

# The Effect of Managerial Coping Approaches on Employee Ambivalence Toward Organizational Change: A Field Study at the College of Administration and Economics, University of Sumer

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**Abstract:** This study investigates employee ambivalence toward organizational change among academic and administrative staff and examines the effectiveness of managerial approaches in mitigating such ambivalence. The study is grounded in a contemporary conceptualization of ambivalence as the simultaneous coexistence of positive and negative evaluations toward the same organizational phenomenon. Using a descriptive-analytical design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a stratified random sample of 80 employees at the College of Administration and Economics, University of Sumer. The findings indicate that managerial approaches collectively account for a significant proportion of the variance in employee ambivalence. Leadership support emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by managerial transparency, effective communication, and participation in change. In contrast, empowerment and capacity-building did not demonstrate a statistically significant independent effect when the remaining dimensions were controlled. The study recommends prioritizing leadership support as a key intervention for reducing employee ambivalence and integrating empowerment initiatives within a supportive leadership environment to maximize their effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Employee Ambivalence, Organizational Change, Managerial Approaches, Leadership Support, Managerial Transparency, University of Sumer



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## 1. Introduction

Over the past decades, organizational behavior literature has undergone a substantial shift in its understanding of employee responses to organizational change. Early perspectives largely interpreted employee reactions through a binary lens of support versus resistance. More recent scholarship, however, has moved beyond this simplified dichotomy toward conceptualizations that acknowledge the complexity and multidimensionality of human responses within organizational settings. A recent review of this evolving field demonstrates that research on change recipients has progressed from traditional attitudinal models toward the concept of employee ambivalence toward change, which has emerged as one of the most comprehensive frameworks for capturing the coexistence

of competing evaluations during organizational transformation [1].

Employee ambivalence toward change refers to a psychological state in which individuals simultaneously hold both positive and negative evaluations of the same organizational change initiative. Importantly, such ambivalence should not be interpreted as a lack of commitment or an indication of resistance. Rather, it reflects a complex psychological condition in which employees recognize potential benefits associated with change while simultaneously perceiving risks related to their professional roles, career stability, and organizational position. Consequently, contemporary change management research has increasingly shifted its focus from asking whether employees support or resist change to examining the organizational conditions that shape the nature and intensity of these mixed responses.

A growing body of evidence suggests that organizational environments and managerial practices play a critical role in explaining variation in employee reactions, even among individuals exposed to similar organizational circumstances [2]–[4]. Within this context, managerial approaches have attracted increasing scholarly attention as potential determinants of employee ambivalence during periods of organizational transformation. The seminal framework proposed by Kotter and Schlesinger identified communication, participation, negotiation, facilitation, and support as key managerial mechanisms for addressing employee uncertainty and anxiety during change [5]. Contemporary scholarship has expanded this perspective to include practices such as effective communication, participative decision-making, leadership support, managerial transparency, and psychological empowerment. These practices are increasingly viewed not merely as technical tools of change management but as mechanisms through which employees interpret organizational realities, construct meanings, and regulate emotional responses toward change [6], [7].

The importance of these issues is particularly evident within higher education institutions. Universities are increasingly exposed to pressures arising from quality assurance requirements, accreditation standards, digital transformation initiatives, institutional expansion, and the reengineering of administrative and academic processes. Such changes extend beyond structural adjustments and frequently reshape professional roles, career expectations, and institutional relationships, making employee reactions a critical determinant of change effectiveness and long-term organizational sustainability [8].

Despite the growing recognition of employee ambivalence as an important psychological indicator influencing organizational change outcomes, significant gaps remain within the existing literature. Much of the prior research has focused on employee acceptance, resistance, readiness for change, or commitment to change, while comparatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding the organizational antecedents of ambivalence itself. Moreover, studies examining managerial approaches have

predominantly evaluated their direct effects on change implementation, organizational performance, or readiness for change, with considerably less attention directed toward explaining how these practices influence the emergence, intensity, or reduction of employees' contradictory affective responses during organizational transformation [1], [6]. Consequently, the mechanisms through which managerial approaches shape employee ambivalence remain insufficiently understood, particularly within higher education settings in developing-country contexts.

Addressing this theoretical and empirical gap, the present study investigates employee ambivalence toward organizational change among academic and administrative staff at the College of Administration and Economics, University of Sumer. Specifically, the study examines the extent to which managerial approaches—including leadership support, managerial transparency, effective communication, participation in change, and empowerment practices—contribute to explaining variations in employee ambivalence. In doing so, the study contributes to the emerging literature on employee ambivalence by shifting attention from ambivalence as a descriptive psychological outcome toward a more systematic understanding of its organizational antecedents. Furthermore, it provides empirical evidence from an underrepresented higher education context, thereby enriching current knowledge regarding the psychological and organizational dynamics that influence the success of organizational change initiatives.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **From the Binary Model to Employee Ambivalence: Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Evolution**

Employee responses to organizational change have long occupied a central position within organizational behavior research. Early scholarship was largely dominated by a binary perspective that conceptualized employees as either supporters of change or resisters opposing its implementation. This perspective assumed that employee attitudes were relatively stable, internally consistent, and capable of being classified into one of two opposing categories [9].

Over time, however, growing empirical evidence challenged this assumption. Researchers increasingly observed that employees often experience mixed and sometimes contradictory reactions toward organizational change. Individuals may simultaneously recognize the potential benefits of change while expressing concerns regarding its consequences for their professional roles, career prospects, or organizational status. Such findings exposed important limitations in traditional models that treated employee attitudes as unidimensional and internally coherent.

A significant turning point emerged with the work of Piderit, who argued that employee responses to change cannot be adequately understood through a simple support–resistance dichotomy [10]. Instead, attitudes toward change comprise three interrelated

components: a cognitive component reflecting evaluations of change outcomes, an affective component encompassing emotional reactions, and a behavioral component representing intentions to support or oppose change initiatives. Importantly, these dimensions do not always align. Employees may acknowledge the necessity of change at the cognitive level while simultaneously experiencing anxiety or uncertainty at the emotional level, resulting in ambivalent behavioral intentions. This perspective shifted scholarly attention from observable attitudes toward the internal structure of employee responses.

Subsequent contributions by Oreg further advanced this perspective by demonstrating that reactions to change are shaped by the interaction of individual dispositions, organizational perceptions, and contextual factors [3], [4]. Resistance is therefore not merely an expression of opposition but often reflects complex psychological processes through which employees interpret and evaluate organizational transformations. Individual differences in personality, prior experiences, and trust in management influence how change is perceived and experienced [11].

The theoretical foundations of this perspective can be traced to Cognitive Dissonance Theory [12], which proposes that individuals seek consistency among their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. When conflicting evaluations arise, psychological tension emerges and motivates efforts to restore coherence. Organizational change frequently creates precisely such conditions, exposing employees to both opportunities and threats simultaneously. As Van Harreveld et al. noted, this tension becomes particularly salient when individuals must form judgments about situations characterized by competing implications [13].

Building on these empirical and theoretical developments, employee ambivalence emerged as a distinct construct within organizational change research. Rothman et al. define ambivalence as the simultaneous coexistence of strong positive and negative evaluations toward the same object [14]. Unlike cognitive dissonance, which primarily concerns inconsistency among beliefs or between beliefs and behavior, ambivalence refers specifically to the coexistence of opposing evaluations directed toward a single object. Although conceptually related, the two constructs represent distinct psychological phenomena with different underlying mechanisms.

Organizational change provides particularly fertile conditions for the emergence of ambivalence because it simultaneously generates opportunities and risks. Employees may appreciate the potential benefits of change for organizational effectiveness while fearing losses related to status, authority, job security, or established work routines. Recent studies examining digital transformation and artificial intelligence adoption illustrate this dynamic, showing that employees often perceive opportunities for learning and development alongside concerns regarding automation and job displacement [15].

Consequently, ambivalence is increasingly viewed not as a form of hidden resistance but as a common and often expected response to organizational change [16].

Recent research further indicates that employees actively develop coping strategies to manage ambivalence, either by resolving conflicting evaluations in favor of one position or by temporarily maintaining ambivalence while adapting to evolving circumstances [17]. Moreover, systematic reviews have demonstrated that communication quality, information clarity, and managerial practices play critical roles in shaping employee reactions, including levels of ambivalence toward organizational change [2].

Taken together, these developments demonstrate a clear shift from simplistic binary explanations toward more nuanced conceptualizations that recognize the multidimensional nature of employee responses to change. Despite this theoretical progress, limited empirical attention has been devoted to understanding how managerial approaches shape employee ambivalence, particularly within higher education institutions in developing-country contexts. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts employee ambivalence as its central analytical construct and examines how managerial approaches influence its intensity among academic and administrative staff at the College of Administration and Economics, University of Sumer.

### **Dimensions of Managerial Approaches and Their Explanatory Influence on Employee Ambivalence**

Building upon the foundational framework of Kotter and Schlesinger and subsequent developments in change management scholarship [5]–[7], managerial approaches can be conceptualized as five interrelated dimensions. Although these dimensions share the common objective of reducing the psychological tension generated by simultaneous positive and negative evaluations of organizational change, they operate through distinct psychological and organizational mechanisms. Each dimension contributes to shaping the intensity of employee ambivalence in a different manner.

**Effective Communication:** Effective communication constitutes the primary mechanism through which organizations manage the conflicting information that often accompanies change initiatives. From the perspective of Cognitive Dissonance Theory, inconsistent or ambiguous messages increase uncertainty and amplify the tension between employees' positive and negative evaluations of change. Conversely, transparent, timely, and continuous communication can reduce this uncertainty by helping employees develop a more coherent understanding of the objectives, processes, and expected outcomes of organizational transformation [18]. Rather than eliminating ambivalence altogether, effective communication primarily serves to mitigate its intensity by reducing the ambiguity that sustains it.

**Participation in Change :**Participation in change operates through a different mechanism by influencing employees' perceptions of control and agency. Rather than focusing on

information exchange, this dimension concerns the extent to which employees are involved in shaping decisions related to the change process. Evidence suggests that employees who perceive themselves as active contributors to organizational transformation tend to exhibit more favorable reactions, even when the consequences of change directly affect them [19]. By increasing perceived control and ownership, participation reduces feelings of vulnerability and diminishes the intensity of ambivalent responses.

**Leadership and Managerial Support** :Leadership support primarily addresses the affective dimension of employee ambivalence. Whereas communication and participation largely target cognitive and procedural concerns, supportive leadership fosters trust, psychological security, and confidence in the change process. A meta-analysis conducted by Peng et al. demonstrated that transformational leadership is positively associated with openness and commitment to change while being negatively associated with resistance and cynicism [20]. Supportive leaders help employees interpret organizational change within a coherent and meaningful framework, thereby reducing the need to maintain competing evaluations simultaneously.

**Managerial Transparency** :Managerial transparency refers to the degree to which organizations openly communicate the rationale, criteria, and decision-making logic underlying change initiatives. Unlike communication, which focuses on information transmission, transparency concerns the visibility and legitimacy of managerial intentions. When transparency is lacking, employees may remain skeptical regarding the motives behind organizational decisions despite receiving adequate procedural information [18]. Transparency therefore reduces negative evaluations rooted in suspicion and uncertainty by clarifying the intentions and principles guiding change-related decisions.

**Empowerment and Capacity-Building** :Empowerment and capacity-building focus primarily on employees' perceptions of their own ability to cope successfully with changing work demands. Psychological empowerment reflects a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in one's work role [21]. Through training, skill development, and capacity-building initiatives, organizations can strengthen employees' confidence in their ability to adapt to new expectations and responsibilities. Such interventions reduce concerns regarding professional inadequacy and perceived threats to self-efficacy, even when employees continue to hold mixed evaluations regarding the change itself.

Taken together, these five managerial dimensions represent complementary pathways through which organizations can influence employee ambivalence. Effective communication reduces cognitive ambiguity; participation enhances perceived control; leadership support builds affective trust; managerial transparency alleviates skepticism regarding managerial intentions; and empowerment strengthens perceived self-efficacy.

Collectively, these mechanisms help explain how managerial approaches shape employees' psychological responses to organizational change and influence the extent to which ambivalence is intensified or mitigated.

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Main Hypothesis ( $H_m$ ):** Managerial approaches negatively and significantly predict employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

### **Sub-Hypotheses**

$H_1$ : Effective communication negatively and significantly predicts employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

$H_2$ : Participation in change negatively and significantly predicts employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

$H_3$ : Leadership and managerial support negatively and significantly predict employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

$H_4$ : Managerial transparency negatively and significantly predicts employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

$H_5$ : Empowerment and capacity-building negatively and significantly predict employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

## **3. Materials and Method**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a descriptive–analytical research design, which is well aligned with the nature of the research problem and its objectives. This design enables a systematic examination of employee ambivalence toward organizational change and facilitates the empirical assessment of the relationships between employee ambivalence and the five dimensions of managerial approaches. It also provides an appropriate framework for testing the hypothesised relationships and estimating the magnitude of their effects.

**Population and Sample:** The target population comprised all academic and administrative staff employed at the College of Administration and Economics, University of Sumer ( $N = 100$ ). These employees represent the organisational members most directly affected by ongoing and planned change initiatives within the institution.

Following the sample-size determination guidelines proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a target sample of 80 participants ( $n = 80$ ) was established. Data were collected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure balanced representation across the two principal employee groups: academic and administrative staff.

**Methodological Note:** Although an absolute sample size of 80 participants may conventionally be regarded as modest, it represents 80% of the entire study population ( $N = 100$ ). This exceptionally high coverage rate substantially exceeds those commonly reported in comparable organisational field studies and therefore strengthens confidence

in the representativeness of the sample. Consequently, the findings may be considered highly credible within the institutional context under investigation.

The demographic profile of the study participants across gender, age, tenure, and educational qualification is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of the Study Participants

| Variable                  | Categories           | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender                    | Male                 | 49            | 61.25          |
|                           | Female               | 31            | 38.75          |
| Age                       | ≤ 30 years           | 17            | 21.25          |
|                           | 31–40 years          | 42            | 52.50          |
|                           | ≥ 41 years           | 21            | 26.25          |
| Tenure (Years of Service) | < 5 years            | 20            | 25.00          |
|                           | 5–10 years           | 39            | 48.75          |
|                           | > 10 years           | 21            | 26.25          |
| Educational Qualification | High School or Lower | 8             | 10.00          |
|                           | Diploma              | 11            | 13.75          |
|                           | Bachelor's Degree    | 9             | 11.25          |
|                           | Master's Degree      | 35            | 43.75          |
|                           | Ph.D.                | 17            | 21.25          |

**Research Instrument:** The questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection and was developed based on the peer-reviewed literature and theoretical framework presented in the preceding sections. The instrument consisted of three main sections. The first section collected respondents' demographic information. The second section measured employee ambivalence toward organizational change as a unidimensional construct reflecting the individual's direct experience of psychological conflict, hesitation, and internal tension toward organizational change according to the subjective/felt ambivalence approach discussed in the literature [14], [22], without separating positive and negative evaluations into independent dimensions. The third section measured managerial approaches across their five dimensions, namely effective communication, participation in change, leadership and managerial support, managerial transparency, and empowerment and capacity-building, as derived from the theoretical framework of the study. All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

It is important to note that the present study operationalized employee ambivalence as a unidimensional construct through the subjective/felt ambivalence approach rather than adopting the alternative perspective that measures ambivalence through separate positive and negative evaluations and subsequently derives an ambivalence score mathematically using Griffin's formula [23], later employed by Priester and Petty within the Gradual

Threshold Model [22]. This methodological choice is grounded in the argument advanced by Priester and Petty[22], who demonstrated that direct measurement of felt ambivalence more accurately captures the individual's actual psychological experience of internal conflict. Under this approach, respondents directly evaluate the degree of tension, hesitation, and psychological conflict they experience toward organizational change as a unified psychological state rather than separately assessing positive and negative evaluations and calculating the discrepancy statistically. Furthermore, this approach avoids the methodological and statistical assumptions associated with objective ambivalence measures derived from separate evaluative dimensions and is well established within the psychological literature on attitude measurement [14].

**Validity and Reliability:** To establish face and content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of academic experts specializing in Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior. The reviewers evaluated the extent to which the instrument adequately and comprehensively represented the theoretical dimensions of the study and assessed the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire items.

Reliability was assessed through a pilot study using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each dimension and for the overall instrument. Following the psychometric recommendations of Nunnally [24], a threshold value of 0.70 was adopted as the minimum acceptable level of internal consistency. As shown in Table 2, all reliability coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and a high degree of measurement reliability.

**Table 2.** Instrument Structure and Reliability Coefficients

| Main Construct                                    | Dimension                         | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Employee Ambivalence toward Organizational Change | Employee Ambivalence              | 10              | 0.914            |
| Managerial Approaches                             | Effective Communication           | 4               | 0.861            |
|                                                   | Participation in Change           | 4               | 0.847            |
|                                                   | Leadership and Managerial Support | 4               | 0.889            |
|                                                   | Managerial Transparency           | 4               | 0.876            |
|                                                   | Empowerment and Capacity-Building | 4               | 0.842            |
| Managerial Approaches (Overall)                   | —                                 | 20              | 0.938            |
| Total Questionnaire                               | —                                 | 30              | 0.947            |

**Statistical Analysis:** To test the research hypotheses, Pearson correlation coefficients were initially employed to examine the relationships among the study variables and to provide an early assessment of potential multicollinearity among the dimensions of managerial approaches. Subsequently, Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) analysis was conducted by entering the five managerial dimensions simultaneously as predictors, with employee ambivalence serving as the dependent variable. This procedure enabled the testing of the main hypothesis through the overall coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and the F-test of model significance, while the sub-hypotheses were examined through the standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$  and  $B$ ) and their associated significance levels for each predictor after controlling for the effects of the remaining dimensions. Prior to interpreting the regression results, the underlying assumptions of the model were assessed, including Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values to evaluate multicollinearity and diagnostic checks of residual normality. All statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## Results

**Descriptive Statistics:** To examine the respondents' perceptions of managerial approaches and employee ambivalence toward organizational change, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were calculated. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables and Dimensions

| Construct / Dimension                             | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) | Level    |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| Employee Ambivalence toward Organizational Change | 3.58     | 0.74                    | Moderate |
| Effective Communication                           | 3.71     | 0.68                    | High     |
| Participation in Change                           | 3.43     | 0.77                    | Moderate |
| Leadership and Managerial Support                 | 3.65     | 0.71                    | High     |
| Managerial Transparency                           | 3.52     | 0.73                    | Moderate |
| Empowerment and Capacity-Building                 | 3.47     | 0.76                    | Moderate |
| Managerial Approaches (Overall)                   | 3.56     | 0.62                    | Moderate |

As shown in Table 3, respondents perceived the overall implementation of managerial approaches at the College of Administration and Economics, University of Sumer, as moderate ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ). Among the five dimensions, effective communication recorded the highest mean score ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), followed by leadership and managerial support ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), both of which were rated at a high level. In contrast, managerial transparency ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ), empowerment and capacity-building ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ), and participation in change ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ) were

perceived at moderate levels.

Employee ambivalence toward organizational change also exhibited a moderate level ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ), suggesting that employees experience a moderate degree of mixed attitudes and uncertainty regarding organizational change initiatives.

**Assessment of Normality:** Before conducting parametric analyses, the normality assumption was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test.

**Table 4.** Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test of Normality

| Variable              | K–S Statistic | Sig. (p-value) | Assessment           |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Managerial Approaches | 0.083         | 0.200          | Normally Distributed |
| Employee Ambivalence  | 0.091         | 0.114          | Normally Distributed |

Table 4 indicates that the significance values for managerial approaches ( $p = 0.200$ ) and employee ambivalence ( $p = 0.114$ ) exceed the accepted threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of normal distribution cannot be rejected, indicating that both variables satisfy the normality assumption. Accordingly, parametric statistical techniques were considered appropriate for subsequent analyses.

**Correlation Analysis:** Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between managerial approaches and employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

**Table 5.** Pearson Correlation Matrix

| Construct / Dimension               | [1]      | [2]     | [3]     | [4]     | [5]     | [6]   |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| [1] Employee Ambivalence            | 1.000    |         |         |         |         |       |
| [2] Effective Communication         | -0.541** | 1.000   |         |         |         |       |
| [3] Participation in Change         | -0.473** | 0.682** | 1.000   |         |         |       |
| [4] Leadership & Managerial Support | -0.612** | 0.731** | 0.694** | 1.000   |         |       |
| [5] Managerial Transparency         | -0.526** | 0.718** | 0.647** | 0.756** | 1.000   |       |
| [6] Empowerment & Capacity-Building | -0.451** | 0.628** | 0.613** | 0.685** | 0.641** | 1.000 |

Note.  $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed).

The findings reveal statistically significant negative correlations between employee ambivalence and all dimensions of managerial approaches ( $p < 0.01$ ). Correlation coefficients ranged from -0.451 to -0.612, indicating that higher levels of perceived managerial practices are associated with lower levels of employee ambivalence toward organizational change.

The results further show positive and statistically significant correlations among the

dimensions of managerial approaches, with coefficients ranging from 0.613 to 0.756. These relationships suggest conceptual relatedness among the dimensions while warranting subsequent examination of multicollinearity in the regression analysis.

### Hypothesis Testing

**Simple Linear Regression Analysis:** Simple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the individual effect of each managerial dimension on employee ambivalence.

**Table 6.** Simple Linear Regression Results

| Independent Variable              | $\beta$ | t     | Sig.  | R <sup>2</sup> | Decision  |
|-----------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|----------------|-----------|
| Effective Communication           | -0.541  | 5.779 | 0.000 | 0.293          | Supported |
| Participation in Change           | -0.473  | 4.781 | 0.000 | 0.224          | Supported |
| Leadership and Managerial Support | -0.612  | 7.042 | 0.000 | 0.375          | Supported |
| Managerial Transparency           | -0.526  | 5.538 | 0.000 | 0.277          | Supported |
| Empowerment and Capacity-Building | -0.451  | 4.456 | 0.000 | 0.203          | Supported |

The results presented in Table 6 indicate that each managerial dimension has a statistically significant negative effect on employee ambivalence ( $p < 0.001$ ). Leadership and managerial support demonstrated the strongest explanatory power ( $R^2 = 0.375$ ), followed by effective communication ( $R^2 = 0.293$ ) and managerial transparency ( $R^2 = 0.277$ ). These findings provide preliminary support for all five sub-hypotheses when each predictor is examined independently.

**Multiple Linear Regression Analysis:** To assess the unique contribution of each managerial dimension while controlling for the effects of the remaining dimensions, a multiple linear regression model was estimated.

**Table 7.** Multiple Linear Regression Results

| Predictor                       | B     | $\beta$ | t     | Sig.  | Tolerance | VIF   |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Constant                        | 5.284 | —       | 8.743 | 0.000 | —         | —     |
| Effective Communication         | 0.241 | 0.252   | 2.564 | 0.012 | 0.458     | 2.184 |
| Participation in Change         | 0.163 | 0.171   | 1.984 | 0.049 | 0.441     | 2.268 |
| Leadership & Managerial Support | 0.318 | 0.341   | 3.622 | 0.001 | 0.352     | 2.841 |
| Managerial Transparency         | 0.217 | 0.229   | 2.418 | 0.018 | 0.389     | 2.571 |

|                                    |            |            |            |       |       |       |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Empowerment &<br>Capacity-Building | -<br>0.124 | -<br>0.136 | -<br>1.796 | 0.076 | 0.497 | 2.012 |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|

Model Statistics:  $R = 0.738$ ;  $R^2 = 0.545$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.514$ ;  $F = 17.713$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .

The multiple regression model was statistically significant ( $F = 17.713$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and explained 54.5% of the variance in employee ambivalence toward organizational change ( $R^2 = 0.545$ ). Among the predictors, leadership and managerial support exerted the strongest negative effect ( $\beta = -0.341$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), followed by effective communication ( $\beta = -0.252$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), managerial transparency ( $\beta = -0.229$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ), and participation in change ( $\beta = -0.171$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ).

In contrast, empowerment and capacity-building did not reach statistical significance ( $\beta = -0.136$ ,  $p = 0.076$ ), indicating that its unique contribution was not significant after controlling for the effects of the other managerial dimensions.

The collinearity diagnostics showed acceptable values, with tolerance statistics ranging from 0.352 to 0.497 and VIF values ranging from 2.012 to 2.841. These values are below commonly accepted thresholds, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a serious concern in the model.

Overall, the findings support the main hypothesis that managerial approaches contribute significantly to reducing employee ambivalence toward organizational change. Four of the five sub-hypotheses ( $H_1$ – $H_4$ ) were supported in the multiple regression model, whereas  $H_5$  was not supported after controlling for the influence of the other predictors.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that managerial approaches are significantly associated with employee ambivalence toward organizational change, with the five managerial dimensions collectively explaining a substantial proportion of the variance in employee ambivalence. This suggests that the manner in which organizational change is managed may play an important role in shaping employees' cognitive and emotional responses during transitional periods. These findings are consistent with the study's theoretical foundation, which proposes that managerial practices influence how employees interpret, evaluate, and respond to change initiatives. When organizational environments are characterized by supportive leadership, effective communication, transparency, and opportunities for participation, employees may experience lower levels of uncertainty and fewer conflicting attitudes toward organizational change. In this regard, the results are broadly consistent with Cognitive Dissonance Theory [12], which suggests that individuals seek to reduce inconsistencies among competing beliefs and evaluations, and they also support the argument that ambivalence is shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by contextual organizational conditions [13]. Furthermore, the findings reinforce recent research emphasizing the importance of organizational practices

in shaping employee reactions to change [2]. This observation may be particularly relevant within higher education institutions, where continuous reforms associated with quality assurance requirements, accreditation standards, digital transformation initiatives, and administrative restructuring frequently reshape employees' work environments. In such contexts, employees' responses may depend not only on the nature of the change itself but also on how the change process is implemented and communicated [8]. At the dimensional level, leadership and managerial support emerged as the strongest predictor of employee ambivalence, suggesting that supportive leadership may help employees navigate uncertainty by fostering trust, confidence, and a stronger sense of organizational support during periods of change. Such conditions may facilitate more positive interpretations of change initiatives and reduce conflicting emotional reactions. This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that supportive leadership is associated with lower resistance to change and reduced organizational cynicism [20], highlighting the importance of relational and interpersonal aspects of change management. Effective communication was identified as the second strongest predictor, underscoring the importance of providing employees with accurate, timely, and understandable information throughout the change process. Clear communication may reduce ambiguity concerning the objectives, procedures, and anticipated outcomes of change, thereby limiting uncertainty and mixed reactions. This finding is consistent with prior research demonstrating that communication quality contributes to more favorable attitudes toward organizational change [18], while also suggesting that communication may be most effective when accompanied by visible managerial support and trust-building practices. Managerial transparency also demonstrated a significant negative association with employee ambivalence, indicating that openly communicating the rationale behind decisions and ensuring the visibility of administrative processes may strengthen perceptions of fairness and organizational credibility. Whereas communication primarily facilitates information exchange, transparency appears to contribute by enhancing trust in managerial intentions and decision-making processes, a conclusion that aligns with contemporary perspectives emphasizing transparency as a key mechanism for increasing employee acceptance of organizational initiatives [18]. Participation in change was likewise found to have a statistically significant, albeit comparatively weaker, effect on employee ambivalence. Employee involvement in discussions and decision-related processes may enhance feelings of inclusion and perceived control, thereby reducing uncertainty associated with change. The relatively modest effect observed in the present study may reflect contextual characteristics of university settings, where participation mechanisms may differ in terms of depth, authenticity, and influence on final decisions. In contrast, empowerment and capacity-building did not retain statistical significance within the multiple regression model, despite demonstrating significance in the simple

regression analyses. This finding suggests that the unique contribution of empowerment became less pronounced after accounting for the influence of the other managerial dimensions. One possible interpretation is that empowerment-related practices may operate in conjunction with broader managerial processes, particularly leadership support and communication mechanisms, although further research employing more advanced analytical approaches is needed to clarify these relationships. Taken together, the findings suggest that the various managerial dimensions contribute to reducing employee ambivalence through different but complementary mechanisms. Leadership support appears to represent the most influential relational factor, while communication and transparency contribute to enhancing understanding, trust, and perceived legitimacy. Participation and empowerment may also play meaningful roles, although their effects appear to be more context-dependent. From a practical perspective, the results imply that organizations seeking to reduce employee ambivalence during change initiatives should invest not only in formal change procedures but also in supportive leadership behaviors, transparent decision-making processes, and effective communication strategies. Such practices may help create organizational environments in which employees feel informed, supported, and better equipped to adapt constructively to organizational change.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study suggest that employee ambivalence toward organizational change, conceptualized as the simultaneous coexistence of positive and negative evaluations toward the same organizational phenomenon, represents an important psychological response within contemporary organizational settings rather than a temporary or peripheral reaction. The results indicate that managerial approaches play a meaningful role in shaping the extent to which employees experience conflicting attitudes toward organizational change. More specifically, the findings reveal that the examined managerial dimensions do not contribute equally to reducing employee ambivalence. Leadership and managerial support emerged as the most influential factor, highlighting the importance of relational and affective mechanisms in helping employees cope with uncertainty during periods of organizational transition. Effective communication and managerial transparency also demonstrated significant contributions, suggesting that employees are more likely to respond positively to change when they receive clear information and perceive organizational processes as fair and credible. Although participation in change was found to exert a significant influence, its effect was comparatively weaker, while empowerment and capacity-building did not maintain statistical significance when examined alongside the other managerial dimensions. Collectively, these findings suggest that reducing employee ambivalence requires a comprehensive managerial approach that combines supportive leadership, transparent

communication, and meaningful employee involvement rather than relying on isolated managerial interventions. From a broader perspective, the study contributes to the growing literature on organizational change by providing empirical evidence from the higher education sector in Iraq, a context that remains underrepresented in the international organizational behavior literature. As such, the findings offer insights that may support both scholars and practitioners seeking to understand how managerial practices influence employee reactions during periods of organizational transformation.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of several methodological considerations that simultaneously provide opportunities for future research. Although the sample represented a substantial proportion of the target population, the relatively limited number of participants and the focus on a single institutional setting may restrict the broader generalizability of the findings. Future studies could therefore examine larger and more diverse samples across multiple universities and organizational contexts to assess the stability of the observed relationships under different institutional and cultural conditions. In addition, the study relied exclusively on self-reported questionnaire data, which may increase the possibility of common method bias and subjective response tendencies. While appropriate reliability and validity procedures were undertaken, future research could benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, such as supervisor assessments, qualitative interviews, or observational methods, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee responses to change. Another limitation relates to the cross-sectional nature of the research design, which captured employee perceptions at a single point in time. Because reactions to organizational change often evolve throughout different stages of implementation, longitudinal research designs may offer deeper insights into how employee ambivalence develops, intensifies, or declines over the course of organizational transformation. Furthermore, the study was conducted within a single college in one public university, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other organizational environments characterized by different structures, cultures, or leadership systems. Comparative studies involving public and private institutions, as well as different occupational groups, could therefore enrich understanding of contextual variations in employee ambivalence. The results also indicated notable relationships among several managerial dimensions, suggesting that future research may benefit from exploring the distinct and interactive mechanisms through which leadership support, communication, transparency, participation, and empowerment influence employee attitudes toward change. Although the current model explained a substantial proportion of variance in employee ambivalence, a considerable amount of variance remained unexplained, indicating the potential influence of additional organizational and psychological factors. Future studies may therefore examine the

mediating or moderating roles of variables such as organizational trust, perceived organizational support, psychological contracts, readiness for change, and organizational identification. Finally, the present study adopted a subjective approach to measuring ambivalence by focusing on employees' direct perceptions and experiences. Future research could extend this work by comparing subjective measures of ambivalence with alternative objective or formula-based measurement approaches in order to determine whether different conceptualizations of ambivalence produce similar or divergent predictions regarding employee adaptation to organizational change.

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