

The Facilitating and Inhibiting Processes of Organizational Identification on Employee Innovative Behavior

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Abstract

One of the critical factors for the stable development of enterprises is employees' high organizational identification. Employee innovation constitutes the cornerstone of enterprise innovation development. However, research findings regarding the influence of organizational identification on innovative behavior have been inconsistent. The normative conflict model offers a theoretical lens for gaining deeper insights into this relationship. According to this model, employees' organizational identification produces dual promoting and inhibiting effects on innovative behavior through two opposing pathways—dissatisfaction with the status quo and compliance with the status quo. Employees' perception of normative conflict serves as a crucial condition that triggers the emergence of both dissatisfaction with and compliance with the status quo. Leaders' innovation expectations and innovation support play a moderating role in the process whereby organizational identification promotes and inhibits employees' innovative behavior.

Full Text

The Process Whereby Organizational Identification Promotes and Inhibits Employees' Innovative Behavior

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Abstract

One of the keys to stable organizational development is employees' high identification with the organization. Employee innovation constitutes the cornerstone

of organizational innovation and development. However, research findings on the influence of organizational identification on innovative behavior remain inconsistent. The normative conflict model provides a theoretical lens for deepening our understanding of this relationship. According to this model, employees' organizational identification exerts dual effects—both promotive and inhibitive—on innovative behavior through two opposing pathways: dissatisfaction with the status quo and conformity to the status quo. Employees' perception of normative conflict serves as a crucial condition triggering these two pathways, while leaders' innovative expectations and support play moderating roles in the process through which organizational identification promotes and inhibits employees' innovative behavior.

Keywords: organizational identification; normative conflict model; innovative behavior

A January 8, 2018 Guangming Daily front-page article titled “Establishing Hearts for Heaven and Earth, Upholding True Science” observed that what moves people most about recipients of the State Supreme Science and Technology Award is their deep patriotism. The sustained development of a nation requires its people's wholehearted devotion. Similarly, the key to a firm's sustained stable development lies in employees sharing a common destiny and growth trajectory with their enterprise. As Xu Shaochun, Chairman of Kingdee's Board, stated at the 2017 China Management Global Forum, entrepreneurs need to build a corporate community of shared destiny, connecting every employee and stakeholder closely with the enterprise to transform and grow together.

This concept of employees and enterprises sharing a common fate has long attracted Western scholars' attention. Frederick Taylor (1911) proposed that individual and organizational interests should be unified, with this commonality forged through close cooperation between managers and employees. March and Simon (1958) formalized this concept as “organizational identification.” Building on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Ashforth and Mael (1989) defined organizational identification as employees' psychological merging with their organization, experiencing its successes and failures as their own. Employees with high organizational identification refer to their company as “we” rather than “they.” This seminal and influential work by Ashforth and Mael (1989) sparked a wave of research on organizational identification among organizational behavior scholars both domestically and internationally.

Within this research stream, the relationship between organizational identification and employee innovative behavior has garnered considerable scholarly attention (Madjar, Greenberg, & Chen, 2011; Chen & Lin, 2017; Gu, Zhou, & Peng, 2016; Ma & Zhu, 2015; Wang & Luo, 2010; Zhang, Nie, & Huang, 2014). However, the effect of organizational identification on innovative behavior remains unclear. While some studies have found a positive influence, theoretical arguments and a few empirical investigations suggest that organiza-

tional identification may also inhibit innovative behavior. According to social identity theory, when individuals highly identify with their group, they voluntarily comply with group norms and conform to the status quo (Blader, Patil, & Packer, 2017; Terry & Hogg, 1996). Innovation research, conversely, shows that dissatisfaction with the status quo constitutes an important condition for stimulating innovative behavior (Birkinshaw & Mol, 2006; Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Zhou & George, 2001). For example, employees with higher levels of dissatisfaction with the status quo demonstrate correspondingly better innovative behavior (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Thus, integrating social identity theory and innovation literature suggests that organizational identification might negatively affect innovative behavior. Additionally, some empirical studies show either negative correlations between organizational identification and employee innovation (Rotondi, 1975) or non-significant positive relationships (Xu, 2017). These inconsistent findings imply that organizational identification may simultaneously exert both positive and negative influences on employee innovative behavior. As some scholars have speculated, employees with high organizational identification might be either the most or least willing to innovate (Blader et al., 2017). Therefore, this study focuses on the promotive and inhibitive processes through which organizational identification influences employee innovative behavior and the contextual factors that give rise to these distinct processes.

1. Literature Review and Problem Statement

This study aims to investigate the mechanisms through which organizational identification influences employee innovative behavior. Our literature review therefore addresses two aspects: (1) reviewing research on organizational identification's effects on employee behavior to identify research gaps; and (2) integrating literature on employee innovative behavior to propose the applicability of the normative conflict model in studying the mechanisms linking organizational identification and innovative behavior.

1.1 Organizational Identification's Effects on Employee Behavior and Research Gaps

Scholarly research on organizational identification has primarily proceeded along three directions: antecedents, outcomes, and multiple identifications (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Outcomes include employee attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors. Given space constraints and our research scope, this review focuses exclusively on organizational identification's influence on employee behavior.

1.1.1 Promotive Effects Because employees with high organizational identification closely link their own interests and fate with those of their company, they think from the organization's perspective at work, demonstrate proactive initiative, and strive to contribute to the organization (Ashforth et al., 2008; Blader et al., 2017). Existing literature has generally examined how employees'

level of organizational identification affects their work behavior based on this core characteristic. Previous studies have found that, compared to employees with low organizational identification, those with high identification voluntarily engage in organizational citizenship behavior (e.g., Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015), voice behavior (e.g., Chamberlin, Newton, & Lepine, 2017; Knoll & van Dick, 2013), and even pro-organizational unethical behavior (Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2014). They demonstrate loyalty to protect organizational reputation and interests (Ma et al., 2011) and support organizational change (Fuchs & Edwards, 2012). They share knowledge with colleagues (e.g., Carmeli, Atwater, & Levi, 2011; Du, Zhu, & Xu, 2017), exhibit high work engagement (e.g., Jian, Xu, Cao, & Zhao, 2017), perform well in in-role tasks (e.g., Chen, Zhu, & Zhou, 2015; Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014), innovate at work (e.g., Madjar et al., 2011; Chen & Lin, 2017), and take charge proactively (e.g., Li, Zhang, & Tian, 2016).

These direct promotive effects of organizational identification are also subject to certain boundary conditions. For instance, Lee et al.'s (2015) meta-analysis found that the relationship between organizational identification and organizational citizenship behavior is stronger in collectivistic cultures. Consistent with this finding, Lam, Liu, and Loi (2016) validated such boundary effects in their study. Additionally, high-quality team-member exchange relationships strengthen the positive effect of organizational identification on organizational citizenship behavior (Liu et al., 2011). Li et al. (2016) found that the positive relationship between organizational identification and taking charge is weaker among risk-averse employees. Hekman and colleagues (2016) showed that employees' perceptions of colleagues' promotion/prevention focus moderate the relationship between organizational identification and in-role behavior.

1.1.2 Inhibitive Effects Rotondi (1975) found that R&D employees' organizational identification was negatively correlated with innovativeness. Dukerich and colleagues (1998) noted that high organizational identification might lead employees to trust colleagues blindly, hindering organizational learning. Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) pointed out that when personal control is low, employees with high organizational identification engage less in voice behavior. Haslam and colleagues (2006) found that employees with strong organizational identification stubbornly commit to failing projects. Bouchikhi and Kimberly (2003) suggested that employees with high organizational identification might resist organizational change. Employees with high organizational identification also exhibit lower voluntary turnover (Zhu, Tatachari, & Chattopadhyay, 2017).

1.1.3 Research Gaps Two clear research gaps emerge from this literature review. First, scholars studying organizational identification have either focused exclusively on its positive effects or solely on its negative effects, rarely examining both simultaneously. Since most phenomena have both advantages and disadvantages (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013), it is necessary to consider both sides to ensure scientific rigor. Focusing on both positive and negative aspects has

gradually become a trend in organizational behavior research, as evidenced by recent studies (e.g., Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott, 2016; Lin, Ilies, Pluut, & Pan, 2017; Smith, Hill, Wallace, Recendes, & Judge, 2018). Second, although organizational identification represents an important factor influencing employee behavior (Lee et al., 2015), its effects on certain specific behaviors remain unclear. Innovative behavior stands out as a prominent example. While some empirical studies show that organizational identification promotes innovative behavior, theoretical arguments and other empirical research suggest negative or non-significant relationships. This implies that organizational identification may simultaneously promote and inhibit employee innovative behavior, as Blader et al. (2017) noted that employees with high organizational identification might be either the most or least willing to innovate. Therefore, this study's overarching question is: Does organizational identification exert both promotive and inhibitive effects on employee innovative behavior? If so, how do these different effects emerge?

Table 1 The Influence of Organizational Identification on Employee Behavior and Research Gaps

Promotive Effects	Inhibitive Effects	Research Gaps
(1) Organizational Citizenship Behavior Examples: Dukerich et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2015	(1) Innovativeness Example: Rotondi, 1975	(1) Scholars studying organizational identification have either focused exclusively on its positive effects or solely on its negative effects, rarely examining both simultaneously.
(2) Voice Behavior Examples: Chamberlin et al., 2017; Knoll & van Dick, 2013	(2) Voice Behavior Example: Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008	(2) Although organizational identification represents an important factor influencing employee behavior (Lee et al., 2015), its effects on innovative behavior remain unclear.
(3) Pro-Organizational Unethical Behavior Example: Effelsberg et al., 2014	(3) Organizational Learning Example: Dukerich et al., 1998	

Promotive Effects	Inhibitive Effects	Research Gaps
(4) Loyalty Behavior Example: Ma et al., 2011	(4) Organizational Commitment Example: Haslam et al., 2006	
(5) Pro-Change Behavior Example: Fuchs & Edwards, 2012	(5) Organizational Change Example: Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2003	
(6) Knowledge Sharing with Colleagues Examples: Carmeli et al., 2011; Du et al., 2017	(6) Turnover Behavior Example: Zhu, Tatachari, & Chattopadhyay, 2017	
(7) Work Engagement Example: Jian et al., 2017		
(8) In-Role Task Performance Examples: Chen et al., 2015; Liden et al., 2014		
(9) Work Innovation and Taking Charge Examples: Madjar et al., 2011; Chen & Lin, 2017; Li et al., 2016		
(10) Other Boundary Conditions Examples: Lee et al., 2015; Lam et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2011; Li et al., 2016; Hekman et al., 2016		

1.2 Applicability of the Normative Conflict Model in Studying Organizational Identification' s Influence on Innovative Behavior

The normative conflict model (Packer, 2008) emerged against the backdrop of numerous group identification studies assuming that highly identified individuals faithfully adhere to group norms. Packer (2008) argued that when highly identified individuals perceive normative conflict—that is, when current norms or the status quo harm the group and alternative, better behavioral standards exist—they do not blindly conform but rather express dissatisfaction with the status quo because they want to contribute to the group' s betterment. Conversely, when highly identified individuals perceive low normative conflict, they faithfully comply with norms and the status quo because they believe such behavior best serves organizational interests. Packer and Chasteen (2010) validated these core propositions across four empirical studies. Because this perspective empha-

sizes normative conflict' s moderating role on the relationship between group identification and members' dissatisfaction/conformity, it provides an excellent framework for explaining whether highly identified employees will conform to or express dissatisfaction with organizational status quo. Therefore, we propose that normative conflict moderates the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction with the status quo, such that higher normative conflict strengthens this relationship; and normative conflict moderates the relationship between organizational identification and conformity to the status quo, such that lower normative conflict strengthens this relationship.

Highly identified employees might be either most willing or least willing to innovate (Blader et al., 2017). Innovation research shows that when employees are dissatisfied with the status quo, they are very likely to engage in innovative behavior to change it (Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Zhou & George, 2001). Therefore, organizational identification and normative conflict-induced dissatisfaction or conformity will ultimately affect employees' innovative behavior.

Employee innovative behavior refers to employees' conscious introduction and application of new ideas, processes, products, or procedures at work to benefit individuals, groups, organizations, or broader society (West & Farr, 1990). Anderson, Potocnik, and Zhou (2014) comprehensively reviewed factors influencing innovative behavior across three levels: individual differences, group, and organization. Subsequent studies can also be categorized into these three aspects. Individual factors include employees' personal expectations (Baer, 2012; Yuan & Woodman, 2010), dissatisfaction with the status quo (Birkinshaw & Mol, 2006; Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Zhou & George, 2001), relational orientation (Leung, Chen, Zhou, & Lim, 2014), locus of control (Wallace, Butts, Johnson, Stevens, & Smith, 2016), role stress (Leung, Huang, Su, & Lu, 2011), and perceived job requirements for innovation (Shin, Yuan, & Zhou, 2017). Group-level factors include leader-member exchange (Wang, Fang, Qureshi, & Janssen, 2015), transformational leadership (Chen, Farh, Campbell-Bush, Wu, & Wu, 2013), and team climate (Wallace et al., 2016). Organizational-level factors include human resource management practices (Martínez-Sánchez, Vela-Jiménez, Pérez-Pérez, & De-Luis-Carnicer, 2011; Shipton, West, Parkes, Dawson, & Patterson, 2006).

Among individual-level studies on innovative behavior, scholars have examined why employees innovate from different perspectives, two of which relate to organizational identification and the normative conflict model. The first is the social-political perspective (Baer, 2012; Dyer & Page, 1988; Van de Ven, 1986; Yuan & Woodman, 2010), which suggests that employees consider whether innovation satisfies their personal interests. For example, Scott and Bruce (1994) noted that organizational support for innovation influences innovative behavior because it signals that innovation can bring personal benefits. Consistent with this view, Yuan and Woodman (2010) found that employees are more likely to innovate when they expect positive performance outcomes. Baer (2012) also showed that employees are more inclined to implement their new ideas when they believe innovative efforts will yield positive personal results. It is under-

standable that employees consider whether innovation benefits themselves, while managers often expect employees to consider organizational interests. Organizational identification encompasses both personal and organizational interests because highly identified employees believe that organizational success will satisfy their personal interests. West and Farr (1990) mentioned that the ultimate purpose of employee innovative behavior is to benefit both individuals and organizations. Therefore, the influence process of organizational identification on employee innovative behavior warrants special attention.

The second perspective focuses on dissatisfaction with the status quo. Existing innovation literature shows that dissatisfaction with the status quo constitutes an important factor triggering employee innovative behavior (Birkinshaw & Mol, 2006; Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Zhou & George, 2001). Birkinshaw and Mol (2006) used case analyses of GM and P&G to find that dissatisfaction with the status quo represents the first step in innovative behavior. Using survey methods, Yuan and colleagues (2010) and Zhou and colleagues (2001) found that employees with high levels of dissatisfaction with the status quo are likely to engage in innovative behavior. This perspective, combined with Packer's (2008) normative conflict model, better explains the relationship between organizational identification and innovative behavior. As previously discussed, the normative conflict model explains that highly identified individuals express dissatisfaction with the status quo when they perceive normative conflict, while innovation literature shows that employees engage in a specific behavior—innovative behavior—when dissatisfied with the status quo. Therefore, the normative conflict model has strong relevance and applicability in explaining the organizational identification-innovative behavior relationship.

Pro-social rule breaking refers to employees' intentional violation of formal organizational policies or regulations to enhance organizational or stakeholder well-being (Morrison, 2006). Voice behavior refers to employees' spontaneous expression of work-related opinions, concerns, and suggestions to facilitate organizational improvement (Morrison, 2014; Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998). These two behaviors share with innovative behavior the commonality that employees aim to benefit their organization. Despite this similarity, their unique characteristics suggest that the normative conflict model has stronger applicability to innovative behavior. First, pro-social rule breaking focuses on violating formal organizational policies or regulations rather than norms (Morrison, 2006), whereas the normative conflict model (Packer, 2008) emphasizes perceived normative conflict. Because their foci differ, pro-social rule breaking has weaker association with the normative conflict model. Second, voice behavior is an upward communication behavior (Morrison, 2014). Morrison (2011) noted in reviewing voice behavior literature that employees' judgment of whether voice targets (e.g., leaders) will listen and act constitutes a key mechanism influencing voice. This characteristic of voice does not align well with the normative conflict model's core propositions, making the model less direct and appropriate for explaining voice behavior.

Based on this analysis, we contend that the normative conflict model has greater applicability in explaining the organizational identification-innovative behavior relationship compared to its relationship with pro-social rule breaking and voice.

1.3 Specific Research Questions

As discussed above, high perceived normative conflict drives highly identified individuals to be dissatisfied with the status quo, while low perceived normative conflict motivates them to conform to the status quo. Because dissatisfaction with the status quo is an important condition for triggering innovative behavior (Birkinshaw & Mol, 2006; Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Zhou & George, 2001), highly identified employees who perceive strong normative conflict may express dissatisfaction with the status quo and thus innovate; when they perceive weak normative conflict, they will comply with existing norms and thus not actively innovate. We therefore propose our first research question: Does organizational identification's promotive and inhibitive effect on employee innovative behavior arise from normative conflict? Specifically, when highly identified employees perceive strong normative conflict, does dissatisfaction with the status quo mediate the positive effect on innovative behavior? When highly identified employees perceive weak normative conflict, does conformity to the status quo mediate the negative effect on innovative behavior?

Packer (2008) noted that one source of perceived normative conflict is membership in another group to which individuals belong. In today's technology-dominated society, employees are not only organizational members but also professional community members. If employees highly identify with their profession, they will introduce professional perspectives and knowledge into organizational work and be willing to identify aspects where current organizational norms or status quo hinder development. Moreover, when employees possess rich professional knowledge and skills, such expertise enables them to identify how organizational status quo impedes development, thereby enhancing their perception of normative conflict. Therefore, employees' professional identification and professional knowledge/skills may be sources of perceived normative conflict. Packer (2008) also noted that normative conflict arises when group members believe alternative, superior behavioral standards exist. If group members discuss new and feasible norms, others may evaluate current norms' pros and cons and consider adopting better standards. Based on this view, we propose that when leaders emphasize innovative examples from other companies in the industry, employees will perceive normative conflict. We therefore propose our second research question: What individual-level and leader-level factors trigger employees' perception of normative conflict? Specifically, do employees' professional identification, professional knowledge and skills, and leaders' emphasis on industry innovation examples facilitate perceived normative conflict? How do these factors influence the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction/conformity? Does normative conflict mediate these effects?

Packer (2008) proposed that when group members are dissatisfied with the sta-

tus quo and want to change it, they consider whether change benefits the group and whether it is achievable. Based on this, we examine what leader-level factors influence employees' perceptions of whether status quo change benefits the organization and whether it is achievable. Our third research question therefore asks: What individual-level and leader-level factors influence the relationship between dissatisfaction/conformity and innovative behavior? Specifically, does employees' perceived innovation benefit to the organization enhance the positive effect of dissatisfaction on innovative behavior and weaken the negative effect of conformity? Does employees' perceived innovation feasibility enhance the positive effect of dissatisfaction and weaken the negative effect of conformity? Can leaders' innovative expectations and support respectively enhance employees' perceptions of innovation benefit and feasibility? How do these factors jointly influence the relationships between dissatisfaction/conformity and innovative behavior?

Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper] Specific Research Questions

2. Research Framework

The above literature review and problem analysis reveal that organizational identification' s effect on employee innovative behavior is not unidirectionally positive or negative but rather involves two coexisting influences. The normative conflict model provides an appropriate theoretical lens for exploring the contextual factors underlying these different effects. The model posits that highly identified individuals express dissatisfaction with the status quo when they perceive normative conflict, while innovation literature shows that dissatisfaction triggers innovative behavior. Therefore, based on the normative conflict model, we develop a comprehensive theoretical framework (Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]) depicting the promotive and inhibitive processes through which employees' organizational identification influences innovative behavior and the individual- and leader-level contextual factors affecting these processes.

Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper] Research on the Promotive and Inhibitive Pathways of Organizational Identification' s Influence on Employee Innovative Behavior (Integrated Model)

2.1 The Promotive and Inhibitive Mechanisms of Organizational Identification on Innovative Behavior: The Moderating Role of Normative Conflict

Organizational identification refers to the degree to which employees perceive themselves as one with their organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This concept originates from social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to this theory, highly identified individuals define themselves through group characteristics and view group success and failure as their own. When individuals highly identify with their group, they voluntarily comply with group norms and conform to the status quo (Blader et al., 2017). Previous literature

presents two perspectives on the relationship between organizational identification and group norms/status quo. Some scholars argue that highly identified employees conform to organizational status quo (Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg, & Turner, 1990). However, other literature indirectly shows that highly identified employees also engage in behaviors inconsistent with organizational norms or status quo (Fuller et al., 2006; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008).

The normative conflict model (Packer, 2008) provides an important explanatory framework for these inconsistent views. The model acknowledges social identity theory's identification-conformity perspective but simultaneously argues that highly identified employees express dissatisfaction with their group's norms or status quo under certain conditions. This condition occurs when employees perceive normative conflict—that is, when current norms or status quo harm the group and alternative, better behavioral standards exist. For example, salespeople experience normative conflict when company regulations prevent them from serving customers as efficiently as competitors (Dahling & Gutworth, 2017). When highly identified employees perceive strong normative conflict, they become dissatisfied with the status quo because they want to contribute to the organization's betterment; when they perceive weak normative conflict, they faithfully comply with norms and status quo because they believe such behavior best serves organizational interests. Packer and Chasteen (2010) validated the normative conflict model's core propositions across four empirical studies. Because this perspective emphasizes normative conflict's moderating role on the relationship between group identification and members' dissatisfaction/conformity, it is well-suited for explaining whether highly identified employees will conform to or express dissatisfaction with organizational status quo. Therefore, we propose that normative conflict moderates the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction with the status quo, such that higher normative conflict strengthens this relationship; and normative conflict moderates the relationship between organizational identification and conformity to the status quo, such that lower normative conflict strengthens this relationship.

Highly identified employees might be either most willing or least willing to innovate (Blader et al., 2017). Innovation research shows that when employees are dissatisfied with the status quo, they are very likely to engage in innovative behavior to change it (Yuan & Woodman, 2010; Zhou & George, 2001). Therefore, organizational identification and normative conflict-induced dissatisfaction and conformity will ultimately affect employees' innovative behavior.

Employee innovative behavior refers to employees' proactive introduction and application of new ideas, methods, and approaches at work to benefit the organization, team, or individual (Anderson et al., 2014; West & Farr, 1990). When highly identified employees perceive that current organizational norms or status quo hinder organizational development and that alternative, better behavioral standards exist, they develop dissatisfaction with the status quo. Because their goal is to promote better organizational development, they want

to change the status quo. Dissatisfaction with the status quo is an important factor in innovative behavior (Birkinshaw & Mol, 2006), and innovation is a typical change-oriented behavior (Marinova, Peng, Lorinkova, Van Dyne, & Chiaburu, 2015). Therefore, when highly identified employees perceive strong normative conflict, they easily become dissatisfied with organizational status quo and actively engage in innovative behavior. Conversely, when highly identified employees perceive weak normative conflict, they believe conforming to the status quo best serves organizational interests and thus likely comply with the status quo without actively seeking innovation. We therefore propose that normative conflict moderates the positive indirect effect of organizational identification on innovative behavior through dissatisfaction with the status quo, such that higher normative conflict strengthens this positive effect; and normative conflict moderates the negative indirect effect of organizational identification on innovative behavior through conformity to the status quo, such that lower normative conflict strengthens this negative effect.

2.2 Sources of Normative Conflict: Individual-Level Factors

The previous section identified normative conflict as an important contextual factor causing employees to become dissatisfied with or conform to the status quo due to organizational identification. This section further investigates the sources of normative conflict and how these sources affect the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction/conformity.

The normative conflict model (Packer, 2008) identifies membership in another group as a source of perceived normative conflict. In today's knowledge- and technology-driven society, most employees are not only organizational members but also professional community members (e.g., a journalist at a media company is both an employee and a member of the journalism profession). Literature shows that when employees' professional identity is salient and they highly identify with their profession, they think and act from that professional perspective (Burris, Rockmann, & Kimmons, 2017; Hekman et al., 2009). When employees introduce professional perspectives and knowledge into organizational work, they become willing to identify aspects where current organizational norms or status quo hinder development. Because organizations are important channels for professionals to practice their profession and realize professional values (Russo, 1998), they pay close attention to better external behavioral standards that might help the organization. Normative conflict precisely refers to perceiving that current norms or status quo harm the group and that alternative, better behavioral standards exist. Therefore, employees' professional identification positively influences normative conflict. Beyond professional identification, we also propose that employees with rich professional knowledge and skills may perceive normative conflict because such expertise enables them to identify how organizational status quo impedes development, thereby enhancing normative conflict perception. Given that employees' normative conflict moderates the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction/conformity

(as hypothesized earlier), we further propose that professional identification and professional knowledge/skills moderate the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction/conformity through normative conflict. In other words, normative conflict mediates the moderating effect of professional identification/knowledge and skills on the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction/conformity (mediated-moderation; cf. Grant & Berry, 2011). We therefore propose that employees' professional identification and professional knowledge/skills moderate the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction with the status quo through normative conflict, and moderate the relationship between organizational identification and conformity to the status quo through normative conflict.

2.3 Sources of Normative Conflict: Leader-Level Factors

Normative conflict also arises when group members believe alternative, superior behavioral standards exist (Packer, 2008). Group behavioral standards are not fixed but continuously tested and developed. If group members discuss new and feasible norms, others become conscious of group status quo and may evaluate whether current norms benefit the group and whether better standards should guide behavior. Based on this view, we propose that when leaders emphasize innovative examples from other companies in the industry, employees will perceive normative conflict. First, leaders are organizational agents (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007), and employees tend to pay more attention to what leaders emphasize than what colleagues mention. Second, conflict perception easily emerges from comparisons. When leaders emphasize external innovation examples, employees compare their company's status quo with these examples and identify factors hindering company development. For instance, when a media company leader describes how NetEase News won the "2016 Most Influential News App" award by consistently upholding "attitude-driven" journalism and innovatively covering major events like the Rio Olympics and southern China floods, employees may reflect on their company's news coverage and consider what prevents it from innovating like NetEase. Therefore, leaders' emphasis on industry innovation examples represents another source of normative conflict. We propose that leader emphasis on industry innovation examples positively influences normative conflict. Given that employees' normative conflict moderates the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction/conformity, we further propose that leader emphasis on industry innovation examples moderates the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction with the status quo through normative conflict, and moderates the relationship between organizational identification and conformity to the status quo through normative conflict.

2.4 Dissatisfaction/Conformity and Innovative Behavior: Moderating Effects of Perceived Innovation Benefit and Leader Innovative Expectations

Packer (2008) proposed that when group members are dissatisfied with the status quo and want to change it, they consider whether change benefits the group. Based on this, we propose that employees' perceived innovation benefit to the organization and leaders' innovative expectations play direct and indirect moderating roles in the relationship between dissatisfaction/conformity and innovative behavior.

When group members are dissatisfied and want to take action, they consider whether their actions benefit or harm the group (Packer, 2008). If changing the status quo harms the group, it violates the original intention of benefiting the group, and they will not act. Conversely, if change benefits the group, dissatisfied members are more likely to take action. This view aligns with expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), which posits that employees consider whether actions will produce desired outcomes when deciding what to do. As Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo (2017) found, individuals are more willing to start businesses when they believe entrepreneurship will produce desired outcomes. Based on the normative conflict model and expectancy theory, we propose that when employees are dissatisfied with organizational status quo and simultaneously perceive that innovative behavior will benefit the organization, they will be more willing to innovate. Indeed, innovative behavior is a discretionary behavior for employees (Ford, 1996), and they need reasons to decide whether to innovate (Shin et al., 2017). Dissatisfied employees' intention to change the status quo aims to improve organizational development. To maintain this intention, they naturally consider whether changing the status quo benefits the organization. Therefore, when perceiving that innovative behavior benefits the organization, dissatisfied employees are more likely to believe they need to innovate. Conversely, conformity's inhibitive effect on innovative behavior becomes stronger when employees perceive little benefit from innovation to the organization. This occurs because the lack of organizational benefit from innovation reinforces conforming employees' belief that their conformity is correct, providing sufficient justification for not innovating. We therefore propose that higher perceived innovation benefit to the organization strengthens the relationship between dissatisfaction and innovative behavior, while lower perceived innovation benefit strengthens the relationship between conformity and innovative behavior.

An important source of employees' perceived innovation benefit is leaders' innovative expectations. First, leader expectations direct employees' attention toward those expectations. Leaders possess legitimate positional power and control important work resources and support, so employees pay close attention to leaders' expectations (Liu, Qu, Shi, & Deng, 2016). When leaders express innovative expectations, employees' attention shifts to these expectations. Second, employees actively interpret the meaning of leaders' innovative expectations. According to social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), employees

attend to and interpret salient and relevant information in their environment. Because leaders are typically viewed as organizational agents (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007), when leaders communicate innovative expectations, employees may infer that innovation benefits the organization. Shin et al. (2017) also suggested in their practical implications that leaders can strengthen employees' perception that innovation benefits the organization by communicating its significance and importance for organizational development. We therefore propose that leader innovative expectations positively influence employees' perceived innovation benefit to the organization. Given that perceived innovation benefit directly moderates the relationship between dissatisfaction/conformity and innovative behavior, and that leader innovative expectations positively influence perceived innovation benefit, we propose that leader innovative expectations moderate the relationship between dissatisfaction and innovative behavior through perceived innovation benefit, and moderate the relationship between conformity and innovative behavior through perceived innovation benefit.

2.4 Dissatisfaction/Conformity and Innovative Behavior: Moderating Effects of Perceived Innovation Feasibility and Leader Innovative Support

Packer (2008) proposed that when group members are dissatisfied and want to change the status quo, they consider whether change is achievable. Based on this, we propose that employees' perceived innovation feasibility and leader innovative support play direct and indirect moderating roles in the relationship between dissatisfaction/conformity and innovative behavior.

When group members are dissatisfied and want to take action, they consider whether their actions will succeed because behaviors deviating from group norms may elicit negative evaluations from other group members (Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000; Packer, 2008). When changing the status quo is feasible, dissatisfied members are more likely to act. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) also suggests that individuals act when they believe effort enhances performance. For example, clerks are more willing to spend four extra hours on a report if they believe it will substantially improve it. Therefore, we propose that when employees are dissatisfied with the status quo and simultaneously perceive their innovative behavior as feasible, they will be more willing to innovate. First, feasible innovative behavior reduces the likelihood of colleagues' negative evaluations. Second, feasible innovative behavior provides a legitimate way to express dissatisfaction. Thus, the relationship between dissatisfaction and innovative behavior becomes stronger when innovation is perceived as feasible. Conversely, conformity's inhibitive effect on innovative behavior becomes stronger when employees perceive innovation as difficult to achieve. First, the impossibility of innovation success intensifies others' negative evaluations. Second, when innovation seems unachievable, employees increasingly believe that conforming to the status quo and making no changes best serves organizational interests. We therefore propose that higher perceived innovation feasibility strengthens the

relationship between dissatisfaction and innovative behavior, while lower perceived innovation feasibility strengthens the relationship between conformity and innovative behavior.

Leader support positively influences employee attitudes and behaviors. For example, Chan's (2017) study of Chinese employees found that employee performance improves with high leader support. Leader support can encompass many aspects, but studying leader support for employee innovation is particularly necessary in today's innovation-driven context. We propose that leader innovative support is an important factor influencing employees' perceived innovation feasibility. On one hand, when leaders encourage innovation and respect and recognize employees' innovative behavior, such support signals that innovative behavior is "legitimate" here, reducing employees' concerns about innovating. On the other hand, leader innovative support enhances employees' confidence in innovating. We therefore propose that leader innovative support positively influences employees' perceived innovation feasibility. Given that perceived innovation feasibility directly moderates the relationship between dissatisfaction/conformity and innovative behavior, and that leader innovative support positively influences perceived innovation feasibility, we propose that leader innovative support moderates the relationship between dissatisfaction and innovative behavior through perceived innovation feasibility, and moderates the relationship between conformity and innovative behavior through perceived innovation feasibility.

3. Theoretical Construction

Employees' organizational identification and innovative behavior constitute fundamental drivers of organizational development. However, previous research shows that organizational identification and innovative behavior are not always positively correlated; in other words, highly identified employees do not necessarily engage in innovative behavior. This unclear relationship raises several questions for scholars: Does organizational identification promote or inhibit employee innovative behavior? If it promotes innovation, what contextual factors cause this effect and what are the specific mechanisms? If it inhibits innovation, what contextual factors cause this effect and what are the specific mechanisms? Managers also face questions: Is enhancing employees' organizational identification an appropriate approach for motivating innovation? If so, how can its effect be maximized? If organizational identification has detrimental effects on innovative behavior, how can these negative effects be mitigated? Addressing these questions, this study draws on the normative conflict model to construct a relatively comprehensive theoretical model from both individual employee and team leader levels, explaining the specific mechanisms and contextual factors through which organizational identification influences employee innovative behavior. Our theoretical framework is shown in Figure 2, with main theoretical arguments as follows.

First, organizational identification influences employee innovative behavior through two different pathways that emerge under different conditions: dis-

satisfaction with organizational status quo and conformity to status quo. The crucial factor influencing these pathways is employees' perceived level of normative conflict. Specifically, when employees highly identify with their organization and perceive that current organizational norms or status quo hinder organizational development or that alternative, better behavioral standards exist, they will express dissatisfaction with the status quo and engage in innovative behavior to change it for better organizational development. Conversely, when highly identified employees perceive that current organizational norms do not significantly hinder or harm organizational development, they will faithfully conform to the status quo and not actively seek change, making innovative behavior less likely. Theoretically, this perspective provides a reasonable explanation for inconsistent findings in existing organizational identification-innovative behavior research. It also responds to scholars' calls and enriches the broader organizational identification literature. Ashforth and colleagues (2008) long ago noted the need to explore organizational identification's negative effects, yet such research remains scarce. Pierce and Aguinis (2013) observed that organizational behavior research has long focused on positive aspects while neglecting potential negative aspects. This study's proposal that organizational identification has both promotive and inhibitive effects on innovative behavior represents a theoretical attempt to address these scholarly calls. Practically, this perspective provides managers with a new viewpoint on using organizational identification to motivate innovation—that is, targeted motivation should be based on understanding employees' normative conflict perceptions.

Second, conditions triggering employees' normative conflict perception involve two factors: individual-level factors (employees' professional identification and professional knowledge/skills) and leader-level factors (leaders' emphasis on industry innovation examples). These factors indirectly moderate the relationship between organizational identification and conformity/dissatisfaction. Specifically, employees' professional identification and professional knowledge/skills moderate the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction with the status quo through normative conflict, and moderate the relationship between organizational identification and conformity to the status quo through normative conflict. Leaders' emphasis on industry innovation examples moderates the relationship between organizational identification and dissatisfaction through normative conflict, and moderates the relationship between organizational identification and conformity through normative conflict. This perspective's contribution lies in exploring sources of normative conflict from both employee and leader levels. Since the previous argument highlights the importance of employees' normative conflict perception, it is necessary to understand how such perception emerges. Theoretically, this introduces new topics to the organizational identification-professional identification literature. Previous research shows that when employees have both high organizational and professional identification, they experience role conflict (e.g., Sorensen & Sorensen, 1974), which negatively affects behavior (e.g., Hekman, Bigley, &

Hereford, 2009). Our perspective suggests that high identification in both domains generates normative conflict, which differs from role conflict. Normative conflict focuses on employees' perception that current organizational norms hinder development, whereas role conflict primarily involves holding multiple roles with incompatible expectations. These different foci produce different effects on employees. As our perspective shows, high normative conflict triggers dissatisfaction with the status quo and ultimately stimulates innovative behavior, whereas role conflict typically reduces organizational commitment, increases tension, and decreases job involvement (e.g., Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Practically, this perspective provides managers with guidance for stimulating innovative behavior by highlighting the importance of attending to and emphasizing industry innovation examples to trigger normative conflict perception.

Finally, leaders and employees themselves play important contextual roles in stimulating innovative behavior. Specifically, leader innovative expectations moderate the relationship between dissatisfaction and innovative behavior through employees' perceived innovation benefit to the organization, and moderate the relationship between conformity and innovative behavior through perceived innovation benefit. Leader innovative support moderates the relationship between dissatisfaction and innovative behavior through employees' perceived innovation feasibility, and moderate the relationship between conformity and innovative behavior through perceived innovation feasibility. This perspective's contribution is its emphasis that employees' dissatisfaction can more effectively promote innovative behavior under certain conditions (leader innovative expectations and support), and that conformity's inhibitive effect can be weakened under certain conditions. Theoretically, this represents an important supplement to employee innovation literature. Existing research shows leaders' direct promotive effects on innovative behavior (Chen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015). Our perspective shows that leaders play important contextual (i.e., moderating) roles in employee innovation, and that such moderation operates by influencing employees' own perceptions of innovation (e.g., whether it benefits the organization, whether it is feasible), thereby activating dissatisfaction or weakening conformity to ultimately affect innovative behavior. Practically, this provides guidance for how managers can better stimulate innovative behavior and how employees can better motivate themselves to innovate.

Overall, in today's innovation-driven Chinese context and under the guiding principle of building a "community of shared destiny," studying the mechanisms through which organizational identification influences employee innovative behavior holds important theoretical and practical significance. By integrating the normative conflict model, professional identification, and leadership literature, this study constructs a relatively comprehensive theory from leader and employee individual levels to explore the promotive and inhibitive processes through which employees' organizational identification affects their innovative behavior, addressing current gaps in organizational identification and employee innovation research and providing new perspectives for explaining these pro-

cesses. This research aligns with the recent trend in organizational behavior toward simultaneously examining both positive and negative aspects of phenomena and with the field's multilevel research orientation. At the micro-management level, this study helps organizations use organizational identification more effectively to stimulate innovative behavior and build effective innovation motivation mechanisms. First, employee innovation is crucial for long-term organizational development (Anderson et al., 2014). When deciding whether to innovate, employees consider whether the behavior benefits themselves (Yuan & Woodman, 2010), while managers expect employees to consider organizational interests. Organizational identification encompasses both personal and organizational interests because highly identified employees closely link these interests. Therefore, organizational identification represents an effective pathway for stimulating innovative behavior. Second, good things may have potential negative effects (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013). By understanding the promotive and inhibitive processes through which organizational identification influences innovative behavior and the contextual factors involved, managers can take measures to maximize positive effects while mitigating negative ones.

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