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Organizational Change Communication and Change Recipient Reactions: A Systematic Literature Review

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - This study is not supported by any external research funding.**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Preliminary searches.**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY202590048**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 13 September 2025 and was last updated on 13 September 2025.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective Organizational change is ubiquitous, yet its successful implementation remains a significant challenge for contemporary organizations. Despite its perceived necessity for adaptation and survival, implementing organizational change frequently encounters resistance and other adverse reactions from employees, impeding desired outcomes. Such impedance underscores the critical need to understand the underlying mechanisms that foster positive employee engagement and mitigate negative responses during periods of significant organizational transition. Effective change communication is crucial in navigating these turbulent periods, posited as a key determinant in shaping employee perceptions and subsequent reactions to organizational shifts.

This systematic literature review aims to synthesize existing research to delineate the intricate relationship between various dimensions of change communication and a spectrum of employee reactions to organizational change. Specifically,

this review aims to disentangle the impact of communication quality (e.g., clarity, accuracy, transparency, openness, honesty, richness, two-way dialogue, participative communication, frequency, volume, timeliness, cadence, information sharing, formality, and informality) on key employee reactions such as readiness for change, resistance to change, change satisfaction, change cynicism, change fatigue, commitment to change, support for change, and acceptance of change. By dissecting these relationships, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the communication strategies that either facilitate or impede successful organizational transformations, offering actionable insights for both academics and practitioners. This thorough analysis will also identify gaps in the extant literature, proposing avenues for future research to deepen our understanding of this critical organizational dynamic.

Condition being studied This systematic review is designed to examine the relationship of organizational communication during change with

change recipient reactions from all sectors (private, public, self-employed) and industries across the globe.

METHODS

Search strategy The search strategy utilizes the following keyword string: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("organizational change" OR "organisational change" OR "change initiative" OR "restructur*" OR "transformation" OR "digital transformation" OR "merger*" OR "acquisition*" OR "downsizing" OR "turnaround" OR "culture change" OR "process change") AND (communicat* NEAR / 3 (QUALITY OR adequ* OR clarity OR accuracy OR transparency OR openness OR honest* OR richness OR "two-way" OR dialog* OR participat* OR program* OR direct* OR frequency OR VOLUME OR timeliness OR cadence OR "information sharing" OR "formal" OR "informal")) AND (readiness OR "readiness for change" OR "resistance to change" OR resistance OR "change satisfaction" OR "satisfaction with change" OR "change cynicism" OR cynicis* OR "change fatigue" OR fatigue OR "commitment to change" OR "support for change" OR "acceptance of change") AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")).

We will search the following databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, and APA PsycNet.

Participant or population Employees across organizational settings.

Intervention This systematic review aims to examine the relationship between organizational communication during change and change recipient reactions. Additionally, future quantitative studies will seek to develop targeted interventions to improve change communication and empower recipients.

Comparator N/A.

Study designs to be included The study will include all empirical studies.

Eligibility criteria

Inclusion:

- Population: Employees from all sectors (private, public, self-employed) and industries.
- Exposure: Communication (including its dimensions, viz., quality, adequacy, clarity, accuracy, transparency, honesty, richness, one-way or two-way, participative, programmatic,

directive, frequency, volume, timeliness, cadence, information sharing) during organizational change (including all types, such as, restructuring, digital transformation, mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, turnaround, culture change, process change, etc) from all sectors (private, public, self-employed) and industries as an independent variable.

- Outcome: Change recipient reactions, including their dimensions (readiness, resistance, acceptance, support, commitment, satisfaction, cynicism, fatigue).
- Study Types: All types of empirical studies.
- Language: English.
- Time Frame: All time.

Information sources The research will use electronic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, and APA PsycNet. The Zotero reference manager will manage the bibliographic references.

Main outcome(s) The present systematic review examines the relationship between organizational communication during change and change recipient reactions.

Additional outcome(s) This study will explore potential mediators, moderators, facilitators, antecedents, or other factors in the relationship between organizational communication during change and change recipient reactions.

Data management Data will be managed using systematic review tools such as EndNote, Zotero, and Excel.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis The quality of studies will be assessed using the standardised tool- the CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) checklist. The procedure involves first screening studies based on pre-determined inclusion criteria. Each study is then appraised for aspects such as study design, sample size, data collection methods, validity, and reliability of findings using the CASP checklist. This process helps identify potential biases in study design, reporting, and analysis, such as selection bias or measurement bias, and then we will assess the overall trustworthiness of the findings. After evaluating individual studies, an overall risk of bias is determined, and the findings are synthesized while considering these biases to ensure that

conclusions drawn in the review are reliable and valid.

Strategy of data synthesis Two reviewers (V.V. and A.J.G.) will independently screen titles and abstracts to identify articles that potentially meet the inclusion criteria. Full versions of these articles will then be retrieved and assessed separately by the same reviewers to confirm their eligibility. Any disagreements regarding study inclusion will be resolved through consensus.

Subgroup analysis N/A.

Sensitivity analysis N/A.

Language restriction Only English-language studies will be included.

Country(ies) involved India.

Keywords Organizational change; Communication; Change Reactions; Resistance to change; Change Readiness; Commitment.

Dissemination plans The findings will be disseminated through academic publications and conferences.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Virajanand Varma - Author 1 will draft the manuscript, including data management and analysis.

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Author 2 - Allen Joshua George - Author 2 will contribute to data management and analysis.

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