RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# Does the traditional culture affect organizational identification? An analysis of the perception channels in organizational identification of Chinese employees

**Abstract**   This paper explores the information perception channels of organizational identification (OID) in the context of Chinese traditional culture. Drawing on the grounded theory, the authors conducted a survey on employees in Shandong, Henan, Beijing, Guangzhou, Gansu, Jiangsu and Taiwan, and developed a five-factor scale for information perception channels of OID consisting of leader modeling, consideration for subordinates, external encouragement, rationalizing norms and rules, and behavioral consistency. Results of regression analysis show that all of these five factors have significant effects on employees' OID, particularly the factors of external encouragement, behavioral consistency, and consideration for subordinates.

**Keywords**   organizational identification, perception channels, traditional culture

**摘要**   为了研究员工在组织认同过程中的信息感知途径问题，首先利用扎根理论的质化研究方法，通过对山东、河南、北京、广州、甘肃、江苏、台湾等地企业的调研，萃取组织认同信息感知途径量表，然后收集有效问卷以检验假设。结果

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表明，在传统文化背景下，组织认同的信息感知由率先垂范、体恤关爱、外部认可、明理述规、行为一致等五个维度构成，通过对组织认同的多重回归分析发现，它们对组织认同均具有显著性影响，尤其是外部认可、行为一致和体恤关爱预测力更强。

关键词  组织认同，感知途径，传统文化

## 1  Introduction

Along with the development of globalization, technology innovation, and changes in labor force structure, modern enterprises have to face a great deal of external uncertainty in a highly dynamic environment. As a result, enterprises are compelled to improve their competitiveness by means of merger, restructuring, outsourcing and layoffs, etc. The external pressure in turn pushes employees to change their jobs more frequently than ever before. Therefore, how to establish a good psychological contract between employees and enterprises has become one of the main concerns of researchers and practitioners alike. In recent years, an increasing amount of attention has been paid to OID based on the theory of social identity. OID emphasizes on the process of integrating the individual self and organization into one in employee's self-definition. In other words, it is a process of converting the self-concept of "I" into "we". However, at present, most enterprises cannot provide long-term employment guarantee for their employees, making it difficult to establish the sense of belonging and loyalty to enterprises among employees. Taking IBM as an example, it abolished the life-long employment system that had persisted for decades in the 1990s. In 2005, IBM's PC division was sold to Lenovo. Both IBM and Lenovo had to face the same problem: How to rebuild OID amidst their employees. Considering that there have been an increasing number of cases such as IBM and Lenovo in China, studying OID in enterprises has become an urgent task given the context of ever changing organizational structure and labor relationship in a transitional China.

Riketta (2005) classified present literature on OID into three study approaches, namely cognitive, affective, and sociological identification. In this paper, we define OID as, by integrating these three approaches, "individual's self definition regarding himself as oneness with the organization (sociological), which is the result of individual's perception and internalization of organization's value (cognitive), and reflected as individual's emotional belonging to an organization in terms of sense of belonging, pride, and loyalty (affective)". Some researchers are under the impression that OID is the same as cultural identification. They believe that the identification system consists of four fundamental processes:

cultural comparison, cultural categorization, distinctiveness and definition. However, as a whole, existing literature on OID has been mainly concentrated on its antecedents and outcomes. Little attention has been paid to its formation process. As the formation of OID is a process in which individuals perceive and internalize the organizational value system into their own and, in the end, feel themselves and organization as an organic integration. Some problems remain unsolved. For example, how does the existing organizational value pass on to individuals? How do individuals perceive and accept the organizational value? There has been little discussion on these problems in the field of OID. Thus the main purpose of this paper is to address these problems.

Employees perceive OID through communication. While as a kind of interpersonal interaction, communication is affected by cultural background to a large degree (Cheney, 1983). We thus assume that the perception channels of Chinese employees' OID should be understood and studied under the background of traditional Chinese culture. Though small in number, some researchers have found that OID under the Chinese culture has some unique characteristics. For instance, Chinese employees' OID is embodied as loyalty to their leaders for Chinese organizations lay great emphases on employees' obedience to their leaders as if one should do to his/her own parents (Redding, 1990). In addition, some researchers have pointed out that OID under the Chinese culture context is affected by familism. That is to say, people pay attention to and emphasize harmonious relationship (Hwang, 1999). Inspired by these researchers, we attempt to explore employees' perception channels of OID from the perspective of traditional culture.

## 2 Literature review

OID theories can be classified into three main categories: the difference theory, the information theory and the resource theory. Drawing on the difference and information theories, researchers have examined factors that affect the OID: At the organization level, organizational distinctiveness, organizational prestige, and external and internal competitions are the major factors influencing OID (Mael and Ashforth, 1992); at the individual level, post tenure, relationship, satisfaction with the organization and sentimentality are the major influencing factors. Information theory mainly focuses on OID process by studying the transmitting and receiving process of information and their channels. Comparing with the other two theories, the information theory can be used to conduct detailed analyses on OID. The present information-theory-based OID studies can be divided into two subgroups:

One emphasizes the importance of managers while the other highlights the importance of communication.

Schultz el al. (2000) suggested that OID provides a flexible approach for managers which could help them harmonize and resolve contradictions in a complicated and diverse organizational context. As chief information senders, managers need to build for their staff members a consistent self-concept, which is an important component of their managerial activities and is termed as "identity claims" by Schultz. Cheney and Christensen (2001) argued that as legal representatives of an organization, managers have easier access to internal communication channels, which enables them to influence the official claims of the organization. Corley and Gioia (2004) pointed out that managers should take responsibilities to develop OID among members, especially when organizational identity is indistinct. They termed this responsibility as "sense-giving function of organizational identities" and argued that such a function helps organizational members to rebuild OID through various communication tools. As a whole, these studies highlighted manager's impact on the process of OID development. However, they failed to analyze how such an influence works from the employee's perspective.

Another research perspective emphasizes the importance of communication. Having studied the function of communication on OID, Smidts, Riel and Pruyn (2001) suggested that external prestige and internal information have markedly influence on OID, especially perceived external prestige and communication climate. Perceived external prestige is what employees perceive to be external points of view on their organization, mainly through word of mouth, publicity and internal communication, etc. Communication climate is defined as a kind of shared psychological climate, including openness, trust, sense of participation, and act in commutation, all of which have influences on OID. Cheney (1983) analyzed the impact of information with different contents on OID. He argued there are two kinds of information: visual-information and persuasive information. The former is external comments while the latter is internal comments, both of which help persuader (organization) and receiver (members) reach consensus. These results supported the information theory. However, they only focused on communication climate and information content. Little attention has been paid to the specific channels for information perception used by employees.

In conclusion, although some studies have analyzed factors influencing OID from the perspective of information theory and these studies' findings have also been consistent with Cheney et al.'s (2001) viewpoint that communication plays an important role in information transmitting and receiving, there has been no definite answer to what are the information

perception channels that influence OID. Therefore, this paper aims to explore and verify these channels.

## 3 Qualitative research on the perception channels of OID

3.1 Survey

Employees from eight enterprises participated in our survey, including a large-scale hydropower stations in Gansu Province, two electric power supply enterprises in Yantai city and Rizhao city, Shandong Province, a tire manufacturer in Weihai, Shandong Province, an electric power supply enterprise in Luoyang, Henan Province, a public transportation company in Beijing, an aviation software design enterprise in Beijing and a branch of a state-owned commercial bank in Tianjin. The respondents' position ranged from managers at the upper, middle levels to grass-roots staff in each enterprise. A total of 81 responses were received. Field study was conducted in each sample enterprise, including on-site visit, interview with randomly chosen staff members, and promotion materials collection, etc. Pre-interviews and formal interviews methods were used. Pre-interviews were conducted in Beijing, including 3 primary questions and corresponding complementary and substituting questions. The three primary questions used were "Please describe the things you mostly agree with your organization value and things you most disagree", "Please describe a concrete incident happened to you which helps to develop organizational identification/misidentification in you", "What are the most influential people and events during the work? What are their effects on you?" Based on these interviews results, a semi-structured interview outline was finally developed.

3.2 Coding and classification

The grounded theory is used for theory building based on systematic data analysis. By analyzing the original data, researchers can reveal hidden concepts out of data without developing hypotheses. The core technology of the grounded theory is the so-called "three step coding method", namely open coding, axis coding and selective coding. For our purpose, we analyzed word-for-word the original interview records, categorizing and carrying out 28 open codes. In the step of axis coding, certain relationship between research topic and data obtained were built. In the last step, we further integrated and refined the secondary codes obtained in step 2, resulting in five central categories of the perception channels of OID (see Table 1).

**Table 1**    Coding results of the perception channels of OID

| Theory | Selective coding | Axis coding | Open coding | Typical quotations from interviewees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Persuasive information | Leader modeling | Taking the lead | Leaders lead us in the frontline | Whenever an accident happened, my boss can diagnose the cause of the accident and solve the problem calmly |
| | | Practicing what one preaches | Leaders keep their words | My division manager always be the last to leave office and keeps his words |
| | | Implementing regulations strictly | leaders publicly criticize those failed to meet requirements | Once I was publicly scolded by my master for not obeying the dispatcher's order |
| | | Experience sharing | Leaders share their experiences with us without reserve | My director taught me how to master the price change pattern in the purchase price of natural rubber unselfishly. I have found the pattern quite useful in practice |
| | | Timely warning | Leaders warn and correct employees' wrongdoings timely | When some employees are late for a meeting, our leader always reminds them of the importance of punctuality |
| | | Accurate predictions | Leader's opinions have been proved right | My division director is able to predict correctly the future direction of technology development in our industry |
| | Consideration for subordinates | Solving Problems for Employees | Leaders solve problems for employees | When some employees are hospitalized, our leaders even help these employees to find good doctors |
| | | Understanding employees' difficulties | Leaders concern about employees' working conditions | Leaders decide that we should start working before 7:00 in the morning to avoid the heat in the daytime |
| | | Paying visit to subordinates | Leaders pay visits to front-line employees at festivals | At every spring and mid-autumn festival, leaders always pay visit to the front-line employees and bring them food and gifts |

(*To be continued*)

| Theory | Selective coding | Axis coding | Open coding | Typical quotations from interviewees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Providing opportunities for learning | Leaders try their best to provide opportunities for workers to learn | My boss left the opportunity of going abroad to a technician. We were so touched |
| | | Collective cooperation | We work together to solve problems at work | We successfully gained an important client thanks to everybody's effort and hardworking |
| | | Helpful colleagues | Colleagues help and advice each other | One of our colleagues was always anxious and got angry easily, we advised him to get rid of this bad habit for it "does harm to your customers and yourself" |
| | External encouragement | Necessary guidance | Leaders always repeat some thought-provoking words | My boss used to say "for every minute at work, we shall remember the importance of working safety for sixty seconds". I remember this sentence vividly |
| | | Telling of setbacks | Veteran workers talk about their previous setbacks at work | Some experienced employees told me that they also made the same mistakes and taught me how to correct the mistake |
| | | Behavior correcting | Veteran workers always remind newcomers of the right ways of doing things | Some experienced employees in our company always tell newcomers who just graduated from college to "speak less, observe more, learn more and work harder." |
| | | Application of case teaching | Learn better by negative examples | When our bank summoned us together and wrote off the huge sum of bad loans in front of us, everyone was shocked and learn a valuable lesson |
| | | Idol-model teaching | Admire good models | It is well-known in our company that there is a worker voluntarily help poor children to go to school for more than 20 years |

*(Continued)*

| Theory | Selective coding | Axis coding | Open coding | Typical quotations from interviewees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Illustration of regulations | Leaders explain rules and regulations to us in person | Our manager often organizes small workshops and explains safety regulations to us in person |
| | | Punishment announcement | Announce punishment result openly | Safety accidents and punishment results are announced openly in our company |
| | Rationalizing Norms and Rules | Overcoming difficulties | Overcome difficulties without complaints | When new proofreading task came on short notice, workers on duty started working without any complaints |
| | | Conformity pressure | Abide by company rules | Because of wearing sleeveless clothes is forbidden in our company, we gradually get into a habit of not wear those clothes even after work |
| | | Removing obstacles | Veteran workers always clear away the obstacles and strive to meet requirements | Though read meter only once in every two hours will suffice, my master still insists on checking the meter every hour, as the rules require |
| | | Persistence | We consistently adhere to good working ways | Our programmers always insist on self-checking their job patiently, no matter how busy they are |
| Visual information | Behavioral consistency | Recognition of society | We won public approval | Our company was the championship for four consecutive years in the municipal best service quality competition |
| | | Recognition of clients | Earned high marks from customers | Customs sent us a banner, reading with "100% satisfaction with high skills and perfect service" |
| | | Praise and rewards | Won rewards | The innovation of QC team won a city-level award. After that, "be creative and excellent" started to resonate among all employees |

*(To be continued)*

| Theory | Selective coding | Axis coding | Open coding | Typical quotations from interviewees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Recognition of leaders | Praised by the competent authorities at a higher level | A worker in our company self-studied computer language and able to modify the business software we are using now. He has been praised by leaders many times |
| | | Family-style influence | Our business philosophy is similar to family education philosophy. | Just like my father used to encourage me to work harder and honestly, our company leaders also teach us that "hard work pays off" |

# 4    Extractions from Chinese traditional culture

The above dimensions obtained from the qualitative research are deeply influenced by Chinese traditional culture. "Leader modeling", the first dimension of information perception channels of OID, means that manager should set a good example by his behavior, play his leading role through his modeling actions. Such statements can be easily found in Chinese classics. For example, Hsun Tzu once said that "he who can not be a good example for others unless he can be strict with himself" (*Xun Zi*: *Fei Xiang)*. In the *History of the Song Dynasty*, it is noted that "He who can't be trusted unless he can set a good example for others, he who can't be convincing unless he can be leading in every aspect" (*The History of the Song Dynasty*, Vol. 284). Zhang Yanghao also pointed out that "if he can't be strict with himself, how can he convince others?" (*Advice on Laws and Disciplines*). The second dimension is "consideration for subordinates", which means to care about employees' living standard and help them grow and develop in their work. It is recorded in "Analects of Confucius: Yan Yuan" that "Fan Chi asked about benevolence. The Master said, 'It is to love all men'". It also recorded in "*Analects of Confucius*: *Xu'er*" that "The Master said, a youth, when at home, should be filial, and abroad, respectful to the elder. He should be earnest and truthful. He should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the good". "Benevolence" is the core of Confucian culture. Some ancient scholars also argued that consideration for subordinates can get them sincerely convinced. In other words, as Liu Zhou put it, "If you want to get others' respect, you must care about them" (*Liu Zi's Tactics*), or "Be benevolent is to care about others, then get their respect; be caring when employ others, then get their willingness to work for you" (*Bao Pu Zi*: *Yong Xing*).

The third dimension is "external encouragement", which means external evaluations of the organization, particularly the comments from the public and customers. This dimension is very similar to the concept of "*Ming*" (meaning name or reputation) in Chinese traditional culture, as *Chuang-tzu* once put it, "a name is but the shadow of reality" (*A Happy Excursion*). It is also written in the *The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei* that "to be wise enough to know the method, he should keep his name according to the reality" (Vol. 17). The fourth dimension is "rationalizing norms and rules", which means to explain the systems and regulations to employees with every detail. "Reason" is a philosophy concept used widely in Chinese traditional culture. Zhang Dainian summarized the norm of "reason" into five levels, namely "form", "law", "order", "cause" and "result" (Xu, 2005). An organization usually uses the form of "rationalizing norms and rules" to advocate its regulations, orders, reasons and criteria, which have great significance in forming employees' OID and reducing their behavior differences. As ancient philosopher Han Feizi advocated, that "social upheavals will never happen in a country with clear-defined law". The fifth dimension is "behavioral consistency", which means employees in an organization act in order and form some good behavior habits, as Zhuge Liang said in his famous *Principles of Army* that "an army with well-disciplined soldiers but an incapable general is not likely to be defeated while an army with an intelligent general but undisciplined soldiers can defeat nobody". It is also written in *Kang Cangzi*: *The methods of Military* that "an army can be all-conquering if every soldier works hard for the same aim, thus it can press forward with an indomitable spirit and no one can hold it back" (Zhao, 2007).

## 5 The influences of information perception channels on OID

### 5.1 Participants

Considering the scale, randomness, and characteristics of the respondents, questionnaires were distributed in Beijing, Guangzhou, Jiangsu and Taiwan. To expand the representativeness of our samples, we selected some of our respondents from management trainees in Beijing, who come from all over the country and all walks of life. Some respondents came from different organizational levels in two large-scale enterprises. Other respondents were on-the-job students of different management training courses in Beijing, Guangzhou and Taiwan. Specifically, respondents in Taiwan consisted of 15 local business managers. In addition, we conducted random test on employees at different levels in two large-scale enterprises in Beijing and Jiangsu Province. A total of 483 valid questionnaires are received, in which 211 (43.7%) were men

and 239 (49.5%) women. 94 (12.1%) were under the age of 30, 248 (31.9%) between 31 and 35, 201 (25.8%) between 36 and 40, 163 (21.0%) between 41 and 45, 52 (6.7%) between 46 and 50, 17 (2.2%) between 51 and 55, and 2 (0.3%) were above 56. As for job tenure, 4 (0.8%) were less than one year, 10 (2.1%) between 1 and 2 years, 26 (5.4%) 3–4 years, 43 (8.9%) between 5 and 7 years, 61 (12.6%) between 8 and 10 years, 136 (28.2%) between 11 and 15 years, and 184 (38.1%) over 16 years. As for educational level, 9 (1.9%) were high school graduates, 87 (18.0%) college graduates, 320 (66.3%) had bachelor degrees, 55 (11.4%) had master degrees or above.

## 5.2 Measures

Based on the data we obtained in the interview and the qualitative analysis method in the grounded theory, we develop an experimental scale consisting of the extracted 28 behavior characteristics. We then use a five-point equidistant evaluation method to retest the scale. Based on the item analysis results, we further modify questionnaire items and form the final *Information perception channels of Organizational Identification Measurement Scale* consisting of 21 items, in which three relevant scales are quoted (including organizational identification questionnaire, positive affectivity and negative affectivity scales). Patchen (1970) suggested that OID is composed of three interwoven factors, namely membership, royalty, and similarity. Drawing on Patchen's theory, Cheney (1982) developed the most widely used measurement scale of OID—Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ). In this paper, we use a simplified OIQ consisting of 12 items and adopt a bi-directional English-Chinese translation method to ensure the accuracy of the translation. In addition, to reduce influence from the individual level, we also adopt positive and negative affectivity to reflect individuals' personality tendency when experiencing happy or sad emotions. Accordingly, Price's (1997) positive affectivity and negative affectivity scales (PA-NA Scale) are included as part of our scale.

In order to verify the effectiveness of our scale, we randomly select 200 samples to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and the rest samples for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Five factors are extracted. Based on the conclusions of the above qualitative research, these five factors are named, respectively, leader modeling, consideration for subordinates, external encouragement, rationalizing norms and rules, and behavioral consistency. The cumulative contribution rate is 53.568%. As a rule, a Cronbach's $\alpha$ bigger than 0.7 is acceptable. With a Cronbach's $\alpha$ value as high as 0.95, our scale has satisfactory internal consistency (as shown in Table 2). To guarantee the construct validity of our scale, convergent and discriminant validity tests are conducted. To improve the convergent validity, all items in the scale with a

factor loading value lower than 0.35 are eliminated. As for discriminant validity, the correlation coefficients among different items in the scale range from 0.269 to 0.541, meeting the requirements of discriminant validity (see Table 2).

**Table 2**    Results of exploratory factor analysis of information perception channels of OID

| Items | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My boss knows our business well and he/she is a role model for us. He/she has a great impact on me and I have learned a lot from him/her | 0.972 | | | | |
| 2. My boss keeps his/her words and completes jobs first before he/she requires others to do the same | 0.754 | | | | |
| 3. My boss always points out and corrects our misconducts on time | 0.598 | | | | |
| 4. When I ask my boss some questions, he/she answers me without any reserve | 0.497 | | | | |
| 6. My boss is considerate and understands our difficulties | | 0.893 | | | |
| 7. As far as I am concerned, my boss helps employees solve their problems and difficulties | | 0.787 | | | |
| 5. My boss pays a visit to the front-line employees with the gift on New Year's Day or other festivals | | 0.562 | | | |
| 8. My boss tries his/her best to provide opportunities for excellent workers to further develop themselves | | 0.355 | | | |
| 10. I know my company has a good reputation and public image | | | 0.993 | | |
| 9. I heard that our clients speak highly of our company's public image and staff qualifications | | | 0.793 | | |
| 12. We have won a lot of awards and praises, which makes us agree more with company vision | | | 0.655 | | |
| 11. As what I have known, the competent authorities at a higher level and other social institutions often praise our company | | | 0.653 | | |
| 14. Our boss or veteran employees always tell us about their setbacks in the past | | | | 0.830 | |
| 15. Experienced employees here always give me suggestions on the better way of doing of things. I have benefited greatly from their suggestions | | | | 0.727 | |
| 16. My boss always says some concise but philosophical words which are helpful guidance to our work | | | | 0.411 | |
| 13. Our company always organizes us together and learn lessons from negative example in order to deepen our understandings of rules and regulations | | | | 0.362 | |
| 17. There are many good examples in my company. I respect and always learn from them | | | | 0.351 | |
| 20. When facing difficulty, my colleagues stick to their consistent work style | | | | | 0.743 |

(*To be continued*)

| Items | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. Most of my colleagues abide by our company rules and regulations naturally and are able to maintain consistent ways of doing things | | | | | 0.709 |
| 18. Veteran employees here have good behaviors and habits, and hardly affected by other people | | | | | 0.507 |
| 19. I find that people persist on some fixed ways of doing thing in our company | | | | | 0.473 |
| Eigen value | 7.14 | 2.12 | 1.38 | 1.37 | 1.10 |
| Factor variance (%) | 34.02 | 10.10 | 6.61 | 6.55 | 5.26 |
| Cumulative variance (%) | 34.02 | 44.12 | 50.73 | 57.29 | 62.55 |

The results of EFA indicate that OIQ has a one-dimensional structure with overall eigenvalue of 9.214. Variance explained accounts for 57.589%. The overall reliability estimate (Cronbach's $\alpha$) achieves 0.9502. Many other researchers have also confirmed the one-dimensional structure of the scale. For example, Cheney et al. (1983), suggested that in OIQ, one single factor accounts for 86% of the total variance. PA-NA scale is a two-dimensional structure with overall eigenvalues of 3.454 and 1.889, respectively. Variance explained account for 66.792% and the Cronbach'$\alpha$ is 0.8073.

This study also uses CFA to further explore the stability of the five-factor structure. As a rule, good fit values include: $\chi^2/df < 3$, GFI, CFI, NNFI>0.9, RMSEA<0.05 (Bollen, 1989). Acceptable fit values include: $\chi^2/df < 5$ and RMSEA<0.08. As for our first-order factor structure model, $\chi^2/df = 3.53$, RMSEA=0.079, indicating the proposed model is acceptable. In addition, GFI=0.89, CFI=0.95, NNFI=0.90, showing good fitting of data (see Fig. 1).

## 5.3 Regression analysis of organizational identification

OLS regression model is adopted to test OID. ANOVA test results show that there are no significant differences among the demographic variables of OID, namely age, education, working years, and "the year you started working in your present company". Therefore, we do not enter these demographic control variables into the regression model. Moreover, a dummy variable is used to test whether there are any correlations between OID and the nature of enterprises or enterprise location. The result shows that the both enterprise nature and location do not have any significant impact on OID. Before applying OLS, we also examine the multi-collinearity and residual distribution of the data, as well as the linear relationship between endogenous and exogenous variables. As shown in Table 3, in Model 1, $R^2$ is 0.638 and adjusted $R^2$ is 0.634, showing information perception channels have strong explanatory power over OID. To further verify

whether the variances in OID is attributed to differences in identification information itself or differences in individuals' information perception channels, we enter into Model 2 two personality characteristics of positive and negative affectivity. As shown in Table 4, only positive affectivity has significant effects on OID ($\beta$=0.121). In comparison with Model 1, the $R^2$ (0.653) of Model 2 increases only a mere 0.014, showing that the information perception channels have greater influence on OID than that of positive and negative affectivity. In addition, testing for multicollinearity of the five dimensions of information perception channels of OID show that the tolerance is between 0.540 and 0.886 and VIF is between 1.166 and 1.853, indicating that there is no multicollinearity existing among these dimensions. .
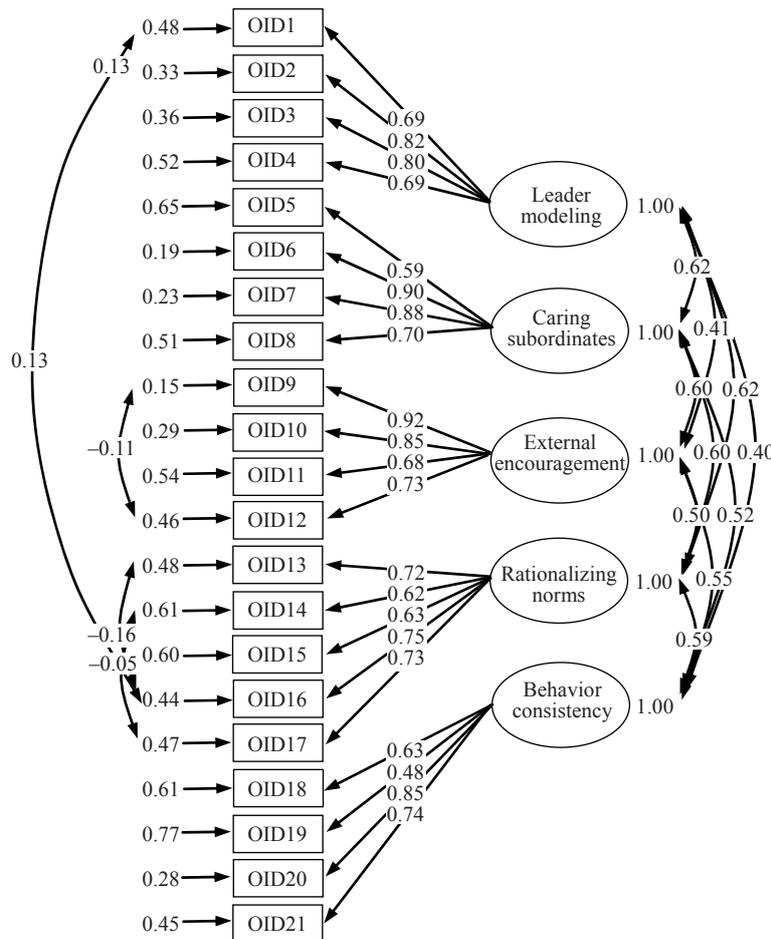


**Fig.1**   Five-factor structure model

Model 2 shows that different dimensions of information perception channels of OID vary in their predictive power of OID. From highest to lowest, external encouragement ($\beta$=0.315), behavioral consistency ($\beta$=0.236), consideration for subordinates ($\beta$=0.228), leader modeling ($\beta$=0.126), positive affectivity ($\beta$=0.121), and rationalizing norms and rules ($\beta$=0.116). Meanwhile, consideration for subordinates, external encouragement and behavioral consistency have higher significant level ($p$<0.001) than that of the other dimensions. This shows that, by cultivating good external reputation, an organization helps to enhance its members' OID. Meanwhile, considerations for subordinates and behavioral consistency have greater impact on OID than that of leader modeling and rationalizing norms and rules. These results show that, besides emphasizing rules and regulations and playing exemplary roles, leaders need to practice what they preach and care about their employees' growth and development and feel sympathetic to their employees' difficulties, so as to have greater impact on employees' OID ( see Table 4).

**Table 3**    Results of descriptive statistical analysis

| Variables | Mean | Standard deviation | OID | Leader modeling | Consideration for subordinates | External encouragement | Rationalizing norms and rules | Behavioral consistency | PA | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OID | 3.603 | 0.650 | (0.950) | | | | | | | |
| Leader modeling | 3.625 | 0.742 | 0.448** | (0.829) | | | | | | |
| Consideration for subordinates | 3.389 | 0.802 | 0.630** | 0.496** | (0.807) | | | | | |
| External encouragement | 3.560 | 0.695 | 0.655** | 0.323** | 0.538** | (0.827) | | | | |
| Rationalizing norms and rules | 3.384 | 0.636 | 0.562** | 0.469** | 0.541** | 0.450** | (0.7817) | | | |
| Behavioral consistency | 3.541 | 0.571 | 0.549** | 0.269** | 0.417** | 0.397** | 0.481** | (0.721) | | |
| PA | 3.844 | 0.567 | 0.282** | 0.043 | 0.100* | 0.208** | 0.160** | 0.173** | (0.807) | |
| NA | 2.575 | 0.775 | –0.119** | –0.084 | –0.045 | –0.108* | 0.026 | –0.059 | –0.293** | (0.855) |

Note: ** indicates $p$<0.01, *** indicates $p$<0.001, one-tailed test.

**Table 4**    Results of multiple regression analysis of information perception channels and OID

| Determinants | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Information perception channels | | |
| Leader modeling | 0.119** | 0.126** |
| Consideration for subordinates | 0.230*** | 0.228*** |
| External encouragement | 0.336*** | 0.315*** |
| Rationalizing norms and rues | 0.125** | 0.116** |
| Behavioral consistency | 0.249*** | 0.236*** |
| Personality traits | | |
| PA | | 0.121** |
| NA | | – |
| $R^2$ | 0.638*** | 0.653*** |

| Determinants | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.634 | 0.646 |
| $\triangle R^2$ | 0.638 | 0.014 |

Note: ** indicates $p<0.01$, *** indicates $p<0.001$, one-tailed test.

## 6   Conclusions and discussion

Since the launch of reform and opening-up, China has gradually become one of the world's most economically dynamic regions. As a result, an increasing number of organizational behavior researchers have shifted their attention from Japan to China. Based on Chinese traditional culture, this study explores the information perception channels of OID among employees by combining together both qualitative and quantitative research methods. We find a five-dimensional structure of Chinese employees' information perception channels of OID, namely leader modeling, consideration for subordinates, external encouragement, rationalizing norms and rules, and behavioral consistency. In comparison with previous studies, at the beginning of our research, we do not presume the effects of traditional culture on modern enterprises. Rather, we explore the existing influence of traditional culture on modern organization by studying the practices in these organizations. Our study reveals an interaction between Chinese traditional culture and modern organizations in terms of employees' OID. When studying cross-cultural management, some scholars found that OID helps top management teams improve their performance in international joint ventures. The findings in this study can provide these international joint ventures with practical suggestions for building OID in the context of Chinese traditional culture.

In recent years, more organizational behavior researchers have shifted their attention from organizational result variables to process variables. With the deepening of research on OID, there has been a growing interest in the formation process of OID in organization. For example, Gioia and Thomas (1996) suggested that OID formation is "symbolic and inventive" in nature. However, he ignored the specific channels by which employees from different cultural background perceive OID. The main contribution of this study is that we find five types of perception channels of OID and their correspondent contents. In comparison with extant studies on OID, our study has both similarities and differences (see Table 5). For example, Zheng (2000) argued that Chinese entrepreneurs often take a paternalistic leadership style under the influence of Confucian culture. The leader modeling, consideration for subordinates, and behavioral consistency dimensions in our model are consistent with his conclusions.

**Table 5**   Comparison between our study and relevant researches

| Factor | Channels and behaviors | Related studies and authors | Main differences between this paper and existing studies |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leader modeling | Taking the lead<br><br>Practicing what one preaches<br><br>Implementing strictly regulations<br><br>Sharing experiences | −Under the influence of Confucian culture, leading by virtue and good behaviors include set a good example with one's own conduct and to be scrupulous in separating public from private interests (Zheng, 2000)<br>−As a chief information sender, managers have to build up consistent self-concept for their subordinates as well as "identity claims" (Whetten and Mackey, 2002) | This paper focuses on revealing the channels and ways by which managers send out information |
| Consideration for subordinates | Solving problems for employees<br><br>Understanding employees' difficulties<br><br>Paying visit to subordinates<br>Providing opportunities for learning | −Under the influence of Confucian culture, benevolent leading includes offering help in time of emergency, encouragement and counseling (Zheng, 2000)<br>−OID in the context of Chinese culture emphasizes harmony in one's relationship (Hwang, 1999) | This paper focuses on revealing the effective transmission channels of harmonious and benevolent values |
| External encouragement | Recognition of society<br><br>Recognition of clients<br>Praise and rewards<br>Recognition of leaders | −A company's reputation is a type of scarce resources in building OID among its members (Sillince, 2006)<br>−Organizations often focus on building a positive self-image, which helps cultivate OID (Cheney,1982) | This paper focuses on analyzing employees' perception channels of external reputation of their companies |
| Rationalizing norms and rules | Necessary guidance<br><br>Telling of setbacks<br><br>Reminding of correct way of doing things<br><br>Learning from negative examples<br><br>Learning from good examples | −Persuasive information created by organization which helps persuader (organization) and receiver (members) reach consensus (Cheney,1982)<br>−OID exists in a series of institutional claims, provides reasonable and consistent statements for members, and helps them build up a sense of self-collectivity (Whetten and Mackey, 2002) | This paper focuses on revealing the main transmission channels of persuasive information |

(*To be continued*)

*(Continued)*

| Factor | Channels and behaviors | Related studies and authors | Main differences between this paper and existing studies |
|---|---|---|---|
| Behavioral consistency | Overcoming difficulties<br>Conformity pressure<br>Clearing away obstacles<br>–Persistence | –Members build up self-identification by seeking the distinction between "me" and "us" (Breakwell and Lyons,1996) | This paper focuses on analyzing how the behavior pattern of "ours" affects that of "mine". |

The limitations of this paper are as follows: First, when sampling our respondents, we did not take into consideration the effect from industries and enterprise development phases; Second, when testing the effects of information perception channels on OID, we considered only work tenure, positive and negative affectivity at the individual level. To increase the robustness of our conclusions, more variables are needed to be considered for the future studies.

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