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THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE PROCESSES: A COMPREHENSIVE THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Paper examines the basic concepts underlying communication psychology and its vital significance in facilitating changes in terms of personal levels, as well as those of work, in addition to describing how, by employing a mix of different communication concepts, the manner in which the nuances of communication strategies influence our attitude, action, and association in matters of change is examined. According to specified communication theories, like the Social Cognitive Theory, Diffusion of Innovations, and Organizational Development Theory, the study seeks to conduct a systematic literature review in the form of an SLR to examine how communication psychology is conducive to the development of effective change management, as described in terms of a deeper analysis, merging the mentioned concepts.

KEYWORDS: Systematic Literature Review, Organizational Change, Theoretical Frameworks, Change Management, Communication Psychology.

1. INTRODUCTION

On one hand, one realizes that technology and globalization shift extremely quickly. Consequently, one must adapt to a changing world to live and flourish. Given the changes in the market, customer needs, and the competitive nature of the world, one must be in a perpetual state of change and innovation (Gartner, 2021). In essence, many different types of organizations have taken a more concerted role in the process of change.

In such an ongoing dynamic, there is a consensus that when managing change, communication is a critical factor for success or failure (Arnab, 2014; Kotter, 1996). This is because, through communication, leaders are able to communicate the reasons for change and motivate staff to take an active part in the change process (Kotter, 1996). Furthermore, communication helps staff to better understand change and express themselves, a factor that positively influences perceptions and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility in the minds of team members.

However, despite the appreciation of the role of communication in organizations, organizations may face major challenges, especially in transformational moments, such as those faced in change processes. Some of these challenges include confusion that can be caused by communication inconsistencies. Therefore, developing a solid understanding of communication psychology becomes essential, as it helps leaders avoid common pitfalls in change management and increases the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Against this background, this paper seeks to explain in detail how communication psychology facilitates change at both the individual and organizational levels. By examining various communication theories and frameworks, the paper aims to clarify how communication functions within change contexts and how it strongly influences change outcomes. Methodologically, the study is based on a systematic literature review framework and is supported by a qualitative synthesis of key theoretical models and peer-reviewed research articles.

By exploring the topic in greater depth, the paper ultimately aims to offer practical insights and strategies for applying communication psychology in ways that ensure effective change initiatives and support long-term organizational success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Integrating Communication Psychology and Theoretical Frameworks for Organizational Change

A good theoretical framework offers vital guidance for the examination of how change in

communication affects individuals or/and organizations. This study employs a structured and integrative method that presents diverse theoretical concepts from scholarly literature in the fields of psychology and management. The structured method ensures a comprehensive understanding of how change processes function, as well as offering valuable directions that can guide theoretical perspectives in any given context. Developing from established theories in psychology and organizational change, the study identifies how communication is central to changing the organization.

The crux of the framework, therefore, lies in the desire to assess the potential of effective communication, as informed by the tenets of communication psychology, to initiate and maintain change within organizations. Communication psychology guarantees relevant and insightful knowledge in the assessment and management of the intricate relationship between communication and change. The intricate relationship between communication and change has thus been identified as falling within several key domains by the framework, including stakeholder engagement, cultural change, resistance to change, leadership communication, change communication strategies, and the utilization of communication technology (Aakhus & Bzdak, 2015).

Thus, stakeholder engagement forms a vital aspect in sustaining the successes of organizational change. In ensuring that organizational change is successful, it is crucial for all employees, the community, and suppliers to become involved in the change process and become aligned to it. This mainly comes about by the use of organizational communication, which builds an all-inclusive environment for stakeholders to freely interact. Organizational success, therefore, comes about by the adoption of town meetings, surveys, and focus groups, which help in understanding the concerns and expectations of the community and all stakeholders, thus ensuring organizational success (Johnston & Taylor, 2018).

Another concept that is related to stakeholder engagement is that of cultural transformation, which becomes important when organizational goals or culture change. According to communication psychology, communication can be utilized as a major tool to reinforce or change the underlying culture or the norms and beliefs held by the organizational members. Leaders are important change agents who can articulate narratives that justify the need for the change, describe the direction of change, and

articulate vision as regards the future (Hicks, 2018). The strategic use of stories, metaphors, and consistency in messages facilitates organizational members to be more flexible, creative, and collaborative. In a sense, effective communication in this approach creates a culture that is responsive to continuous change and evolution.

However, despite all these attempts, one of the most common obstacles to a successful transformation process is resistance to change. In most cases, this resistance tends to happen to a person who feels insecure, threatened, or left out of a process. The tools for changing this specific human behavior are presented by the psychology of communication, focusing on listening, emotional awareness, and being included in decision-making. In this context, Prosci states:

When employee involvement is started early and is continuous during the change process, more understanding and less anxiety result. Leaders who exhibit behaviors expected of others, who certainly articulate the benefits of change and state their views on a basis of reason, and generate high levels of support and engagement amongst their employees.

In this sense, communication by the change leader is seen as a key factor in the accomplishment of the effectiveness of change management in general. From the perspective of Akbari and Pratomo (2021), leaders who are empathetic, attentive, and masters of strategic communication tend to succeed more in times of change in the organization. Leading by positive example, influencing the perception of the group, and being able to communicate the reasons, goals, and phases of change are likely to impress employees substantially. Honest and reliable communication is vital in times of change in the organization.

To ensure that the target audience hears the message at the right time in the appropriate way, the application of change communication strategies is essential. The application of communication psychology helps organizations target the right audience with the appropriate message at the right moment using the most appropriate communication channel (Sanborn, 2022). Communication psychology helps in identifying the readiness of the target audience to change and how they communicate this change in the most appropriate way. For example, the change message could be communicated in the form of infographics for the visually oriented or through email or in a town hall meeting for others. To account for such variation, organizations should create a communication strategy that not only clearly communicates information to be exchanged but also appeals to the

emotional dimensions of change.

In this regard, communication technologies and tools play an increasingly important role in contemporary organizations. Communication applications, video conferencing, and collaboration software not only increase the interactivity of interactions but also accelerate information exchange and make it more effective. Many of those technologies are designed based on principles of communication psychology in order to understand and appreciate, collaborate, or avoid information overload. Where implemented appropriately, these tools will connect organizational units and enable a more inclusive and responsive change process.

To further reinforce this framework, three key theoretical perspectives bring additional insights. First, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) draws attention to the impact of observation and self-efficacy on behavior. In organizational contexts, the theory predicts that employees will learn new behaviors through observing their leaders and peers. Leaders demonstrating confidence and openness to change can influence others to exhibit a similar attitude toward changes. Thus, mentoring and role modeling become vital activities within the organization for embedding change.

Additionally, Rogers' "Diffusion of Innovations Theory" (1962) provides guidelines for understanding the process by which ideas are communicated from one person to another. According to Rogers, some of the communication channels, opinion leadership, and adopter groups play a significant role in influencing the rate at which innovation is accepted in any organization. This, therefore, means that aspects of communication in any organization should be based not only on the content of the message but also consider the process by which the message is communicated to the members of the organization.

The third perspective is the theory of Organizational Development, which applies behavioral science for effective collaboration, decision-making, and learning in any organization (Burke, 2022). The theory aims at instituting planned change in the organization for the betterment of the business as well as the employees. It employs techniques like team-building activities, assessments in organizations, and feedback mechanisms, in which the participation in the change process is highly encouraged, considering how people get motivated, stay engaged, and how they collaborate in groups.

Although the integration of several theories gives a very strong basis from which to view organizational change, it has various challenges.

Many of these theories bring out similar concepts as motivations, behaviors, and influence, and shallow attention to redundancies can bring forth conceptual confusion. Therefore, what is paramount for scholars and practitioners is distinguishing the principal ideas of each theory and applying them toward what best relates to parts of change. More importantly, because integration across disciplines such as communication, psychology, and organizational science requires effective coordination and conceptual alignment among those disciplines, this might take time and may involve collaboration by experts with diverse skill sets.

Overcoming such problems requires an approach whereby organizations ensure that their research and practice are collaborative and flexible. The knowledge from the different disciplines should be shared, novel approaches to communication experimented with, and models refined by feedback to keep theoretical frameworks applicable to both research and real-world practices. Tracy (2014)

2.1 *Communication, Psychology, and Organizational Change*

The meaning and definition of communication psychology differ across various disciplines; yet, in totality, communication psychology is considered the study of how psychological principles, such as perception, cognition, emotions, and behavior, influence human communication, especially in a social and organizational setting. This is a very important approach through which individuals address change, how messages affect individuals' beliefs, and eventually how communication psychology can reduce change resistance, improve employee engagement, and enhance transparent leadership within an organizational setup (Bandura, 1977; Kotter, 1996; Cameron & Green, 2019).

Organizational change extends beyond structural modifications to encompass shifts in attitudes, behaviors, and organizational culture. Existing literature increasingly emphasizes the pivotal role of communication psychology in facilitating these multidimensional changes. Despite this growing recognition, the specific communication strategies and underlying psychological mechanisms that influence organizational outcomes remain insufficiently explored. In response to this gap, this section conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine the role of communication psychology in organizational change. The SLR methodology ensures methodological transparency, replicability, and scholarly rigor, following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021).

2.2 *Systematic Literature Review*

2.2.1 *Research Questions and Objective*

The focus of this SLR is to study how communication psychology can be adopted in organizational change management and determine the theoretical and empirical contributions that uphold communication-based change interventions. The review is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Which theoretical models are used to explain how communication psychology contributes to organizational change?

RQ2: What are the most significant themes of communication psychology in terms of stakeholder engagement, leadership, and resistance management?

RQ3: What is the evidence on the effectiveness of psychologically based theory-driven communication strategies in change?

2.2.2 *Search and Sources of Literature*

In answering the research questions, the relevant literature was reviewed through the five prominent online databases: Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. The academic literature search included peer-reviewed journal articles published in English in the period 2000-2024. A methodical approach to literature searching was implemented by the combination of the keywords:

- "Communication psychology" AND "organizational change."
- "Change communication strategies" AND "behavioral science."
- "Leadership communication" AND "resistance to change."
- "Stakeholder engagement" AND "organizational transformation."
- To optimize the results, Boolean operators and truncations (e.g., communicate) were applied.

2.2.3 *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

The selection was based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, which helped ensure the relevance and quality of the included literature. The inclusion criteria that guided the selection included empirical or theoretical studies with a peer review related to the context of organizational change communication psychology, which were published in English from 2000 to 2024. By contrast, non-peer-reviewed materials, studies clearly unrelated to the research focus, editorials or commentaries, and publications without a clear basis in theory or empiricism were excluded.

2.2.4 Screening and Selection Process

In the initial search, a total of 324 studies were identified; after removing 78 duplicate articles, the number of studies remained at 246. Screening was carried out by examining the titles and

abstracts, during which 147 articles were eliminated in this phase. Thereafter, a total of 99 articles were screened at the full-text level, and 42 studies were included in the review, as shown in Figure 1, which depicts a PRISMA flow chart for selection.

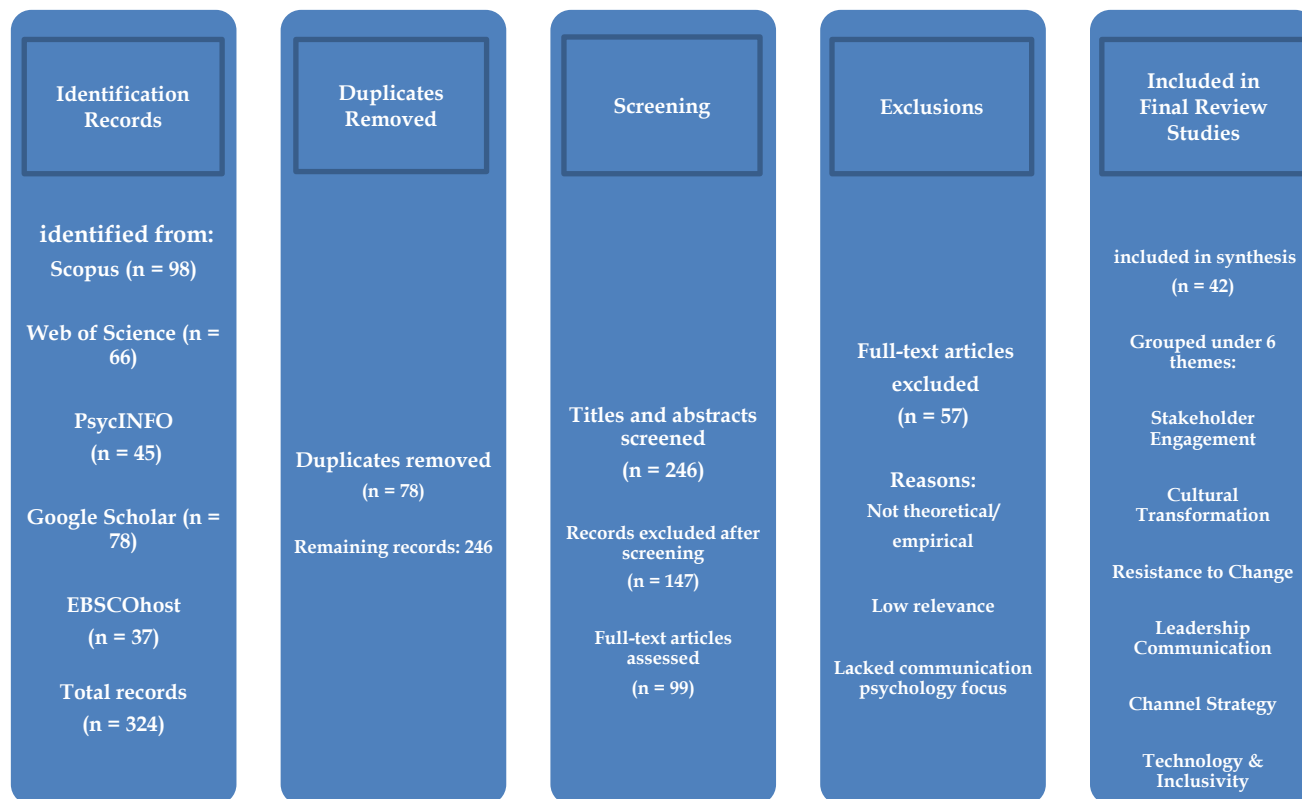


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram illustrating the systematic literature review screening and selection procedure.

Figure 1 presents the detailed results of the search: 324 records were identified in the initial database search, from which 42 studies met the inclusion criteria and were thus included in the systematic review. The results of screening and selecting were synthesised thematically to provide a coherent interpretation of the literature.

2.3 Results Synthesis

Based on the thematic analysis, the selected studies were organized into six dominant themes that collectively explain the role of communication in facilitating organizational change.

2.3.1 Engagement of Stakeholders

A substantial amount of literature stressed the significance of engaging stakeholders by means of participatory forms of communication, such as town hall meetings, feedback mechanisms, or inclusive dialogues. Effective forms of communication were identified to have a significant impact in increasing employees'

participation and instilling a sense of psychological ownership in change initiatives, which in turn improved commitment and minimized uncertainty in the minds of stakeholders, as suggested by Johnston and Taylor in 2018, and Aakhus and Bzdak in 2015.

2.3.2 Cultural Transformation

In addition, the importance of the role of communication in changing organizational culture was revealed, especially during phases of significant culture change. For instance, leaders tend to utilize the power of narratives and symbols in an effort to instill the values that they want an organization to follow and the common vision that will bind the organization. Further understanding of the role of the psychology of communication was revealed in helping the organization internalize these values.

2.3.3 Resistance to Change

It is usually associated with fear, ambiguity, or perceived threats to stability. Literature suggests that

empathy, emotional validation, and strategic framing of messages are psychologically founded communication strategies that help in lowering resistance to change and increasing openness toward it. Such psychologically informed communication strategies are crucial in reducing resistance and increasing the opening up to change. Meanwhile, active listening and employee involvement in decision-making build psychological safety and trust.

2.3.4 Leadership Communication

Effective leadership communication was recognized as an essential influencer of the success of change management implementation. Findings reveal that visible, credible, and clear change leadership, such as through emotionally intelligent leadership, symbolic leadership, and informational leadership, helps in reducing uncertainty and strengthening commitment to the organization, especially in periods of change (Akbari & Pratomo, 2021; Kotter, 1996).

2.3.5 Communication Channels and Message Delivery

Research has proven the importance of adopting adaptive communication channels in supporting

2.4 Summary of Theoretical Frameworks

Author(s)	Theory/Model	Key Concepts	Application
Bandura (1977)	Social Cognitive Theory	Observational learning, self-efficacy	Modeling change behaviors, enhancing belief in capability
Rogers (1962)	Diffusion of Innovations	Innovation adoption, communication channels	Supporting early adopters, segmenting audiences
Prosci (2020)	ADKAR Model	Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement	Structured change process management
Burke (2022)	Organizational Development Theory	Feedback loops, behavior reinforcement	Designing long-term change strategies and team learning

From this review, a number of conceptual richness groups and gaps in terms of validation were identified. Thus, while there are a great number of theoretical frameworks that have been developed to provide valuable insights into the various psychological mechanisms behind change communication, there still seems to be a scarcity in terms of empirical longitudinal studies. Thus, with this perspective, the diagram represented below shows the value of understanding the six key strategic applications of organizational change communication, based and directed by such foundational theoretical constructs as Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations, the Prosci ADKAR Model, and Burke's Organizational Development Theory.

change management initiatives. According to communication theories such as Rogers' theory of Diffusion of Innovations, research has shown that a communication message is more likely to prove effective if its content is preferred by a section of a targeted audience or suits a particular style of learning or communication, such as visual communication and written communication, as opposed to dialogue or verbal communication by other people, as proposed by Sanborn (2022).

2.3.6 Inclusivity and Technology

Finally, the use of digital platforms in integrating digital communication was found to increase the scope of reach as well as channel real-time feedback, thereby aiding dynamic change processes in organizations. However, the literature has emphasized the ethical regulation and cultural sensitivity that are to be taken into account in digital communication. Thus, by using inclusive language and digital segmentation tools, the organization can promote equity while avoiding communication barriers to communicate effectively with the diverse employee groups in the organization (Gartner, 2021; Buengeler et al., 2017).



Figure 2: Theoretical Framework Linking Communication Psychology to Organizational Change Strategies.

Additionally, the impact of communication strategies on specific organizational results, such as productivity and employee turnover, is another area that is not fully explored. Finally, there is a significant gap in non-Western contexts and digital-first conditions.

2.5 Summary

This methodological literature review has shown that the discipline of communication psychology is a dynamic basis through which organizational change can be promoted. All the themes that have been identified, such as engagement, culture, resistance, leadership, strategies, and technology, have significant connections to the psychological principles that can be applied to promote effective communication within the organization. Further studies focusing on the research structure and methods would be beneficial to the improvement of the presentation and validity of the findings.

3. METHODOLOGY

The specific methodology used in this study is a comprehensive qualitative methodology, which focuses on a thorough analysis and integration of the literature available in the domains of communication psychology and organizational changes. Primarily based on this methodology, the study aims to gain thorough knowledge regarding crucial concepts, findings, and theoretical frameworks related to organizational changes. By using this methodology, the study builds a strong platform to discuss the impact of communication strategies on organizational changes.

The fundamental stage of this research entails an exhaustive literature review. This stage entails the collection of books, journal articles, as well as empirical studies. However, in the process of ensuring reliability and validity, this particular research pays attention specifically to resources appreciated universally as having a significant scholarly influence. In the realm of foundational literature, Bandura's "Social Cognitive Theory" of 1977 explicitly outlines how individuals within an organization are able to process new pieces of information, establish new beliefs, or even change their behaviors through processes of observation.

In addition to these basic theories, the literature review is also concerned with research related to persuasion and influence. Interestingly, in the work conducted by Heath & O'Hair (1992), some clarity is given with regards to how one person can influence another through communication. This is a very critical issue in organizational setting because leaders have to influence others in a way that is not resistant to change.

In line with the latest practices in organizational situations, the literature review incorporates recent models of change management methodologies. For example, the Prosci methodology, while highlighting

a systematic and people-centered approach to change, also incorporates aspects such as the ADKAR model, which stands for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement, in a successful change implementation. While doing so, it aligns with various theoretical perspectives of communication psychology.

At this point, "key concepts are synthesized through thematic analysis, which involves combining, grouping, or uniting ideas, theories, and other patterns from different sources. In summary, thematic analysis is the process used to associate universal elements of different studies, such as employee engagement, resistance to change, leadership communication behaviors, and organizational readiness, to create a meaningful context to view both academic and professional opinions on organizational change. In addition, this study integrates different aspects of communication psychology in relation to organizational change, considering different levels, from the individual to groups. This is made clear by the application of self-efficacy theory, which discusses the methods used by an individual to cope with change, as well as persuasion theory, which discusses the methods used to construct messages to influence change, whereas the following discussion will look at the roles of emotional intelligence, storytelling, and continuous feedback in changing communication behaviors."

Organizational synthesis examines how the nature of the organization, whether it is rigid or flexible, hierarchical or non-hierarchical, impacts various change communication strategies. Literature suggests that the impact of these strategies is often related to various cultural dimensions, such as leadership, workforce, or technology. This contextual perspective allows the study to adapt core concepts to diverse settings, enhancing the applicability and robustness of its conclusions.

The last step in the methodology includes the critical review of literature. This stage aims at highlighting established findings, as well as current challenges and gaps of the research. Each of the selected sources will be critically reviewed for methodological strength, clarity of concepts, and strength of evidence. The focus will fall onto the research methods chosen-quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-Methods-and the generalization of findings to the largest possible extent.

For example, though Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory gives a fundamental principle of operation, some critics argue that it fails to fully take into account the influence of external factors on behavior

modulation. In the same way, Heath and O'Hair's model elaborates on key components in building persuasive communication, but it does not possibly extend to cultural and organizational differences that impact message reception. Considering these critiques against the strengths of these models, therefore, the study makes judgments about their overall effectiveness when applied within organizational settings.

Accordingly, this process of evaluation also points to areas requiring further research and areas of weakness in existing research designs, including the fact that much past research has either focused on changes at the macro-level or at the micro-level without effectively relating them, or in examining the effects of interventions in communication over time on overall organizational performance.

The study has also addressed the pragmatic applications of the reviewed theories. For instance, the Prosci methodology (2020) has provided significant information to practitioners but has been criticized as too inflexible and lacking evidence in various organizations. The Prosci methodology clearly recognizes the significance of knowledge and skill integration in various contexts, such as organizational settings and school systems.

Consequently, with the aim of ensuring the reliability of the research, the study strictly focuses only on literature that has been published within the last 25 years, apart from the literature produced by Bandura, which was a leading theory in the field.

In sum, this approach integrates a literature review, thematic synthesis of ideas, and critical assessment in showing how communication psychology enables organizational change. Through this integration of theory, empirical perspective, and practical direction, the study constructs a complex framework that reaches both scholarly understanding and leadership practice by providing active resources to help guide organizational transformation.

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4. CONCLUSION

This paper explores the role of communication psychology as an enabler of both organizational and personal change. This required undertaking a systematic literature review (SLR) which analyzed 42 relevant studies. Synthesizing some of the prominent theoretical frameworks, including Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, 1977; Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations, 1962; and the Prosci ADKAR Model into a cohesive model, provides one that is comprehensive, steeped in both psychological principles and strategic communication.

These results highlight six themes that are central to successful change initiatives: stakeholder engagement, cultural transformation, resistance management, leadership communication, strategic messaging, and ethical use of technology. Communication was found to impact trust, emotional safety, behavior change, and overall engagement. Additionally, practices like empathetic leadership, representational framing, and extreme inclusion were associated with more effective and sustainable change processes.

It then places the proposed framework in the context of integrating classical change theories with contemporary challenges such as digitalization, diversity, and real-time interaction. A core emphasis is on how communication psychology can enable sustainable change, especially when allied with emotional intelligence and feedback-based communication strategies. (Heath & O'Hair, 1992; Ratcliff & Sun, 2020).

This paper argues that future research should investigate longitudinal effects, those emerging from underrepresented cultural contexts, and emerging technological resources including AI and VR. The practice suggestions for encouraging psychologically informed communication strategies mean organizational preparedness, resilience, and fairness will be increased in order to support more effective and ethical change management processes.

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