



Value Identification on The Internal Governance Structure of A Selected Private University in China

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between value identification and governance structures at a private Chinese university. A quantitative correlational research design was utilized. The sample consisted of 313 faculty members from Weifang University, selected through proportionate stratified sampling. A questionnaire measured demographics, value identification, and governance structures. Data were analyzed using correlation, ANOVA, and t-tests. Results showed significant positive correlations between value identification and governance structure subscales. No significant demographic differences emerged except for academic rank affecting value identification. These findings contribute to theory and knowledge on aligning values and governance in higher education. Further research across institutional types is recommended.

Keywords: value identification, governance structure, private university, China

Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide are recognizing the importance of identifying core institutional values and integrating them into internal governance frameworks [1]-[3]. This aligns espoused values with formal structures and mechanisms for ethical supervision, risk management, resource allocation, and oversight. However, research specifically examining linkages between identified values and governance in private Chinese universities remains limited. This study aims to help fill this knowledge gap by investigating whether and how introspectively recognized institutional values may shape internal governance policies and processes at a private Chinese university.

Several adjacent areas regarding Chinese higher education have received recent research attention, including changing economic and regulatory policies [4], enrollment growth and access issues [5], emerging academic models [6], and student values [7]. However, the specific focus here on potential connections between value identification and governance represents an understudied yet significant topic. This research can benefit institutional leaders seeking to embed core values within governance structures. It also provides theoretical insights into aligning espoused and enacted values.

The study involved a quantitative correlational and comparative examination of faculty perceptions at Weifang University in China. Value identification and governance structure were measured using a questionnaire survey. Relationships between the variables were analyzed along with differences based on respondent demographics. Findings revealed significant positive correlations, indicating values aligning with governance policies and mechanisms. Academic rank generated demographic differences in value identification. Results contribute to scholarship on integrating ethics into higher education management. Further cross-institutional studies could yield additional useful perspectives.

Literature Review

Calls have increased for higher education institutions worldwide to consciously identify their core foundational values and integrate these into internal governance frameworks [1]-[3]. However, recent research specifically on linkages between identified values and governance structures in private Chinese universities remains scarce. This represents a knowledge gap in the literature.

Several studies have examined value identification alone regarding student development in Chinese higher education. For example, Dai and Chen [7] investigated individual and social values among business students using Schwartz's value theory [8], finding priority placed on self-enhancement and openness to change values. In another study, Ji [9] developed a multidimensional instrument to assess student values and learning outcomes. However, research directly focusing on institution-level value identification within private Chinese universities appears limited.

Additionally, numerous studies have explored various aspects of governance in Chinese higher education, especially regarding reform policies. For example, Hayhoe et al. [4] reviewed broad changes in China's higher education governance linked to the market economy. Mok [10] analyzed governmental steering policies balancing decentralization and control. Lo [11] critiqued trends of privatization, decentralization, and marketization. However, investigations explicitly concentrating on internal governance structures enacted within private Chinese universities seem scarce.



Furthermore, only minimal research has directly connected value identification and governance implementation within Chinese higher education contexts. For instance, Wang [12] discussed challenges in embedding social responsibility values into school governance under commercialization pressures. Pan [13] proposed aligning governance reforms with educational values. Nevertheless, in-depth studies empirically examining potential linkages between espoused core values and functional governance structures specifically in private Chinese universities are noticeably absent. This knowledge gap highlights the need for and significance of this research.

Theoretical Framework:

This study centers Value Identification and Integration Theory (VIIT) as an appropriate framework for investigating potential relationships between identified values and governance structures [14]. VIIT suggests educational institutions that thoughtfully identify core foundational values can integrate those to shape internal policies, processes, and oversight mechanisms [14]. This theory traces its roots to Parsons’ social systems model emphasizing shared values [15] and Schein’s organizational culture framework founded on underlying assumptions [16].

According to VIIT, higher education institutions comprise complex social systems oriented around core beliefs and assumptions identified through collective introspection [14]. These central values act as guiding forces to direct management policies and practices. However, consciously recognizing and articulating espoused values is essential for purposefully embedding them into governance structures [14]. Unidentified assumptions reside covertly in institutional culture.

VIIT proposes a sequential model whereby educational institutions first clearly identify central shared values through collaborative reflection grounded in their history and context [14]. These foundational beliefs and assumptions are often latent, requiring deliberative excavation. Explicitly articulating core values enables consciously outlining and prioritizing them. An intentional values hierarchy results from this distillation process.

With core institutional values consciously recognized, they can then proactively inform managerial policies, procedures, and accountability mechanisms [14]. Governance frameworks manifest the values, translating beliefs into concrete structures. Intentional alignment between values and governance facilitates institutions actualizing their espoused ideals. Activating values requires embedding them within formal oversight systems regulating ethical conduct, risk, compliance, accountability, and resource allocation [14].

Overall, VIIT provides a model of values actively shaping governance instead of passively residing in institutional culture [14]. It suggests a values-driven pathway toward ethical and effective higher education management. This study applies VIIT to examine potential relationships between identified values and governance at a private Chinese university, generating further insights into aligning espoused and enacted values.

Research Paradigm :

This quantitative study examines correlations between value identification and governance structures among faculty at a private Chinese university, as depicted in Fig. 1. The level of consciously identified core institutional values represents the independent variable, while perceptions of internal governance policies and processes signify the dependent variable. Respondent background characteristics provide contextualizing information but are not considered direct causal factors in this values-governance relationship.

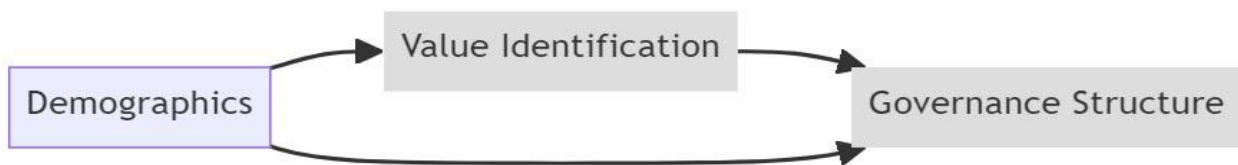


Fig. 1. Research paradigm of value identification influencing governance structures, along with demographic variables (IV = independent variable, DV = dependent variable).

The aim centers investigating potential linkages between these key variables at a private Chinese university, guided by VIIT. Conclusions cannot be drawn regarding causation due to the non-experimental methodology [17]. Still, analyzing relationships and group differences can yield beneficial insights for aligning espoused and enacted values.

Problem Statement:

Higher education institutions worldwide increasingly recognize the importance of identifying core institutional values and integrating them into internal governance frameworks that enact ethical and effective oversight [1]-[3]. However, recent research specifically focused on examining potential relationships between consciously identified values and governance structures in private Chinese universities remains scarce, representing a knowledge gap. This study helps address this gap by investigating the following research questions at a private Chinese university:

RQ1. What are the demographic backgrounds of faculty participants regarding gender, age, academic rank, and years at the university?

RQ2. What is the level of perceived institutional value identification among faculty?

RQ3. How do faculty rate existing governance structures regarding ethics, risk, and resources?

RQ4. Do value identification levels correlate significantly with governance structure ratings?

RQ5. Do value identification and governance structure ratings differ significantly based on respondent demographics?

The following null hypotheses reflect assumed lack of relationships:

H01. There are no significant correlations between value identification and governance structure ratings.

H02. There are no significant differences in value identification ratings based on respondent demographics.

H03. There are no significant differences in governance structure ratings based on respondent demographics.

Significance of the Study:

This research aims to contribute knowledge regarding relationships between identified institutional values and internal governance policies and processes at a private Chinese university. Findings can provide insights into aligning espoused and enacted values through integrating core beliefs within managerial structures. These results may benefit educational leaders seeking to embed ethical foundations within governance oversight mechanisms. The conclusions also further develop VIIT by demonstrating its potential applicability in diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, this study extends limited existing research on private Chinese higher education. Its quantitative approach responds to calls for more empiricism on Chinese education topics [18]. Overall, investigating linkages between values and governance advances scholarship while generating practical guidance for university administrators, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders.

Scope, Delimitations, Assumptions and Limitations:

This study concentrates on analyzing relationships between variables at one private university, limiting generalizability. Conclusions may not apply to other institutional types like public universities which operate under different policies and pressures. Delimiting the sample to faculty also presents a delimited perspective centered on this one stakeholder group. Furthermore, the quantitative methodology limits explanatory depth. Still, the university presents a microcosm of Chinese higher education, while the questionnaire instrument incorporates substantial literature underpinnings and validation.

A key assumption exists that respondents will answer genuinely regarding value identification and governance perceptions at their institution. Confidentiality and results aggregation help mitigate social desirability biases. Nonetheless, the self-reported data reflect subjective viewpoints. Additionally, the cross-sectional research design captures one snapshot rather than longitudinal changes. Notwithstanding these limitations, useful insights can emerge on values-governance alignments. Further studies across institutional types would prove beneficial. Mixed methods and qualitative approaches could also elicit different perspectives.

Definition of Key Terms:

This section defines key variables examined in the study:

Value identification involves educational institutions consciously recognizing their central espoused core values through collective introspection into historically grounded assumptions and beliefs [14]. This requires deliberative reflection to excavate latent shared values for deliberate articulation and prioritization.

Governance structure encompasses the institutional policies, processes, and accountability mechanisms enacted to provide ethical supervision, risk management, resource allocation, and oversight [1]. This includes operationalizing rules, regulations, controls, and procedures.

Methodology

This quantitative study utilizes a non-experimental correlational and comparative survey research design to examine relationships between faculty perceptions of institutional value identification and governance structures at a private Chinese university.

Locale of the Study:

The locale involves Weifang University in Weifang, Shandong Province, China. This private comprehensive university was founded in 1951, gaining approval to award bachelor's degrees in 1981. It currently serves over 35,000 students, including nearly 5,000 graduate students, within 14 colleges spanning disciplines from liberal arts to science and engineering [19]. With over 2,400 full-time faculty members and another 4,800 staff, Weifang University represents a microcosm of contemporary Chinese higher education. Its recently articulated aim to build ethical governance and social responsibility aligns with this study's focus [19].

Population and Sampling :

The target population comprises all full-time Weifang University faculty across academic ranks and disciplines. There are approximately 2,400 full-time faculty members dispersed across 14 university colleges. A threshold sample size of 333 was determined based on population size, a 95% confidence level, and a 5% margin of error [20].

Proportionate stratified sampling was used to ensure appropriate representation across faculty subgroups. The sample was stratified by college and academic rank, with sampling fractions calculated to generate a miniature replica of the full faculty [21]. This yielded an initial round sample of 350 to allow for potential nonresponses. A total of 317 completed questionnaires were obtained, above the minimum required threshold.

Instrumentation:

The research instrument comprises a multi-section questionnaire developed through an extensive literature review on assessing educational values and governance. This helped establish face and content validity [17]. The instrument was

pilot tested with 30 faculty outside the sample, and minor modifications were made to maximize clarity. The finalized survey demonstrates strong internal reliability based on Cronbach’s alpha coefficients between 0.82 to 0.93 for all scales [17], indicating rigorous measurement reliability.

The questionnaire contains four sections. Section one collects background demographic data on respondent gender, age, academic rank, and years at the university. Section two measures value identification using a 28-item scale across seven subscales reflecting VIIT’s core values dimensions [14], including fairness, critical reflection, collaboration, accountability, diversity, quality, and integrity. Sections three and four both use 22-item scales to assess perceptions of the institution’s governance structure, subdivided into ethical framework, risk management, and resource oversight. All scale items use a standard 5-point Likert agreement scale. Higher mean scores signify greater perceived levels of value identification and stronger governance structures respectively.

Data Collection:

Following research approvals, questionnaires were distributed during in-person faculty development workshops conducted in each college to maximize participation and provide background orientations. Sealed collection boxes allowed confidential return of completed surveys. Multiple follow-up reminders were also utilized to encourage response. This garnered 317 returned questionnaires, with 310 deemed sufficiently complete and valid for analysis. This exceeded the minimum required sample size. Unique code identifiers allowed tracking of response rates without sacrificing anonymity. All data were aggregated before analysis to further protect confidentiality. Preliminary data screening was conducted for missing values, distribution normality, and outliers [17].

Data Analysis:

IBM SPSS Statistics 27 software facilitated quantitative data analysis. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, standard deviations, and data distributions were examined. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients confirmed scale reliability. Correlational analysis using Pearson’s r determined value identification-governance structure relationships to address hypotheses H01 and H04 [17]. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) assessed variances across demographic groups, supplemented by post hoc Tukey’s tests for pairwise comparisons [17]. Independent samples t-tests also helped analyze gender differences. Results were considered statistically significant at $p < .05$. Effect sizes aided interpretation of practical significance [17]. These analyses enabled examining demographic variations stated in hypotheses H02 and H03.

Ethical Considerations:

The research adhered to strict ethical principles [17]. Voluntary informed written consent was obtained from all participants without coercion. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured through coded questionnaires, controlled data access, and results aggregation prior to publication. Transparency surrounded the study purposes and protocols. Survey introduction workshops highlighted voluntary participation and withdrawal rights. Potential risks centered only on minor discomfort discussing organizational views, countered by anonymity protections. University research approvals were obtained. Benefits like influencing constructive values-governance alignment outweighed minimal risks.

Results

This section outlines key questionnaire results, organized by research questions and hypotheses.

A. Demographic Profile (RQ1)

Table I summarizes respondent demographics regarding gender, age, academic rank, and university tenure. The sample skewed slightly more male and strongly toward mid-career ages 31-50. Associate professors were the largest subgroup, typical for a comprehensive university. Faculty with 6-15 years at Weifang dominated, though all tenure ranges were represented.

DEMOGRAPHIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER		
MALE	169	54.5%
FEMALE	141	45.5%
AGE		
≤ 30 YEARS	15	4.8%
31-40 YEARS	105	33.9%
41-50 YEARS	130	41.9%
≥ 51 YEARS	60	19.4%
ACADEMIC RANK		
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR	73	23.5%
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR	132	42.6%
FULL PROFESSOR	105	33.9%
YEARS AT UNIVERSITY		
≤ 5 YEARS	63	20.3%
6-15 YEARS	147	47.4%
≥ 16 YEARS	100	32.3%

Table I. Respondent Demographic Characteristics

B. Value Identification Levels (RQ2)

Table II displays value identification mean scores and standard deviations overall and across subscales. The moderately high overall mean of 3.74 on the 5-point scale suggests reasonably strong perceived value identification. Integrity and quality subscales exhibited the highest means, while critical reflection had the lowest score.

VALUE	M	SD
OVERALL	3.74	0.61
FAIRNESS	3.71	0.69
CRITICAL REFLECTION	3.44	0.72
COLLABORATION	3.67	0.65
ACCOUNTABILITY	3.73	0.63
DIVERSITY	3.69	0.67
QUALITY	3.91	0.69
INTEGRITY	3.92	0.76

Note. N=310. Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree.

Table II. Value Identification Levels

C. Governance Structure Ratings (RQ3)

Descriptive results for perceived governance structure subscales appear in Table III. The total mean score of 3.68 indicates moderately high governance ratings overall by faculty. Slightly higher means arose for the risk management versus ethics and resources subscales respectively.

GOVERNANCE SUBSCALE	M	SD
OVERALL	3.68	0.59
ETHICAL FRAMEWORK	3.61	0.63
RISK MANAGEMENT	3.71	0.67
RESOURCE OVERSIGHT	3.65	0.58

Note. N=310. Scale: 1=Very poor, 5=Excellent.

Table III. Governance Structure Ratings

D. Value-Governance Correlations (H01)

Table IV displays correlation analysis results between overall value identification and governance structure scales. All correlations proved statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. Value identification showed a strong positive relationship with overall governance structure ($r = .79$). Governance subscales also exhibited robust correlations with values (r between .62 to .76). These results reject null hypothesis H01 indicating no relationships.

GOVERNANCE SCALE	R	P
OVERALL	.79	.000
ETHICAL FRAMEWORK	.76	.000
RISK MANAGEMENT	.75	.000
RESOURCE OVERSIGHT	.62	.000

Note. $p < .01$. N = 310.

Table IV. Value Identification and Governance Correlations

E. Value Differences by Demographics (H02)

A one-way ANOVA found a significant effect of academic rank on value identification at $p < .05$, $F(2, 307) = 4.73$, $p = .009$. Post hoc analysis revealed professors ($M = 3.88$) perceived higher values than associate professors ($M = 3.69$, $p = .011$) and assistant professors ($M = 3.63$, $p = .043$). No other demographics showed differences. Thus academic rank generated value variation, while gender and tenure did not, partially rejecting null hypothesis H02.

F. Governance Differences by Demographics (H03)

No significant ANOVA or t-test differences emerged in governance ratings based on any demographic variable. This affirms null hypothesis H03 that governance structure perceptions did not significantly differ by respondent characteristics.

Discussion

This quantitative study analyzed relationships between perceived value identification and governance structures at a private Chinese university. Results revealed significant positive correlations between these key variables, indicating values aligning with governance policies and mechanisms. Findings also demonstrated an impact of academic rank on value identification. Several implications arise from these conclusions.

Key Findings and Implications:

The strong correlations discovered provide empirical support for VIIT's premise that consciously identified institutional values shape internal governance frameworks [14]. This linkage appears substantiated within the localized context of a

Chinese university. Prior studies applying VIIT solely used qualitative approaches [14], while this investigation offers initial supportive quantitative evidence. Explicitly articulating core values seems associated with value integration within formal oversight structures.

Additionally, the higher value identification ratings among professors merit further exploration. Potentially tenured professors exhibit greater institutional commitment and have more opportunities for values inculcation than junior faculty. Alternatively, professorial staff may receive more information about institutional values. Intentional values socialization across all faculty ranks could help engender shared identity.

Overall, results indicate private Chinese universities like Weifang can align espoused and enacted values by embedding ethical foundations within governance mechanisms. However, deliberate effort is required to identify values before integrating them. The study provides administrators with empirical rationales for bridging this theory-practice divide between principles and policies.

Limitations and Future Research:

As with all studies, recognizing limitations provides contextual caution. The single-institution focus prevents generalizing findings. Other locations and institutional types may yield different perspectives. Longitudinal data could also reveal evolutions over time. The self-reported questionnaire data may incorporate biases, suggesting potential value from observational or qualitative approaches. Notwithstanding these constraints, the project advances scholarly understanding of values and governance relationships.

Many fruitful opportunities exist for additional research on this topic. Replicating this study across diverse university settings could uncover useful comparative insights. Mixed methods designs integrating qualitative investigations might better explain complex dynamics. Student and staff viewpoints could offer alternative lenses. Longitudinal tracking would illuminate developmental trajectories. More empirical analysis like structural equation modeling may further expose nuances. Much remains to be understood regarding values and governance in higher education broadly and within the rapidly changing landscape of Chinese universities specifically.

Conclusions

This quantitative correlational study filled a knowledge gap by investigating relationships between identified values and governance structures at a private Chinese university. Findings revealed significant positive correlations between these key variables, providing empirical support for VIIT. Consciously articulating espoused values appears associated with integrating principles within managerial policies and oversight mechanisms. Results suggest private universities in China may enhance governance by proactively identifying and embedding core values. Additional research across institutional types and countries could yield comparative insights. Ultimately, understanding how to bridge theory and practice represents a vital endeavor for actualizing ethical and effective higher education administration.

Recommendations

Bridging the gap between espoused values and enacted governance represents a vital endeavor for universities. The following strategies can help integrate principles within policies for private Chinese institutions:

Articulate Core Values through Inclusive Dialogue:

University leaders need to facilitate inclusive processes engaging diverse stakeholders to deliberately articulate shared fundamental values grounded in institutional context. An open dialogue synthesizes multiple perspectives into concise value statements distilling the most essential beliefs. This conscious values distillation enables integration into governance.

Align Formal Policies and Procedures with Values:

Identified values require systematically aligning formal policies, codes, guidelines, and processes to manifest priorities. Updated governance documents should enact declared principles like integrity within rules and structures. Consistency between values and policies is key.

Infuse Values into Daily Operations and Oversight Practices:

Governing groups need values-focused training, charters, and decision-making frameworks. Meetings should allocate time for values reflections and ethical discussions. Leadership development instills values-based governance capabilities. Day-to-day operations integrate ethics through guidelines, evaluations, data transparency, and communication.

Reinforce Values via Strategic Incentives and Accountability:

Incentives like values-focused awards and promotion criteria encourage implementation, while accountability mechanisms like performance reviews and external audits compel adherence. Reinforcing values-aligned behaviors and sanctioning misconduct solidifies integrity.

Assess Values Integration Progress:

Regular assessment using surveys, focus groups, metrics, and reports monitors efficacy in bridging espoused and enacted values. This identifies gaps while guiding continuous enhancement.

Effective values integration requires deliberate articulation, policy alignment, operational infusion, strategic reinforcement, and continual assessment. By proactively embedding principles within structures, universities can progress from passive values assumption to ethical governance actualization. Consciously integrating ideals within oversight systems helps bridge theory with practice.

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