

ADAPTIVE RESILIENCE IN NEWLY ESTABLISHED PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how a newly established public organization adapts to organizational change under institutional expansion, limited resources, and structural uncertainty, conditions that classical change models do not adequately address.

Design/methodology/approach: A qualitative single-case study was conducted at the Office of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Pamekasan Regency, Indonesia, between November 2025 and February 2026. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nine purposively selected informants, one month of participant observation, and document review. They were analysed through open coding, constant comparison, and theoretical comparison, with source and method triangulation and member checking supporting trustworthiness.

Findings: Change did not follow a linear unfreeze–change–refreeze sequence. Six interacting elements emerged: pre-unfreezing, identity release, adaptive coping mechanisms, cultural accelerators, fragile refreezing, and ecosystem support. Informal adaptation, the religious meaning attached to work, and external partnerships sustained operations, whereas stability remained temporary because central policy revisions repeatedly altered work procedures.

Research limitations/implications: The single-case design and short observation period limit generalisation; the framework is context-sensitive and requires testing in other settings and over longer periods.

Practical implications: Newly formed public organizations should assess readiness before change, facilitate identity transition, formalise effective informal practices, draw on shared religious-cultural values, and institutionalise external partnerships.

Originality/value: The study proposes the Adaptive Resilience Framework, which extends change-management theory by integrating dynamic capabilities, collaborative governance, and religious-cultural values in a non-Western, resource-constrained public-sector context.

Keywords: change management; adaptive resilience; institutional expansion; public organization; dynamic capabilities

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Public organizations are often created or expanded through policy decisions that leave little time for preparation. This study shows how a newly established ministry office in Indonesia kept serving pilgrims despite limited staff, unclear procedures, and shifting central regulations. By revealing how informal adaptation, religious motivation, and community partnerships sustained operations, it fills a gap in change-management research, which largely assumes stable, well-resourced organizations. The findings offer policymakers and public

managers practical guidance on preparing, supporting, and stabilising new public institutions so that citizens continue to receive reliable services during institutional transitions.

INTRODUCTION

Public organizations are frequently reshaped by political and administrative decisions that take effect faster than the organizations can prepare for them. Such turbulence, in which events, demands, and support interact in highly variable and unpredictable ways, has become a chronic condition of contemporary governance (Ansell et al., 2023). Expansion policies illustrate the problem. Evidence from Uganda shows that the proliferation of administrative units can produce unforeseen consequences, including workforce disorder and service gaps (Cohen, 2024; Mutebi et al., 2024). A comparable process unfolded in Indonesia after the revision of Law No. 39/2008, when several new ministries were established, including the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, through Presidential Regulation No. 92/2025. At the district level, as in Pamekasan Regency, the newly established office had to begin operating immediately even though its resources were limited and its structure was not yet in place.

The change-management literature continues to treat Lewin's three-stage *unfreezing–changing–refreezing* model and Kotter's eight-step approach as principal references (Burnes, 2020). Critics, however, argue that both models are overly linear and depend heavily on top-down leadership (Bakari et al., 2017; Carreno, 2025), and review evidence on change success similarly foregrounds communication, a clear vision, and top-management commitment (Dempsey et al., 2021). Assumptions of initial stability and resource adequacy are also difficult to satisfy in newly developed public organizations, where capacity often erodes through reorganization and budget cuts (Ansell et al., 2021; Elston & Zhang, 2025). Beyond structure, cultural and religious dimensions are rarely accommodated in mainstream change models, even though research indicates that religious values can function as a source of motivation and social cohesion in the public sector (Dik et al., 2024; Rocha & Pinheiro, 2020). Global scholarship, moreover, remains dominated by Western perspectives (Nicholson et al., 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2025), so local contexts are often overlooked.

Alternative lenses such as *dynamic capabilities* (Teece, 2007) and *collaborative governance* (Emerson et al., 2012) are promising because they emphasise sustained adaptation supported by an organization's ecosystem. Yet research on dynamic capabilities in the public sector is still emerging (Loureiro et al., 2021), and the available evidence concerns established organizations, such as public bodies implementing administrative reform in Brazil (Castelo & Gomes, 2023). Research on organizational resilience likewise remains conceptually contested (Hillmann & Guenther, 2021; Muñoz et al., 2022). Public-sector models identify planning, adaptation, and learning as critical phases of resilience (Butkus et al., 2024), but, to the authors' knowledge, how these phases unfold when an organization is created without any preparatory phase remains unexamined. The application of these perspectives to newly formed public organizations, such as the Office of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Pamekasan Regency, is therefore underexplored.

This study responds to these gaps by examining that office as a newly formed public organization. The site was selected because of the distinctive characteristics of Madura, a highly religious region with strong religious traditions. Pamekasan recorded a 2026 pilgrim volume of 1,384, a relatively large number compared with other areas in East Java, and is supported by a network of Islamic boarding schools and Hajj guidance groups (*Kelompok Bimbingan Ibadah Haji dan Umrah*, KBIH). This context sharpens the tension between a new bureaucratic system and religious expectations, offering a rich setting in which to observe adaptation under

structural pressure and strong local values. The study aims to develop a change-management framework suited to public organizations facing structural disruption and resource constraints by identifying the adaptive elements that emerge in the field and situating them within an Adaptive Resilience Framework. It is guided by one main research question: *How does an emerging public organization adapt to organizational change under conditions of limited resources and uncertainty?* Two supporting questions refine it: (a) to what extent do the assumptions of classical change models hold in this setting, and (b) which elements and relationships explain how adaptation unfolds?

The study makes four contributions. Theoretically, it extends the Lewin–Kotter sequence by adding a pre-unfreezing phase and the notion of fragile refreezing, and it connects identity transition (Bridges, 2009), dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007), and religious-cultural values within a single framework. Empirically, it provides rare access to the earliest operational phase of a post-expansion public organization in a non-Western, religiously embedded setting. Methodologically, it demonstrates theory building from a single revelatory case through staged, transparent coding and multiple forms of triangulation (Lindgreen et al., 2021a; Pratt et al., 2022). Practically, it offers guidance for policymakers and public managers who must establish new institutions under uncertainty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classical and Critical Perspectives on Organizational Change

Kurt Lewin's three-stage model of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing is widely regarded as a foundation of planned-change thinking (Burnes, 2020). Its simplicity explains its popularity, yet critics find it too linear and dependent on stable initial conditions (Bakari et al., 2017). In the public sector, the refreezing phase is rarely achieved because the environment continually imposes new demands (Haug et al., 2024), and bureaucratic rigidity and limited resources further constrain organizational improvement and adaptability (Novandika et al., 2025). Kotter's eight-step model emphasises leadership and communication (Sittrop & Crosthwaite, 2021), but it still relies on top-down leadership and a rigid sequence of stages that is difficult to implement in high-speed environments (Carreno, 2025). Both models are further challenged by the concept of organizational readiness for change (Weiner et al., 2020), which stresses collective belief among organizational members. Although relevant, this concept presupposes an established structure and identity, which newly formed post-expansion organizations do not always have.

Transition, Identity, and Non-Western Perspectives

Beyond the structural dimension, a psychological perspective is also important. Bridges (2009) distinguishes *change* as an external event from *transition* as an internal process and stresses the need to let go of the old identity before accepting new conditions. This perspective helps explain why many initiatives fail: not because of their design, but because the human aspect is poorly managed. It does not, however, explain how transition occurs when the organization itself does not yet have a clear identity. In recent years, scholars have also called for attention to non-Western perspectives. Farazmand (2002) emphasises the role of local culture and religion in public administration, and Ongaro and Tantardini (2024) examine the relationship between religion and bureaucracy. In Indonesia, the paradigm of Islamic public administration (Hariani & Soegiono, 2025) shows how religious values can interact with formal systems, and spiritual leadership has been associated with the effectiveness of change (Jahroni et al., 2024). Studies of Islamic organizations similarly link Qur'anic principles to

organizational structure, leadership, adaptability, and institutional resilience (Rapae & Mahmud, 2025). These findings suggest that religious values are not merely a backdrop but a source of motivation and social cohesion.

Resources, Collaboration, and Dynamic Capabilities

When internal resources are limited, cross-sector collaboration becomes crucial. The collaborative governance framework (Emerson et al., 2012) describes how involving diverse actors can build shared capacity, and studies in Indonesia show that cross-sector collaboration helps local governments cope with budget constraints (Aqsa & Nugroho, 2023; Nugroho et al., 2025). Most studies, however, focus on actors with balanced bargaining positions, whereas cases of high dependence on external partners are rarely studied. From a strategic perspective, the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) emphasises resource-based advantage, but the VRIO conditions are seldom met in new organizations. The dynamic capabilities approach (Teece, 2007) is therefore more relevant because it emphasises an organization's ability to rebuild resources amid uncertainty, and Helfat and Peteraf (2003) add the capability lifecycle, which describes how capabilities develop from founding to maturity.

Research on dynamic capabilities in the public sector is still developing (Loureiro et al., 2021). Empirical work suggests that dynamic capabilities can mediate the effectiveness of organizational change in public organizations (Castelo & Gomes, 2023), that sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities are associated with public-sector performance (Mwanza & Dar, 2025), and that in public healthcare organizations certain capacities become visible only when resource-management difficulties arise (Loureiro et al., 2023). In the context of Hajj services, effective management, continuous evaluation, and institutional support have been identified as important for maintaining service performance (Nasution et al., 2025), and studies of Islamic organizations indicate that flexibility, iterative adjustment, collaboration, and continuous evaluation can support adaptation under changing conditions (Pratama et al., 2025).

Organizational Resilience, Bricolage, and Robust Governance

Organizational resilience has attracted growing attention but remains a contested construct. Hillmann and Guenther (2021) review its conceptual and operational problems and call for a clearer, more parsimonious concept, while Hillmann (2021) shows that disciplinary perspectives with different ontologies have shaped how resilience is understood. Muñoz et al. (2022) contrast resilience with robustness and antifragility as distinct responses to adversity. In the public sector, Butkus et al. (2024) identify planning, adaptation, and enhanced learning as critical phases explaining resilience. Related work on robust governance argues that public organizations facing turbulence need to combine flexible adaptation with proactive innovation (Ansell et al., 2023), and that public managers who mix and match governance practices, acting as bricoleurs, help create robust responses (Carstensen et al., 2023). Bricolage, the appropriation and repurposing of resources at hand, has also been shown to underpin how public-sector staff innovate without the resources that normally support implementation (Taylor et al., 2021). Taken together, these streams suggest that resilience in resource-poor public organizations may rest on improvised reconfiguration, but they have rarely been combined with change-management theory.

Most existing change-management theories were developed in relatively stable organizational settings in which structures and resources are already established. This assumption becomes problematic when the theories are applied to new post-expansion public organizations operating under institutional uncertainty and resource limitations, and

bibliometric studies confirm the strong influence of Western perspectives in organizational-change research (Nicholson et al., 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study does not treat the six elements it reports as entirely new concepts. They are contextual extensions and combinations of existing perspectives that emerge from the empirical setting. Pre-unfreezing and fragile refreezing extend the conventional sequence of change, identity release highlights the organizational-identity dimension of transition, adaptive coping mechanisms reflect how limited resources are addressed through informal adaptation, and cultural accelerators and ecosystem support highlight the roles of religious values and external relationships in sustaining adaptation.

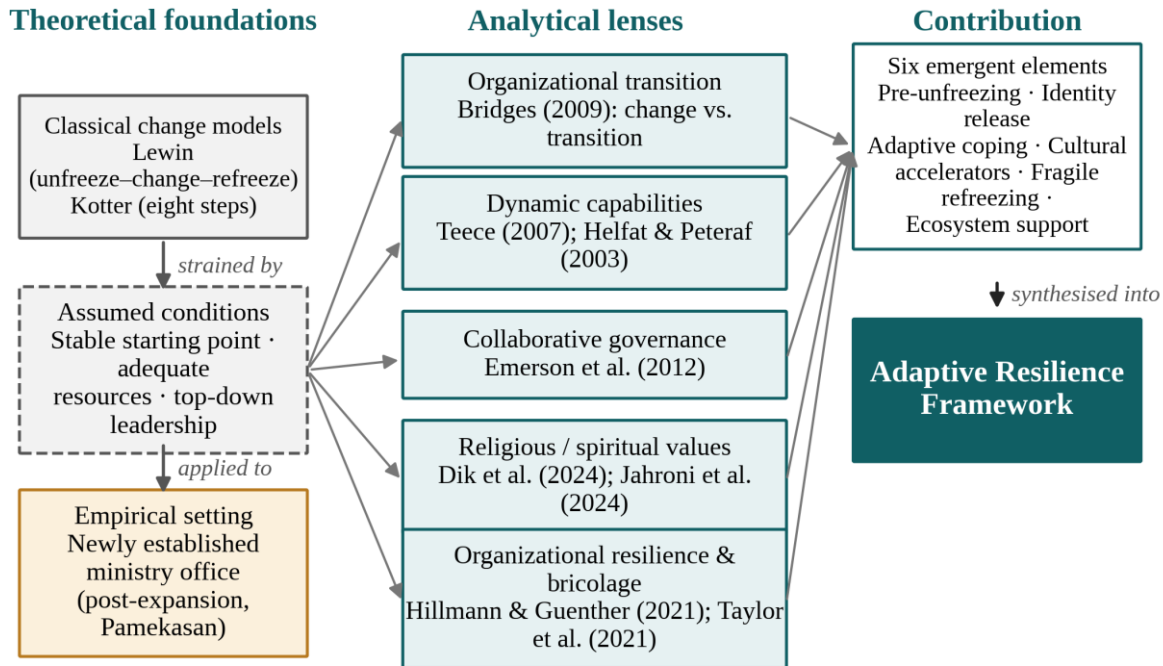
Research Propositions

Because this is an inductive, theory-building study, the literature is used to formulate sensitising research propositions rather than hypotheses to be tested. The propositions oriented the interview guide, while the framework itself was derived from the data rather than imposed on it. P1: In newly established post-expansion public organizations, the absence of a preparatory phase leads work to continue on inherited routines rather than through planned unfreezing (Burnes, 2020; Dempsey et al., 2021; Weiner et al., 2020). P2: Where organizational boundaries with the predecessor remain blurred, the release of the old identity occurs gradually and informally rather than through formal facilitation (Bridges, 2009). P3: Under resource limitation, informal coping practices that reconfigure resources at hand substitute for missing formal capacity and may develop into organizational capabilities (Loureiro et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2021; Teece, 2007). P4: Shared religious-cultural meanings of work strengthen coping by sustaining motivation under additional workload (Dik et al., 2024; Jahroni et al., 2024). P5: External actors with long-standing ties provide complementary resources that sustain operations (Aqsa & Nugroho, 2023; Emerson et al., 2012). P6: Where central regulation is frequently revised, post-change stability remains temporary, and the organization must adapt repeatedly (Ansell et al., 2023; Haug et al., 2024; Panayiotou et al., 2019).

Research Model

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model. Classical change models rest on assumptions of stability, adequate resources, and top-down leadership that are strained in a newly established ministry office. Five lenses are therefore brought to bear on the case: organizational transition, dynamic capabilities, collaborative governance, religious-cultural values, and organizational resilience with bricolage. Their combination with the empirical setting is used to identify emergent elements, which are then synthesised into the Adaptive Resilience Framework. The model aligns the research objectives, the theoretical lenses, the propositions, and the empirical analysis, and it provides the logic for the methodology and results that follow.

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework of the Study



Source: Authors' conceptualisation, adapted from the literature cited in the Literature Review.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a single-case design. Its orientation is not only to describe the case but to build theory from it. The chosen case is the Office of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Pamekasan Regency, a newly formed public organization created through institutional expansion under Presidential Regulation No. 92/2025. A single-case design is appropriate because the case is revelatory: it provides access to the early phases of a post-expansion organization, which are rarely documented in the literature. The design is aligned with the research questions, which ask how and why adaptation unfolds rather than how often, and with the theory-building objective of the study (Lindgreen et al., 2021a). Figure 2 summarises the research design and analytic procedure.

Research Setting and Sample

The research was conducted from November 2025 to February 2026, coinciding with the organization's initial operational period. The setting is a district-level office located in Pamekasan Regency, East Java, in the same complex as the Ministry of Religious Affairs office from which it was separated. Nine informants were purposively selected for their direct involvement in the change process: the head of the office (P1), two structural officials (S1, S2), three daily executive staff (A1, A2, A3), two interns (M1, M2), and one representative of external partners from the Hajj and Umrah Guidance Group (K1). The diversity of positions allows triangulation of sources. As is common in qualitative research, the sample is intended to support transferability of findings to similar contexts rather than statistical generalisation.

Data Collection

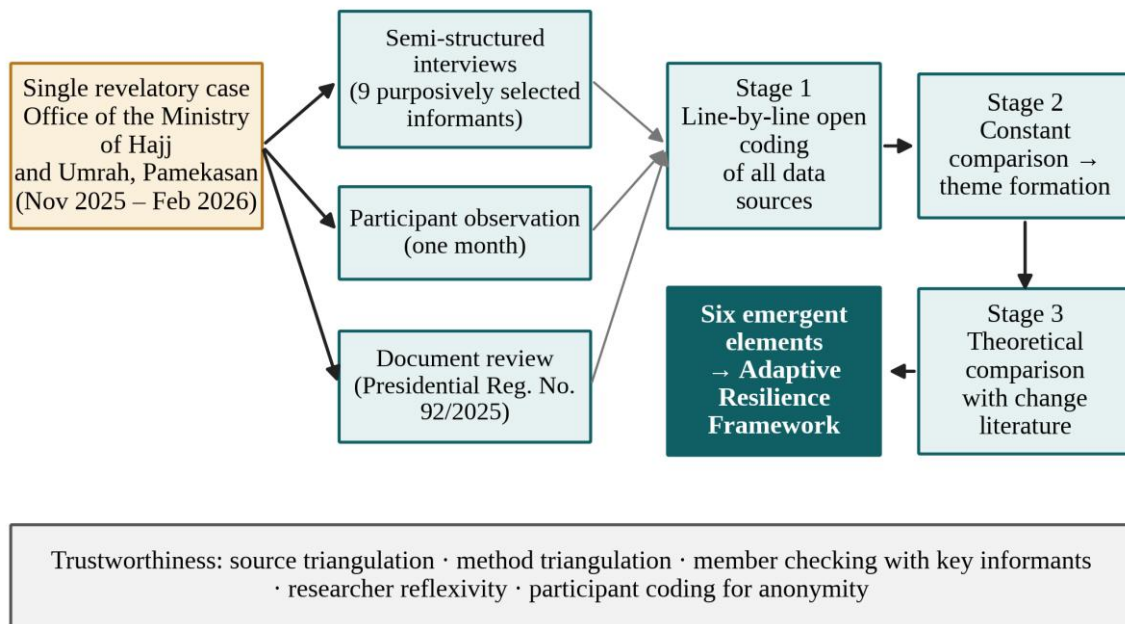
Data collection used three techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with interview guides that followed the theoretical framework but remained open to emerging themes. Second, participatory observation was carried out for one month, during which the researchers engaged in daily office activities. Third, document review included Presidential Regulation No. 92/2025 as the formal basis for establishing the new institution. Interviews, observation, and documents were collected within the November 2025–February 2026 fieldwork period. Participant codes (P, S, A, M, K) are used throughout to protect identities.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis consisted of three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The process began with line-by-line open coding of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to identify recurring expressions and actions related to organizational change. Second, related codes were compared and grouped through constant comparison into broader themes, such as lack of preparation, adjustment to new roles, informal coping, religious motivation, temporary stabilisation, and external support. Third, these themes were compared with the existing change-management literature and refined into six emergent elements: pre-unfreezing, identity release, adaptive coping mechanisms, cultural accelerators, fragile refreezing, and ecosystem support. The framework was developed by examining the relationships among these elements rather than by imposing a predetermined model on the data. Making the coding logic explicit in this way responds to calls for transparent and reflexive qualitative practice (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Lindgreen et al., 2021b; Pratt et al., 2022).

The validity of the data was maintained through source triangulation (comparing information from different informants), method triangulation (comparing interviews, observations, and documents), and member checking with key informants to confirm the researchers' interpretations. Ethical considerations were observed throughout: participants were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily, and their identities were protected through participant codes. The researchers also reflected on their position and their relationship with the research setting during data collection and interpretation to minimise potential bias. Two limitations should be noted: the observation period was relatively short, and the researchers' institutional relationship with the campus from which the interns came may have shaped interpretation.

Figure 2
Research Design and Analytic Procedure



Source: Authors' research design.

RESULTS

Informant Characteristics

The study involved nine informants with varied backgrounds (Table 1). The head of the office (P1) had eight years of experience in the Ministry of Religious Affairs before the expansion. The two structural officials (S1, S2) were the Head of the Administration Subdivision and the Head of the Hajj Service Section, with an average of 12 years of experience. Three executive staff (A1, A2, A3) handled daily administrative activities. The two interns (M1, M2) came from the Da'wah Management Study Program at IAI Miftahul Ulum Pamekasan, and the external informant (K1) represented a Hajj and Umrah Guidance Group that had partnered with the office for more than five years.

Table 1
Informant Characteristics and Data Sources

Code	Position / role	Background and relation to the case
P1	Head of office	Eight years of experience in the Ministry of Religious Affairs before the expansion
S1, S2	Structural officials	Head of the Administration Subdivision and Head of the Hajj Service Section; average of 12 years of experience
A1, A2, A3	Executive staff	Handle daily administrative activities
M1, M2	Interns	Da'wah Management Study Program, IAI Miftahul Ulum Pamekasan
K1	External partner	Representative of the Hajj and Umrah Guidance Group (KBIH); partnership of more than five years

Source: Authors' fieldwork data (November 2025–February 2026).

Preparation, Resource Constraints, and Coping

The findings suggest that applying classical change models in this context faces several limitations. The earliest problem was the absence of a preparatory phase. Several informants reported that the change occurred suddenly, without socialisation or training. A1 recalled, "I was notified suddenly. Next month it would no longer be the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Preparation? There was none." A1 added that "we just ran with it," that there had been no socialisation or standard work system, and that staff "immediately just worked according to the old habits." A2 likewise expressed confusion owing to the lack of a clear standard operating procedure. In the early stages, work patterns were therefore maintained provisionally on the basis of old routines, and employees adapted while carrying out operational tasks.

Resource limitations were the second major challenge. The number of available employees did not meet ideal needs, which increased workload. A2 reported that work previously handled by others now had to be done alone, and A3 said that overtime had become almost a daily habit. Observation corroborated these accounts. While verifying pilgrim data, the researcher observed two staff members sitting on the floor (*lesehan*) and checking every document, while prospective pilgrims arrived, queued, and waited without anyone greeting or directing them because all officers were occupied. The limitation thus concerned not only staffing levels but also operational support facilities. Organizations responded with informal strategies: the internship period was extended from one to one and a half months (P1, M1), and interns assisted with data input and document correction (M2).

Identity, Culture, and Ecosystem Support

From a psychological perspective, the change did not trigger significant resistance, and most staff were neutral. A1 said, "I realize that this early stage of the work will inevitably encounter many obstacles, but we are principled that the work must continue." Nevertheless, the issue of organizational identity persisted. The office remained in the same complex as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which blurred the boundary between the old and new organizations, and the head of office interpreted the change as a form of promotion (P1). Identity release therefore occurred gradually rather than through formal facilitation (A2, P1). Staff also repeatedly drew on religious meaning to make sense of the workload: A2 referred to "serving God's guests" and to "work is worship," and M1 spoke of helping the *Ummah*. External actors further sustained operations. The campus showed flexibility in extending the internship period, and the relationship with the KBIH was maintained because the same personnel remained involved (K1).

Fragile Refreezing and Synthesis

The stability that began to form did not last long. Policy changes from the centre forced the emerging work procedures to be adjusted repeatedly (A3, P1). A3 described a situation in which the organization had no time to adapt before new changes appeared, and observation also recorded procedures being revised within a relatively short time. A review of Presidential Regulation No. 92/2025 confirmed the formal basis for establishing the new organization. From these findings, the classical model cannot fully explain the practice of change; several elements emerged consistently, reflecting a pattern of organizational adaptation in the face of limitation and uncertainty. Table 2 shows how first-order codes were grouped into the six elements, and Table 3 summarises the elements with their empirical evidence and theoretical anchors.

Table 2
From First-Order Codes to Emergent Elements

Emergent element	Representative first-order codes	Data sources
Pre-unfreezing	Sudden notification; no socialisation or training; confusion about standard procedures; work on old habits	Interviews (A1, A2); document review
Identity release	Neutral staff response; change interpreted as promotion; shared complex with the Ministry of Religious Affairs	Interviews (A1, A2, P1)
Adaptive coping mechanisms	Increased workload; daily overtime; internship extended from 1 to 1.5 months; interns assist with data input and document correction	Interviews (A2, A3, P1, M1, M2); observation
Cultural accelerators	"Serving God's guests"; "work is worship"; helping the Ummah	Interviews (A2, M1)
Fragile refreezing	Policy changes from the centre; procedures revised within a short time	Interviews (A3, P1); observation
Ecosystem support	Campus flexibility in internship extension; KBIH relationship maintained through the same personnel	Interviews (K1, P1)

Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 3
Empirical Identification of Emerging Elements of Change

Element	Short description	Empirical evidence	Theoretical anchor
Pre-unfreezing	Readiness assessment before change	No socialisation and training; work patterns still follow previous habits (A1, A2)	Lewin's unfreezing (Burnes, 2020); readiness (Weiner et al., 2020)
Identity release	Letting go of the old organizational identity	Neutral staff response (A1, A2); interpreted as promotion (P1); shared complex makes release of the old culture difficult (A2, P1)	Transition (Bridges, 2009)
Adaptive coping mechanisms	Informal strategies to overcome limitations	Internship period extended from 1 to 1.5 months (P1, M1); students assist with data input and document correction (M2)	Dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007); bricolage (Taylor et al., 2021)
Cultural accelerators	Religious values as adaptation reinforcement	"Serving God's guests" (A2); "work is worship" (A2); "help the Ummah" (M1)	Religion in the workplace (Dik et al., 2024); spiritual leadership (Jahroni et al., 2024)
Fragile refreezing	Transient post-change stability	Policy changes from the centre (A3, P1); procedures revised within a short time (observation)	Process view of change (Panayiotou et al., 2019); robust governance (Ansell et al., 2023)
Ecosystem support	Ongoing support from external actors	Campus flexibility in internship extension; KBIH relationship maintained through the same personnel (K1)	Collaborative governance (Emerson et al., 2012)

Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 3 shows that the emergent elements are closely related to the organization's unstable initial state, its limited resources, and the roles of cultural values and external support in sustaining the change process. The empirical evidence was cross-checked across interview accounts and field observations, and the six elements were not derived from a single informant or an isolated event. Pre-unfreezing and identity release were identified from staff and leadership accounts, whereas adaptive coping was reflected in the adjustment of internship arrangements and task allocation. Cultural accelerators emerged from recurring references to religious meaning in work, fragile refreezing from repeated procedural changes following central policy adjustments, and ecosystem support from continued cooperation with external partners.

DISCUSSION

Why Linear Models Fall Short

The experience of change at the Office of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Pamekasan Regency reveals conditions that cannot be fully explained by the stages proposed by Lewin and Kotter (Table 4). The change occurred suddenly, without a preparatory phase, so employees had to work with makeshift procedures. This differs from Lewin's assumption of stable initial conditions before unfreezing begins (Burnes, 2020), and it is consistent with the view that readiness presupposes an established structure that new organizations lack (Weiner et al., 2020). It also qualifies the success factors typically listed in change reviews, such as communication, a clear vision, and top-management commitment (Dempsey et al., 2021): in Pamekasan these were largely unavailable at the outset, and work continued regardless. The ambiguity of organizational identity further slowed the release of old routines, a dimension rarely discussed in Kotter's top-down model (Carreno, 2025) but anticipated by the distinction between change and transition (Bridges, 2009).

Table 4
Classical Assumptions Compared with the Pamekasan Case

Dimension	Assumption in classical models	Observation in the case	Implication
Starting condition	Stable organization with a defined state to unfreeze (Lewin)	Sudden notification; no preparation; old routines continued	A pre-unfreezing phase is needed
Direction of change	Top-down, leader-driven sequence (Kotter)	Adaptation by staff, interns, and partners in the field	Change is distributed and emergent
Resources	Adequate capacity to implement steps	Staff shortages, overtime, limited facilities	Informal coping substitutes for formal capacity
Identity	Old identity can be released through facilitation	Shared complex blurs boundaries; gradual release	Identity release must be actively supported
End state	Refreezing into a new stable state	Repeated procedural revision after central policy changes	Refreezing is fragile and temporary

Source: Authors' analysis.

Adaptive Coping, Bricolage, and Dynamic Capabilities

Interestingly, the organization developed adaptive mechanisms that were not formally designed. The extension of student internships, for example, was an informal strategy to address the manpower shortage. From the perspective of dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007), this practice can be understood as improvisation that may develop into an organizational capability. During observation, the interns did not merely help with administration but became part of the organizational learning process, which shows that adaptation often arises from simple solutions emerging in the field. In this case, adaptation occurred through reconfiguring available resources rather than providing new formal resources, allowing the organization to maintain its activities while gradually developing ways of working that fit the new conditions. This resonates with evidence that public-sector staff innovate through the appropriation and repurposing of resources at hand when formal support is absent (Taylor et al., 2021), and that certain organizational capacities become visible only when resource-management difficulties arise (Loureiro et al., 2023). It also extends findings that dynamic capabilities mediate the effectiveness of change in public organizations (Castelo & Gomes, 2023) by showing how such capabilities can emerge before formal structures exist. Unlike employee-driven bricolage within established healthcare organizations, however, the bricolage observed here was organizational and depended on actors outside the formal boundary, namely the campus and the KBIH.

Cultural Accelerators and Ecosystem Support

Religious values were also found to reinforce adaptation. Staff phrases such as "serving God's guests" or "work is worship" suggest that spiritual motivation acts as a cultural accelerator. This aligns with research by Jahroni et al. (2024), who emphasise the role of spiritual leadership in the effectiveness of change, and with reviews showing that religion and spirituality shape how employees experience work (Dik et al., 2024; Rocha & Pinheiro, 2020). In an organization without established structures, religious values act as a social glue and a source of psychological energy for survival, a point consistent with the argument that religion deserves a place in the study of public administration (Ongaro & Tantardini, 2024). Local religious values and traditions give staff the psychological energy to accept additional workload with a sincere attitude, which in turn makes informal strategies such as internship extensions or overtime easier to implement. Cultural values are therefore not just background but drivers that strengthen adaptive resilience.

In addition to these internal factors, ecosystem support plays an important role. The relationship with the KBIH and the campus's flexibility in extending the internship period constitute ecosystem support that sustains operations. This shows that collaborative governance (Emerson et al., 2012) occurs not only at the policy level but also in everyday informal relationships, and it complements Indonesian evidence that cross-sector collaboration helps local governments manage budget constraints (Aqsa & Nugroho, 2023; Nugroho et al., 2025). The relationship is reciprocal: the external ecosystem provides resources, while the organization's dynamic capabilities transform these resources into tangible capabilities that underpin sustainability. The organization's ability to learn and improvise therefore cannot stand alone but depends on external support.

Fragile Refreezing and the Structure of Indonesian Bureaucracy

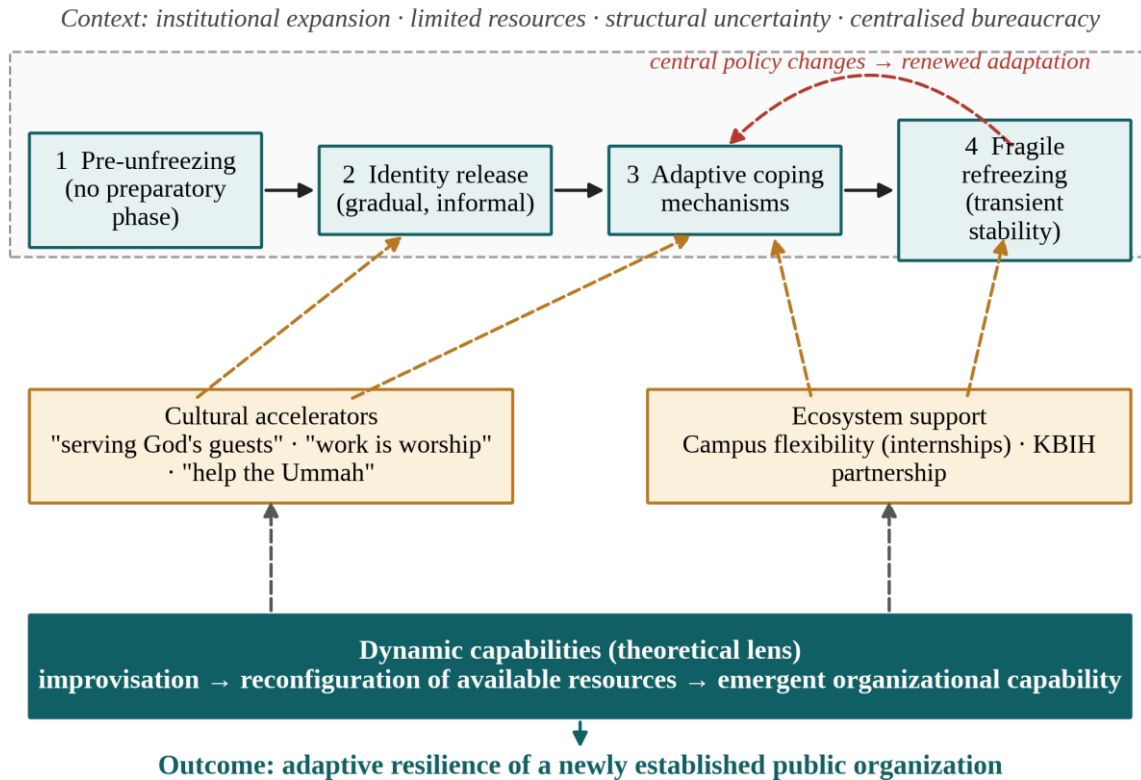
However, the stability that began to form proved fragile. New policies from the centre immediately changed procedures already in place, forcing the organization to adjust again. This shows that refreezing is never truly permanent but temporary, a pattern better captured by

process perspectives on sustained change (Panayiotou et al., 2019) and by the observation that public-sector change rarely reaches a refrozen state (Haug et al., 2024). It also echoes the claim that governance under turbulence requires robust responses that combine flexible adaptation with proactive innovation (Ansell et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, central regulations that change suddenly mean that work procedures in the regions are never fully established. Whenever an organization begins to find an operational rhythm, new policies from ministries or government regulations alter the mechanisms already in place. This indicates that refreezing is temporary because Indonesia's bureaucracy remains highly centralised and hierarchical, with high dependence on central directives, and this limits the space for regional autonomy to maintain internal stability. Fragile refreezing is therefore not only a technical phenomenon but a structural consequence of governance that positions regions as policy implementers rather than decision-makers.

Theoretical Contribution: The Adaptive Resilience Framework

Overall, this study confirms that change in a new public organization does not follow a linear pattern but unfolds adaptively through a combination of informal mechanisms, cultural values, and external support. The proposed Adaptive Resilience Framework (Figure 3) departs from this reality by adding a pre-unfreezing phase and elements such as identity release and cultural accelerators to the conventional sequence, with dynamic capabilities as the theoretical lens that explains how improvised practices become organizational capability. As noted in the Literature Review, the six elements are contextual extensions and combinations of existing perspectives rather than entirely new concepts; the contribution lies in bringing them together for a post-expansion public organization operating under uncertainty. The framework also refines resilience research. Whereas public-sector models emphasise planning, adaptation, and learning as phases of resilience (Butkus et al., 2024), the Pamekasan case shows adaptation and learning occurring without prior planning, supported by cultural and ecosystem resources. It adds to the argument that resilience should be distinguished from robustness and antifragility (Muñoz et al., 2022) by suggesting that fragile refreezing and repeated re-adaptation are better described as recurrent resilience than as a return to equilibrium, and it responds to calls for conceptual clarity in the resilience literature (Hillmann, 2021; Hillmann & Guenther, 2021).

Figure 3
Empirically Derived Adaptive Resilience Framework



Source: Authors' analysis of interview, observation, and document data.

Practical and Policy Implications

The findings have implications for policymakers and public managers responsible for establishing or expanding public institutions (Table 5). Because change arrived without preparation, readiness assessment, basic socialisation, and interim standard procedures should be provided before or at the moment of institutional transition. Because identity release proceeded informally, formal facilitation of the shift in identity, including physical and symbolic separation from the predecessor organization, would help staff adjust. Effective informal practices, such as flexible internship arrangements, should be recognised and formalised rather than left to improvisation. Religious-cultural motivation can be acknowledged in leadership practice without substituting for adequate staffing and facilities. Finally, central government should stabilise regulatory revisions or phase them in, because frequent changes prevent regional offices from consolidating their procedures.

Table 5
Practical Implications Mapped to the Emergent Elements

Element	Implication for public managers and policymakers
Pre-unfreezing	Provide readiness assessment, socialisation, and interim standard procedures at the moment of transition
Identity release	Facilitate the identity transition explicitly, including clearer separation from the predecessor organization
Adaptive coping mechanisms	Recognise and formalise effective informal practices; avoid relying on overtime and temporary labour alone
Cultural accelerators	Acknowledge shared religious-cultural motivation in leadership and communication without substituting for resources
Fragile refreezing	Phase in and consolidate central regulatory changes so that regional offices can stabilise procedures
Ecosystem support	Institutionalise partnerships with campuses and community organizations through formal arrangements

Source: Authors' analysis.

Contextual Insights

The findings should be read in the context of a religiously embedded, centralised, and resource-constrained setting. In Madura, where Islamic boarding schools and KBIH form dense community networks, religious expectations shape how staff and partners understand public service, and Hajj services themselves depend on continuous evaluation and institutional support (Nasution et al., 2025). Studies of Islamic organizations show that flexibility, collaboration, and Qur'anic principles of leadership and delegation can support adaptation and resilience (Pratama et al., 2025; Rapae & Mahmud, 2025), and research on Islamic public administration indicates that religious values interact with formal systems (Hariani & Soegiono, 2025). Because the literature remains dominated by Western perspectives (Nicholson et al., 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2025), these contextual insights help to explain why a framework built on Lewin and Kotter requires adaptation when applied to non-Western public organizations. The framework should nevertheless be viewed as context-sensitive rather than universally generalisable.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that organizational change in a newly expanded public organization does not follow a linear process. The case of the Office of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Pamekasan Regency indicates that change develops through a combination of informal adaptation, religious values, and support from the surrounding organizational environment. Six elements were identified: pre-unfreezing, identity release, adaptive coping mechanisms, cultural accelerators, fragile refreezing, and ecosystem support. These findings suggest that change in a newly established public organization requires more than formal change procedures. The Adaptive Resilience Framework developed here provides a contextual perspective for understanding how organizations respond to uncertainty, limited resources, changing structures, and the need to establish new organizational identities.

Theoretically, the study extends the Lewin–Kotter sequence and links it with identity transition, dynamic capabilities, collaborative governance, and religious-cultural values. Empirically, it documents the earliest operational phase of a post-expansion public organization in a non-Western setting. Practically, it points to readiness assessment, identity facilitation,

formalisation of effective informal practices, and stabilisation of regulatory change as priorities for new public institutions. The framework is particularly relevant to emerging public organizations undergoing institutional change under conditions of resource limitation and uncertainty, while its applicability may be more limited in mature organizations with stable structures and established resources.

This study is limited by its focus on a single case in Pamekasan Regency and by the fact that the research was conducted during the organization's early operational period. The observation period was also limited, and the researchers' institutional relationship with the campus from which the interns came may have influenced the interpretation of some findings. Further research should therefore examine the framework in other regions and organizational settings and follow the change process over a longer period, which would help determine whether the six elements also appear as organizations develop and their institutional conditions change. Comparative multiple-case designs and longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable. The framework should be viewed as context-sensitive rather than universally generalisable, and its applicability in other organizational settings requires further empirical examination.

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Conceptualization, A.B. and R.; methodology, A.B. and R.; formal analysis, A.B.; investigation, A.B.; writing—original draft preparation, A.B.; writing—review and editing, R., Rh. and K.O.; supervision, K.O. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily; their identities were protected through participant codes.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors used Claude (Anthropic) to restructure the manuscript according to the journal template, to edit the language, and to prepare the figures. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no financial conflicts of interest. The institutional relationship between the authors and the campus from which the interns came is disclosed in the Method and Conclusion sections.

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