, **CV**: communicate vision, **RO**: remove obstacles, **CW**: create short term wins, **BC**: build on change, **AC**: anchor changes in culture.

Table 8. H_{TFLS} Hypothesis Results (relationship between the transformational leadership style and the Kotter change model process).

H_{TFLS}: Transformational Leadership → Kotter Change Model	**Std. β**	**Std. Error**	**T-Value**	***p* Values**	**Decision**	**F^2**	**2.5% CI LL**	**97.5% CI UL**
	0.543	0.05	10.097 **	0.00	Supported **	0.647	0.44	0.65

** $p < 0.01$ of the two-tailed test with 0.05 sig. level.

Table 9. Hypotheses Results (relationship between transactional leadership components and the Kotter change model stages).

	MBA				CR				Transactional Leadership Style				
	Hyp.	**Std. β**	**T Value**	***p* Values**	**Hyp.**	**Std. β**	**T Value**	***p* Values**	**Hyp.**	**Std. β**	**T Value**	**F2**	***p* Values**
SU	**H1A**	0.063	1.001	0.159	**H1B**	0.094	1.256	0.105	**H2**	0.376	8.3 **	0.12	**0.00**
PC	**H4A**	0.104	1.617 *	**0.050**	**H4B**	0.017	0.185	0.427	**H4**	0.388	8.2 **	0.18	**0.00**
VC	**H6A**	0.027	0.426	0.335	**H7B**	0.032	0.517	0.303	**H6**	0.324	6.5 **	0.12	**0.00**
CV	**H8A**	0.124	2.24 **	**0.013**	**H8B**	0.001	0.038	0.485	**H8**	0.401	9.04 **	0.19	**0.00**
RO	**H10A**	0.119	2.16 **	**0.015**	**H10B**	0.05	0.901	0.184	**H10**	0.398	9.2 *	0.19	**0.00**
CW	**H12A**	0.067	1.04	0.149	**H12B**	0.076	1.47 *	**0.046**	**H12**	0.344	7.42 **	0.14	**0.00**
BC	**H14A**	0.073	1.44 *	**0.045**	**H14B**	0.093	1.59 *	**0.049**	**H14**	0.398	8.7 **	0.19	**0.00**
AC	**H16A**	0.113	2.12 **	**0.017**	**H16B**	0.067	1.05 *	**0.050**	**H16**	0.327	7.1 **	0.17	**0.00**

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ of the two-tailed test with a 0.05 sig. level.

Table 10. H_{TRLS} Hypothesis Results (relationship between transactional leadership style and the Kotter change model process).

H_{TRLS}: Transactional Style -> Kotter Change Model	**Std. β**	**Std. Error**	**T-Value**	***p* Values**	**Decision**	**F^2**	**2.5% CI LL**	**97.5% CI UL**
	0.119	0.05	2.006 *	0.045	Supported *	0.258	0.013	0.227

* $p < 0.05$ at Two tailed test with 0.05 Sig. Level.

6. Discussion

The literature review identified a pertinent research gap due to a dearth of studies examining leadership and strategic change management approaches. While prior research has examined the correlation between transformational leadership and change concepts, little attention has been paid to the various change models that might be implemented during the change process. Furthermore, within the context of the leadership-as-practice (LAP) theory, this research seeks to delve deeper into the interplay between leadership styles and strategic change models, aligning the discussion with the LAP perspective [23].

This research advances leadership and change management theory. First, it provides a theoretical linkage between Kotter's change model and the transactional and transformational leadership styles, aligning the former with the LAP perspective. Second, Kotter and Cohen [15] emphasized transformational leadership in change execution, a viewpoint that resonates with the LAP approach to leadership, where leadership is recognized as a fluid and evolving process shaped by ongoing interactions and experiences. Despite multiple studies showing that the Kotter change management approach is effective, none of the earlier studies hypothesized and investigated this relationship within the LAP framework. This study aims to address this gap by constructing a model to evaluate and examine the link between both the transformational and transactional leadership styles and pillars with each Kotter change management implementation step, thereby bridging the gap between Kotter change management and practice.

As a result, at the **first step**, we proposed that intellectual stimulation, idealized influence (attributed and behavioral), and individual consideration of transformational leadership style pillars had an impact on a sense of urgency. The findings backed up our point of view. The data also backed up our claims that there is no link between the TFLS's inspirational motivation and individual consideration pillars. As for the transactional style, according to Bass and Stogdill [88], in order to establish a change structure, contingent rewards are essential, while Antonakis and House [63] found that monitoring and feedback were more beneficial than contingent incentives. Our findings concluded that no link exists between contingent rewards and the active management by expectations pillars. In accordance with LAP, from the leadership-as-practice perspective, contingent rewards involve incentivizing performance through external motivators like bonuses. Active management centers on engaging guidance and communication. These pillars are distinct, as contingent rewards rely on extrinsic incentives, while active management emphasizes intrinsic engagement. The former may undermine the genuine commitment fostered by the latter. Leadership as practice highlights the need for authentic connections and shared meaning, contrasting with the transactional nature of contingent rewards. Thus, no intrinsic link exists between these pillars, reflecting their divergent approaches to effective leadership.

In the **second step**, we highlighted leadership style and coalition building, and we proposed that inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and idealized influence are necessary. This investigation validated our hypothesis that the ascribed pillars create a potent coalition. As expected, there was no correlation between intellectual stimulation and coalition building. As for the TFLS, our findings corroborated our hypothesis that MBEA is necessary to track worker behavior at this stage. Furthermore, there was no correlation between forming coalitions and contingent rewards. These findings corroborate those of Holten and Brenner [89] and demonstrate that the TRLS would facilitate change engagement, a factor that, according to Kotter's theory, is crucial for success. Thus, in the second step, where leadership style and coalition building take center stage, from a leadership-as-practice perspective, MBEA is essential for monitoring worker behavior. It involves intervening only when deviations from expected norms occur. This approach preserves autonomy and encourages self-direction, aligning with the principle of empowering leadership. MBEA enables leaders to focus on strategic guidance rather than micromanagement, fostering a culture of responsibility and initiative for sustainable development [90]. By addressing exceptions, leaders ensure standards are met while allowing flexibility and innovation to flourish, reinforcing the core ethos of leadership as practice.

We expected that all the TFLS pillars would be useful while creating vision in the **third step**. In general, the findings did not support all our proposed hypotheses, with the exception of a substantial and strong link between IIB, IS, and VC. We also succeeded in proving that the MBEA and CR pillars of the TRLS are not linked to this step. Hence, transitioning to the third step, where the creation of a compelling vision takes precedence, the LAP approach offers a distinctive way through which to comprehend the utility of the TFLS pillars. From a leadership-as-practice perspective, the MBEA and CR pillars of the TRLS are not inherently linked to the third step of Kotter's change model. In Kotter's model, the third step involves creating a clear and compelling vision for change. However, MBEA and CR primarily focus on the operational aspects of leadership, such as monitoring and rewarding performance. In contrast, the third step of Kotter's model emphasizes the importance of articulating a shared vision that inspires and guides individuals towards a common goal. This requires fostering a sense of purpose, shared values, and emotional connection—aspects that go beyond the transactional nature of MBEA and CR. Leadership-as-practice underscores the need for holistic and authentic engagement, which may involve more transformational leadership approaches, while MBEA and CR are better suited to addressing specific performance and operational aspects rather than shaping a broader vision for change.

In the **fourth step**, communicating the vision, we assumed all the TFLS pillars were essential. The findings validated our assumption that successful communication of the vision requires inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, behaviorally idealized influence, and individual consideration. In terms of the TRLS, our findings reinforced the requirement for MBEA; additionally, there was no link between contingent rewards and this step. In other words, as we advance to the fourth step of the change process, the link between the leadership-as-practice (LAP) approach and communicating the vision becomes increasingly pronounced. LAP views leadership as a dynamic, socially constructed practice shaped by interactions, emphasizing the role of leaders in effectively conveying and reinforcing the change vision. In LAP, leaders' actions hold paramount importance, and communicating the vision aligns seamlessly with this perspective. Effective communication, a core component of LAP, involves not only transmitting information but also embodying the vision through actions and behaviors. This mirrors the idealized influence pillar of transformational leadership, where leaders serve as role models, reinforcing the vision's authenticity and credibility. LAP underscores that communicating the vision is not a passive exercise but an active practice where leaders engage with followers, fostering a shared understanding and commitment to the change journey.

We proposed using inspiring motivation (IM), behavioral idealized influence (II/B), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individual considerations (IC) to motivate non-change-engaged employees while removing obstacles (RO) at the **fifth step**. IC, IS, IIB, and RO were linked positively. The is no evidence linking IIA, IM, and this phase. Regarding the TRLS, we anticipated MBEA could monitor employee behavior in accordance with the given task and job description. The study found a favorable association between MBEA and RO, but not with CR. Hence, in the context of the fifth step involving motivation and obstacle removal, the leadership-as-practice (LAP) perspective offers valuable insights. LAP's core tenet of leadership as a dynamic, socially constructed practice aligns with the use of inspiring motivation (IM), behavioral idealized influence (II/B), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individual consideration (IC) to engage non-change-engaged employees and overcome obstacles. LAP emphasizes that effective leadership involves actively modeling and inspiring change, which resonates with the application of IM and II/B in transformational leadership. These pillars enable leaders to set examples and influence employees by showcasing the benefits of change. Similarly, IS and IC, also from transformational leadership, support LAP's personalized approach by encouraging creative problem-solving and addressing individual concerns, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement. As leaders embrace LAP, they collaboratively tackle obstacles using IS and IC to identify innovative solutions while engaging employees in the obstacle removal process,

since innovation and knowledge sharing are essential during change management [91]. This approach reflects LAP's adaptable nature, as leaders tailor their actions to the specific context and the needs of their team.

At the **sixth step** of the KCM, that is celebrating accomplishments, we argued that leaders would win more trust via idealized influence as a result of apparent successes that establish the foundations for additional support for change. Inspirational motivation will inspire followers to work on future projects, and intellectually stimulated personnel will think and behave differently. At this step, we found no link between individual considerations and creating short-term wins. (CSTW). Empirically, some of our views were supported. CW was related to II/B, IM, and IS. No significant relationship was found between II/A, IC, and CSTW. While celebrating achievements, the guiding coalition should be rewarded, and leaders should continuously offer performance feedback [92]. Accordingly, we postulated that CR is positively connected to CSTM. The study's findings confirmed this. No meaningful association was identified between MBEA and this step. The concept of celebrating accomplishments within the context of the leadership-as-practice (LAP) perspective encapsulates the dynamic and socially constructed nature of leadership. LAP views leadership as an ongoing, interactive process that is shaped by interactions, context, and shared meanings. When leaders celebrate accomplishments, they engage in a practice that aligns with LAP's emphasis on the active and observable aspects of leadership. By recognizing and acknowledging achievements, leaders reinforce the change vision and foster a sense of achievement and progress among followers, demonstrating the tangible impact of their leadership actions.

In the **seventh** step, we discussed that leadership thrives when it is based on change; therefore, leaders should employ most of the TFLS and TRLS pillars to make new changes. The findings validated our hypothesis, in terms of the TFLS pillars; that there is a strong positive link between IIA, IIB, IM, IS, and BC. In the case of the TRLS, the findings revealed a substantial positive association between CR, MBEA, and the building on change step. The substantial positive association that exists between contingent rewards (CR), management by exception—active (MBEA), and the "building on change" step resonates deeply with the principles of the leadership-as-practice (LAP) perspective. Within LAP, this association reflects the dynamic and socially constructed nature of leadership practice, emphasizing the active role of leaders in guiding and sustaining change initiatives. In LAP, the positive link between CR, MBEA, and the "building on change" step underscores the practical and contextually responsive approach of leadership practice. Leaders who embrace LAP principles recognize the significance of utilizing rewards (CR) and active monitoring (MBEA) to foster continuous improvement and adaptation during the change process. This mirrors LAP's view of leadership as a fluid and adaptable practice that responds to evolving circumstances and challenges. Furthermore, the positive association between CR, MBEA, and the "building on change" step aligns with LAP's emphasis on leaders' active engagement and influence. Leaders, by employing CR and MBEA, demonstrate LAP's core tenet of leadership practice as an ongoing interaction that shapes organizational dynamics. This approach empowers leaders to proactively guide their teams through the "building on change" phase, maintaining momentum, and ensuring that the change initiative remains effective and relevant. In essence, the connection between CR, MBEA, and the "building on change" step within the LAP framework illustrates how leadership practice plays a pivotal role in cultivating a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation. By integrating CR and MBEA with LAP principles, leaders contribute to the dynamic and socially embedded nature of leadership practice, driving successful change implementation and fostering a culture of sustainable growth and innovation.

At the **eighth** step, Kotter [4] stressed the relevance of transformational leadership in anchoring approaches to organization culture (AC). We expected the TFLS and IIA/B, IC, and IS pillars to contribute to this phase. The study results corroborated recent studies by Springer et al. [67] and Tipu, Ryan, and Fantazy [68] and our views. IIA/B, IC, IS, and AC had a substantially favorable relationship to AC. While no empirical evidence

was found for IM, Kotter [4] also suggested using incentives, prizes, and promotions to reinforce new norms and values. In addition, leaders should monitor the new processes to keep them on track, practiced, and perpetuated. The findings confirmed our hypotheses. MBEA and AC in culture have a favorable link, as does CR. The linkage between MBEA and organization culture, as well as the positive connection between contingent rewards (CR) and culture, hold significance within the leadership-as-practice (LAP) perspective. In LAP, these associations reflect the dynamic and socially constructed nature of leadership practice. The favorable link between MBEA and AC underscores LAP's emphasis on contextually responsive leadership, showcasing how leaders actively shape and reinforce specific cultural attributes. Likewise, the positive relationship between CR and culture aligns with LAP's view of leadership as a practical and adaptable process, wherein leaders strategically utilize incentives to align behaviors with shared values. In essence, MBEA and CR exemplify how LAP principles manifest in leaders' active influence on organizational culture, highlighting the interactive and context-sensitive nature of leadership practice within the broader organizational context.

In general, transformational leaders are better at executing change than transactional leaders, the study found. H_{TFLS} anticipated a medium influence of transformational leadership on the Kotter change model, whereas H_{TRLS} predicted a lower significant impact for transactional leadership.

From a practical standpoint, this study offers insightful and thorough information for leaders using the Kotter change management model to modify their transactional and transformational leadership styles according to the transition step to ensure sustainable implementation. For instance, when applying idealized influence behaviors in implementing the eight stages of the Kotter change model, as the model results indicated, change leaders are advised to leverage their charisma to mobilize their followers towards a common vision. This can be achieved by attentively listening to their followers, commending individual team members for their achievements, and assuming accountability when mistakes occur. During these transitional stages, it is imperative for leaders to offer constructive feedback to each individual member of the team. The success of leaders who discover innovative solutions and forge new paths for their teams is mostly fueled by curiosity rather than intelligence. Adding to this, it is crucial to be seen as trustworthy and respected role models by all team members, while also promoting curiosity, practicing ethical behavior, and effectively delivering messages with clarity and diplomacy to ensure effective and sustainable change.

With respect to the inspirational motivation pillar of the transformational leadership style that should be practiced when creating powerful coalitions, communicating the vision, creating short-term wins, and building on change, it is advised that leaders at these stages communicate in a positive, challenging, but yet realistic manner the efforts needed from the team, the company's mission and objectives, and the beneficial impact for the organization. Leaders who underestimate or ignore the importance of jobs and the tasks related to them, or fail to help individuals understand how their contributions fit into the overall goals, may face challenges in inspiring their subordinates. For this, leaders ought to encourage team members to fully embrace the vision by boosting morale, creating a sense of unity, and implanting a shared objective. To do this, leaders' communication styles need to be optimally tailored to the needs of the team. Thus, leaders need to communicate simply and concisely with an authoritative demeanor so that members can understand their vision. This creates a sense of organization and coherence and makes it possible for members to complete tasks without any confusion. To do this, communication should be defined by simplicity. This approach creates a logical and transparent structure that makes it possible for team members to carry out tasks without fear. Moreover, it is imperative for leaders to have an optimistic attitude in order to energize and exude passion throughout the processes.

The model results showed that intellectual stimulation behaviors are essential throughout the Kotter model change stages, except when creating a powerful coalition. Leaders at

these change stages shall motivate their subordinates to think creatively and foster innovation. Encouraging followers fosters the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, thus enhancing the overall performance of the group or organization. Encouraging innovation means giving each team member a voice in decision-making and encouraging a sense of importance and responsibility for the company's overall success. An essential aspect of this is that a leader should refrain from criticizing the beliefs or opinions expressed by the members. Terminating ideas prematurely can foster an atmosphere of suspicion, harm, and loss of trust. Consequently, leaders must delicately alter the way in which followers engage in problem-solving and generate novel and inventive approaches to accomplish their teams' objectives. Leaders must acknowledge that there are diverse approaches to accomplishing a goal and that there is no conventional route to fostering creativity.

With respect to the fourth pillar of the transformational leadership style, namely individualized consideration, which shall be practiced when creating a powerful coalition, communicating the vision, removing obstacles, building on change, and anchoring change in the organization's culture, change leaders are advised to facilitate the personal and professional development of team members within a conducive and supportive atmosphere and strive to understand their goals and dreams, their likes and dislikes when it comes to their jobs, and their areas of interest. Emotional intelligence is necessary for effectively involving individuals. Emotional intelligence encompasses the display of authentic empathy, understanding, and addressing the needs of individuals, and fostering their continuous personal development. As a result, emotionally intelligent leaders build strong bonds based on trust with their teams. At these change stages, leaders could also play the mentor role by demonstrating a willingness and openness to attentively listen to the concerns of their followers. This entails acknowledging and appreciating the incentives, aspirations, and requirements of each individual member. Once leaders understand the underlying motivation that drives an individual, they can then offer tailored training opportunities.

Leaders should also adjust transactional leadership practices when implementing the Kotter change model. First, leaders should provide the promised rewards in exchange for the team's efforts at the last three stages of the change model. While creating powerful coalitions, communicating the vision, removing obstacles, building on change, and anchoring change in culture, leaders should develop and practice active management by expectation behaviors. For instance, leaders at all organization levels ought to report to higher levels and change planners any deviation in performance that can affect and detrain change efforts, intervene and take corrective actions in the most efficient manner possible. Thus, leaders should be able to delegate authorities to lower levels to take actions on minor matters and leave the strategies for fine tuning and major decisions centralized. Accordingly, we advise leaders to develop delegation of authority skills for themselves. They should also follow a systematic approach that is based on certain steps to keep track of change process deviations and take decisions. Leaders can also maintain professionalism and provide suitable training, such as problem analysis and teamwork skills, for the concerned employees to be able to handle problems and take efficient decisions, ensuring an optimum level of productivity. These actions can lead to high standards with increased potential to achieve sustainable change.

Based on the findings, Figure 3 depicts the relative importance of the transformational and transactional leadership styles and their pillars in relation to the Kotter change model step.

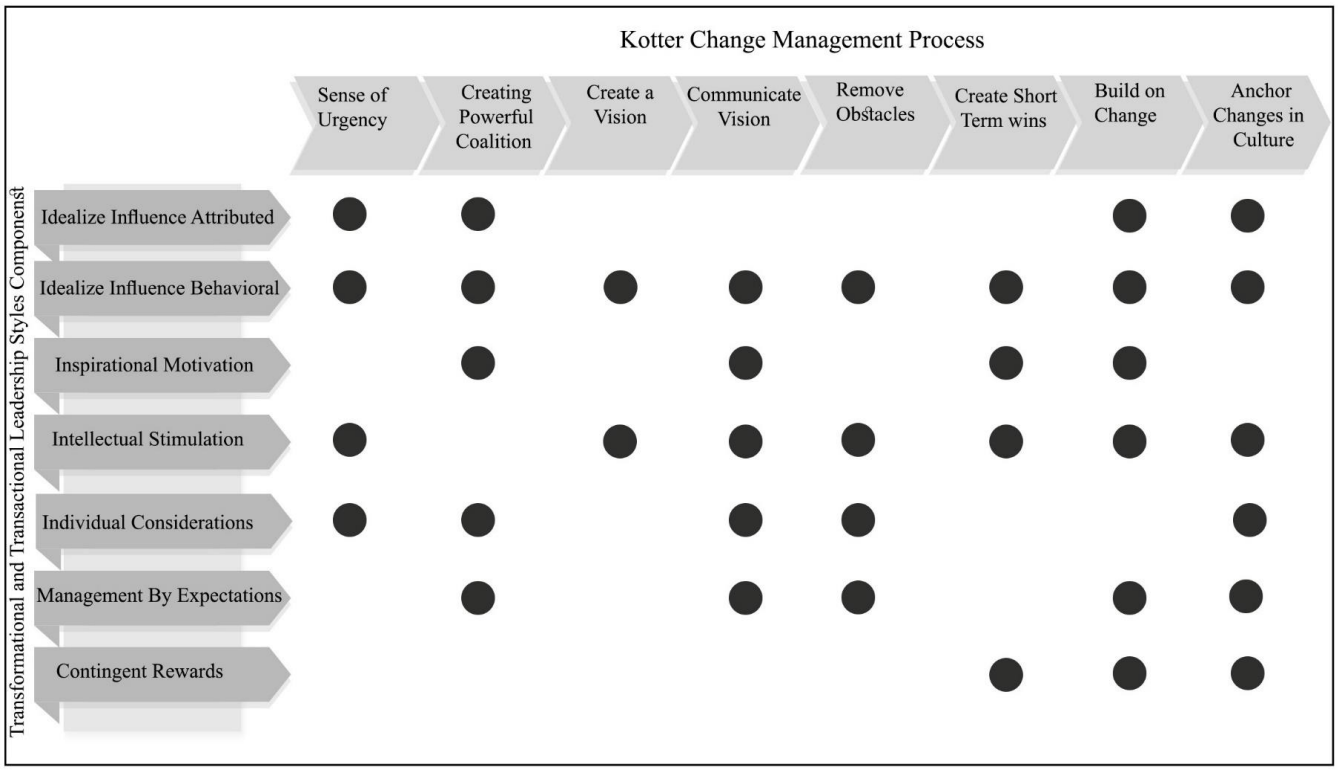

Figure 3. The relative importance of each leadership style component in the change process.

7. Conclusions

This paper constructs a theoretical model to investigate the effect of the transformational and transactional leadership styles and their pillars on each Kotter change model implementation stage.

Previous research has demonstrated a correlation between employee commitment to change and transformational leadership styles [18–20]. Other studies have linked transformational leadership or leadership skills with effective change management [17,21,50,93]. Kakucha [52] found that the leader's charisma is significant during change. Our research showed that both the transformational and transactional leadership styles, along with their pillars, including charisma, had positive correlations with change management when employing a planned Kotter model change strategy. These results contradict those of der Voet [51], who found that transformational leadership contributes little to planned change approaches. Incorporating the findings of Seijts and Gandz [23], who theoretically delineated the leader character dimension throughout the Kotter change processes, this research contributed to leadership research by filling the current research gap between the pillars of the transformational and transactional leadership styles and the Kotter change model by providing a theoretical and valid empirical investigation.

This study's insights align closely with the principles of the leadership-as-practice (LAP) perspective. LAP views leadership as an active and socially constructed practice that is responsive to organizational dynamics. The positive associations observed between transformational and transactional leadership styles and their pillars, as well as the Kotter change model stages, reflect LAP's emphasis on leadership as an ongoing and contextually sensitive interaction. The findings highlight how leaders, within the LAP framework, navigate change implementation by dynamically deploying different leadership styles and engaging in active practices tailored to the specific stages of the change process. This correlation reaffirms LAP's core principles and underscores the relevance of adaptable leadership practices in effectively guiding organizational change efforts. Thus, while scholars have described leadership-as-practice as a framework that shifts leadership from focusing on an individualistic approach to a collective and context-dependent perspective [54], especially

when pushing organizations towards new practices [55], our research goes beyond these results to conclude that leadership and leadership practices are the basic blocks needed to ensure sustainable and continued change throughout the change processes, starting from creating the urgency of change, communicating visions, and building team cohesiveness training, delegating authorities, and ending up with change reinforcement.

The findings of this study have to be seen in the light of some limitations. As most of the organizations operating in Lebanon are considered small to medium enterprises, the sample size covered these enterprises that are operating in the service industry sector without including large organizations that constitute only up to 6% of the Lebanese industry. Moreover, we have failed to include public service organizations in our sample due to several constraints. Another limitation of this study is that it followed a deductive approach only to study the relationship between variables. Future research can include a qualitative analysis and interviews to provide more insightful information on leadership as a practice that implements sustainable change. Another limitation can be drawn from the data collocation time horizon, which follows a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal approach. This can restrict the ability to capture dynamic changes in leadership and organizational transformation over time.

In view of the projected shift in Middle East and Gulf countries like Dubai and Qatar, which are developing sustainable smart cities and attracting educated workers from different cultural and educational backgrounds [94,95], it is strongly suggested that this model be tested in these areas in order to guide change efforts and determine the leadership style that should be adopted to foster sustainable and continuous change. Future studies should focus on other leadership style categories as well as the Kotter transformation model. A future study might look at the link between the transactional and transformational leadership styles, as well as the other planned change models described in this paper.

Author Contributions: Methodology, N.B.Z.; Investigation, J.C. and H.B.; Resources, M.R.; Writing—original draft, A.M.M. and A.B.H.-L.; Writing—review & editing, F.A.; Visualization, H.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding and the APC was funded by the Lebanese International University.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Lebanese International University (LIUIRB-231031-AM-301, 12 December 2023).

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to confidentiality.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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