

The Path of Enhancing Employees' Organizational Identification through Corporate Culture Construction

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Abstract: *The relationship between corporate culture construction and employees' organizational identification is an important issue in the field of organizational behavior. This study constructs a theoretical framework from three levels: influencing mechanisms, differentiated pathways of action, and continuous reinforcement mechanisms. At the level of influencing mechanisms, corporate culture establishes the cognitive foundation through symbolic coding and meaning construction, achieves the integration of organizational identity into self-concept through value internalization and identity anchoring, and completes the deepening from cognition to emotion through emotional energy cultivation and belonging generation. At the level of differentiated pathways, different cultural orientations and identification dimensions follow a logic of fit, the relationship between cultural strength and identification depth is nonlinear, and cultural inclusiveness achieves the integration of multiple identifications through identity overlap and enhancement mechanisms. At the level of reinforcement mechanisms, cultural rituals realize the periodic activation of identification, organizational narratives provide meaning anchoring, and cultural governance drives the transformation of identification into self-reproduction. This framework reveals the multiple pathways and internal mechanisms through which corporate culture construction enhances organizational identification.*

Keywords: *corporate culture; organizational identification; influencing mechanisms; pathways of action; reinforcement mechanisms*

Introduction

The intrinsic relationship between corporate culture construction and employees' organizational identification is a core issue in organizational behavior. Organizational identification reflects employees' acceptance of the organizational identity and the degree to which it is integrated into their self-concepts, thus serving as a key variable that influences employees' attitudes and behaviors. In the contemporary context of diverse organizational identities and the differentiation of employee values, how to enhance organizational identification through systematic culture construction has become an urgent theoretical question. Existing studies tend to focus on the linear relationship between a single cultural characteristic and the level of identification, lacking a systematic construction of internal mechanisms, differentiated pathways, and continuous reinforcement mechanisms. This study integrates theories of symbolic interaction, social identity, and emotional energy to analyze the influencing mechanism from symbolic coding, value internalization, to emotional cultivation, reveals the logic of fit between cultural orientation and identification dimensions, the nonlinear relationship between cultural strength and identification depth, as well as the role of cultural inclusiveness in the integration of multiple identifications, and explains the reinforcing functions of cultural rituals, organizational narratives, and cultural governance, thereby providing an integrated theoretical explanation for the complex relationship between corporate culture construction and organizational identification.

1. The Influence Mechanism of Corporate Culture on Organizational Identification

1.1 The Symbolic Coding and Meaning Construction of Corporate Culture

Corporate culture, as a production system of shared meanings within an organization, has its symbolic operation that constitutes the cognitive foundation for the generation of employees'

organizational identification. In the organizational field, corporate culture uses a series of symbolic carriers such as rituals, language, material symbols, and behavioral norms to concretize abstract organizational values and goals into perceptible and transferable cognitive schemas. This process of symbolic coding is not a simple transmission of information; instead, it embeds specific organizational identity features into the symbolic structure, enabling employees to gradually form a basic cognitive framework of the organizational identity through continuous interaction with the symbolic system. The repeated performance and contextual application of cultural symbols further strengthen the stable linkage between the symbols and the organizational identity they signify, providing employees with clear cognitive boundaries for distinguishing "us" from "them."

The meaning construction function of the symbolic system is reflected in its power to define and interpret organizational reality. Corporate culture weaves the organization's history, events, and figures into a meaning network with internal logic through narrative-based symbolic integration, providing cognitive coordinates for employees to understand their positions and roles within the organization. This meaning construction process transforms organizational identity from an abstract concept into a narratable collective story, and employees accomplish their individualized understanding of organizational identity by participating in the interpretation and re-creation of cultural symbols. The meaning-anchoring function of cultural symbols grants organizational identity stability and continuity in employees' cognitive structures, thereby establishing the necessary cognitive prerequisite for their subsequent formation of deep-level organizational identification^[1].

1.2 The Internalization Mechanism of Value Concepts and Identity Anchoring

The core value concepts carried by corporate culture are transformed from organizational-level public norms into individual-level self-referential standards through an internalization mechanism. This internalization process follows a path of cognitive restructuring, in which employees, through continuous exposure to cultural values, gradually compare, adjust, and integrate the value orientations advocated by the organization with their own cognitive schemas. When organizational values form a consistent or complementary relationship with employees' existing self-cognitions, value internalization shifts from superficial compliance to deep acceptance, and the features of organizational identity begin to merge into the employees' self-concept structures. The depth of value internalization directly determines the weight of organizational identity in employees' self-definition; the more complete the internalization, the more blurred the boundary between organizational identity and individual identity becomes.

The identity anchoring mechanism reflects the stabilizing effect of organizational identity on employees' self-positioning after value internalization. Once the core values of the organization are accepted by employees as part of their own value systems, organizational identity becomes a frame of reference for employees' self-evaluation and social comparison. When facing role conflicts, career decisions, or organizational changes, the internalized value concepts provide employees with cognitive benchmarks for judgment and choice, enabling their behaviors and attitudes to remain consistent with the organizational identity. This identity anchoring effect not only enhances employees' psychological attachment to the organization but also enables them to consciously maintain the positive value of organizational identity when facing external evaluations. The coupling of value internalization and identity anchoring constitutes the key transformation link from cultural contact to organizational identification.

1.3 The Breeding Field of Emotional Energy and the Generation of Belonging

On the basis of cognitive construction, corporate culture also functions as a field for the production and flow of emotional energy. Cultural practices in the daily operation of an organization, such as ritual gatherings, informal interactions, and the emotional mobilization of role models, construct micro-situations in which emotional energy is continuously generated and transmitted. In these situations, employees gain individual experiences of emotional energy through physical co-presence, the synchronized resonance of emotional expression, and the cumulative circulation of interaction ritual chains. By setting legitimate ways of emotional expression and value objects for emotional investment, corporate culture guides employees to direct their emotional energy toward organizational identity, thereby endowing the originally neutral organizational belonging relationship with strong emotional coloration^[2].

The generation of a sense of belonging is based on the accumulation and sharing of emotional

energy at the organizational level. When the emotional experiences that employees gain in cultural interactions are repeatedly validated and form stable emotional memories, their psychological attachment to the organization sublimates from cognitive-level "recognition" to emotional-level "endearment." As a breeding field for emotional energy, corporate culture has its core mechanism in transforming individual emotional experiences into a collective emotional atmosphere, enabling employees to confirm their emotional connection with the organization through shared emotions. Once a sense of belonging is generated, it possesses the characteristic of self-reinforcement: employees participate more actively in cultural practices because of their belonging, and in turn, they continuously receive the nourishment of emotional energy through cultural participation, thus forming a virtuous cycle from emotional immersion to deep belonging.

2. Differentiated Pathways of Action in Corporate Culture Construction

2.1 The Logic of Fit Between Cultural Orientation and Identification Dimensions

Different types of corporate cultural orientations exhibit differentiated fit characteristics in stimulating specific dimensions of employees' organizational identification. A support-oriented culture, with care, collaboration, and employee development as its value core, tends to strengthen the emotional dimension of organizational identification, enabling employees to gain psychological security and a sense of belonging in the organization, thereby forming an identification pattern based on emotional attachment. An innovation-oriented culture emphasizes risk-taking, autonomy, and change, which is highly compatible with the evaluative dimension of identification; in the process of gaining autonomy and a sense of innovative achievement, employees closely connect organizational identity with the realization of self-worth, forming an identification pattern based on achievement evaluation. A rule-oriented culture focuses on procedural norms and role clarity, which has a natural affinity with the cognitive dimension; through clear cognition of organizational systems and role boundaries, employees establish a stable position for themselves in the organization, forming an identification pattern based on cognitive confirmation.

The fit mechanism between cultural orientation and identification dimensions is rooted in the paths of psychological need satisfaction shaped by different cultural types. A support-oriented culture satisfies employees' need for belonging, making affective identification its core representation; an innovation-oriented culture satisfies employees' need for autonomy and achievement, making evaluative identification dominant; and a rule-oriented culture satisfies employees' need for structure and certainty, making cognitive identification the primary form. This logic of fit implies that corporate culture construction should not pursue the maximization of a single identification dimension; rather, it should identify the identification dimension oriented toward core needs based on the organization's strategic goals, industry attributes, and human resource composition, and then select the matching cultural orientation type accordingly. Cultural construction that deviates from this logic of fit may lead to a structural mismatch between cultural investment and identification output, thereby weakening the effectiveness of cultural construction in enhancing organizational identification.

2.2 The Nonlinear Relationship Between Cultural Strength and Identification Depth

Corporate cultural strength reflects the degree of consistency, depth of embedding, and level of prominence of culture within an organization, and its impact on employees' organizational identification depth does not present a simple positive linear relationship. When cultural strength is at a relatively low level, cultural signals are rather vague, making it difficult for employees to form a clear perception of organizational identity, and identification depth generally remains low. As cultural strength gradually increases, employees' recognition and consensus regarding the features of organizational identity continuously improve, cognitive identification becomes established, and affective identification and evaluative identification also gain room for development, with identification depth showing a clear increasing trend. At this stage, the marginal effect of increased cultural strength on identification depth is relatively significant, and the investment in cultural construction can yield relatively clear identification returns^[3].

When cultural strength exceeds a certain critical value, its relationship with identification depth may transform into a nonlinear and complex pattern. Excessively high cultural strength is often accompanied by increased cultural homogeneity and high salience of cultural expression, which may trigger employees' psychological defense against excessive uniformity and suppress the space for

multiple identities within individual self-concepts. In a high-strength cultural field, some employees may exhibit a differentiated state of superficial compliance and deep alienation, with organizational identification remaining at the cognitive dimension and struggling to deepen into the affective and evaluative dimensions. More notably, when cultural strength continues to rise and forms cultural pressure, identification depth may experience diminishing marginal returns or even a negative association, as employees resort to psychological withdrawal or identity compartmentalization to alleviate the erosion of self-integrity caused by cultural pressure. This nonlinear relationship suggests that cultural construction should seek a moderate range of cultural strength, maintaining cultural clarity and consistency while avoiding cultural vagueness, and simultaneously leaving room for the diverse expression of employees' individual identities.

2.3 Cultural Inclusiveness and the Integration Approach to Multiple Identifications

Against the background of an increasingly diverse composition of organizational membership, cultural inclusiveness has become a key moderating variable affecting employees' level of organizational identification. Cultural inclusiveness is reflected in the organization's degree of acceptance and ability to integrate different subgroup identities, differentiated value orientations, and diverse behavioral styles. A highly inclusive corporate culture does not require employees to sacrifice their subgroup identities in exchange for organizational identification; instead, on the basis of acknowledging the legitimacy of multiple identities, it constructs a value framework that can accommodate multiple identities. This inclusive culture reduces the psychological cost for employees when choosing between organizational identity and other identities, enabling them to smoothly integrate organizational identity into their existing multiple self-structures, thereby raising the overall level of organizational identification.

The integration approach to multiple identifications, under the effect of cultural inclusiveness, is realized through two mechanisms: identity overlap and identity enhancement. The identity overlap mechanism manifests as the convergence of value connotations between organizational identity and subgroup identity; employees perceive the affinity between the organizational culture and the culture of their own subgroups, and organizational identity thus gains the emotional and meaning resources endowed by subgroup identity. The identity enhancement mechanism manifests as organizational identity occupying a more superior position in the hierarchy of employees' identities; when the organizational culture demonstrates respect for and incorporation of the values of different subgroups, employees tend to evaluate organizational identity as an identity category with higher social value and self-worth. The synergistic effect of the two mechanisms enables employees to shift from a state of conflict among multiple identities to an integrated state, where organizational identification is no longer achieved at the cost of weakening other identifications but is instead strengthened through the integration process of multiple identifications. Cultural inclusiveness thus constitutes a key transformative pathway from identity diversity to identification integration, enabling corporate culture construction to effectively enhance employees' organizational identification in organizational contexts characterized by diverse identities.

3. Continuous Reinforcement Mechanisms of Organizational Identification

3.1 Cultural Rituals and the Periodic Activation of Identification

As the rhythmic performance of corporate culture along the temporal dimension, cultural rituals undertake the function of periodically activating employees' organizational identification. Through highly stylized symbolic performances, physical co-presence, and emotional resonance, ritual activities condense the dispersed perception of organizational identity in daily work into a highly focused identity experience. In the ritual scene, the symbolic representations of organizational identity (logos, slogans, representative figures) are presented centrally, and employees complete the ritualistic confirmation of organizational identity through collective participation. This periodic activation, different from the gradual influence of daily cultural immersion, establishes periodic nodes highlighting organizational identity on the psychological timeline of employees through the deliberate selection of temporal moments and the careful design of ritual procedures, thereby providing organizational identification with sustained energy replenishment^[4].

The internal mechanism of periodic activation is manifested as the cumulative circulation of emotional energy and the regular reinforcement of identity memory. The emotional resonance

generated by the ritual context allows employees to retain a certain emotional residue even after the ritual ends, and this emotional residue gradually fades in subsequent daily work until it is awakened and replenished again by the next ritual activity. This periodic infusion of emotional energy prevents organizational identification from falling into emotional dullness due to routinization. The organizational history, collective achievements, and identity symbols repeatedly emphasized in ritual activities are continuously written into employees' individual memory systems, forming an identity memory chain that spans time periods. When employees are able to string together ritual experiences from different time points into a continuous identity narrative in the temporal sequence, organizational identification acquires an inherent resilience against the attenuation of identification caused by organizational changes and individual role transitions.

3.2 Organizational Narratives and the Meaning Anchoring of Identification

As the textual presentation of corporate culture, organizational narratives perform the core function of meaning anchoring in the maintenance and deepening of employees' organizational identification. Unlike abstract value advocacy, the narrative form concretizes organizational identity into a comprehensible, memorable, and transmissible story structure through plot development, character shaping, and conflict resolution. In the process of engaging with organizational narratives, employees not only obtain factual information about what the organization is but, more importantly, understand the causal logic and value orientations behind why the organization is as it is. The plot-based interpretation provided by narratives endows organizational events and current decisions with a coherent meaning framework, enabling employees to incorporate their own experiences within the organization into this larger structure of meaning, thereby confirming their own positions and values in the organizational historical context.

The realization of meaning anchoring depends on the stability of the identity reference framework constructed by narratives. When an organization faces uncertain situations such as change, crisis, or strategic adjustment, the continuous presence of core narratives provides employees with identity cues to navigate through uncertainty. When changes in the external environment impact employees' perception of organizational continuity, the core features of organizational identity carried by narratives (founding ideas, major turning points, representative achievements) serve as stable meaning anchors, enabling employees to obtain a continuous experience rather than a sense of disruption at the level of organizational identity. The coexistence of multiple versions of narratives and their open space for interpretation allow them to accommodate different employee groups' understandings of organizational identity, avoiding the rigidity of meaning anchoring. Through the selective telling and intergenerational transmission of narratives, the stable core and adaptability of organizational identity can be balanced, allowing organizational identification to maintain core consistency while possessing the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances^[5].

3.3 Cultural Governance and the Self-Reproduction of Identification

Cultural governance goes beyond the top-down model of cultural dissemination in cultural construction, focusing on how employees' participatory agency in cultural practices drives the self-reproduction of organizational identification. Within the framework of cultural governance, employees are no longer viewed as passive recipients of culture but as active agents in the generation, dissemination, and maintenance of culture. When employees gain space to interpret cultural connotations, create cultural forms, and evaluate cultural practices, their psychological investment in organizational identity shifts from receptive identification to constructive identification. The key to this transformation lies in the fact that the efforts and creativity employees invest in the process of cultural participation forge a deeper bond with the organizational identity, where identification is no longer a psychologically imposed state but a psychological outcome of self-participation in construction.

The self-reproduction mechanism of identification is manifested as a positive cycle among cultural participation, identity confirmation, and further participation. Through their participation in and contribution to cultural activities, employees obtain identity confirmation from the organization and other members, and this confirmation strengthens employees' positive evaluation and emotional attachment to organizational identity. Employees who have obtained identity confirmation tend to invest more actively in cultural practices, taking on the roles of cultural disseminators and guardians, and their behaviors in turn become sources of identity confirmation for other members. In this cycle, the energy of organizational identification no longer depends solely on the cultural design and continuous investment at the organizational institutional level, but also comes from cultural interactions

and mutual identity recognition within the employee community. The self-reproduction achieved through cultural governance transforms organizational identification from a passive state of external maintenance to an active state of internal drive, forming the self-perpetuation of organizational identification along the temporal dimension and its self-enhancement along the intensity dimension.

Conclusion

This study constructs a systematic theoretical framework covering influencing mechanisms, differentiated pathways of action, and continuous reinforcement mechanisms regarding the pathways of enhancing employees' organizational identification through corporate culture construction. At the level of influencing mechanisms, corporate culture forms a progressive influence chain from cognitive foundation, identity integration, to emotional sublimation through symbolic meaning construction, value internalization and integration, and the nurturing of an emotional field. At the level of differentiated pathways, the logic of fit between cultural orientation and identification dimensions, the nonlinear relationship between cultural strength and identification depth, and the integration mechanism of cultural inclusiveness indicate that cultural strategies need to match organizational characteristics. At the level of reinforcement mechanisms, the periodic activation of cultural rituals, the meaning anchoring of organizational narratives, and the self-reproduction of cultural governance constitute threefold guarantees for the continuation of organizational identification along the temporal dimension and its deepening along the intensity dimension. Future research may further examine the moderating effects of organizational contextual characteristics and the boundary conditions of the theoretical framework.

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