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The Impact of Organizational Ambiguity on Strategies for Containing It: A Study of the Opinions of a Sample of Employees in the National Company for Home Furniture in Mosul

¹Sultan A. K. Alnofal¹, Khaldoon F.M. Al-Kamash² and Ammar A. Salem²

¹Department of Business Management Techniques, Northern Technical University, Mosul, Iraq

²Department of Materials Management Techniques, Northern Technical University, Mosul, Iraq

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Khaldoon F.M. Al-Kamash²

Department of Materials
Management Techniques,
Northern Technical University,
Mosul, Iraq

Email: khaldoon79@ntu.edu.iq

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ABSTRACT

Organizational ambiguity represents one of the key obstacles in the business field due to its emergence from diverse and varying factors. This necessitates the adoption of a strategic approach, as it offers effective contributions to mitigating and even avoiding ambiguity. Accordingly, the study problem arises from the following question Does the absence of a proactive approach in strategies for dealing with organizational ambiguity constitute a major cause of its emergence in the workplace at the researched organization? The study relied on a questionnaire as the primary tool for collecting data on the phenomenon under investigation at the researched organization (the National Company for Home Furniture in Mosul). A random sample of 19 individuals from the organization was selected. The researchers utilized several statistical tools, including frequencies, percentages, and arithmetic means, standard deviations, and regression analysis. The study reached several conclusions, the most prominent of which was the weak impact of organizational ambiguity on containment strategies at the researched organization. Based on these conclusions, the study proposed several recommendations.



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Introduction

The entire organizational process encounters challenges that hinder its progress toward its intended goals, and organizational ambiguity may be one of these challenges. This places organizations under pressure, compelling them to adopt various strategies—some addressing the present while others extending into the future. However, gaps exist between these approaches. From this perspective, the researchers found justification for outlining their study's methodology, which focused on defining the research problem, stating its objectives, and developing a hypothetical framework leading to the formulation of hypotheses, all within the context of selected data collection tools and statistical methods, as indicated below.

1.1 Study Problem

Undoubtedly, organizations operate in diverse environments—some stable, while others are subject to turbulence. This imposes constraints and necessitates reflection, yet it does not exempt them from risks and uncertainty. Such conditions lead to ambiguity, whether regarding assigned roles or the nature of the objectives they seek to achieve. This creates a dilemma—"to be or not to be"—prompting organizations to carefully evaluate their surroundings, avoiding negative aspects while embracing positive ones.

Several challenges emerge: pressure groups remain entrenched, competitors stay vigilant, bureaucratic procedures persist in their complexity, and suppliers threaten non-compliance with their obligations due to limited financial allocations. All these factors contribute to uncertainty. Consequently, the researched organization faced difficulties that led to setbacks, unless proactive and even remedial strategies were employed. Thus, the study's problem is encapsulated in the following question:

Does the absence of a proactive approach in strategies for dealing with organizational ambiguity constitute a major cause of its emergence in the workplace at the researched organization?

1.2 Study Objectives.

The current study aims to:

1. Define organizational ambiguity, explore its causes, and identify its dimensions within the scope of this study.
2. Examine the strategies for addressing organizational ambiguity in light of their characteristics.
3. Describe and diagnose the two variables of the phenomenon under study based on the respondents' answers to the items representing their dimensions.
4. Determine the impact of organizational ambiguity on its containment strategies within the researched organization.

1.3 Hypothetical Framework of the Study

The current study adopted a hypothetical framework that reflects the impact of the dimensions of organizational ambiguity on its containment strategies, as illustrated below:



Fig. 1 prepared by the researchers

1.4 Study Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the current study were determined as follows:

First.Hypothesis:

Organizational ambiguity affects the strategies to contain it at the level of the researched organization.

A sub-hypothesis stems from this hypothesis, which states:

Each dimension of organizational ambiguity (pressure groups, competitors, suppliers, formal procedures, financial allocations, certainty cases) affects the strategies to contain it at the level of the researched organization.

1.5 Data Collection Methods

The current study relied on the questionnaire form as a tool to collect data related to the phenomenon under study. Its items covered the dimensions expressing the variables of that phenomenon. It was presented to a group of experts to benefit from their opinions and comments. After it became valid for the study, it was distributed to a random sample of (19) individuals from the total actual staff of the researched organization.

The researchers used a set of statistical tools (frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, standard deviations, regression) to prove the study hypothesis, demonstrate the extent of its framework's validity, and reveal its objectives. This required addressing two main axes:

2 Organizational Ambiguity

Organizational ambiguity represents a significant obstacle in the path of organizations, requiring them to monitor and diagnose problems to leap towards future prospects. This cannot be achieved without understanding the nature of ambiguity, investigating its causes, and trying to identify its dimensions—subjects that will be the focus of the following sections.

2.1 Concept and Causes of Organizational Ambiguity

Organizational ambiguity indicates the lack of clarity in tasks and the absence of understanding regarding them, where employees and even administrative leaders receive instructions that tend to be conflicting. This reflects a state of contradiction caused by informational deficiency—meaning the absence of accurate, role-related information. Additionally, restrictions and obstacles may appear here and there, generating a feeling among

individuals that the flowing information is not at the required level. [1]. On the other hand, some view organizational ambiguity as the inability of working individuals to know what is expected of them in terms of performance[2]. In the same context[3] argue...

Ambiguity is one of the key features of future management, highlighting the need for organizations to adopt new methods that go beyond traditional thinking and perception. According to[4], ambiguity is considered one of the negotiation characteristics that indicates uncertainty and requires a methodological approach. Emphasis on the organizational Dexterity for achieve supremacy[5].

Based on this, researchers understand that organizational ambiguity refers to: "(Situations of conflict and lack of understanding regarding the roles assigned to employees in the organization, arising from practices by pressure groups, suppliers, competitors, as well as the complexity of procedures, prevailing uncertainty, and the low level of financial allocations supporting employees, placing the organization at a crossroads of challenges)." That is motivated leadership to adopted strategic intelligence to achieve success[6].

The reasons for organizational ambiguity, as mentioned by[7], include:

1. The diversity of societies in expressing their intentions, which leads to multiple interpretations, resulting in disagreements and misunderstandings, making behavioral problems more likely to emerge and escalate.
2. The perception among employees and management that similar motives may lead to similar behaviors, even though they may achieve different objectives.
3. The prevalence of pretentious behavior among some employees to the extent of misleading others, creating doubt.
4. The variety of motives and intentions associated with each behavioral pattern, which may reflect a state of ambiguity in the organizational field.

2.2 Dimensions of Organizational Ambiguity

The dimensions adopted by the current study are as follows:

Pressure Group

A group generally represents the concept of social relations through its networks and communication channels among its members, considering the prevailing values and traditions that shape the group's ideals and orientations. Pressure groups play a pivotal role in the life cycle of organizations, often accompanied by anxiety, tension, fear, and frustration at the organizational level, especially when there are opposing positions against them. This is because they influence organizational decisions and extend their impact[8]. Such influence creates a sense of uncertainty among employees, reflecting on leader ship costs and possibly leading to emotional pressure. This pressure manifests in physiological and biological reactions, ultimately resulting in employee dissatisfaction [9].

• Competitors

Competitors, especially unexpected ones, pose a significant threat to organizations, particularly when they possess maneuvering skills and excel at tactical games. These competitors can penetrate markets, set boundaries, and impose restrictions on transactions, preventing others from entering or establishing a foothold. This situation leaves organizations in a state of confusion, amplifying ambiguity due to information gaps in the work environment. This dominance of competition in the business field makes predicting relationships difficult, expanding risks and challenges [10].

According to [11], competitors are among the most critical external factors due to their direct impact on the organization's daily activities. Therefore, any competition faced by the organization in its environment requires adaptation to maintain its market position and avoid any forms of administrative corruption[12].

• Suppliers

Suppliers pursue certain goals, while users seek different ones, creating conflicting objectives that signal ambiguity[13] point out that selecting the best supplier is not only important for decision-makers but also for the suppliers themselves. Certain criteria act as vital indicators supporting suppliers' positions based on their business strategies. These criteria help suppliers improve weak aspects while deprioritizing elements they deem significant compared to users' perspectives. Key criteria include service cost and quality, financial and operational performance, market share, supplier reputation, and brand value.

• Financial Allocations

The financial aspect is a crucial resource for sustaining activities, assuming its proper availability. However, financial support may falter or disappear, undermining operations and creating stagnation or even decline. [14] stresses that resource utilization and control must be accompanied by cash flow analysis, evaluation, and monitoring, identifying surplus or deficit in liquid cash positions, and the organization's ability to meet its financial obligations on the agreed due dates.

- **Complex Official Procedures**

Procedures represent a sequence of consecutive steps, ideally requiring simplification. However, in the workplace, complex and authoritarian procedures often prevail, causing confusion and misunderstanding. These procedures can become endless loops, turning implementers into passive tools with no input or decision-making authority, negatively impacting performance and stripping procedures of their value. This has led to calls for adopting "green tape" practices, as complexity in procedures often reflects both command-driven and arbitrary tendencies [15].

- **Uncertainty**

Uncertainty is one of the pressing factors on strategic options. Stability creates a sense of certainty, while instability signals the dominance of uncertainty, which affects the thinking of strategic decision-makers. This state of uncertainty may arise from sudden disruptions in the external environment. summarized the relationship between uncertainty and environmental change by stating that "uncertainty represents the gap between what is known and what must be known to achieve a correct decision[16]. indicated that management finds it difficult to predict expected circumstances due to a lack of sufficient information, making it harder to foresee future events. This phase is characterized by a complete absence of information, putting the organization at risk. Decision-makers estimate probabilities when choosing among available alternatives, even when fully aware of the data related to profits and outcomes.[17]in suggesting that higher levels of uncertainty necessitate better investment in the positive aspects of crises through mobilizing efforts and making decisive decisions. [18,19]identified methods for forecasting such as trend analysis, brainstorming, and scenarios. These methods require senior management to play its fundamental role by preparing the organizational environment to support activities, addressing obstacles, and meeting several requirements such as organizational structure flexibility, entrepreneurial creativity, climate stimulation, and growth potential [20].

2.3 Strategies for Containing Organizational Ambiguity

The current study identified the following strategies:

- **Defensive Strategies:**

These strategies stem from the absence of expansionist ideas, focusing on entering new fields while clinging to the existing state without considering significant changes. The core idea is holding onto what exists without seeking fundamental transformations, often resulting in low competition levels. Circumstances that drive decision-makers to adopt this strategy, as identified by [21], include:

Weak administrative leadership environment.

The leadership's desire to minimize losses.

Facing an offensive strategy from other parties.

- **Reactive Strategies:**

Organizations resort to these strategies when they struggle to interact with their surrounding environment. This approach involves adopting various behavioral methods characterized by fluctuation and instability, with a focus on formal aspects to preserve a portion of their identity and reputation. However, in all cases, the organization's image remains blurred and undefined due to the ambiguity surrounding it. This drives organizations to make hasty changes, creating what [22] referred to as "Future Shock." According to [23], identifying competitors' goals, strengths, and weaknesses can provide strategic analysts with a reasonable understanding of possible competitive responses, particularly in terms of price reductions, introducing new products, launching promotional campaigns through advertising, and boosting sales. The aim is not simply to generate quick profits but to diagnose these responses in a way that allows brilliant minds to emerge and take the idea of modernity, postmodernity that puts the organization in front of many options in the field of environment [24].

- **Analytical Strategies**

The content of these strategies involves attempts to balance two factors: stability and change. They emphasize monitoring competitors while adopting ideas that have achieved success, with a focus on learning and addressing environmental developments seriously[25] pointed out that these strategies aim to achieve balance between efficiency/defensiveness and innovation/pioneering. They typically adopt the most successful innovations developed by risk-takers.[26]

- **Future-Oriented Strategies**

This strategy involves breaking the rigid shell of stagnation, asserting that leaping into the future without preparation may be futile, rendering human existence meaningless. Giving value to the future on a strategic level serves as a vital starting point. Therefore, adopting future-oriented strategies at all levels and across various fields supports openness, reinforces hope, and emphasizes ambition. This aligns with the German

philosopher Karl Jaspers's assertion that "we must clarify the basic givens of our present life and explain the consequences of our actions in simple terms [27]. Such strategies enable organizations to contain organizational ambiguity through an entrepreneurial perspective, positively impacting sustainable development, which represents a contemporary orientation that organizations strive to achieve [28].

3 Application framework

The Impact of Organizational Ambiguity on Strategies to Contain It in the Organization Under Study (Furniture Company)

The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that the effects of organizational ambiguity through its dimensions (pressure groups, competitors, suppliers, financial allocations, procedural complexity, uncertainty) on strategies to contain it were weak according to the findings of the current study. The (B) values indicated that a one-unit change in any dimension of organizational ambiguity results in changes of (0.116, 0.124, 0.277, 0.121, 0.126, 0.426) in the containment strategies, which are very limited increases. This is supported by the calculated (T) values of (1.944, 0.640, 0.480, 0.514, 0.079, 0.502), which are less than the tabulated values at the **0.05** significance level.

This means the study hypothesis is not accepted, prompting the researchers to conclude that the prevalence of organizational ambiguity through its dimensions does not reflect its impact on containment strategies. This is because the nature of ambiguity does not imply the possibility of containing it through specific strategies, as the sources of ambiguity are diverse, making it difficult to determine the impact based on the approach presented in this study. Additionally, the surveyed individuals may not be proficient in interpreting the items representing the specific dimensions, which contributed to such results. However, the reality may indicate a different picture, as each strategy has its own impact, whether related to defensive strategy or reactive strategy.

Table 1. The Impact of Organizational Ambiguity on Strategies to Contain It at the Level of the Home

	Furniture Company / Mosul					
	R ²	F	Tabul	BETA	T	Tabul
		Calcula	ated		Calcula	ated
		ted			ted	
Pressure Groups	0.13	0.23	4.45	-0.116	-0.48	2.898
Competitors	0.017	0.264		0.124	0.514	
Suppliers	0.66	1.202		0.257	1.096	
Financial Allocations	0.015	0.252		0.121	0.502	
Procedural Complexity	0.24	0.41		0.153	0.64	
Uncertainty	0.182	3.78		0.426	1.944	
Overall Indicator	0.29	0.508		0.17	0.713	

P<0.05

d.f(1,17)

n = 19

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The current study reached several conclusions, which can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a state of organizational ambiguity at the level of the Home Furniture Company in Mosul, reflected through an agreement among the respondents on its indicative dimensions—whether related to pressure groups, financial allocations, complex procedures, or uncertainty.
2. The respondents' opinions in the Home Furniture Company varied regarding the items expressing strategies to deal with ambiguity, indicating that the company is subject to situational variables that require adopting more than one strategy depending on the surrounding circumstances.

3. The impact of organizational ambiguity on containment strategies at the company is minimal, which explains the widespread ambiguity and its diverse indicators. The company faces difficulties that push it to adopt multiple strategies instead of relying on one, making containment efforts more challenging.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the study proposes several recommendations, including:

1. The need to clarify the implications of organizational ambiguity at the company (Home Furniture Company) in a way that enables employees to master the skills of dealing with ambiguity and view it as a familiar occurrence in the business environment without apprehension.
2. Adopting the dimensions of strategic thinking as a fundamental pillar when selecting strategies to contain organizational ambiguity—by making goals, timing, and assumptions active entry points to confront any organizational tensions—while distinguishing between the company's activities and operations to determine the appropriate strategic action based on the degree of ambiguity. The focus should be on causes and effects rather than labels.
3. Promoting the idea among employees that adapting to reality in all its aspects is an effective way to stimulate negotiations with the environment. This approach involves adopting multiple strategies to contain disruptions in the organizational base. It highlights the importance of involving strategy makers, organizational policy planners, and those who operate within the organization's corridors to detect any arising issues and employ strategic vigilance to address them.

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