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## The impact of high-commitment work systems on organizational identification

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of a high-commitment work system on Chinese employees' organizational identification. It constructed a theoretical model with perceived insider status as a mediator and a climate for inclusion as a moderator, which was then empirically tested. In this study, an empirical examination was conducted using a sample of in-service employees from 13 companies within China. A quantitative research methodology was employed through a questionnaire survey, and a total of 750 valid sample data points were collected for hypothesis testing using data analysis. The research results indicate that (1) high-commitment work system positively influences employees' organizational identification; (2) high-commitment work system has a positive impact on employees' perceived insider status; (3) employees' perceived insider status positively affects their organizational identification; (4) perceived insider status partially mediates the impact of a high-commitment work system on organizational identification; (5) climate of inclusivity can augment the positive influence of a high-commitment work system on organizational identification. (6) climate of inclusivity can also enhance the positive impact of perceived insider status on organizational identification. High-commitment work systems not only have a direct positive impact on employees' organizational identification but can also indirectly enhance it by elevating employees' internalized identity levels. In addition, an inclusive environment can enhance the positive impact of both high-commitment work systems and internalized identity on organizational identification individually. The findings can broaden empirical research in the context of Chinese culture, facilitating a better understanding of the relationship between high-commitment work systems and organizational identification. It extends empirical research on both aspects within the Chinese context. Moreover, optimizing work design and fostering an inclusive team atmosphere can elevate employees' identification with the organization, offering more insights to business leaders.

**Keywords:** Climate for inclusive, High-commitment work system, Organizational identification, Perceived insider status, Process plugin program, Work design styles.

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**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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## **1. Introduction**

As one of the critical factors contributing to a company's competitive advantage, talent plays a pivotal role in sustaining and furthering high-quality development in organizations. When employees identify with their organizations and are willing to strengthen their connection with them, they are likelier to engage in behaviors that benefit the company. On one hand, this can enhance their professional identity [1].

On the other hand, it can optimize their work experience [2], contributing to increased job satisfaction. Additionally, a strong sense of organizational identification helps organizations reduce employee turnover [3, 4] and fosters more proactive citizenship behaviors among employees [5]. These key insights remind managers of the practical value of cultivating and maintaining employees' organizational identification.

As organizational boundaries become increasingly blurred, it presents more challenges for businesses and employees. Employee organizational identification is becoming increasingly crucial in the practices of organizations.

In today's fast-paced work environment, fierce competition requires organizational leaders to seek effective management methods to stimulate employees' identification and enhance their company's competitive advantage. The ability to effectively enhance employee organizational identification is a crucial step for organizations to achieve high-quality development, and a lack of a suitable and correct environment can impede the normal development of both employees and organizations.

With the continuous changes in the internal and external environment, China's corporate management models are gradually shifting from being "control-oriented" to being "commitment-oriented" [6]. Human resource management practices in organizations aim to influence employee behavior by affecting their skills and motivation [7]. As a human resource management practice system that inspires employees' commitment to the organization, the high-commitment work system enriches employees' knowledge.

It enhances their job skills, igniting their enthusiasm for work and empowering them [8], improving the performance level of staff [9]. It is a practical set of management practices that promotes organizational growth and employee development, increasing employee engagement, relevant skills, and job enthusiasm [10]. It is worth investigating whether a high-commitment work system can impact employee organizational identification.

To investigate this issue, this study will examine the impact of organizational work design styles on employee organizational identification from the perspective of enterprise work design styles. This aims to play a driving role in establishing and improving employee organizational identification in the management process of enterprises, thereby helping businesses maintain or even continuously acquire developmental momentum and vitality. So far, no researcher has directly verified the relationship between a high-commitment work system and employee organizational identification in the practical environment of Chinese culture.

Additionally, there is a lack of relevant studies on intermediate mechanisms in the research on employee organizational identification. So, studying the real-world connection between a high commitment work system and how employees feel about their organization in the context of Chinese culture can help us understand the causes better and give HR professionals in businesses better ideas for how to run their departments.

## **2. Theory and Research Hypothesis**

### *2.1. High-Commitment Work System and Organizational Identification*

The high-commitment work system is characterized by meeting the needs of service recipients and differs from traditional top-down leadership paradigms as it is oriented towards benefiting followers. While respecting subordinate employees, the high-commitment work system can fulfill their needs in ethical and caring ways, enhancing organizational care and fostering subordinates' growth.

Moreover, it can provide support and assistance for the development of others through leadership positions, which is an act of serving others, with its core being "serving others" [11]. On the other hand, since the high-commitment work system can enhance its influence by gaining employees' trust, it enables employees to focus on organizational goals and vision, achieve organizational and personal progress by granting a certain level of autonomy, and provide various services [12]. On the other hand, organizational identification is the behavior of employees in helping their teams achieve task goals, building relationships with external entities, and interacting with them [13]. This behavior encompasses proactive and extra-role behaviors [14].

The commitment and empowerment of managers can promote employee attitudes and behaviors [15]. It can directly lead to employees engaging in more organizational citizenship behaviors [16] or influence the extra-role behaviors displayed by employees through the creation of positive atmospheres such as procedural fairness and service-oriented atmospheres [17], such as voice behavior [18].

On the other hand, the high-commitment work system can facilitate the development of high-quality leader-member exchange relationships [16], enhance employees' identities [15], and elevate organizational trust levels [19]. These factors are conducive to increasing employee trust and satisfaction with leadership and the organization. Factors related to perceptions or attitudes play a crucial role in organizational identification, such as organizational psychological ownership, employee satisfaction, and affective commitment [20].

Different leaders' actions and styles have different impacts. For example, empowering leadership can strengthen the core self-evaluation of research and development personnel and promote employees' organizational identification tendencies. In contrast, directive leadership can reduce the effect of core self-evaluation on organizational identification [21].

Humble leadership can inspire organizational identification by increasing employees' psychological empowerment [22], and empowerment is one of the characteristics of the high-commitment work system.

Given the above, this study posits that a high-commitment work system impacts organizational identification. The greater the level of commitment within the leadership's work system, the more robust employees' inclination toward organizational identification becomes. Consequently, a hypothesis is put forward:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The high-commitment work system has a positive impact on organizational identification.*

## *2.2. Mediating Effect of Perceived Insider Status*

A high-commitment work system can facilitate the development of high-quality leader-member exchange relationships [16], enhance employees' identities [15], and elevate organizational trust levels [19]. These factors are conducive to increasing employee trust and satisfaction with leadership and the organization.

A high-commitment work system involves essential traits such as building relationships with subordinates, empowering them, aiding in their growth and success, and prioritizing their interests, all of which contribute to cultivating trust in leaders among subordinates. Leaders who can attend to the psychological needs of employees are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy by them [23]. In contrast, leaders who fail to address these needs may engender distrust. On the other hand, when employees can form close superior-subordinate relationships and managers demonstrate ample trust and respect for employees, it facilitates the perception of high levels of trust among employees [24]. Therefore, this study posits that a high-commitment work system influences employees' internal psychological ownership. The higher the level of a high-commitment work system, the higher the level of employees' internal psychological ownership, leading to the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>2</sub>: A high-commitment work system positively impacts perceived insider status.*

Because internal psychological ownership, as a manifestation of psychological empowerment, has a positive impact on work behaviors [25], when employees perceive trust from their leaders, they believe that their leaders positively anticipate their behavior and are willing to assume the risks associated with their actions [23]. The emotional states and attitudes of staff members play a crucial role in shaping organizational identification [26]. When employees possess a high level of perceived trust, they are more inclined to take proactive actions.

On one hand, perceiving trust from leaders can make employees feel secure and more comfortable when expressing ideas or taking actions involving unknown risks. On the other hand, based on the leader-member exchange theory, one party's favor will lead to reciprocal efforts from the other party. In other words, when workers believe their leaders have their best interests at heart, they are more likely to act in ways that will help them. Employees perceiving trust from superiors also motivates them to invest more time, effort, and resources into their work, which can stimulate team performance by increasing employees' organizational commitment [27]. Based on the above, this study posits that the higher the level of employees' perceived insider status, the higher their sense of organizational identification, leading to the following hypotheses:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Perceived insider status has a positive impact on organizational identification.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Perceived insider status mediates the relationship between a high-commitment work system and organizational identification.*

## *2.3. The Regulatory Effect of Climate on Inclusive*

A climate for inclusion allows each employee to represent the collective and participate in the organization's core activities, where their viewpoints are heard and appreciated [28]. It encourages innovation, open communication, and participative decision-making, fostering a fair and just environment [29].

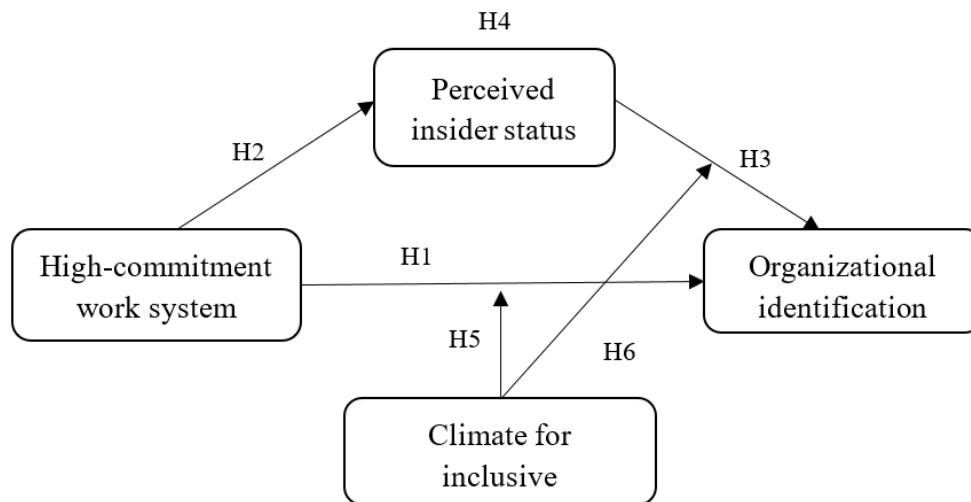
When an organization embraces an inclusive climate, individual employees' unique identities are respected, facilitating the formation of diverse teams and the joint resolution of problems and biases through the integration of perspectives [30]. In such an atmosphere, the organization respects and encourages employees to retain their uniqueness, leading to a sense of belonging among employees [31]. Furthermore, it can enhance employees' identification with the organization. On the other hand, a climate for inclusion promotes the sharing and exchange of knowledge, information, and perspectives among team members, facilitating the rapid transformation of information and knowledge into intellectual assets [32]. Team communication, information sharing, and knowledge exchange are crucial behavioral processes for team adaptation, directly affecting team adaptability [33].

The more employees can adapt to their roles, behaviors, and positions within the team, the stronger their identification with the team. Additionally, the fairness principles of climate inclusion can maintain a fair, competitive working environment and allow employees to make mistakes. All of these factors contribute to employees' enhanced identification with the organization. Based on the above, this study posits that the higher the level of inclusiveness in the atmosphere, the higher the sense of organizational identification. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H<sub>5</sub>: Climate for inclusion moderates the impact of a high-commitment work system on organizational identification.*

*H<sub>6</sub>: Climate for inclusion moderates the impact of perceived insider status on organizational identification.*

The research model in this study is depicted in [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1.**  
Research framework.

### 3. Research Methods

#### 3.1. Participants and Procedure

Utilizing a questionnaire survey method, this research conducts quantitative analysis while respecting ethical considerations of voluntary participation, carrying out the study only after obtaining consent from both the participating companies and employees [34]. The official survey of this research focuses on in-service employees from 13 Chinese companies as the sample. This benefit of online questionnaires, such as their accessibility to a large sample, quick data collection, cost effectiveness, environmental sustainability, and reduction of social desirability bias, are what drove this decision [35]. From March to April 2023, a total of 827 questionnaires were gathered for this study. As the responses were gathered through online questionnaires, all completed questionnaires were successfully collected. Invalid questionnaires, totaling 77, were eliminated due to excessive similarity in responses or inconsistencies in answers to reverse-coded questions. Therefore, the study retained 750 valid questionnaires, achieving an effective rate of 90.69%.

#### 3.2. Measures

The variables involved in this study include high-commitment work systems, perceived insider status, organizational identification, and climate for inclusion. The scales used in the questionnaire were either translated based on existing classical scales or directly quoted or adapted, employing a 5-point scoring system, with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

This study adopts the [36] definition of a high-commitment work system, which is described as a system encompassing employment decisions related to employee selection, development, utilization, and retention. The measurement of behaviors related to high-commitment work systems used the scales [36] employed in their research. Example items include statements such as "When an important position becomes vacant, the company prefers internal recruitment over external recruitment."

The definition of organizational identification used in this study is based on Ashforth and Mael [37], which define organizational identification as an employee's sense of belonging and self-identification with the organization, involving the cognitive process of associating oneself with the organization. This study uses the scale employed by Gao and Zhao [11] to measure organizational identification, which consists of 5 items. Example items include statements like "I have a strong sense of belonging to our company."

In this study, perceived insider status is defined following Masterson and Stamper [38], where internal psychological ownership refers to the perceived extent to which employees perceive personal space and acceptance as members of the organization. The measurement of internal psychological ownership utilizes a scale translated from Liu, et al. [39], adapted from the scale developed by Masterson and Stamper [38]. This scale is a single-dimensional scale consisting of 5 items. Example items include statements like "I feel I belong to this company."

The definition of climate for inclusion in this study is based on Shore, et al. [31], which describes a climate for inclusion as an environment where the organization respects and encourages members to retain their uniqueness, allowing members to translate perceived respect into a sense of belonging. Nishii [30] uses a three-dimensional measurement scale that consists of 31 items to measure a climate for inclusion. Example items include statements like "The performance evaluation process in my department is fair and just."

The results of the reliability and validity tests, as shown in Table 1, demonstrate the good performance of each scale, meeting the requirements for use.

**Table 1.**  
Results of scale reliability and validity testing.

Variable	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	TLI	CFI	Cronbach $\alpha$
High-commitment work system	3.724	0.066	0.034	0.957	0.964	0.951	0.879
Perceived insider status	1.172	0.038	0.024	0.959	0.959	0.949	0.933
Organizational identification	2.746	0.051	0.018	0.976	0.992	0.994	0.906
Climate for inclusive	3.724	0.076	0.034	0.957	0.964	0.951	0.880

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Description Statistics and Correlation Analysis of Variables

The description statistics and correlation analysis of the variables are presented in Table 2. The results indicate a significant positive correlation among all research variables.

**Table 2.**  
Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis of variables (N = 750).

Variable	M	SD	A	B	C	D
High-commitment work system (A)	3.64	0.576	1			
Perceived insider status (B)	3.46	0.888	0.248***	1		
Organizational identification (C)	3.60	0.688	0.458***	0.309***	1	
Climate for inclusive (D)	3.34	0.945	0.232**	0.433***	0.413***	1

Note: \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001: A significant level, as below.  
All values are rounded to three decimal places, as below.

##### 4.2. Regression Analysis

This study will utilize regression analysis to explore the causal relationships between variables, employing the Process plugin program in the SPSS analysis software. Specifically, Model 4 in Process will be employed to examine mediating effects while controlling for demographic variables. The analysis will scrutinize the model's total, direct, and indirect effects.

To begin, we will assess the total effects as shown in Table 3. Model 1 results reveal a significant predictive effect of a high-commitment work system on organizational identification ( $\beta = 0.465$ ,  $t = 14.353$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.001$ ). Additionally, the 95% bootstrap confidence interval [0.428, 0.564] excludes 0, indicating a noteworthy total effect.

Subsequently, we will scrutinize the direct and indirect effects. When the mediating variable of perceived insider status is included in Model 2, the predictive effect of a high commitment system on organizational identification is still significant ( $\beta = 0.409$ ,  $t = 11.958$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.001$ ). The 95% bootstrap confidence interval's upper and lower limits [0.365, 0.508] do not encompass 0, signifying a significant direct effect.

On the other hand, the mediating variable of perceived insider status significantly predicts employee organizational identification ( $\beta = 0.157$ ,  $t = 4.595$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.001$ ). In Model 3, the independent variable of the high-commitment work system also significantly predicts the mediating variable of perceived insider status ( $\beta = 0.356$ ,  $t = 10.413$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.001$ ). The 95% bootstrap confidence interval's upper and lower limits [0.366, 0.536] do not contain 0, indicating a significant indirect effect. Thus, H1, H2, and H3 are all supported.

**Table 3.**  
Results of regression analysis.

Regression equation (N=750)			Significance of coefficient				
	Outcome variable	Predictive variable	B	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
1	Organizational identification	High-commitment work system	0.465	0.035	14.353***	0.428	0.564
		R	0.465				
	Fit index	R <sup>2</sup>	0.216				
		F	206.019***				
2	Organizational identification	High-commitment work system	0.409	0.037	11.958***	0.365	0.508
		Perceived insider status	0.157	0.029	4.595***	0.076	0.189
	Fit index	R	0.487				
		R <sup>2</sup>	0.238				
3	Perceived insider status	High-commitment work system	0.356	0.043	10.413***	0.366	0.536
		R	0.356				
	Fit index	R <sup>2</sup>	0.127				
		F	108.430***				

Note: \*\*\*p<0.001: A significant level.

Based on the data results presented above, it can be concluded that all hypotheses proposed in this study, H1, H2, and H3, have been validated. Furthermore, the results for the total effects, direct effects, and indirect effects of the model are presented in Table 4. The results of all effects testing show that the bootstrap 95% confidence intervals for these effects have upper and lower limits that do not include 0, indicating the significance of each effect.

The direct effect of the high-commitment work system on organizational identification (0.436) accounts for 87.98% of the total effect (0.496), while the indirect effect (0.060) represents 12.04% of the total effect. This indicates that perceived insider status plays a partially mediating role in the model, thereby confirming H4.

**Table 4.**

Decomposition of indirect, direct and total effect.

Type of effect	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Ratio
Totaleffect	0.496	0.035	0.428	0.564	
Direct effect	0.436	0.037	0.365	0.508	87.98%
Indirect effect	0.060	0.018	0.028	0.097	12.04%

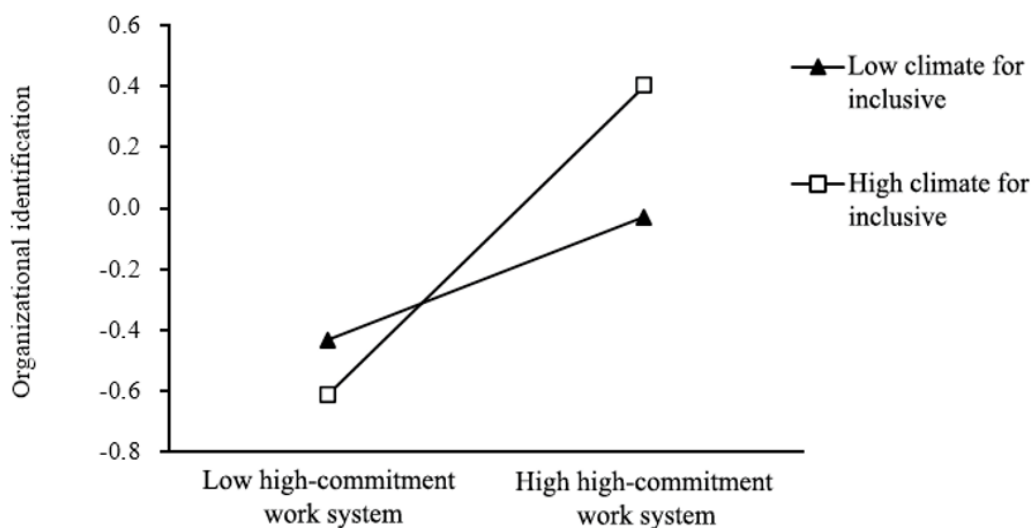
After standardizing the variables, we continued to examine the moderating effect using Model 15 in the Process plugin. Model 5 looked at how the moderating variable (climate for inclusiveness) and the independent variable (high-commitment work system) affected organizational identification. The results are shown in Table 5. The bootstrap 95% confidence interval for this interaction effect, with upper and lower limits of [0.089, 0.214], does not include 0. This indicates that the moderation effect is significant, with a  $\beta$  coefficient of 0.151 ( $t = 4.760, p = 0.000$ ).

**Table 5.**

Results of moderation regression analysis.

Regression equation (N=750)			Significance of coefficient				
Regulated variable	Predictive variable	$\beta$	SE	$t$	LLCI	ULCI	
4 Perceived insider status	High-commitment work system	0.357	0.034	10.413***	0.289	0.424	
	<i>R</i>	0.356					
	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.127					
	<i>F</i>	108.430***					
5 Organizational identification	High-commitment work system	0.354	0.037	9.657***	0.282	0.426	
	Perceived insider status	0.072	0.042	1.726	-0.010	0.154	
	Climate for inclusive	0.061	0.046	1.342	-0.028	0.151	
	High-commitment work system *climate for inclusive	0.151	0.032	4.760***	0.089	0.214	
	Perceived insider status *climate for inclusive	0.147	0.029	5.073***	0.090	0.204	
	<i>R</i>	0.552					
	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.305					
	<i>F</i>	65.175***					
Fit index							

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.001: A significant level.



**Figure 2.**

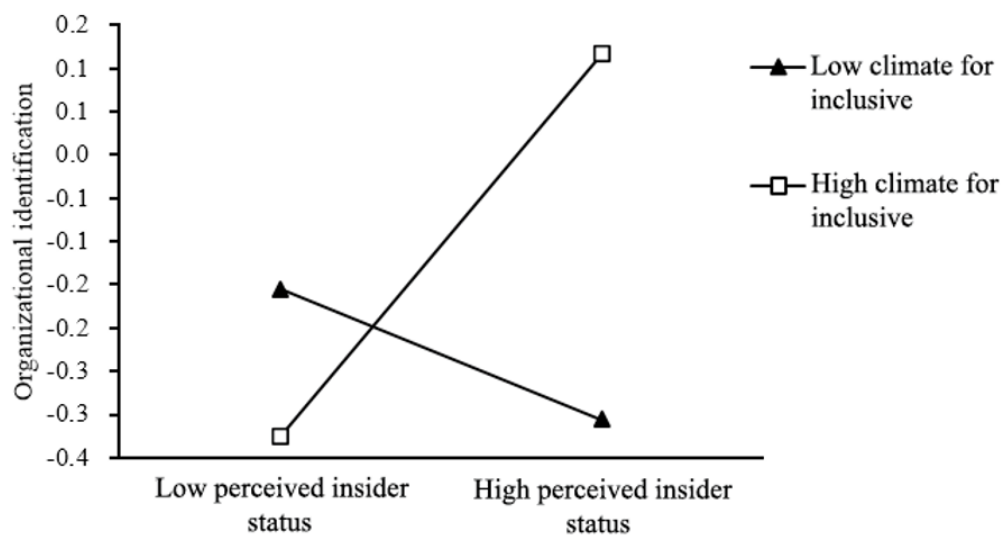
The difference in interaction between organizational identification and high-commitment work systems under high and low-level climates for inclusive.

The interaction effects illustrating the moderating role of climate for inclusion are presented in Figure 2. There is a strong and positive link between the high-commitment work system and organizational identification for people who had a

higher climate for inclusion (M + 1SD) (simple slope = 0.506,  $t = 9.839$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). On the other hand, for those with a lower level of inclusiveness (M-1SD), the high-commitment work system still significantly and positively predicts organizational identification, but the strength of the predictive effect diminishes (simple slope = 0.202,  $t = 4.433$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This means that as the climate for inclusion level rises, the high-commitment work system's effect on organizational identification gradually grows stronger. This shows that climate for inclusion has a positive moderating effect. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is confirmed in this study.

Next, the interaction effect of the moderating variable, climate for inclusion, with the mediator variable, perceived insider status, on organizational identification is depicted. The bootstrap 95% confidence interval for this interaction effect, with upper and lower limits of [0.090, 0.204], does not include 0.  $\beta = 0.147$  ( $t = 5.073$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating a significant moderating effect.

The interaction effect illustrating the moderating role of climate for inclusion is presented in Figure 3. There was a strong link between perceived insider status and organizational identification for people who had a higher level of climate for inclusion (M + 1SD), (simple slope = 0.220,  $t = 4.791$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). However, for those with a lower climate for inclusion (M-1SD), perceived insider status does not have a significant predictive effect on organizational identification (simple slope = -0.076,  $t = -1.369$ ,  $p = 0.171$ ). This suggests that as the climate for inclusion increases, the influence of perceived insider status on organizational identification gradually strengthens, demonstrating a positive moderating effect of the climate for inclusion. Hence, Hypothesis 6 is confirmed in this study.



**Figure 3.** The difference in interaction between organizational identification and perceived insider status under high and low-level climates for inclusive.

## 5. Conclusion

According to our data analysis, high-commitment work systems positively influence employees' organizational identification and their levels of perceived insider status. Conversely, employees' levels of perceived insider status also positively impact their organizational identification. This suggests that high-commitment work systems not only directly affect employees' organizational identification but can also indirectly boost it by raising employees' levels of perceived insider status, which serves as a partial mediator.

One more thing is that a welcoming environment can help the connection between high-commitment work systems and the feeling of being an insider. This makes the positive effects of both on organizational identification stronger.

### 5.1. Significance and Suggestions

A high-commitment work system allows managers to enhance their influence by gaining employees' trust. This system meets employees' needs in areas such as ethics and care while respecting subordinates, enhancing organizational care, and providing support and assistance for others' development. This helps employees strengthen their identification with the company.

This study confirms that a high-commitment work system contributes to developing high-quality leader-member exchange relationships [16], subsequently enhancing employees' identities [15]. A high-commitment work system establishes essential qualities such as building relationships with subordinates, empowering them, helping them grow and succeed, and prioritizing their interests. These factors contribute to cultivating trust in leaders among subordinates. If employees can form close relationships with leaders and managers can demonstrate complete trust and respect for employees [24], it facilitates the perception of trust among employees. This trust perception translates into employees viewing themselves as "insiders" of the organization.

Since perceived insider status serves as a manifestation of psychological empowerment and exerts a positive impact on work behavior [25], when employees sense the trust of their leaders, they perceive that their leaders have positive expectations for their actions and are willing to shoulder the risks associated with those actions [23]. With a higher level of

perceived trust, employees tend to display more positive behaviors. Feeling the trust of their leaders, employees reciprocate by engaging in actions that benefit the leaders or the organization. Moreover, perceiving trust from superiors motivates them to allocate more time, energy, and resources to their work, thereby enhancing team performance [27] and fostering a stronger sense of organizational identification.

A climate of inclusion allows each employee to have the opportunity to represent the collective in core organizational activities and ensures that their views are heard and appreciated. It effectively encourages innovation, open communication, and participative decision-making among employees, thus creating a fair and just environment. When organizations have a climate for inclusion, each employee's identity is respected, promoting the formation of diverse teams and facilitating problem-solving and bias reduction through integrating perspectives. In such an atmosphere, the organization respects and encourages employees to retain their uniqueness, fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing their identification with the company.

On the other hand, a climate for inclusion promotes team members' sharing and exchanging knowledge, information, and viewpoints, thereby rapidly converting information and knowledge into knowledge assets [32]. Team communication, information sharing, and knowledge sharing are critical behavioral processes for team adaptation, directly impacting team adaptability [33]. The more employees can adapt to their roles, behaviors, and positions within a team, the more they identify with the team. Furthermore, the fairness principles of a climate for inclusion can maintain a fair and competitive working environment, allowing employees to make mistakes. All of these factors contribute to employees enhancing their identification with the organization. The results of this study demonstrate that establishing an inclusive work environment within a company is a scientific and effective strategy for management. It leads to improved employee identification, subsequently enhancing overall organizational performance.

## 5.2. Limitations

While this study has yielded meaningful conclusions, it also has several limitations. Firstly, the sample range was not extensive due to constraints, and the sample size was limited. Additionally, the sampling method employed was convenience sampling. Therefore, the representativeness and generalizability of the results obtained from this data analysis still require further verification. Secondly, this study examined a limited number of variables. Because numerous factors influence employee organizational identification in actual environments, it is necessary to synthesize results from various aspects to enhance understanding of employee organizational identification. Hence, the conclusions of this study may be restricted to practical applications, and further in-depth research is needed to explore other potential influencing factors. In subsequent related research, the selection range of samples should be carefully considered. Increasing the sample size and employing a sampling method that aligns more closely with the research needs are essential. Expanding the scope of discussion and investigating new influencing factors is also warranted.

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