



An Effect Mechanism Model of Communication Openness on the Transformation Force Field

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This study aims to explore the impact of communication openness on the transformation force field, specifically focusing on the mediating role of organizational commitment. A well-structured and comprehensive model is developed and tested using empirical data from a benchmark enterprise in China. The results highlight the significant reduction in resistance to transformation and the enhancement of organizational commitment due to communication openness. Additionally, it is found that organizational commitment plays a crucial role in minimizing resistance to transformation. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between communication openness, organizational commitment, and organizational transformation. Moreover, they offer practical implications for managers seeking effective implementation of change.

Keywords: *Communication Openness; Organizational Commitment; Transformation Force Field*



1. Introduction

Communication stands out as an essential means of effective conflict resolution, while effective transformation communication serves as a critical guarantee of successful organizational transformation. Effective transformation communication allows organizational members to unify their thoughts, coalesce consensus, thereby enabling each member to accept and identify with the transformation. It also helps clarify their intentions, approaches, timing, and the extent of their involvement. Moreover, effective transformation communication leads to the timely detection and resolution of adverse emotions among organization members during the transformation process, fostering a smooth and harmonious organizational transformation atmosphere. Additionally, it enables organization members to actively participate in the transformation, providing valuable reference information and grounds for decision-making. This study aims to explore the mechanism by which communication openness affects the transformation force field, with a specific focus on the mediating role of organizational commitment.

The transformation force field comprises two conflicting forces: motivation for transformation and resistance to transformation. Although earlier studies have examined the connection between communication openness and organizational commitment, limited research has been conducted on the influence of communication openness on the transformation force field, specifically with regard to the mediating effect of organizational commitment. In the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) era, comprehending the significance of communication openness and organizational commitment in organizational transformation holds utmost importance for both practitioners and scholars.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, we aim to develop a comprehensive model that investigates the effect mechanism of communication openness on the transformation force field, incorporating the mediating role of organizational commitment. Second, we seek to provide empirical evidence by testing the model using data from a benchmark enterprise in China. Finally, we aim to draw practical implications for managers and organizations to effectively facilitate successful transformation.

To achieve these objectives, the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant literature on communication openness, organizational commitment, and the transformation force field, developing the research hypotheses. Section 3 presents the research methodology, including the research design, sample, data collection, measures, and data analysis. Section



4 reports the results of the empirical analysis, while Section 5 discusses the findings, theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper, summarizing the key findings and contributions to the field.

By examining the effect mechanism of communication openness on the transformation force field and the mediating role of organizational commitment, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on organizational transformation. Furthermore, it offers valuable insights for managers and organizations seeking to enhance communication openness and foster organizational commitment to facilitate successful transformation.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Communication Openness

Communication openness refers to the extent to which an organization fosters a transparent, accessible, and candid exchange of information between its members (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Open communication is crucial for creating an environment that encourages employees to share their ideas, concerns, and opinions without fear of retribution (D'Aprix, 1996). The concept of communication openness has been linked to numerous organizational outcomes, including increased job satisfaction, higher levels of trust, improved performance, and reduced turnover (Smidts et al., 2001).

Communication openness is particularly relevant in the context of organizational transformation, as it enables employees to better understand the rationale behind the change and the potential benefits it may bring (Ford et al., 2008). By promoting transparency and reducing information asymmetry, communication openness can help alleviate employees' uncertainty and anxiety, leading to decreased resistance to transformation (Lines, 2004). Therefore, the present study hypothesizes that:

H1. Communication openness is positively significant for the transformation force field (namely, the stronger the communication openness, the greater the motivation to transformation, and the lower the resistance to transformation).

2.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is the psychological attachment that an employee feels towards their organization, which can significantly influence their attitudes and behaviors (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It can be classified into three dimensions: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving the organization), and



normative commitment (sense of obligation) (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Organizational commitment is considered a crucial factor in determining employees' attitudes and behaviors during organizational transformation (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). High levels of commitment have been associated with reduced resistance to change, increased acceptance of new practices, and improved overall performance during transformation processes (Oreg et al., 2011). In the context of communication openness, several studies have shown that open and transparent communication can enhance employees' organizational commitment (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Communication openness is positively significant for organizational commitment (namely, the stronger the communication openness, the stronger the organizational commitment)

H2a. Communication openness is positively significant for affective commitment

H2b. Communication openness is positively significant for continuance commitment

H2c. Communication openness is positively significant for normative commitment

2.3 Transformation Force Field

The transformation force field consists of two opposing forces: motivation to transformation and resistance to transformation (Lewin, 1951). Motivation to transformation refers to the driving forces that encourage employees to accept and support the change, such as the perceived benefits of the transformation and alignment with personal goals (Armenakis et al., 1993). Resistance to transformation, on the other hand, represents the restraining forces that hinder employees' willingness to accept and adapt to the change, such as fear of losing control, perceived threats to job security, and lack of trust in management (Oreg, 2003).

The relationship between organizational commitment and resistance to transformation has been well documented in the literature. Employees with higher levels of commitment are less likely to resist change, as they identify with the organization's goals and are more willing to support the transformation process (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). In addition, committed employees are more likely to perceive the change as beneficial and are more willing to invest effort in the transformation process (Madsen et al., 2005). Based on this, the study hypothesizes that:

H3. Organizational commitment is positively significant for the transformation force field (namely, the stronger the organizational commitment, the greater the motivation to transformation, and the lower the resistance to transformation)

H3a. Affective commitment is positively significant for the transformation force field

H3b. Continuance commitment is positively significant for the transformation force field

H3c. Normative commitment is positively significant for the transformation force field

2.4 The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

Although the direct relationships between communication openness, organizational commitment, and resistance to transformation have been studied, the potential mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between communication openness and resistance to transformation has not been thoroughly investigated. As previously discussed, communication openness can foster a more transparent and inclusive environment, which in turn enhances employees' organizational commitment (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). Moreover, employees with higher commitment levels are less likely to resist change and more likely to support the transformation process (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that organizational commitment could mediate the relationship between communication openness and resistance to transformation.

By investigating these relationships, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the effect mechanism of communication openness on the transformation force field, with a focus on the mediating role of organizational commitment. The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for managers and practitioners who seek to implement successful organizational transformations by enhancing communication openness and fostering a strong sense of commitment among their employees. The research model of this paper is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Effect Mechanism Model of Communication Openness on Transformation Force Field





3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study utilizes an empirical analysis method to examine the effect of communication openness on the transformation force field within a medium-to-large benchmark enterprise in China. The method provides a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of this complex and specific issue in the context of the continuously evolving internal and external environment.

3.2 Case Selection

The case study centers around JH Technology, a Chinese private enterprise that has a 20-year development history. The company has navigated through different stages of growth while capitalizing on the "demographic dividend" and "engineer dividend" within China's corporate development process. The selection of this company was based on two main factors: the need to adjust its organizational operation mechanism due to its expanding scale, and its planned initiation of a new round of organizational transformation. Furthermore, JH Technology's experience in fostering communication openness, promoting employee organizational commitment, and minimizing resistance to transformation provides valuable insights for local private enterprises in China during the VUCA era. The study aims to present a logical and grammatically correct analysis of these aspects.

3.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to 107 participants, with all questionnaires recovered and considered valid data, yielding a 100% recovery rate. The questionnaire aimed to assess whether the questions could meet the study's needs and whether their measurement content was consistent. Following data collection, the reliability of the data was verified through a reliability analysis of each scale.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data, such as interview transcripts and company documents, were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and relationships among the communication openness, organizational commitment, transformation force field. Quantitative data, such as survey responses, were analyzed using statistical techniques, such as regression analysis and structural equation modeling, to test the proposed hypotheses and assess the relationships among the model components.

4. Results

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Motivation to transformation, resistance to transformation, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, and communication openness were taken as variables respectively, resulting in the correlation matrix shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

	Motivation for Transformation	Resistance to Transformation	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment	Communication Openness
Motivation for Transformation	1					
Resistance to Transformation	.309**	1				
Affective Commitment	0.159	.363**	1			
Continuance Commitment	0.061	.298**	.679**	1		
Normative Commitment	0.039	.357**	.612**	.747**	1	
Communication Openness	-0.013	.296**	.513**	.550**	.608**	1
** At the level of 0.01 (two-tailed), the correlation is significant.						

The results of the correlation analysis demonstrated that the correlations between the factors and scales in this study were not significant between motivation to transformation and affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, and communication openness. All other factors and scales exhibited significant positive correlations with each other. Moreover, since the resistance to transformation scales are all reverse scoring items, their options and corresponding scores were transformed in the statistics for the sake of easy understanding. In other words, the higher the score, the lower the resistance to transformation. The above results of correlation analysis have also served as a basis and guarantee for the subsequent analysis.

4.2 Regression Analysis

4.2.1 Regression Analysis of Communication Openness and Affective Commitment

The regression analysis of communication openness and affective commitment is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Analysis of Communication Openness and Affective Commitment

Communication Openness - Affective Commitment						
Model		Non-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		p
		B	Standard Error	Beta	t	
Independent Variable	Communication Openness	0.486	0.079	0.513	6.125	0.000
Regression Model Summary	R ²	0.263				
	Adjusted R ²	0.256				
	F	37.513				
Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment						

The results obtained from the regression analysis in the table indicate that the statistic of the F-test is 37.513, which is statistically significant at the 1% level of significance, suggesting that a regression model can be established between communication openness and affective commitment, in addition to the fit coefficient of the regression equation $R^2 = 0.263$, which is an average but acceptable fit. The T-test corresponds to a p-value of less than 0.001, which illustrates that communication openness exerts a positive significant effect on affective commitment with a standardized coefficient of 0.513.

4.2.2 Regression Analysis of Communication Openness and Continuance Commitment

The regression analysis of communication openness and continuance commitment is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Communication Openness and Continuance Commitment

Communication Openness - Continuance Commitment						
Model		Non-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		p
		B	Standard Error	Beta	t	
Independent Variable	Communication Openness	0.571	0.085	0.55	6.753	0.000
Regression Model Summary	R ²	0.296				
	Adjusted R ²	0.303				
	F	45.606				
Dependent Variable: Continuance Commitment						

The results obtained from the regression analysis in the table reveal that the statistic of the F-test is 45.606, which is statistically significant at the 1% level of significance, indicating that a regression model can be established between communication openness and continuance commitment, in addition to the fit coefficient of the regression equation $R^2 = 0.296$, which is an average but acceptable fit. The T-test corresponds to a p-value of less than 0.001, which suggests that communication openness exerts a significant positive effect on continuance commitment with a standardized coefficient of 0.550.

4.2.3 Regression Analysis of Communication Openness and Normative Commitment

The regression analysis of communication openness and normative commitment is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Communication Openness and Normative Commitment

Communication Openness - Normative Commitment						
Model		Non-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		p
		B	Standard Error	Beta	t	
Independent Variable	Communication Openness	0.635	0.081	0.608	7.839	0.000
Regression Model Summary	R ²	0.369				
	Adjusted R ²	0.363				
	F	61.449				
Dependent Variable: Normative Commitment						

The results obtained from the regression analysis in the table demonstrate that the statistic of the F-test is 61.449, which is statistically significant at the 1% level of significance, indicating that a regression model can be established between communication openness and normative commitment, in addition to the fit coefficient of the regression equation $R^2 = 0.369$, which is a relatively effective fit. The T-test corresponds to a p-value of less than 0.001, which illustrates that communication openness exerts a significant positive effect on normative commitment with a standardized coefficient of 0.608.

4.2.4 Regression Analysis of Affective Commitment and Resistance to Transformation

The regression analysis of affective commitment and resistance to transformation is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression Analysis of Affective Commitment and Resistance to Transformation

Affective Commitment - Resistance to Transformation						
Model		Non-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		p
		B	Standard Error	Beta	t	
Independent Variable	Affective Commitment	0.251	0.063	0.363	3.987	0.000
Regression Model Summary	R ²	0.132				
	Adjusted R ²	0.123				
	F	15.900				
Dependent Variable: Resistance to Transformation						

The results obtained from the regression analysis in the table indicate that the statistic of F-test is 15.900, which is statistically significant at 1% level of significance, indicating that a regression model can be established between affective commitment and resistance to transformation, in addition to the fit coefficient of the regression equation $R^2=0.132$, which is an average fit. The T-test corresponds to a p-value less than 0.001, which demonstrates that affective commitment and resistance to transformation have a significant positive effect with a standardized coefficient of 0.363.

4.2.5 Regression Analysis of Continuance Commitment and Resistance to Transformation

The regression analysis of continuance commitment and resistance to transformation is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Regression Analysis of Continuance Commitment and Resistance to Transformation

Affective Commitment - Resistance to Transformation						
Model		Non-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		p
		B	Standard Error	Beta	t	
Independent Variable	Affective Commitment	0.251	0.063	0.363	3.987	0.000
Regression Model Summary	R ²	0.132				
	Adjusted R ²	0.123				
	F	15.900				
Dependent Variable: Resistance to Transformation						

The results obtained from the regression analysis in the table indicate that the statistic of F-test is 10.267, which is statistically significant at 1% level of significance, suggesting that a regression model can be established between continuance commitment and resistance to transformation, in addition to the fit coefficient of the regression equation $R^2=0.089$, which is a poor fit. The T-test corresponds to a p-value of less than 0.01, which indicates that there is a significant positive effect of continuance commitment and resistance to transformation with a standard coefficient of 0.298.

4.2.6 Regression Analysis of Normative Commitment and Resistance to Transformation

The regression analysis of normative commitment and resistance to transformation is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Regression Analysis of Normative Commitment and Resistance to Transformation

Normative Commitment - Resistance to Transformation						
Model		Non-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		
		B	Standard Error	Beta	t	p
Independent Variable	Normative Commitment	0.224	0.057	0.357	3.92	0.000
Regression Model Summary	R ²	0.128				
	Adjusted R ²	0.119				
	F	15.366				
Dependent Variable: Resistance to Transformation						

The results obtained from the regression analysis in the table reveal that the statistic of F-test is 15.366, which is statistically significant at 1% level of significance, indicating that a regression model can be established between normative commitment and resistance to transformation, in addition to the fit coefficient of the regression equation $R^2=0.128$, which is an average fit. The T-test corresponds to a p-value of less than 0.001, which illustrates that there is a significant positive effect of normative commitment and resistance to transformation with a standardized coefficient of 0.357.

4.2.7 Regression analysis of Communication Openness and Resistance to Transformation

The regression analysis of communication openness and resistance to transformation is shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Regression Analysis of Communication Openness and Resistance to Transformation

Communication Openness - Resistance to Transformation						
Model		Non-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		p
		B	Standard Error	Beta	t	
Independent Variable	Communication Openness	0.194	0.061	0.296	3.174	0.002
Regression Model Summary	R ²	0.088				
	Adjusted R ²	0.079				
	F	10.071				
Dependent Variable: Resistance to Transformation						

The results obtained from the regression analysis in the table reveals that the statistic of F-test is 10.071, which is statistically significant at 1% level of significance, indicating that a regression model can be established between communication openness and resistance to transformation, in addition to the fit coefficient of the regression equation $R^2=0.088$, which is a poor fit. The T-test corresponds to a p-value of less than 0.01, which illustrates that communication openness and resistance to transformation have a significant positive effect with a standard coefficient of 0.296.

5. Discussion

The present study aims to examine the causal relationship between communication openness and the transformation force field. In particular, we focus on exploring the mediating role of organizational commitment in this relationship. Our empirical findings strongly support the notion that communication openness has a positive and significant impact on organizational commitment, while showing a negative link with resistance to transformation. Additionally, the results highlight the significant negative association between organizational commitment and resistance to transformation, providing further support for our research hypotheses.

One noteworthy finding is the lack of a significant relationship between motivation for transformation and the other variables. This suggests that motivation for transformation is likely to be driven primarily by external factors, such as environmental changes or stakeholder demands, rather than internal factors such as communication openness or organizational commitment. In contrast, resistance to transformation originates from within the organization and is strongly associated with communication openness and organizational



commitment.

The results clearly indicate the vital importance of promoting communication openness in order to cultivate organizational commitment and diminish resistance to transformation. By establishing and maintaining channels of open and transparent communication, organizations can facilitate employees in gaining a deeper comprehension of the transformation process, its objectives, and possible outcomes. Consequently, this can result in greater employee commitment and a decreased level of resistance to change.

The present study contributes to the existing literature on communication openness, organizational commitment, and resistance to transformation by exploring their interrelationships and the mediating role of organizational commitment in the context of organizational transformation. While previous research has investigated the relationship between communication openness and organizational commitment, there has been limited focus on the relationships between the three dimensions of organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment) and resistance to transformation. Our study addresses this gap and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the effect mechanism of communication openness on the transformation force field.

Our findings have practical implications for managers and organizations undergoing transformation processes. Firstly, it is essential for organizations to prioritize open and transparent communication throughout the transformation process in order to enhance employee commitment and reduce resistance to change. This can be achieved by actively involving employees in decision-making, sharing relevant information, and addressing concerns or uncertainties. Secondly, organizations should take into account the specific communication needs of different stakeholders, including employees, transformation project participants, and external stakeholders. By developing targeted communication strategies, organizations can ensure that each stakeholder group receives the necessary information and support required for the successful implementation of the transformation process. Lastly, the consistency between the words and actions of organizational leaders is crucial to the success of transformation efforts. Leaders must lead by example, practicing what they preach, and demonstrating their commitment to the transformation process.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small as it consists of data from a single benchmark enterprise in China.



Consequently, the generalizability of our findings to other contexts and industries may be limited. To enhance the external validity of the study, future research could consider expanding the sample size and including organizations from different sectors or regions. Secondly, the cross-sectional design of the study does not allow for the examination of causal relationships between variables. To better understand the causal effects of communication openness and organizational commitment on resistance to transformation, future studies could employ longitudinal research designs. Lastly, future research could explore additional variables that may influence the relationships between communication openness, organizational commitment, and resistance to transformation. Factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, or individual differences among employees should be considered. By incorporating these variables, a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting successful organizational transformation processes can be achieved.

6. Conclusions

This study has sought to explore the effect mechanism of communication openness on the transformation force field, focusing on the mediating role of organizational commitment. The empirical analysis of a benchmark Chinese enterprise has revealed significant positive effects of communication openness on organizational commitment and negative effects on resistance to transformation. Organizational commitment was also found to have a significant negative impact on resistance to transformation.

These findings highlight the importance of open and transparent communication in fostering employee commitment and reducing resistance to change during organizational transformation. Our research extends the existing literature by examining the relationships between the dimensions of organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment) and resistance to transformation. This study has practical implications for managers and organizations, emphasizing the need for clear, consistent communication strategies and strong leadership to facilitate successful transformation efforts.

Despite the limitations related to the sample size and cross-sectional design, this study provides valuable insights into the role of communication openness in organizational transformation. Future research could expand upon these findings by investigating additional variables, utilizing larger and more diverse samples, and employing longitudinal designs to further explore the causal relationships between communication openness, organizational commitment, and resistance to transformation.



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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial and non-financial interests.

Data Availability Statement

The data used to support the findings of this study are included within the article.

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