

A Study on the Influence of the Doctrine of the Mean Thought on Employees' Innovative Behavior

by

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Abstract

This study deeply analyzes how the doctrine of the mean thought affects employees' innovative behavior, to clarify the role of the doctrine of the mean thought in employees' innovative activities. Based on literature research and empirical analysis, a theoretical model is constructed and organizational identification is used as a mediating variable to analyze how the doctrine of the mean thought affects employee innovative behavior by promoting organizational identification. This study collected sample data from 450 Chinese enterprise employees through questionnaires method research and obtained 420 valid questionnaires. The study found that the doctrine of the mean thought significantly positively impacts employees' innovative behavior; organizational identification partially mediates the doctrine of the mean thought and employee innovative behavior, indicating that the doctrine of the mean thought can indirectly promote innovative behavior by improving employees' organizational identification. The research conclusions provide theoretical support and practical guidance for how to effectively use the doctrine of the mean thought to improve organizational innovation capabilities and emphasize that by enhancing employees' organizational identification, enterprises can better mobilize employees' innovative motivation and creativity, thereby enhancing the overall competitiveness of enterprises.

Keywords: Doctrine of the Mean Thought, Employee Innovative Behavior, Organizational Identification

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Importance of the Problem

In the face of globalization and rapid technological advancements, companies are operating in an increasingly complex and competitive market. Innovation has become essential for organizations to maintain their competitiveness and sustain long-term growth. However, fostering innovative behavior among employees presents a significant challenge for managers. While material incentives have traditionally been used to motivate employees, there is a growing recognition that deeper cultural and psychological factors are at play. In Chinese culture, the doctrine of the mean thought, which emphasizes balance and harmony, offers a unique approach to managing innovation. This philosophy encourages employees to adopt a stable mindset during times of change, fostering innovation without disregarding caution. Additionally, the doctrine stresses the importance of balance between individuals and teams, promoting collective identity and teamwork. These elements can stimulate employees' motivation to innovate and enhance their creative behaviors. Understanding

how the doctrine of the mean thought influences innovative behavior in the workplace can enrich the theory of innovation and offer companies more sustainable management strategies.

1.2 Research Question

This study aims to answer the following key research questions:

- 1) How does the doctrine of the mean thought influence employee innovative behavior?
- 2) What is the role of organizational identification as a mediator in the relationship between the doctrine of the mean thought and employee innovation?
- 3) How can the application of the doctrine of the mean thought be effectively integrated into organizational management practices to enhance innovation?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to explore how the doctrine of the mean thought affects employee innovative behavior. The study seeks to construct a theoretical model in which the doctrine of the mean thought serves as the independent variable and organizational identification acts as the mediating variable. By verifying the direct and indirect pathways through empirical analysis, the research aims to provide theoretical support for the application of the doctrine of the mean thought in enterprise management. Additionally, the study aims to offer practical guidance and strategic suggestions for managers, helping them leverage the doctrine of the mean thought to foster innovation and improve organizational performance in a rapidly changing business environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Related Concepts and Theories

The Doctrine of the Mean Thought, rooted in Confucian philosophy, emphasizes balance, harmony, and moderation, avoiding extremes. It plays a significant role in organizational management by enhancing emotional stability and promoting organizational identification, which can, in turn, encourage innovation. Modern studies suggest that this doctrine helps employees maintain psychological balance in the face of work pressure and uncertainty, reduces negative emotions, and fosters rational decision-making and innovation (Zhang Y.M., 2023; Guo Z.R & Ma Y.F., 2022). The doctrine's influence is multi-dimensional, encompassing cognition, emotion, and behavior. Cognition refers to rational judgment in complex environments, emotion deals with maintaining psychological stability under stress, and behavior emphasizes balanced decision-making and action (Lai Y.J, 2023).

Employee Innovative Behavior is defined by three key dimensions: creative thinking, which reflects the ability to generate new ideas; exploratory behavior, which refers to trying new methods and solutions; and executive behavior, which involves the ability to implement innovative ideas effectively (Zhang Z.M, Liu S.Q, 2022). The organizational identification concept is a mediating variable that reflects employees' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral alignment with the organization. It plays a crucial role in translating the doctrine of the mean thought into innovative behavior by fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility (Zhao W.Y, 2019).

2.2 Literature Survey

Several studies have explored the impact of the doctrine of the mean thought on organizational dynamics. Zhang Y.M. et al. (2023) highlight the doctrine's role in enhancing leader-member relations and stimulating innovation by helping employees stay calm and rational. Guo Z.R & Ma Y.F. (2022) focus on how the doctrine mitigates anxiety in decision-making, improving overall fairness and job satisfaction. Research by Jin H. and Xu H. (2023) shows that the doctrine of the mean thought helps employees handle stress in dual leadership environments, leading to improved innovation capabilities. In addition, studies emphasize that organizational culture and management styles influence the effectiveness of the doctrine, with a supportive culture fostering better innovation outcomes (Zhang Z.M, Yin H.H, 2021).

Regarding employee innovative behavior, studies have identified key individual and organizational factors that influence creativity. Guo Z.R & Ma Y.F. (2022) suggest that proactive personality, openness, and intrinsic motivation are essential for innovative behavior. Leadership styles and organizational culture, particularly those that encourage risk-taking and creativity, further drive innovation (Zhang Z.M, Liu S.Q, 2022). Additionally, external pressures, such as market competition and technological change, serve as significant catalysts for innovation (Wu S.M, Liang Z.D, 2023).

Organizational identification, as a mediating variable, has been studied in relation to employee innovation. It strengthens employees' commitment to the organization, encouraging them to engage in innovative behavior. Zhou H.P and Yang Y.X (2022) suggest that organizational identification can be fostered by creating a culture of moderation, which aligns with the doctrine of the mean thought. Higher organizational identification leads to greater innovation, as employees feel more responsible and engaged (Zhang Y.M, Wei J.R, Chen Y.T, 2023).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The study aims to explore the influence of the Doctrine of the Mean Thought on employee innovative behavior, with organizational identification serving as a mediating variable. The conceptual framework posits that:

The Doctrine of the Mean Thought, with its emphasis on balance, rationality, and harmony, influences employee behavior by enhancing their emotional stability and fostering a balanced decision-making approach.

Organizational identification mediates the relationship between the doctrine of the mean thought and employee innovative behavior. Employees who align with the organization's values are more likely to be motivated to innovate.

Employee innovative behavior is driven by creative thinking, exploratory behavior, and executive behavior, which are all influenced by the employees' sense of organizational identification.

2.4 Research Hypothesis

The study aims to explore the influence of the doctrine of the mean thought on employee innovative behavior and the mediating role of organizational identification. Based on this, three research hypotheses are proposed to analyze the relationship between variables.

H1: The doctrine of the mean thought has a positive influence on employee innovative behavior.

H2: The doctrine of the mean thought has a positive influence on organizational identification.

H3: Organizational identification plays a mediating role between the doctrine of the mean thought and employee innovative behavior. Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both literature research and empirical analysis to explore the relationships between the Doctrine of the Mean Thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior. The research involves both qualitative and quantitative approaches:

The literature research method is used to review existing studies and theories related to the core concepts, identifying knowledge gaps and shaping the theoretical framework. The questionnaire method is employed to collect primary data from employees, enabling empirical investigation into the relationships between these variables.

The collected data will be analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the theoretical model and test the proposed hypotheses.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of employees working in modern organizations across various industries, with a focus on those from companies that emphasize innovation and employee development. The sample will be selected using a convenience sampling technique, targeting employees who are accessible and willing to participate in the study. The sample size will be determined based on the principles of statistical power, aiming for a sufficient number to provide robust and reliable results. A total of 300-500 respondents will be targeted to ensure data reliability and generalizability of findings.

3.3 Research Instruments

The primary research instrument for data collection is a questionnaire designed to capture information on the key variables: the doctrine of the mean thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior. The questionnaire will be structured into three sections:

1) Doctrine of the Mean Thought Scale: Measures the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of the doctrine (Lai Y.J., 2023).

2) Organizational Identification Scale: Assesses employees' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral identification with the organization (Tao Y., 2019).

3) Employee Innovative Behavior Scale: Measures creative thinking, exploratory behavior, and executive behavior (Zhang Y.M et al., 2023).

All items in the questionnaire will be based on Likert-type scales (1-5), where respondents rate their agreement with each statement from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

3.4 Data Collection

Data will be collected using online surveys distributed to employees across a range of organizations. The surveys will be distributed through email and company intranet platforms to maximize participation. Participants will be informed about the study's purpose, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of their participation. The survey will be open for a period of 4-6 weeks, allowing time for sufficient responses. In addition to the main survey, a small number of face-to-face interviews may be conducted to gain deeper insights into how the doctrine of the mean thought influences innovation behaviors.

3.5 Statistics Used for Data Analysis

The data analysis will be conducted in several stages:

1) Descriptive Statistics: Initially, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) will be used to provide an overview of the sample demographics and distribution of responses for each variable.

2) Reliability Analysis: To ensure the validity and reliability of the scales, Cronbach's alpha will be computed for each of the constructs to assess internal consistency.

3) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA): CFA will be conducted to verify the construct validity of the scales used for measuring the doctrine of the mean thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): To test the proposed research model, SEM will be employed.

This will allow for the analysis of both direct and indirect relationships between the doctrine of the mean thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior. Bootstrapping techniques will be used to test the significance of indirect effects and to validate the mediating role of organizational identification.

4) Hypothesis Testing: The hypotheses will be tested using standardized path coefficients and goodness-of-fit indices (e.g., CFI, TLI, RMSEA) to assess the overall fit of the model.

This approach will enable the study to verify the relationships between the variables and offer practical insights into the role of the doctrine of the mean thought in promoting employee innovation.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

The results of this study reveal the significant relationships between the doctrine of the mean thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior. Through the use of survey data and structural equation modeling (SEM), the analysis shows that the doctrine of the mean thought directly influences employee innovative behavior and indirectly promotes it by enhancing organizational identification. The findings confirm that organizational identification acts as a mediator, strengthening the link between the doctrine of the mean thought and innovative behavior. These results provide important insights into how cultural and psychological factors can foster innovation in organizations.

4.2 Data Analysis of the Quantitative Data

4.2.1 Questionnaire Design

The research questionnaire design involves three aspects: the doctrine of the mean thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior. The questionnaire for measuring the doctrine of the mean thought consists of 15 items, which are divided into three dimensions: cognition, emotion, and behavior. In the cognitive dimension, questions such as "Before making a decision, I generally need to conduct a comprehensive analysis of all possible consequences" are designed to evaluate employees' rational judgment ability when facing complex situations; questions in the emotional dimension such as "When I encounter work pressure, I can be emotionally stable" are used to measure employees' emotional control ability in a stressful environment; questions in the behavioral dimension include "In the choice of solutions, the author often weighs the interests of all parties" to measure employees' balanced choice behavior in the decision-making process. The measurement of organizational identification involves 10 questions, which are divided into three sub-dimensions: value identification, emotional identification, and behavioral identification, such as "I deeply agree with the core values of the company", "I feel that I am an integral part of the company", and "For the development of the company, I am willing to devote more efforts." We have 12 measurement questions about employees' innovative behavior, including creative thinking, exploratory behavior, and executive behavior, such as "I often have some new working methods and some new suggestions", "I would like to try to solve this problem in another way of working", "I can turn innovative ideas into specific work results", etc. The design of these questions ensures multi-level and all-round measurement of the impact of the doctrine of the mean thought on employee innovative behavior.

4.2.2 Sample Statistical Characteristics

As shown in Table 1, 54% of the employees are male and 46% are female, with a balanced gender distribution. The age structure covers 45% under 30 years old, 35% between 31 and 40 years old, and 20% over 41 years old, reflecting the characteristics of different age groups. 65% of the employees in the sample are from small and medium-sized enterprises, and 35% are from large enterprises, which helps to understand the impact of the doctrine of the mean thought on employee innovative behavior in different corporate cultures.

Table 1 Sample Statistical Characteristics

	Items	Number of People	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	227	54.0
	Female	193	46.0
Age	Under 30 years old	189	45.0
	31-40 years old	147	35.0
	Over 41 years old	84	20.0
Enterprise Type	Small and Medium Enterprises	273	65.0
	Large Enterprises	147	35.0

4.2.3 Scale Testing

To ensure the rigor and accuracy of the survey, the reliability and validity of the data were tested before the relevant data were analyzed.

1) Reliability Analysis

This study used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire. According to the test results, the reliability of the doctrine of the mean thought scale was 0.85, the organizational identification scale was 0.87, and the employee innovative behavior scale was 0.88. The reliability coefficients of each dimension were 0.82, 0.84, and 0.79 for doctrine of the mean thought, 0.83, 0.85, and 0.81 for organizational identification, and 0.80, 0.86, and 0.84 for employee innovative behavior. The results showed that the internal consistency of the scale was high.

2) Validity Analysis

(1) Content Validity

This study invited five experts in organizational behavior, business management, and psychology to participate in the questionnaire review. The expert review method was used to evaluate the content validity of the scale to ensure the rationality of the items in each sub-dimension. According to the expert evaluation, the content validity ratio (CVR) of all questions exceeded 0.80, which fully met the requirements of content validity. Among these scales, the average content validity of the doctrine of the mean thought scale reached 0.85, the organizational identification scale was 0.88, and the employee innovative behavior scale was 0.87. These data all prove that the scale performed well in terms of content validity.

(2) Goodness of fit test of the scale

The analysis results show that the model goodness of fit indicators between the doctrine of the mean thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior all meet the above standards, $\chi^2/df=2.75$; CFI=0.92; NFI=0.91; IFI=0.93; RMSEA=0.06, and the above results indicate that the model has a high degree of fit. See Table 2

Table 1 Goodness of Fit Test Analysis of the Scale

Fitting Optimization Index	Recommended Values	Measurement Value
Cumin/d (χ^2/df)	< 3	2.75
Comparative Fit Index, (CFI)	> 0.90	0.92
Standardized Fit Index (NFI)	> 0.90	0.91
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	> 0.90	0.93
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation((RMSEA))	< 0.08	0.06

(3) Convergent validity

This study uses the average variance extracted (AVE) combined with the composite reliability (CR) to evaluate convergent validity. AVE values greater than 0.50 and CR values greater than 0.70 usually indicate that the scale has good convergent validity. The results show that the AVE value of the doctrine of the mean thought scale is 0.58; the CR value is 0.84; the AVE value of the organizational identification scale is 0.62, and the CR value is 0.87; the AVE value of the employee innovative behavior scale is 0.61, and the CR value is 0.85. See Table 3

Table 3 Convergent Validity Analysis

Scale	AVE Value	CR Value
Doctrine of the Mean Thought Scale	0.58	0.84
Organizational Identification Scale	0.62	0.87
Employee Innovative Behavior Scale	0.61	0.85

3) Analysis and verification of model fit indicators

To ensure the reliability of the structural equation model (SEM), we used multiple fit indicators for analysis and verification. The study showed that χ^2/df was 2.75, lower than the recommended value of 3, CFI, NFI, and IFI were 0.92, 0.91, and 0.93 respectively, all exceeding the ideal value of 0.90, and RMSEA was 0.06, lower than the standard value of 0.08. These results show that the SEM constructed in this study has a high goodness of fit and can effectively explain the relationship between the doctrine of the mean thought, organizational identification, and employee innovative behavior.

Table 4 Model Fit Index Analysis

Fitting Optimization Index	Recommended Value	Measurement Value
Cumin/d (χ^2/df)	< 3	2.75
CFI(Comparative Fit Index, (CFI)	> 0.90	0.92
Standardized Fit Index (NFI)	> 0.90	0.91
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	> 0.90	0.93
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation((RMSEA))	< 0.08	0.06

4) Path Analysis and Mediation Effect Analysis between Variables

(1) Path coefficient and its significance test

The study explored the influence of the doctrine of the mean thought and organizational identification on employee innovative behavior through path analysis. The results show that the doctrine of the mean thought directly promotes employee innovative behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.48 and a significance level of $p < 0.01$; at the same time, the doctrine of the mean thought indirectly affects innovative behavior by enhancing organizational identification (path coefficient 0.53, $p < 0.01$). Organizational identification itself also has a significant impact on innovative behavior (path coefficient 0.32, $p < 0.05$). This shows that the doctrine of the mean thought not only directly affects employee innovation, but also indirectly affects innovative behavior by improving organizational identification. Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 are supported.

Table 5 Path Coefficient and Significance Test

Path Relationship		Path Coefficient	Significance (P Value)
Doctrine of the mean thought	Employee innovative behavior	0.48	< 0.01
Doctrine of the mean thought	Organizational identification	0.53	< 0.01
Organizational identification	Employee innovative behavior	0.32	< 0.05

(2) Results of the analysis of the mediation effect

The indirect effect of the doctrine of the mean thought on employee innovative behavior through organizational identification is 0.17, and the 95% confidence interval is [0.09, 0.26], which does not include 0, indicating that the mediation effect is significant. At the same time, the total effect of the doctrine of the mean thought on employee innovative behavior is 0.65, of which the direct effect is 0.48, and the indirect effect accounts for about 26%. Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table 2 Results of Mediation Effect Analysis

Path	Total Effects	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% Confidence Interval
Doctrine of the mean thought Employee innovative behavior	0.65	0.48	0.17	[0.09, 0.26]

Through questionnaire survey and empirical testing, the three research hypotheses of this study were supported. The research conclusions are as follows: the doctrine of the mean thought not only directly affects employee innovative behavior, but also indirectly promotes innovative behavior by improving employee organizational identification.

4.4 Summary of the Results

The study's results indicate that the doctrine of the mean thought significantly impacts employee innovative behavior both directly and indirectly. It directly promotes innovation with a strong path coefficient, while also enhancing organizational identification, which in turn fosters innovative behavior. The mediation analysis shows that organizational identification accounts for about 26% of the total effect, highlighting its crucial role in facilitating innovation. Overall, the study demonstrates that the doctrine of the mean thought, through its influence on organizational identification, plays a key role in stimulating employee creativity and innovation.

5. Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of the doctrine of the mean thought in promoting employee innovative behavior. Both direct and indirect effects were identified, with the doctrine enhancing innovation through organizational identification. The findings underline the importance of a balanced cultural approach in fostering creativity and stability in the workplace, ultimately leading to improved innovation outcomes for organizations.

5.2 Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that the doctrine of the mean thought positively influences employee innovation by enhancing organizational identification. This reinforces the idea that psychological factors, such as emotional stability and organizational alignment, are crucial drivers of innovation. Additionally, the study reveals the mediating role of organizational identification, suggesting that fostering a strong connection between employees and the company enhances their innovative behaviors.

5.3 Recommendation

To capitalize on the findings, companies should integrate the doctrine of the mean thought into their corporate culture through training and communication, helping employees make balanced decisions in uncertain situations. Strengthening organizational identification through transparent communication, emotional support, and team-building activities is also essential. Furthermore,

managers should adopt flexible strategies guided by the doctrine, combining both material and non-material incentives to enhance employee motivation and innovation. Regular evaluation of management strategies will ensure continuous alignment with organizational goals and the promotion of a culture that encourages sustainable innovation.

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