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The role of positive emotional culture as a mediator between symmetrical internal communication and organizational identification: Procedural justice climate as a moderator

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ABSTRACT

Organizational identification is crucial for understanding how employees internalize their company's values, goals, and identity. Understanding the dynamics of organizational identification can help companies foster a more harmonious and productive work environment and develop effective management strategies to retain and enhance employee engagement. This research aims to elucidate the role of a positive emotional culture in the communication relationship symmetrical internal between organizational identification, moderated by procedural justice climate. 158 participants from various industries in Indonesia were involved in this study, selected through convenience sampling. Data collection was conducted via an online survey using Google Forms. Data analysis employed Model 4 and Model 14 of Hayes' PROCESS, utilizing SPSS version 29.0.1.0. The results indicate that a positive emotional culture significantly mediates the relationship between symmetrical internal communication and organizational identification. However, there is no moderating effect of the procedural justice climate in this relationship. This research is valuable for organizational management, as it highlights the importance of fostering symmetrical internal communication to cultivate a positive emotional culture, which, in turn, can enhance employee organizational identification.

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Introduction

The Global Trends Report from Mercer Indonesia (2024) found that 45% of employees who feel a sense of pride in their organization are the primary factors contributing to their thriving in the workplace. Subsequently, a sense of camaraderie and appreciation for employee contributions ensued (Mercer Indonesia, 2024). These factors are closely related to employees' organizational identification with their company. Organizational identification is crucial for understanding how employees internalize their companies' values, goals, and identity. By comprehending the dynamics of organizational identification, companies can foster a more harmonious and productive work environment and develop effective management strategies to enhance employee engagement. By aligning cohesive goals, values, and culture, organizations can establish a strong identity that attracts top talent and investors and enables employees to view their work as a contribution to something greater than mere daily tasks.

Organizational identification is defined as the condition in which an individual perceives themselves as a member of a particular social group and internalizes the characteristics of that





group, leading to feelings of pride, significance, and awareness of belonging (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Smidts et al., 2001). Organizational identification is crucial in helping employees internalize the organization's values, beliefs, goals, and culture, motivating them to act in the organization's best interests (Van Knippenbesrg & Van Shie, 2000). As a result, organizational identification can enhance employee retention, foster cooperation, promote positive work attitudes, and strengthen organizational commitment (Yue et al., 2021).

Forming organizational identification among employees can be achieved by cultivating a positive organizational culture. Organizational culture encompasses not only the physical aspect but also the emotional dimensions, which are integral to what is known as emotional culture. Barsade and O'Neill (2016)) define emotional culture as "the shared affective values, norms, artifacts, and assumptions that govern which emotions people have and express at work and which ones they are better off suppressing." This definition underscores that emotional culture is a foundation for organizational members, guiding them in understanding which emotions and feelings are appropriate to express in the workplace. The emotional aspect of the workplace warrants further study, as employees' emotions not only influence their own behavior but can also impact their colleagues and potentially alter the overall atmosphere within the organization (Vijayalakshmi & Bhattacharyya, 2012). In line with this, Barsade and O'Neill (2016) argue that when leaders ignore emotional culture, they overlook vital aspects that influence employee and organizational performance. Yue et al. (2021) define emotional culture as consisting of a) nonverbal emotional expressions (e.g., tone of speech, facial expressions, body language) and cultural artifacts (e.g., rooms, decorations, group rituals, ceremonies); b) underlying values, i.e., what emotions should be expressed or concealed; and c) underlying assumptions, which is the meanings implied by expressing or suppressing certain emotions. Therefore, emotional culture can be observed at all three levels of culture within a social entity.

Despite its importance, researchers have not developed studies that address the emotional aspect of employees in organizations. Most studies continue to concentrate on Cognitive Culture (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Previous research has predominantly focused on negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and fear (Heaphy et al., 2022; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). Investigations into Positive Emotional Culture have only emerged in the last five years (Men & Robinson, 2018; Men & Yue, 2019; Yue et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2023). To address the gaps in existing literature, this study examined the role of Positive Emotional Culture, which encompasses joy, companionate love, pride, and gratitude, in fostering employee organizational identification.

External factors are essential to cultivating a positive emotional culture, particularly communication patterns employed by organizational management with employees. One key aspect of this is symmetrical internal communication. Research indicates that the strength of internal communication within an organization significantly influences the development of its culture (Grunig & Dozier, 2003; Sriramesh et al., 1996). Symmetrical internal communication is characterized by a two-way flow of information, reciprocity, feedback, active listening, employee participation, and a balance of interests between management and employees (Men, 2014). In organizations that implement symmetrical internal communication, management should establish regular and periodic dialogues with employees to listen to their ideas and address their concerns (Lee, 2022). Therefore, symmetrical internal communication is employee-focused.

Previous studies by Yue et al. (2021) show that Positive Emotional Culture significantly correlates with organizational identification. In their research, Positive Emotional Culture accounted for 57% of the variance in organizational identification. The more attractive employees perceive the company to be, the stronger their sense of organizational identification becomes. This interest reflects the development of positive emotions, including joy, companionate love, pride, and gratitude. The positive emotions experienced by employees enhance their identification with the organization. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed,

along with a detailed description of the mediation model for this hypothesis, as illustrated in Figure 1, positive emotional culture mediates the indirect relationship between symmetrical internal communication and organizational identification.

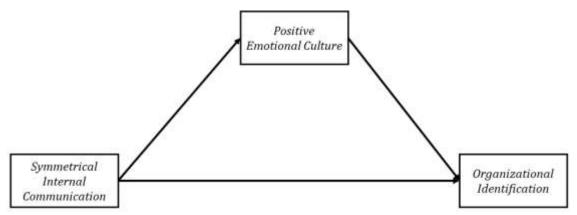


Figure 1. Research Model (Full Mediation)

A specific climate or atmosphere within the organization is often necessary for positive outcomes to occur from a Positive Emotional Culture. (Denison, 1996). One form of organizational climate that may serve as a moderator in the relationship between Positive Emotional Culture and organizational identification is the Procedural Justice Climate. Procedural Justice Climate is defined as "a distinct unit-level cognition regarding shared [procedural] fairness perceptions of treatment by organizational authorities" (Whitman *et al.*, 2012). Organizations with a high Procedural Justice Climate tend to make employees perceive they were treated fairly (Colquitt, 2004). Research conducted by Michel *et al.* (2010) indicates that a strong Procedural Justice Climate within an organization can enhance employees' positive self-concept, ultimately improving their sense of organizational identification with the company.

Several previous studies have demonstrated a consistent positive relationship between Positive Emotional Culture and organizational identification (Sun et al., 2023; Yue et al., 2021). Employees who perceive their workplace culture as emotionally positive—characterized by their senses such as happiness, pride, and gratitude—are more likely to identify with the organization. However, contextual factors can influence the degree of organizational identification, one of which is the Procedural Justice Climate. According to Colquitt (2004), Procedural Justice Climate is closely related to employees' positive attitudes, values, and supportive behaviors toward the organization. A strong Procedural Justice Climate enhances organizational identification, as employees share similar perceptions regarding various procedural matters within the organization, such as management practices, structure, regulations, and norms.

One of the reasons employees identify with an organization is the fulfillment of their needs for respect and pride (Tyler & Blader, 2003). When employees feel they are being treated fairly, their need for respect is met. Similarly, when employees experience a sense of belonging to high-performing teams with strong interpersonal relationships, their need for pride is fulfilled. According to Swanson and Kent (2017), in an organizational context, employee pride stems from attachment to the group and the team's success. Therefore, the second hypothesis proposed by the researcher is procedural justice climate moderates the indirect relationship between symmetrical internal communication and organizational identification through positive emotional culture, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Based on the earlier explanation, this study aims to enhance understanding of emotional culture in the workplace and its role in shaping organizational identification. Specifically, this research examines the role of positive emotional culture as a mediator between symmetrical

internal communication and organizational identification, with procedural justice climate as a moderating factor. The study's motivation stems from the limited research available on positive emotional culture within organizations in Indonesia.

Previous research has primarily identified Positive Emotional Culture as a mediating variable, demonstrating its role in fully mediating the relationship between independent and dependent variables. For instance, a survey study conducted by Men and Yue (2019) found that Positive Emotional Culture serves as a full mediator between Responsive Leader Communication and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Additionally, other studies have highlighted the role of Positive Emotional Culture as a mediator between Leader Motivating Language and Organizational Identification (Yue et al., 2021) and Symmetrical Internal Communication and Organizational Identification (Yue et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has also been identified as a mediator between Leader Motivating Language and Employee Voice. (Yue et al., 2022). Previous research has identified various antecedents of Positive Emotional Culture at different levels, including Responsive Leader Communication (Men & Yue, 2019), Leader Motivating Language (Yue et al., 2021; 2022), and symmetrical communication (Men & Yue, 2019; Yue et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2023). Concurrently, studies exploring the outcomes produced by Positive Emotional Culture have gained traction, focusing on areas such as employee performance (Adler et al., 2022; Hartmann et al., 2021), employee-organization relationships (Men & Robinson, 2018), Organizational Identification (Sun et al., 2023; Yue et al., 2021), Psychological Safety (Aboramadan & Kundi, 2023), employee voice (Yue et al., 2022) and Employee Advocacy (Men & Yue, 2019). However, these studies have primarily been conducted in the United States and India. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Positive Emotional Culture within organizational contexts, it is essential to conduct further research in other countries, such as Indonesia.

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for organizational management. In particular, this research is expected to contribute to building symmetrical internal communication to create a positive emotional culture, which can ultimately impact improving organizational identification by employees.

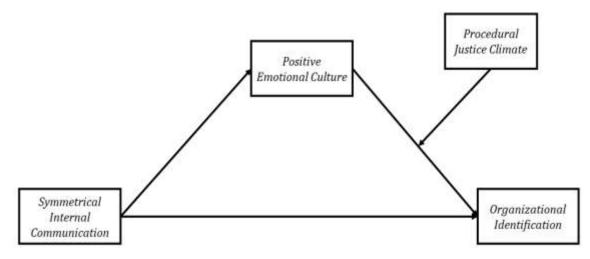


Figure 2. Research Model (Mediated-Moderation Model)

Method

This study employs a correlational quantitative approach utilizing a survey method. Data collection was conducted using convenience sampling techniques. The population for this study consists of employees working in Indonesia, while the sample is restricted by three criteria: 1) Indonesian citizens who are actively employed in Indonesia; 2) individuals who have worked for a minimum of one year; and 3) those who have a supervisor at their

workplace.

This study utilized four instruments. To assess symmetrical internal communication, the researcher employed a scale developed by Dozier *et al.* (1995) and subsequently adapted by Lee (2022). The symmetrical internal communication scale comprises five items, measured on a six-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 6=Strongly Agree). An example of an item on this scale is, "Most communication between me and the company occurs bidirectionally. The Cronbach's Alpha test results indicated a strong reliability value (α =0.826).

Positive emotional culture was measured using a scale developed by Yue *et al.*, (2021). This scale assesses four dimensions of positive emotions—joy, companionate love, pride, and gratitude—through 13 items that depict the emotions experienced by participants within their organization. Each item employs a 6-point Likert scale (1=Highly Unsuitable, 6=Highly Suitable). Some descriptors of positive emotions included in this scale are "Happy," "Enthusiastic," and "Loving each other." The Cronbach's alpha test results indicated a strong reliability value (α =0.947).

Variable Organizational Identification was measured using a scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). This scale has also been utilized in research by Yue *et al.* (2021), which serves as a reference for the researcher. It comprises six items rated on a six-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 6=Strongly Agree). The Cronbach's Alpha test results indicated a good reliability value (α =0.749). An example of an item on this scale is: "For me, the company's success is my success, too."

Variable Procedural Justice Climate was measured using the scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993). This scale was also adapted in research conducted by Hsiung (2012) and consists of six items that assess the fairness of implementing procedural rules within the organization. The scale employs a six-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 6=Strongly Agree). One of the items states, "All work-related decisions are applied consistently to all affected employees. The Cronbach's Alpha test results indicate a strong reliability value (α =0.888).

The researchers surveyed by distributing questionnaires online through various social media channels. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and consisted of four sections: a consent page, three sections dedicated to the measurement tool, and a final section that collected demographic data from participants. To incentivize participation, the researcher offered a randomly drawn reward of Rp.50,000 in e-wallet balance to 20 participants. The questions in the questionnaire were presented in a random order to minimize the likelihood of participants guessing the measured variables.

To test the hypothesis, this study employs the PROCESS Hayes Model 4 and Model 14 analysis techniques (Hayes, 2016). Model 4 is utilized to examine the role of mediation within the research model, while Model 14 is applied to assess moderated mediation in the research framework. The overall analysis of the research findings was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 29.0.1.0.

Results

Based on 219 respondents, 54 were excluded from the analysis because they did not meet the criteria or failed to complete the focus checker items. Consequently, only 158 respondents were included in the analysis. Regarding the age group, 64.6% of the respondents belonged to Generation Z, with female respondents comprising the majority at 77.2%. Regarding educational background, the largest respondents were Bachelor's degree holders, accounting for 65.2%. Complete demographic data is available in Table 1.

The correlation test results indicate that Organizational Identification significantly correlates with gender (r=0.19, p<0.05). Therefore, this variable must be controlled during the hypothesis testing analysis stage. The other control variables i.e., educational background, position level, age, and length of employment did not demonstrate significant correlations with the different variables. Previous research has established that gender differences are related

to Organizational Identification (Arshad *et al.*, 2023; Wu *et al.*, 2018; Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017). The means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic Data

Demographics	Group	F	Percentage (%)
Age	Generation Z (18-26 years old)	102	64.6
	Generation Y (27-42 years old)	56	35.4
Gender	Man	36	22.8
	Woman	122	77.2
Education	High School/Vocational School	31	19.6
	D1/D2/D3	18	11.4
	S1/D4	103	65.2
	S2	6	3.8
Job Level	Staff	129	81.6
	Supervisor	20	12.7
	Manager	9	5.7
Tenure	1-5 years	115	72.8
	6-10 years	39	24.7
	>10 years	4	2.5

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gender	-	-	1								
Ed.	-	-	-0.16*	1							
Level	-	-	-0.18*	0.19*	1						
MK	2.80	2.0	-0.26**	0,05	0.43	1					
Age	25.68	3.88	-0.37**	0.26**	0.05	0.66**	1				
SIC	4.63	0.85	0.17*	-0.01	-0.04	-0.01	-0.75	1			
PEC	4.61	0.88	0.07	-0.02	-0.09	-0.02	-0.07	0.72**	1		
OI	4.54	0.77	0.19*	-0.02	-0.04	0.07	0.02	0.47**	0.49**	1	
PIC	4.72	0.91	0.15	-0.07	-0.15	0.02	0.05	0.81**	0.68**	0.46**	1

Note: N=158. Ed=Education; MK=Serving Time; SIC=symmetrical internal communication; PEC=positive emotional culture; OI=organizational identification; PJC=procedural justice climate.

The first hypothesis examines the role of Positive Emotional Culture as a mediator in the relationship between symmetrical internal communication and Organizational Identification. This hypothesis was tested using the PROCESS Hayes Model 4 (Hayes, 2022). The results of the hypothesis test are illustrated in Figure 3. According to the findings, symmetrical internal communication significantly positively influences Positive Emotional Culture (b=0.75, SE=0.06, p<0.001). This result indicates that higher levels of symmetrical internal communication lead to increased Positive Emotional Culture within the organization. Furthermore, the analysis revealed a significant positive influence of Positive Emotional Culture on Organizational Identification (b=0.30, SE=0.90, p<0.01), suggesting that Organizational Identification increases as Positive Emotional Culture improves. Nevertheless, there is no significant direct effect between symmetrical internal communication and Organizational Identification (b=0.18, SE=0.09, p>0.05). Furthermore, the indirect effect indicates that Positive Emotional Culture mediates the positive relationship between symmetrical internal communication and Organizational Identification (b=0.23, SE=0.08, CI 95% [0.047:0.382]). Therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted. Specifically, higher levels of symmetrical internal communication lead to an increase in Positive Emotional Culture, which fosters Organizational Identification among employees. This mediation is also complete (fully mediated), highlighting the critical role of emotional culture in shaping organizational identification.

^{*}p<0.05 (2-tailed); **p<0.01 (2-tailed)

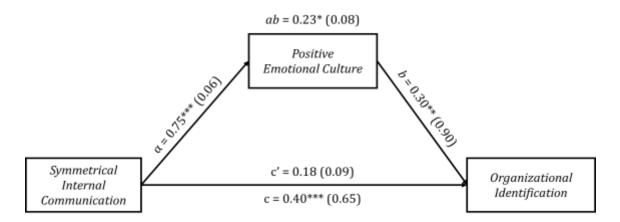


Figure 3. Mediation Statistical Model

The second hypothesis aims to examine the role of Procedural Justice Climate as a moderator in the indirect relationship between symmetrical internal communication and Organizational Identification, mediated by Positive Emotional Culture. The hypothesis was tested using the PROCESS Model 14 developed by Hayes (2022), which is designed for moderated mediation analysis. The results of the hypothesis test are illustrated in Figure 4. The analysis indicates that symmetrical internal communication has a significant positive effect on Positive Emotional Culture (b=0.74, SE=0.06, p<0.001), while it does not significantly influence Organizational Identification (b=0.09, SE=0.12, p>0.05). Additionally, Positive Emotional Culture is found to have a significant positive impact on Organizational Identification. Reason: The revisions improve clarity, enhance technical accuracy, and correct grammatical errors while maintaining the original meaning (b=0.30, SE=0.93, p<0.05). Nevertheless, the Procedural Justice Climate did not significantly influence Organizational Identification (b=0.13, SE=0.11, p>0.05). Similarly, the interaction between Positive Emotional Culture and Procedural Justice Climate also did not significantly influence Organizational Identification (b=0.02, SE=0.06, p>0.05). This result indicates that Procedural Justice Climate does not mediate the indirect relationship between symmetrical internal communication and Organizational Identification through Positive Emotional Culture; therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected. This analysis yielded an R² value of 0.30 after controlling for the employees' age, gender, educational background, length of service, and current job title. In summary, the variables of symmetrical internal communication, Positive Emotional Culture, and Procedural Justice Climate collectively predict Organizational Identification by approximately 31%.

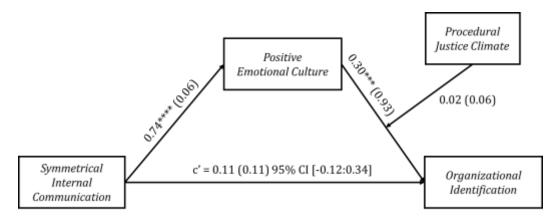


Figure 4. Moderated-Mediation Statistical Model

Although the index value of moderated mediation presented in Table 3 indicates that procedural justice climate did not serve as a moderator in this study model (b=0.02, SE=0.08, 95% CI [0.031:0.385]), the analysis of conditional indirect effects revealed a significant relationship between symmetrical internal communication and organizational identification, mediated by positive emotional culture, particularly at low (b=0.20, SE=0.10, 95% CI [0.014:0.396]) and moderate levels (b=0.22, SE=0.09, 95% CI [0.031:0.385]) of procedural justice climate. This result suggests that implementing a procedural justice climate at low or moderate levels can enhance the relationship between positive emotional culture and organizational identification.

Madayatay	Conditional indirect effect				
Moderator	Condition	b	ONE	LLCI	ULCI
Procedural Justice Climate	Low	0.20	0.10	0.014	0.396
	Medium	0.22	0.09	0.031	0.385
	High	0.23	0.13	-0.029	0.482
Index of moderated	_				
mediation	-	0.02	0.08	-0.133	0.173

Table 3. Conditional Effect of Moderators

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that Positive Emotional Culture mediates the relationship between symmetrical internal communication and Organizational Identification, as no direct effect was found between symmetrical internal communication and organizational identification. These findings align with the research conducted by Yue et al. (2021), which also demonstrates that Positive Emotional Culture serves as a full mediator in this relationship. This highlight reinforces the significant role of Positive Emotional Culture in fostering organizational identification among employees within their respective organizations. In other words, an organization that implements a symmetrical internal communication pattern fosters a culture that is positively perceived by employees, enabling them to identify themselves as integral members of the organization easily. This study also revealed a high and significant regression value of symmetrical internal communication on Positive Emotional Culture, consistent with two previous studies (Men & Yue, 2019; Hanifah & Salendu, 2024). Symmetrical internal communication within an organization is characterized by an employee-centered perspective that values reciprocal communication, openness, mutual trust, and shared significance (Men & Yue, 2019).

Studies conducted by Neves and Eisenberger (2012) in an organization experiencing a crisis demonstrate that symmetrical internal communication can alleviate various negative emotions, such as employee fear and anxiety when facing organizational changes. This improvement occurs because symmetrical internal communication fosters employee confidence, eliciting positive emotions. Research by Sun *et al.* (2023) produced similar findings, indicating that symmetrical internal communication positively correlates with positive emotions at the individual level. Researchers believe this relationship remains relevant to developing a positive emotional culture at the organizational level.

Several studies have demonstrated that symmetrical internal communication enhances employees' perception of a Positive Emotional Culture (Yue *et al.,* 2021) and strongly influences Positive Emotional Culture (Men & Yue, 2019). Furthermore, organizational identification can be cultivated in employees by internalizing the culture prevalent in their workplace, making the culture implemented within a company a crucial aspect that warrants attention. As emphasized earlier, emotional culture, manifested through nonverbal and verbal communication, artifacts, values, and basic assumptions, inherently shapes the emotional

component of an organization's identity (Yue et al., 2021).

Next, the role of Positive Emotional Culture in fostering organizational identification can be examined through the lens of Social Identity Theory (SIT). Developed by Henri Tajfel in the early 1970s, this theory is regarded as a foundational concept in social psychology (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). SIT is defined as an individual's self-concept, which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) along with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1974). This theory seeks to explain how individuals can adopt their group's identity and behave according to it (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). This theory posits that individuals define themselves by engaging with social groups, where such identification protects and enhances their identity (Islam, 2014). From this perspective, an individual's identification with a group is not solely cognitive; it is also affective, reflecting the degree to which the individual perceives the group as meaningful. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), individuals who experience positive emotions are more likely to be invested in their organization, thereby reinforcing their identification with it (Yue *et al.*, 2021).

Symmetrical internal communication emphasizes the importance of employee engagement, active listening to subordinate input, collaboration, and joint decision-making. When communication practices are implemented effectively, employees may experience positive emotions such as happiness, comfort, and gratitude toward their organization. This practice fosters a sense of meaning and belonging, allowing employees to view the organization as significant and reinforce their sense of belonging. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), identifying individuals within a group can also be impactful; it reflects how individuals perceive the group as meaningful to them (Yue et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the data in this study indicate that Procedural Justice Climate does not play a moderating role in the indirect relationship between symmetrical internal communication and Organizational Identification through Positive Emotional Culture. The researchers posit that this finding may be attributed to this study's predominance of female respondents. Previous research has demonstrated a propensity for women to exhibit a higher communal orientation than men (Wu *et al.*, 2018; Fritz & Van Knippenberg, 2017). Consequently, the climate of justice does not significantly influence the relationship; instead, a culture of positive emotions is sufficient for female employees to identify themselves as part of a group. Additionally, the most fundamental factor in organizational identification is an individual's emotional connection with the group to which they belong. When employees perceive themselves as part of a group, they engage with internal emotions and motivations that positively influence their attitudes and behaviors (Wegge *et al.*, 2012).

The study's results highlight the significance of organizational culture in shaping employee identification with their workplace. As an affective aspect of organizational culture, a positive emotional culture enhances communication factors that cannot independently foster organizational identification. Emotional culture, expressed through nonverbal and verbal communication, artifacts, values, and basic assumptions, inherently contributes to the emotional component of an organization's identity (Yue et al., 2021).

The practical implications of this study highlight the necessity for organizations to take effective measures that foster a culture of positive emotions within the workplace. While the internal communication system implemented is participatory, open, and reciprocal between superiors and subordinates, it must also prioritize positive emotional aspects in the interactions among organizational members and with leadership. For instance, cultivating a culture of gratitude—such as expressing thanks, recognizing each other's strengths, and offering support to team members—can be beneficial. Both nonverbal and verbal forms of communication that convey positive emotions will enhance organizational identification, which is ultimately expected to lead to improved productivity and other favorable outcomes.

There are several limitations in the current research and suggestions for future studies. First, this study gathered respondents from various organizations and fields, meaning it did not capture the specific organizational culture of any particular organization. Future research

should aim to sample specific organizations or industry types to provide a more detailed understanding of the culture present within those organizations. Second, subsequent studies could explore additional aspects of organizational culture that may influence the relationship between a positive emotional culture and organizational identification.

Conclusion

As presented in the discussion section, the study's results indicate that a positive emotional culture is a significant full mediator between symmetrical internal communication and organizational identification. However, the procedural justice aspect within the organization, represented by the procedural justice climate variable, does not demonstrate significance as a moderator that enhances the relationship between positive emotional culture and organizational identification. This finding suggests that the positive emotions experienced by employees—such as happiness, gratitude, appreciation, and mutual respect—play a more substantial role in shaping employees' organizational identification with the company than the procedural aspects of organizational implementation.

Statement of Interest

Both authors of the article declare that they have no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

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