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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/17705

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/17705>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFLUENCE OF INTENTIONAL GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS ON THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF ASSOCIATIONS IN MOROCCO EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 15 August 2023

Final Accepted: 18 September 2023

Published: October 2023

Key words:-

Governance, Intentional Mechanisms,
Global Performance, Associations,
Youth

Abstract

Moroccan youth is currently in a situation of failure; their supervision remains a crucial challenge for all actors including associations. Moreover, the 2011 constitution has allowed the recognition of the latter as a strategic actor by granting new missions. These important advances have challenged associations to improve their performance by integrating governance in an optimal way. This study examines the influence of intentional governance mechanisms on the overall performance of Moroccan associations, particularly those working in the youth field. The literature review focused on two aspects: the intentional mechanisms of governance and its organizational determinants, and the overall performance of associations and its dimensions. The epistemological choice that was made in the context of this research work is positivism adapted to a hypothetico-deductive reasoning. An initial exploratory qualitative study with Moroccan associative actors allowed us to frame the different variables in relation to the two concepts studied in the Moroccan context and to make them consistent in a conceptual model.

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Introduction:-

The answer to the question of why an association should be governed is quite fundamental as (Glaser, 2003, p. 39) points out that "nonprofit organizations have governance problems that resemble those of for-profit businesses, but are often much more extreme. Indeed, the governance of NPOs and associations favors the analysis of their environment, their different stakeholders and their respective levels of commitment. As a result, the various stakeholders are subject to the association's interventions (Steen-Johnsen et al., 2011). From a microeconomic perspective, governance interacts between the awardees (benefiting from the majority of the value created) and the sponsors (paying for that value) (Ebrahim et al., 2014). It ensures an accomplished form of transparency through its compliance with the law (Arshad et al., 2014; Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). Thus, work on the concept of governance becomes an imperative (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015). In this sense, researchers are interested in the particularly strong link between governance and performance (Arshad et al., 2014; Blevins et al., 2020).

The objective of this work is to highlight the relationship between the intentional mechanisms of governance and the overall performance of associations working in the youth field in Morocco by seeking to estimate the effects of the former on the latter in order to improve the results of the said associations and consequently satisfy this category representing one of the pillars of development in this country. Therefore, the main question of our problem will be

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formulated as follows: to what extent do the intentional mechanisms of governance influence the overall performance of youth associations in Morocco?

From this main question flow other subsidiary questions, which we will try to answer throughout our article: Question Q.1 will focus on the effects of organizational determinants on the intentional mechanisms of governance. Question Q.2 will focus on the relationship between the associations' overall performance and its dimensions.

Our problematic combines an exploratory phase, which is the subject of this article, and a subsequent confirmatory phase, which has led us to opt for a "modified" positivist posture (Huberman and Miles). From the same point of view, and concerning the approach adopted in our research, we have adopted a hypothetico-deductive approach of modified positivist inspiration. With regard to the methodological approach, we opted, in the first place, for a qualitative approach. As for the research methods, we chose the individual semi-directive interview for the collection of data. Moreover, the choice of our sample was made according to the nature of the study. Indeed, for this exploratory study, the sample size was determined by referring to the principle of theoretical saturation. Thus, the sample chosen to conduct the interviews consisted of ten Moroccan associations working in the youth field at a national geographic scope. The qualitative study allowed us on the one hand to identify the different qualitative variables allowing us to build our research hypotheses leading to the understanding of the links between IMG and OPA. On the other hand, to propose our conceptual model.

Our work is structured around four main axes. First, we will present the conceptual framework of our research through an analysis of the literature review. Then, we will present the methodology adopted in the framework of our research. Finally, we will present and discuss the results obtained during the exploratory phase.

Literature Review:-

The various indicators concerning youth in Morocco reveal that the results obtained do not yet reach the expected aspirations, and that all actors working for and with this category, including associative organizations, must reflect on innovative solutions likely to achieve the desired results. This situation is concretized by worrying indicators testifying to the failure to meet the needs of this youth. As highlighted below:

"Morocco has 5.9 million young people aged from 15 to 24 years old, which represents 16.2% of the total population in 2021, 50.9% of them are male, 59.9% urban dwellers and 56.6% are aged from 15 to 19 years old. More than 6 out of 10 young people (64.6%) have a middle level diploma, 20.6% have a higher-level diploma and 14.8% have no diploma at all". (HCP, 2022)

Moreover, associations as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) act at the level of society in its broadest aspect via the management of global problems of society whether at national or international level. Indeed, the results expected by the said associations through their programs and projects aim on the one hand to achieve the objective of creating value for all stakeholders (Cabane, 2018). It should be noted that associations have an irreplaceable role in the creation of value, particularly social value, since they create free or quasi-free services for the benefit of their target. (Lee, Nowell, 2014). On the other hand, to bring about changes, notably aligned with the country's policies on the subject, on the state of the target population, in our case the youth. (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004, p. 204).

In Morocco, the 2011 constitution strengthened the position of associations in the management of public affairs by allowing them to contribute, within the framework of participatory democracy, to the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of decisions and projects of elected institutions and public authorities. (Constitution 2011).

As a result, the increasingly important role played by associations has led to an increase in expectations of them. As a result, associations today find themselves at a loss to meet the sometimes-divergent requirements of their stakeholders, including the implementation of management and governance systems and practices that are adapted to their expectations, particularly donors. The objective behind this is to improve the overall performance of these associations in order to achieve the expected results, namely the well-being of their targets.

Moreover, the importance of governance in the context of associations has been confirmed by Perez (2003) and Charreaux (1997, p.422), given the constantly growing role of these organizations without forgetting the diversity and weight of their stakeholders. In this regard, associations have been considered a relevant field to study the concept of governance (Zoukhoua, 2006, p.4).

From what has been presented, associations are led to work on governance. (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015). They have every interest in blending all of its forms and theories (Alcoléa-Bureth, 2019).

Moreover, the relationship between "good" governance and performance is particularly strong in associations. It has been of interest to a range of researchers (Arshad et al., 2014; Blevins et al., 2020).

As Plaisance (2021) indicates, governance offers the possibility of constituting structures (S), procedures (P) that are suitable for associations. In this regard, Perez (2009) and Cabane (2018), adding the behavioral component (C), refer to a governance system composed of these three elements (SPC). The implementation of this system will have an impact on the performance of the association. On the one hand, it makes it possible to define the role and coordination of the actors. (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016). On the other hand, it helps to attract and, above all, to retain competent staff (Ferkins et al., 2010). Moreover, the literature on associations has attempted to think about the concept of governance in the associative context. Hayden (2006, p. 118) states, "Governance is the means by which any organization holds itself accountable for its overall performance while providing direction to management. The vehicle for governance is a board of directors (...), which bears ultimate responsibility for the organization's performance and its ability to sustain itself.

However, beyond governance as a concept, it is the mechanisms that are then put in place that matter (Plaisance, 2021). In the context of our research, we adopt the definition of Hoarau and Laville (2008), mentioning the role of governance mechanisms, particularly intentional ones (Board of Directors, General Assembly, Management, etc.) in aligning the functioning of the organization with the objectives and values of the associative project. In fact, referring to the literature review, we now know that the defining medium is the associative project. This is protected by the intentional mechanisms of governance. (Plaisance, 2021). Also, as Brown (2005) points out, the board of directors (BOD) performs the essential function of protecting the values, the mission and the project of the association.

Furthermore, in order to gain credibility and legitimacy with its partners, particularly donors, the association must demonstrate the effectiveness of its strategy and the relevance of its management methods. To do so, it will have to constantly improve the quality of its performance evaluation. (LeRoux & Wright, 2010). The latter must include several dimensions, namely social, societal and environmental, in addition to financial performance. Brunet and Vanoni (2008) speak of a global performance.

It is also worth noting that the contingent approach, being used to "study optimal governance arrangements" (Musawir et al., 2020, p. 6), has been taken up in the framework proposed by Rey García et al. (2013) and also relies on performance as social constructs and this is because performance exists in the minds of various internal and external stakeholders of the organization. (Murray 2010, p. 433). This same framework offers a relevant perspective for addressing the relationship between governance and performance. Plaisance (2021) points out that "governance appears to contribute to the performance [...] of NPOs". In other words, it is necessary to "govern to enhance performance" of associations.

Conceptual framework of the research: governance and performance of associations

In order to make the "right" decisions, Plaisance (2021) points out that associations are invited to take into consideration the specificities of their internal and external environment. His work has focused on a set of determinants that can influence governance mechanisms, namely age, sector, area of intervention, network membership, status and size of the association. In our research, we will discuss each of these determinants, discussed by Plaisance (2021), with the different associative actors in order to choose the most appropriate ones for the Moroccan context.

Furthermore, as cited by Plaisance (2021), performance has become processual and is evaluated "in terms of input, process, output and outcome" (Sabert & Graham, 2014, p. 51.). In this regard, Lee and Nowell, (2014) point out that the conceptualization of association performance is elaborated by a broad sample of perspectives adopted by the authors, each based on distinct phases of the value generation process, (Lee & Nowell, 2014). The same authors noted the existence of a panoply of corresponding performance measurement frameworks; yet none fully represent them. The value generation process presents the major dimensions of overall association performance namely inputs, outputs, organizational capabilities, beneficiary outcomes and outcome outcomes as well as network membership. The said dimensions have been described by the authors as overarching perspectives of association performance. (Lee & Nowell, 2014).

In sum, in order to achieve their mission and ensure their sustainability, associations can resort to governance devices through its mechanisms including intentional on the one hand, and the evaluation of their performance via its dimensions on the other hand. (Plaisance, 2021). Quéinnec (2012) also emphasizes the contribution of governance to all the dimensions of non-profit performance and in particular that of associations.

Research Methodology:-

Epistemological Positioning (Adjusted Positivism)

It is clear that the complexity and variety of the problems that researchers face, particularly those in the social sciences and humanities, can never be confined exclusively to a single paradigm. On the contrary, it is the researcher's ability to move from one approach to another by varying each of them according to the questions and objectives of his or her research that makes it possible to evaluate the relevance of the knowledge that he or she produces.

Moreover, many authors, such as Evrard, have emphasized that the researcher's vision of the object studied is influenced by the epistemological position he/she adopts in his/her research. (Evrard, et al. 2006). It refers to the way in which the researcher approaches reality; consequently, it guides him. To this end, in this paragraph we will present the positioning of our research.

The researcher's work consists in questioning the facts in order to discover the underlying causalities by testing the theoretical hypotheses previously formulated. Thus, in a positivist perspective, knowledge evolves through the discovery of regularities and causalities of reality from observation independently of the observer.

Our problematic combines an exploratory phase and a confirmatory phase, which leads us to opt for an "adapted" positivist posture advocated by Huberman and Miles (2003), that is to say a significant positioning of profusion and superpositions. It is a question of combining the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. We have formulated research proposals, firstly, on the basis of the literature review and, secondly, on the basis of the findings of our exploratory phase.

We believe that this positioning is most appropriate for our research for the following reasons:

- Our conceptual framework highlights a multitude of dimensions that refer to the relationship that can exist between governance practices through its mechanisms, particularly intentional ones, and overall performance. Therefore, our problematic invites us to explain and explore the different concepts;
- The knowledge produced as a result of the back and forth between the field and theoretical knowledge leads us to put forward additional research proposals. This positioning will allow us to discover in depth the causalities between the concepts that we mobilize.

Generally, the objectives that guide any research work are understanding, description, explanation and prediction. However, in discovery work, the objective is to build a theory or a descriptive model through the understanding of a phenomenon. In justification work, the objective is to explain a phenomenon.

Methodological anchoring

Approach used in our research

First, we will attempt to explore the "causal" relationship of influence between the intentional mechanisms of governance and the overall performance of associations. To do this, we begin with a theoretical examination in order to formulate our hypotheses and end with empirical tests confirming or refuting these hypotheses. Indeed, we have adopted a hypothetico-deductive approach inspired by positivism, which is structured around three main stages:

- In the first stage, we tried to identify the key concepts of the research and to formulate hypotheses. This stage is carried out through a literature review based on the work done on the relationship between governance practices via its intentional mechanisms and the overall performance of associations and an empirical exploration through a qualitative study conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews on the case of 10 associations.
- In a second step, the theoretical aspect and the exploratory study are matched in order to build a conceptual model.

The third stage is devoted to testing the causal relationships between the variables and validating the conceptual model already drawn up, as well as confirming or invalidating the hypotheses formulated. This was done through a questionnaire administered to 115 associations throughout Morocco.

Methodological approach (Qualitative)

As discussed, the intentional mechanisms of governance and the overall performance of associations represent "latent" variables that can only be observed through a set of determinants (vectors of achievement), which makes our modeling work all the more difficult. For this reason, and considering our research objective, we opted first for a qualitative study. Indeed, the latter will allow us to delimit our research question and to clarify the theoretical concepts studied in order to propose our conceptual model.

There is no doubt that the qualitative study represents an approach that allows the analysis and understanding of the studied phenomena. Indeed, the objective is not limited to obtaining a quantity of numerical data, but must integrate data in the form of perceptions, representations, that is to say, to value the substance and the quality of the data. This approach, which belongs to descriptive research, focuses on the interpretations and experiences of the informants and their meaning. In this perspective, the definition of the qualitative approach can be presented as follows: "The goal of qualitative research is to develop concepts that help us understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) contexts, focusing on the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of all participants." (Kohn, L. and Christiaens, W. 2014, p.69). In addition, American psychologist Ulric Neisser (1976) also emphasized the importance of the qualitative approach in order to ensure what he called the "ecological compliance of cognitive psychology research." Overall, qualitative research provides insight into people's attitudes and perceptions, and allows for a more in-depth study of their opinions on a particular topic

Methods of data collection:-

There are many studies in the literature about data collection methods. Indeed, data and information collection can be defined as "the organized process of obtaining information from multiple sources in order to move from one level of knowledge or representation of a given situation to another level of knowledge or representation of the same situation, within the framework of a deliberate action whose objectives have been clearly defined, and which gives sufficient guarantees of validity". (De Ketele, Roegiers, 1993)

In this respect, we chose the semi-structured interview for our qualitative study. It should be remembered that the individual semi-directive interview, also known as an interview, is one of the most widely used tools for collecting information, particularly in the field of scientific research, and more specifically in the human sciences.

It has been defined by Grawitz (1992) as "a scientific investigation process, using a verbal communication process, to gather information in relation to a given goal". It is also, still for the same author, "a form of communication established between two people who do not know each other, with the aim of gathering certain information concerning a specific object". (Dépelteau, 2010, p.314). In addition, Tremblay sees that the individual interview represents "an observation technique that involves the use of questions, more or less direct, addressed to an informant encountered by chance or chosen according to previously established criteria. The purpose is to gather essential data on an issue, to analyze the informant as a representative of a particular environment, or to know his or her personality, mentality and conduct". (Sinarinzi, 1999, p10).

In fact, the individual research interview designates a data collection tool from which the interviewee seeks to collect data of different natures, i.e. information, feelings, perceptions, testimonies, etc., with a view to helping the researcher understand the phenomenon under study. Note that in our research, interviewee and informant mean the same thing.

Therefore, the focus will be on collecting verbal data through semi-directive interviews with associative actors in Morocco. We will take care, as far as possible, to limit the inductions, preconceptions or prejudices that any human being could have during the meeting with the interviewees.

In fine and in order to collect our data, we will put in place a strategy that allows us to use procedures adapted to the nature of the research. Also, the choice of the latter will be based on a battery of criteria established in advance, namely the relationship between the degree and precision of the desired information, the costs generated in terms of energy, execution time and data processing, as well as the availability of the final results.

Analysis of qualitative data

The methodology we have chosen to analyze the qualitative data collected from the interviews is content analysis. It is, in fact, considered to be the most appropriate method for studying the interviews. It is characterized by its

capacity to give an account of "what the interviewees said in the most objective and reliable way possible" (Andreani and Conchon, 2005). In fact, it is an analysis technique that allows us to transform the verbal discourse of the interviewees into text format, analyzing their similarities and differences in order to achieve an objective analysis of the phenomenon we want to understand.

The purpose of this method is to be able to analyze, through interviews, observations or focus, the expressions and behaviors of the interviewees, explicitly or implicitly. Generally, it aims at discovering, partially, the meaning of the message emitted by the interlocutor. Moreover, this method has undergone a clear improvement in terms of methodological development, thanks to the progress made in the field of information technology.

Content analysis is the most common approach to the study of interviews or qualitative observations, as pointed out by Krippendorff (1980). It involves transcribing the qualitative data, developing an analysis grid, coding the data collected, and processing it. It allows us to describe the survey material and study its meaning.

The aim of the content analysis method is to give an account of what the interviewees say in the most impartial and reliable way possible. Thus, its founder, Berelson (1952), defines it as "a research technique for objectively, systematically and quantitatively describing manifest communication content" (Lefebvre, 1989, p.383).

As previously stated, one of the objectives of this qualitative exploratory research is to explore the intentional mechanisms of governance to improve the overall performance of associations. In this work, each transcribed interview was processed and structured independently, according to the themes raised in the interviews. The objective is to study the respondents' statements and judgments, as well as their particular views on the subject under study, while adapting to the specificities of the study context. In this sense, Miles and Huberman, (2003) state that qualitative data allow for "rich and well-founded descriptions and explanations of processes embedded in a local context."

From the information obtained, we proceeded to link each piece of information to the corresponding theme in order to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the data.

In order to respond to our research problem, we will proceed in the following to analyze the effect of each variable explaining the intentional mechanisms of governance on the global performance through its six selected dimensions. To do this, we have proposed nine research hypotheses based on the literature and our exploratory study. Thus, we will build our conceptual model that establishes the causal links between our qualitative variables.

Presentation and discussion of the results of the exploratory phase

Taking into consideration the nature of this research, starting with a qualitative approach seems the most appropriate in this respect. Indeed, this approach allows for an optimal understanding of the ambiguity and complexity of the concepts as well as the relationship of influence that could exist between them. Consequently, conducting a qualitative exploratory study will allow us to better grasp the reality of this relationship of influence in the Moroccan context as well as the personal interpretations of the actors interviewed in relation to this subject.

Conduct of the qualitative exploratory study

After reviewing the literature on the governance of associations and its mechanisms on the one hand and the overall performance of associations and its dimensions on the other, a contextual framing, to situate these concepts and understand their representations among associative actors in Morocco, particularly those working in the field of youth, was essential. Especially since, as it seems to us, our research subject is relatively complex. This can be explained first by the polysemy of these two main concepts, namely "Governance" and "Performance", then by the difficulty of observing and measuring such a concept directly in the minds of the associative actors, and finally by the particularity of the research field, namely the Moroccan associative sector, with the absence of data on the real and updated situation of associations in Morocco.

To achieve our goal, we adopted the qualitative approach as a research methodology. This was done by using individual interviews with associative actors from different fields of intervention and from a national or even international geographical scope, as far as their activities are concerned. This method is a relevant tool to collect reliable, exploitable and real data.

It is important to remember that the individual interview we used is semi-directive. It is a method of interviewing in which the researcher encourages the respondent to communicate a great deal of detailed and quality information on the subjects related to his or her research, with very little influence, and therefore with guarantees of the absence of bias in the direction of good scientific quality (Roussel and Vacheux, 2005).

The qualitative study targeted a well-defined category of associative actors, as the actors questioned hold various positions of responsibility: president, vice-president or founding member. Indeed, on the one hand, the choice of conducting the qualitative survey with decision-makers was not fortuitous, since the position they hold allows them to answer the research questions. On the other hand, their experience allows them to be familiar with the real situation of the nonprofit sector, and to eventually provide us with a comparable vision with other nonprofits. Thus, their professional character will help us to better understand the Moroccan associative context, the representations of the concepts in the minds of Moroccan associative actors as well as the validity of the qualitative variables.

The main axes of the interview focused on the perception of the associative actors in Morocco on organizational determinants, Intentional Mechanisms of Governance (IMG) and the dimensions of the Overall Performance of Associations (OPA).

In addition, in order to measure the influence of governance mechanisms on the overall performance of associations in a logic of Stakeholder Theory (ST) and Resource Dependency Theory (RDT), we conducted our exploratory study via semi-structured interviews with the aim of identifying the most important qualitative variables to build our conceptual model. This study was conducted during the months of March and April 2022. For each interview, we made an appointment in advance with association leaders who were very interested in our research topic.

However, the qualitative study allowed us to test the variables that emerged from the literature review and to keep only the most important ones in order to build our conceptual model.

Data collection

In order to carry out the qualitative study, we proceeded in three main steps, namely

- Preparation of the interviews;
- The choice of the field and the sample;
- Construction of the interview guide.

Preparing qualitative interviews

We began a qualitative study whose main objective is to study the influence of intentional governance mechanisms on the overall performance of associations via the perception of the actors. To this end, an interview was conducted with ten associative actors.

For our qualitative research work, we opted for the semi-structured interview as a data collection method for the following reasons:

1. To maintain consistency with our research objective of discovering the representations and perceptions of the associative actors of the subject matter.
2. To focus on the key issues related to our research theme and to ensure that their points of view are well understood.
3. To seek, in order to contextualize the study, to align the understanding of theoretical concepts with the specificities of the associative field in Morocco and this via the how of the interpretation of its actors.
4. Ensure that the questions are well understood.
5. Analyze the data collected from the interviewees, since the researcher has the complete transcript of the said data, so this analysis will be less complicated and easier to exploit.

Therefore, the main axes of the interview were focused on the knowledge of the profile of the actors and their associations, the situation of the governance mechanisms and their organizational determinants and the relationship of the implementation of these mechanisms on the overall performance of their associations. The interview also aimed to take stock of the different governance typologies adopted by the associations surveyed in Morocco because of their importance in the implementation of governance mechanisms within the association.

The choice of the field and the sample: presentation of the sample

The sample size was determined by referring to the principle of theoretical saturation. This principle advocates that the sample size cannot be fixed beforehand in the qualitative study, but only after theoretical saturation (Thiétart et al, 1999). "Saturation is the phenomenon by which, after a certain number of interviews (biographical or not, for that matter), the researcher or the team has the impression of no longer learning anything new, at least as far as the sociological object of the investigation is concerned" (Bertaux, 1980; cited in Pires, 1997). Glaser and Strauss speak of the principle of information saturation, that is, as soon as it was felt that the interviewees were no longer providing original information in relation to that which had already been collected. (Walker, 2012).

Our exploratory study was conducted with 10 associative actors representing national type associations. This study targeted a well-defined category of associative actors, in fact, they hold various positions of responsibility: president, vice-president or founding member. In fact, they are associations from different fields (education, sports, leisure, entrepreneurship, health...), and of different sizes, small (less than 7 employees), medium (between 7 and 12 employees) and large associations (more than 13 employees). Moreover, these associations cover different geographical areas, i.e. national, regional or local. It should be noted that international covers only activities and partnerships and not representation.

In order to carry out the interviews, our interview guide was sent to the said managers, given their primary roles in the governance of the associations. The duration of each interview was estimated to be approximately 45 minutes. During this interview session, the interviewees were free to answer us in person or remotely through tools such as "WhatsApp", "Google meet" or others, in order to limit the constraint of travel. Furthermore, the interview guide is structured in three parts addressing our research theme.

Construction of the interview guide: Preparation of the qualitative interview guide

The development of the interview guide is a crucial phase that must be approached with caution. In fact, its structure and its careful presentation could greatly improve the rate of return of answers as well as their quality.

In this regard, and in order to fully understand the current situation regarding the subject of our research study and to obtain the most reliable and complete information possible, we built our interview guide by considering the definition of governance and its intentional mechanisms as well as the definition of the overall performance of associations and its dimensions as discussed in the theoretical framework.

The development of this interview guide will allow us to define the conduct of each interview. This will be done while remaining flexible regarding the chronology of the different questions.

In fact, while ensuring its coherence, our interview guide includes the following parts

1. An introduction that presents the objective and the context of our study, in which we set out the "rules of the game" by assuring the informants of the anonymity of the remarks collected. In addition, we thanked the interviewees for their time and participation in our study by asking them to respond simultaneously and to click, as a precaution, on the send button at the bottom of the digital medium to send us back their recorded responses in order to ensure the reliability of the results.
2. Then a framework of coherent, neutral, simple and easy to understand open-ended questions was asked to the interviewees. Each of these questions corresponded to the derivatives of our problematic. We also made sure that the questions were not positively or negatively connoted so as not to orient the discussion. In formulating the questions, we tried to avoid anything that might encourage generalized and rationalized responses, in order to anchor the responses in the experiences of the interviewees as much as possible and thus obtain reliable data.
3. Finally, in order to optimize time and effort, our interview guide includes the questions that we consider the most important, trying to explain them further during our interviews, rephrasing them if necessary to adapt them to the interviewees, while remaining objective and neutral so as not to influence them.

Concerning the attitude and techniques adopted during our interview, we tried to guide the discussions in such a way as to focus the debate on our study subject without offending the interviewee. This was done by creating a climate of trust beforehand, as well as by adopting an attitude of respect and active listening to put the interviewee at ease. Also, in order to encourage the interviewees to express themselves better, we tried to show a sincere interest in all of their comments as well as the will to explore their knowledge in order to answer, in fine, our problematic. To achieve this objective, we also had to adopt a flexible attitude regarding the order of the questions.

On the basis of all the concepts raised in the literature review, as well as those defined by the guide, we studied

1. The characteristics of the associations and actors interviewed;
2. the organizational determinants of association governance mechanisms
3. the governance styles adopted by associations in Morocco
4. the dimensions of the overall performance of associations;

Based on this grouping, our guide was designed to allow us to empirically verify the factors we identified through the literature review in our research area.

Definition of assumptions and presentation of the conceptual model

Presentation of results

In this exploratory study, we sought to find out through the interviews we conducted the appreciation of the interviewees on the degree of influence of the intentional mechanisms of governance on the overall performance of associations, on the importance of organizational determinants on the intentional mechanisms of governance as well as the relationship between overall performance and its dimensions. This was discussed in the literature review. For each determinant and dimension, we will present the explanatory elements directly associated with it. The latter reflect the justifications and assessments of the interviewees on the importance of each determinant of these mechanisms for improving the overall performance of the associations through its different dimensions.

Furthermore, the results of the qualitative study demonstrate the importance of intentional governance mechanisms in improving the overall performance of associations. According to this exploratory study, associations in Morocco place great importance on governance. They see its mechanisms as a way to improve their overall performance, especially in a changing and promising context.

Indeed, according to the literature review and after discussion with the associative actors in the framework of our qualitative study, we were able to retain ten variables for the construction of our conceptual model, namely

- Two variables representing the organizational determinants and which will allow us to measure the intentional mechanisms of governance, namely:
 - Age of the association;
 - Membership in a network;
- Six variables to measure the overall performance of associations, namely
 - Inputs;
 - Organizational capacity;
 - Outputs;
 - Outcomes Benefits;
 - Outcomes Results;
 - Legitimacy.

Theme 1: Organizational determinants of governance mechanisms

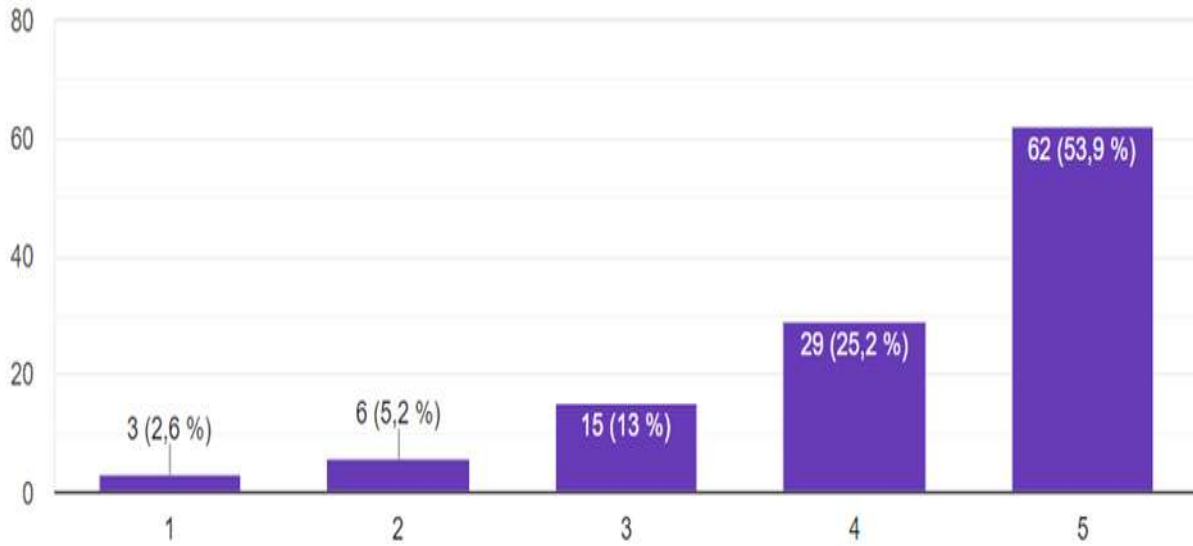
The quality of the mechanisms, especially the intentional ones, depends on the organizational determinants of the association, especially age and membership in networks. The importance of other determinants such as status and sector are not significant in the Moroccan context.

The study also showed that the most important mechanisms are the Board of Directors, General Assembly, Bureau, specialized committees, administrative procedures and values. The same actors supported the position of working on intentional mechanisms, as they are voluntary and more controllable.

Theme 2: The modes of governance adopted by the majority of associations in Morocco

The members of the Board of Directors of our association are chosen first of all on the basis of their management skills

Chart 1:- The professionalized mode of governance.

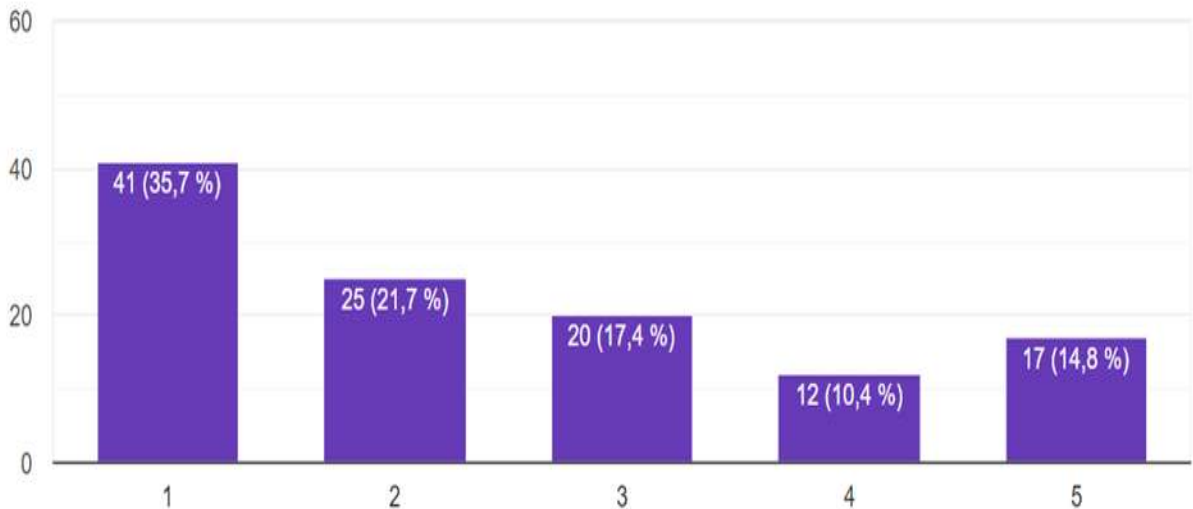


Source: Based on our survey.

More than 79% of the actors declare that the choice of the members of the Board of Directors or the General Assembly is not random; the competence and management capacity of the members is a sine qua non condition for joining the Board of Directors or the General Assembly, given the importance of the role they will have to play in monitoring the executive.

Concerning the involvement of external stakeholders, particularly donors.

Chart 1:- The outsourced governance mode.

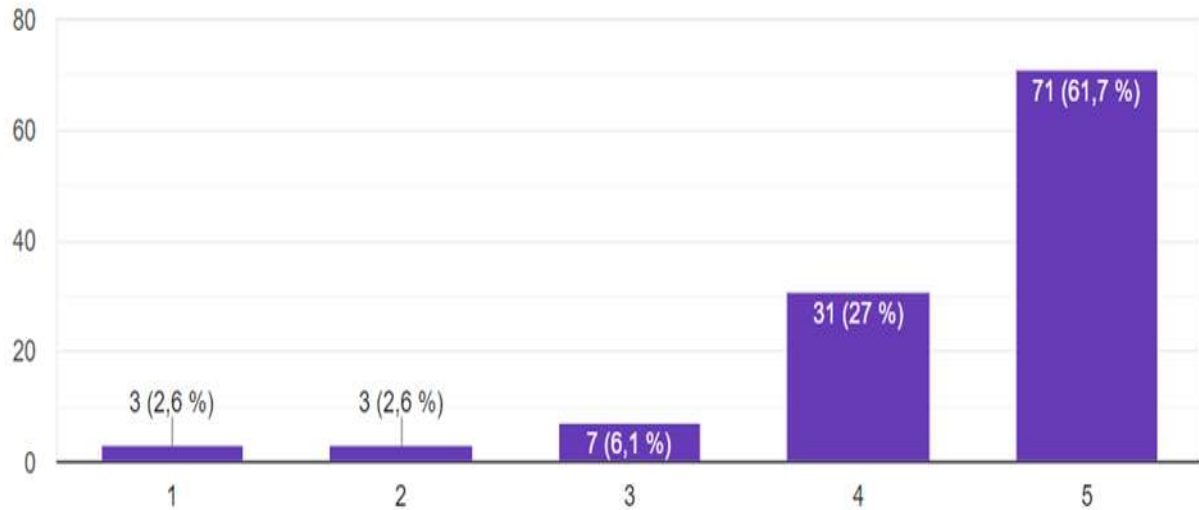


Source: Based on our survey.

We note that more than 74% of our sample believes that decision-making is not the responsibility of external stakeholders, particularly donors. And that the role of governance is also decision-making.

As for the actions carried out by the associations, they are essentially militant in nature.

Chart 2:- The mode of activist governance.

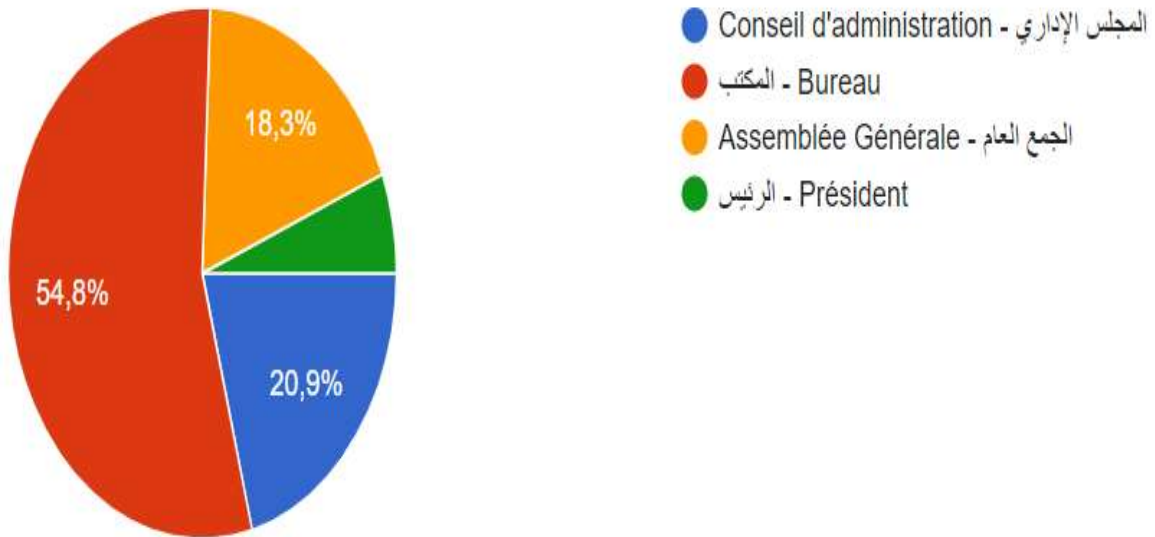


Source: Based on our survey

We note that 88.7 of the interviewees have a strong sense of belonging and that the actions carried out by their association are mainly militant in nature, aiming to advance a cause, and that the members of the General Assembly, Board of Directors and Executive Committee share common values.

In relation to the question of decision-makers within the associations:

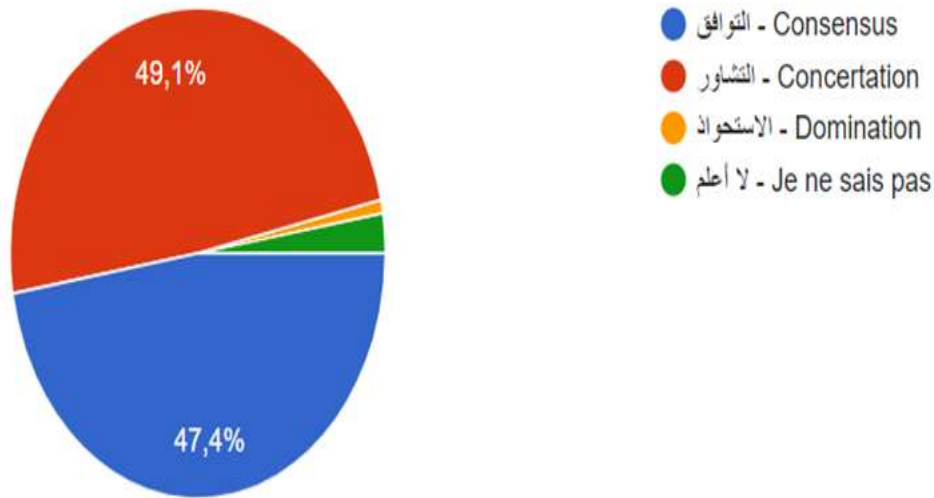
Chart 3:- The tightened governance mode (Who makes the decision?).



Source: Based on our survey

As for the mode of decision making:

Chart 5:- The tightened governance mode (how is the decision made?).



Source: Based on our survey.

On the one hand, we record that more than 94% declare that decisions are taken by the governance bodies, namely the Board of Directors, the General Assembly and the Bureau. On the other hand, more than 96% of our sample confirms that the mode of decision-making shifts between consensus and consultation and that domination is practically negligible as a mode of governance.

In sum, taking into account these results and based on the results of the study conducted in the French context, by Eynaud (Eynaud et al., 2015), we can deduce that the governance styles adopted by Moroccan associations combine between professionalized governance and activist governance. In both modes, the importance of governance mechanisms, particularly the Board of Directors, the General Assembly and the Bureau, procedures and the charter of values is paramount.

Theme 3: The relationship between governance mechanisms and overall performance

The overall performance of associations depends to a large extent on their governance and more practically on their governance mechanisms. All of the interviewees confirmed this observation while supporting their position with the outputs of the reports of various bodies that have dealt with this theme (see CH2 - S2).

The study shows that successful associations are part of a global approach, i.e., an approach that aligns governance with overall performance.

Sidebar 1 : The relationship between IMG and OPA

Some responses:

"Good governance improves the performance of associations in terms of internal management, funding and results on the ground"; "Governance is the lifeblood of any organization. The strength and effectiveness of these organizations depend on the nature of this governance"; "Impacts the sustainability of the association and enhances its reputation"; "Governance can positively improve the performance of associations"; "Gives more visibility on the work flow, facilitates coordination, sharing of responsibility, transparency"

Theme 4: The Relationship Between Associations' Overall Performance and its Dimensions

Based on the content analysis of the exploratory interviews, many members assert that the success of associations depends on improving their overall performance. In order to do so, it is essential for each association to focus on each dimension of this performance, particularly outputs and outcomes, as well as legitimacy, because for all the interviewees, the main indicator of success is the result and the impact on the citizen.

Sidebar 2 : The relationship between OPA and its dimensions

Some answers:

"Technical and financial capacity building"; "support the functioning of associations"; "awareness training and especially relaunch the youth houses to generalize and disseminate the Packs dedicated to improve the governance of Associations with the various stakeholders"; "the involvement of governance modules in school and university curricula"; "involve my media more to promote programs devoted to the issue of governance and accountability"; "Commitment and sense of responsibility"; "Lack of specialized human resources"; "Through their various devices (working tools, management mechanisms. .), through the development of partnerships with international organizations and ministerial departments"; "Through partnerships and collaboration and exchange of good practices with international NGOs"; "A clear vision and means".

"The implementation of a set of mechanisms to ensure better coordination of the stakeholders of an organization in order to make consensual decisions and launch concerted actions"; "Transparency, trust, the right vision. The right way of doing things. Sharing"; "Optimal management of the association"; "Development and guarantee for the association's future.

"Development and guarantee for success"; "Permanent management with shared responsibility"; "The right way of doing things."

Theme 5: Generalities

From our qualitative study, we found near consensus on the following:

- A high probability of not having reliable answers on the axes asking for information on the association's budget, its mode of financing, its sources of financing, its accounting and taxation;
- The use of Arabic is essential to obtain the maximum number of answers;
- a delay observed as for the use of technology in the association and more particularly the information systems;
- the term international refers to the activities and not the representation of the association abroad.

Discussion:-

The exploratory study described above allowed us to formulate nine hypotheses that we will test next, in order to answer our research problem.

In fact, association governance is associated in the literature with better performance, both economic-financial (Alexander and Lee, 2006; Desai and Yetman, 2015; Herman and Renz, 1997; Newton, 2015) and operational (Blevins et al., 2018, 2020; Brown, 2005; Kalodimos, 2017). Quéinnec (2012) also specifies the contribution of governance to all dimensions of nonprofit performance and particularly to the sustainability of the organization.

The literature review conducted allows us to link governance and performance along several paths, thereby highlighting tensions that allow us to formulate research questions inserted into the conceptual and theoretical frameworks described in the previous section. Global hypotheses, called underlying hypotheses, can then be formulated.

Assumptions about the influence of intentional governance mechanisms on overall association performance.

With regard to our hypotheses, the tables below summarize the hypotheses formulated, the theories used, the links tested and the references adopted with regard to each variable.

We can classify our research hypotheses into three categories: hypotheses related to organizational determinants, main hypothesis and those corresponding to the dimensions of overall association performance.

Assumptions about organizational determinants

Organizational determinants of intentional governance mechanisms. Bradshaw, Murray and Wolpin (1992) have linked organizational and board characteristics in the analysis of association boards. For example, age, sector and type of work, size of community, or area of operation are among the determinants of governance. Harrison and Murray (2015) follow the same line. As for Carvalho, Rodrigues and Branco (2017), they point out that these characteristics play a role in the implementation of external audits and controls, in addition to the board structure. (Plaisance, 2021).

Age of the organization

The age of the organization has been extensively studied previously to explain board behavior and performance (Miller-Millesen, 2003). In general, the older an organization gets, the fewer management and governance errors it makes, thanks to self-learning or the mobilization of administrative skills (Ranger-Moore, 1997; Rosengren, 1968). This is particularly true for internal governance policy devices (Y.-J. Lee, 2016). External devices are a logical continuation, in order to verify the quality of internal devices. (Plaisance, 2021) Thus,

H₁: The older the association, the more developed the intentional governance mechanisms are.

Membership in a network

Each governance framework is developed based on the commitments the association makes (Siebart, 2005), particularly with respect to a network in our case. Moreover, belonging to a network implies a new scale of governance, which in turn implies having an already strong governance system. Moreover, collaboration between associations massively contributes to the dissemination of good practices (Barman & MacIndoe, 2012). Thus,

H₂: Membership in a network positively influences the development of internal governance mechanisms.

It should be noted that we have not dealt with other determinants, namely status, because in our case all the associations surveyed have the same status, which refers to the 1958 law, as well as the sector at the time when the majority of associations work in several areas at the same time (Plaisance, 2021).

Main hypothesis

Our main research question is based on a theoretical foundation linking governance and performance (since a positive change in impact is a form of performance). As demonstrated earlier in the literature review, governance and its mechanisms and the overall performance of associations are strongly linked. Thus, governance is a means of defining and improving association performance. (W. A. Brown, 2005; Viader & Espina, 2014; Plaisance, 2021). Therefore, our main hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H₃: Intentional governance mechanisms positively influence associations' overall performance

Assumptions about the Dimensions of Overall Association Performance

As raised in Chapter 1, Section 2, Lee (2014) described the six dimensions as indispensable perspectives of nonprofit performance. These perspectives cannot be treated independently of each other. Thus, the assumptions about the dimensions of overall nonprofit performance can be stated as follows:

Inputs or inputs:

Bagnoli and Megali (2011), Beamon (1999); Cutt and Murray (2000); Kaplan and Norton (1996); Kendall and Knapp (2000); Median-Borja and Triantis (2007); Moxham (2009b); and Newcomer (1997).

H_{3.1}: An association's ability to acquire the necessary resources and use them effectively positively influences the association's overall performance.

Organizational capacity: Kaplan (2001); Moore (2003); and Sowa, Selden, and Sandfort (2004).

H_{3.2}: An association's organizational capacity positively influences its overall association performance.

Outputs: Bagnoli and Megali (2011); Berman (2006); Cutt and Murray (2000); Kendall and Knapp (2000); Moxham (2009b); Newcomer (1997); Poister (2003); and Sawhill and Williamson (2001).

H_{3.3}: The quality of services provided by the association and the focus on its goals and activities positively influence its overall performance.

Outcomes behavioral and environmental changes: Bagnoli and Megali (2011); Berman (2006); Greenway (2001); Lampkin et al. (2006); Moxham (2009b); and Penna (2011)

H_{3.4}: The condition of the target population and the focus on the benefits achieved through the association's activities positively influence its overall performance.

Outcomes Results:-

customer satisfaction; Kaplan (2001); Median-Borja et Triantis (2007); Newcomer (1997); Penna (2011); et Poister (2003).

Realization of public value: Hills et Sullivan (2006); Greenway (2001); Lampkin et al. (2006); Land (2001); Moore (2003); et Penna (2011).

H_{3.5}:The ability to satisfy beneficiaries and the added value created by the association for their benefit positively influence its overall performance.

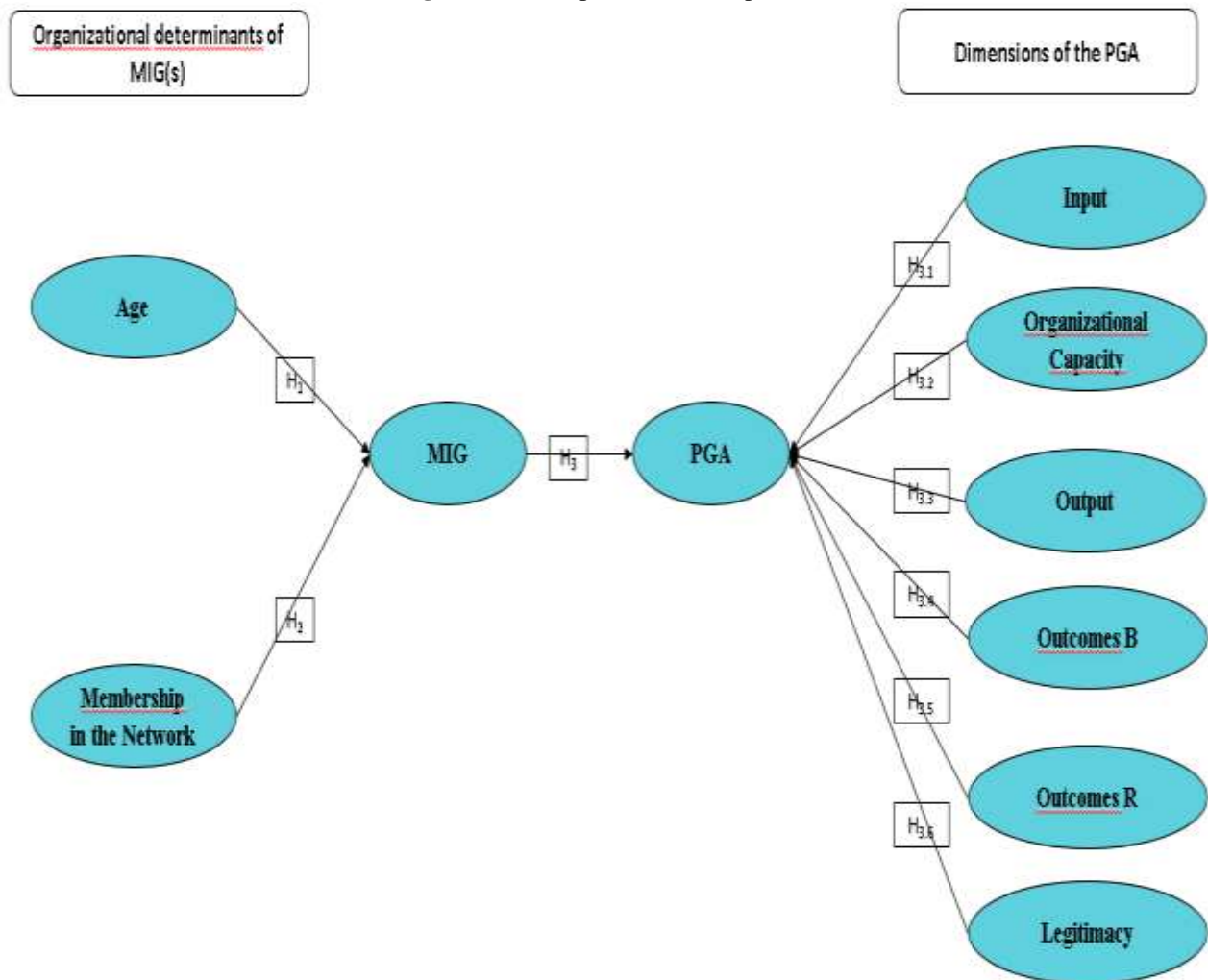
Legitimacy: Bagnoli and Megali (2011); Herman and Renz (2008); Moore (2003); and Talbot (2008).

H_{3.6}:The association's positive relationship with other associations, its reputation in the community and on the ground, and its compliance with laws and best practices positively influence the association's overall performance.

The conceptual model developed

The conceptual model is made up of ten variables from the literature review. Two dependent variables, which correspond to the MIG and PGA, and eight independent variables relating to the organizational determinants of the association, namely the age of the association and membership in the networks, and those relating to the dimensions allowing the measurement of the PGA, namely Input, Organizational capacities, Outputs, Behavioral outcomes, Outcomes, and Network legitimacy. We schematize our conceptual model as follows:

Figure 1:- Conceptual model adopted.



Source: Elaborated by us.

Conclusion:-

In this article we have tried to present the results obtained during our first exploratory study. Indeed, our problematic combines an exploratory phase and a confirmatory phase, which led us to opt for a "modified" positivist posture (Huberman and Miles). In the same perspective, and concerning the approach adopted in our research, we have adopted a hypothetico-deductive approach of modified positivist inspiration.

As for the methodological approach, we opted for a qualitative study. As for the research methods, we chose the individual semi-directive interview for data collection.

Moreover, the choice of our sample was made according to the nature of the study carried out. For the exploratory study, the sample size was determined by referring to the principle of theoretical saturation. Thus, the sample chosen to conduct the interviews consisted of ten Moroccan associations working in the field of youth and with a national geographic scope.

Following this approach, the qualitative study allowed us to identify the different variables that would allow us to build our research hypotheses leading to an understanding of the links between IMG and OPA. These hypotheses were divided into three categories: one main hypothesis, two hypotheses relating to organizational determinants and six corresponding to the dimensions of the associations' overall performance. On the other hand, it allowed us to propose our conceptual model to be tested during our confirmatory study, which will be the subject of another article

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