# Assessment of the Role of Cultural Navigation in the Development of Cultural Identity

Seyed Mohammad Javad. Tabatabaei Qomi[1] , Serajeddin. Mohebbi[2*] , Mohsen. Ameri Shahrabi[3] , Ali. Shojaeifar[4]

[1] PhD student, Department of Cultural Planning Management, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran.
[2] Associate Professor,Department of Management, shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, shiraz, Iran (Corresponding Author).
[3] Assistant Professor,Department of Management, North Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.
[4] Associate Professor, Department of Management and Entrepreneur, Payam Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

* Corresponding author email address: mohebi.abcd@gmail.com

Abstract

In today's world, the phenomenon of globalization and the expansion of communication technologies have increasingly enhanced intercultural interactions. In this context, the concept of "cultural navigation" has gained special significance as a process through which individuals and communities can navigate diverse cultural environments and adapt to communication challenges and cultural differences. This study aimed to evaluate the role of cultural navigation in the development of cultural identity. The research is applied in terms of its objective, exploratory in terms of its approach, and employs a mixed-methods (qualitative-quantitative) design for data analysis. In the qualitative phase of the study, and for the purpose of model design based on grounded theory methodology, a group of experts in cultural fields (university professors, executive managers, and consultants) were selected and underwent in-depth interviews. In this phase, purposive sampling was employed, and the process continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, resulting in a total of 15 interviews. In the quantitative phase, cultural sector managers were considered the population, and among them, 115 individuals were selected as the statistical sample through stratified random sampling with proportional allocation. In the qualitative phase of the research, due to the use of grounded theory, the data collection tool was unstructured interviews with experts. In the quantitative phase, the main data collection tool was a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of 74 items, designed based on the initial conceptual model. In the quantitative phase, SPSS and SmartPLS software were used to conduct descriptive and inferential analyses. The results of the research led to the design of a process model (based on the structure of the paradigm model) for assessing the role of cultural navigation in the development of cultural identity, and the hypothetical relationships of the model were tested and confirmed in a large population.

Keywords: Culture, Cultural Navigation, Cultural Identity

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1. Introduction

Today, cultural navigation holds a significant and widespread position as a practical concept in cultural organizations. In societies with cultural diversity, the ability to understand, interact, and collaborate with different cultures is essential [1]. Cultural navigation refers to the ability of individuals and communities to confront cultural differences, understand and analyze these differences, and embrace cultural diversity. In today's world, various cultures and values coexist within societies [2]. Individuals grow up with the experiences of their specific culture and use their cultural learnings and experiences. However, when encountering other cultures, further navigation and learning may be required. Cultural navigation enables individuals or communities to better understand cultural differences and fosters efforts to reduce conflicts and promote empathy and cooperation in interactions with other cultures. This concept aids managers in engaging with others respectfully, considering cultural differences, and contributing to the development of diverse and enriched communities [3, 4]. Today, many successful service and cultural organizations worldwide have invested extensively in this area [5]. According to a study conducted by the prestigious Fortune magazine, most large organizations around the world fail in achieving their cultural transformation goals. In Iran, too, many organizations have implemented cultural navigation-based planning methods and tools but have often failed to achieve competitive advantage factors. Statistics show that 90% of organizations fail to achieve their transformation goals, with 30% failing at the planning stage and 70% failing during implementation and execution [2].

Cultural navigation is framed as a multi-layered process that examines interactions between different cultures within social, linguistic, and psychological contexts. This framework is based on social and cultural theories that illustrate how individuals can adopt aspects of other cultures while maintaining and reinforcing their primary cultural identity [6, 7]. From a psychological perspective, cultural navigation processes enable individuals to navigate between different cultures by learning new languages and customs and redefining their diverse identities. Within this framework, the concepts of biculturalism and code-switching are presented as key tools for preserving and developing cultural identity in multicultural societies. Research shows that individuals often use strategies such as code-switching when encountering two or more cultures to optimally communicate in various contexts while remaining loyal to their cultural roots [8].

These methods are particularly applicable to younger generations of immigrants who face multiple identity challenges. Theorists also emphasize the role of social spaces, such as schools and universities, in strengthening the cultural navigation process. These institutions allow individuals to benefit from new cultural resources while reinforcing their original cultural identity. In other words, cultural navigation is a continuous learning process that enhances the sense of identity and social belonging through interaction with diverse environments [9]. Ultimately, the theoretical framework of cultural navigation emphasizes the reciprocal interaction of cultures and posits that this process can aid in redefining and reconstructing cultural identities in multicultural societies. This approach emphasizes not only the preservation of indigenous cultures but also individuals' ability to learn from other cultures and enrich their cultural identities.

Cultural navigation, as a complex and multi-layered process, plays a vital role in preserving and enhancing the cultural identities of individuals and communities when faced with globalization and cultural diversity. This concept, by emphasizing the ability of individuals to interact constructively with different cultures, illustrates how one can simultaneously benefit from new cultures while preserving native cultural identities. Tools such as code-switching and biculturalism help individuals navigate multicultural environments, redefining and strengthening their identities. Recent research indicates that cultural navigation, at both individual and collective levels, helps improve social and psychological interactions. Social institutions such as schools and universities can help strengthen cultural identity and increase the sense of belonging by creating multicultural spaces [6, 9]. In general, cultural navigation is recognized not only as a survival tool in a multicultural world but also as a means to redefine and reconstruct cultural identities in diverse societies.

On the other hand, there are numerous obstacles to implementing intelligent cultural navigation thinking within cultural domains, each varying in importance and impact depending on the type of organization. Some of the most significant obstacles are related to organizational behavior and the performance of existing systems within organizations [10]. By identifying these obstacles, the dominant culture in public and service organizations can be better implemented, and capacities for work, delegation of authority, responsibility, autonomy in decision-making, and

a sense of self-efficacy based on a cultural navigation mindset can be enhanced. This, in turn, increases the productivity and effectiveness of the organization within the framework of future-oriented intelligence [11].

Moreover, insufficient flexibility within organizational components and the inability to adapt to new cultural conditions and future phenomena are not the only obstacles to the implementation of cultural programs in cultural domains. In fact, various factors are considered key obstacles to the neglect of cultural navigation approaches [12]. A review of studies in this area shows that many existing barriers and limitations to cultural programs are somewhat common across different organizations, such as conflicting priorities, weak vertical communication, and the lack of support and leadership from senior managers in implementing organizational cultural management programs [10, 13].

What occupies the researcher's mind is whether the transformation decisions in public organizations face the same disregard for future processes and similar hindering factors. A review of recent studies indicates that little research has been conducted to identify the primary factors and obstacles related to the failure of decision-making in cultural organizations within Iranian institutions. This neglect, especially in the public sector, can have even more dire consequences, as decisions made by senior managers in this domain are directly related to the cultural sphere and all aspects of social life. These decisions may determine the economic survival or demise of an individual, group, or organization. New research indicates that cultural navigation processes, such as using dual strategies, code-switching, and other linguistic and cultural methods, can assist youth and different groups in adapting to new cultures while preserving their cultural roots.

This study seeks to address the deficiencies in existing models and evaluate the provision of a comprehensive and systematic cultural navigation model in Iran's cultural domains. Identifying such a relationship can help theorists and managers in this domain make useful and effective plans to improve Iran's cultural fields by becoming aware of the current state of cultural navigation.

2. Methodology

This study is fundamental in terms of its objective and is considered a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) in terms of data collection. In the qualitative section, the grounded theory method was used. Since the

study is conducted in both quantitative and qualitative phases, the research population differs in each phase. In the qualitative phase, the population consists of experts in the fields of marketing and business, while in the quantitative phase, the population includes managers and experts in the field of cultural navigation. In the qualitative phase, given the selection of the grounded theory approach, theoretical sampling was chosen for the current research. In this method, sampling is non-random, and the number of samples is not predetermined. The sampling process continues during data analysis until theoretical saturation is reached. In this study, 15 interviews were conducted, with theoretical saturation occurring after the 11th interview, but to ensure accuracy, the process continued until the 15th interview.

In the quantitative phase, considering maximum variance and a 5% margin of error, 90 individuals were selected, and to increase the questionnaire response rate and facilitate the research, more than 100 electronic questionnaires were distributed, of which 86 were completed and used for analysis and hypothesis testing. In the qualitative phase, MAXQDA software was used to structure the collected data, which included interview transcriptions, documents, notes, and audio files. Initially, open coding was employed, resulting in the formation of main concepts. In the second stage of coding, axial coding was used to eliminate and merge existing concepts, forming first-level categories. By repeating this process and merging first-level categories through selective coding (third-stage coding), second-level categories were formed, and eventually, the final theory emerged from the categories. At this stage, the grounded theory model was used to establish links between the categories. In this model, categories were grouped into six groups: causal conditions, contextual conditions, phenomenon or central category, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences.

In the qualitative phase of this research, interviews and document collection were used as data collection tools. In the quantitative phase, a researcher-developed questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was used.

3. Findings

The data collection tool used in this research was interviews with experts, including specialists, practitioners, and professionals in the cultural domains. Based on the interview protocol, the necessary information to assess the final model of the research was gathered. The data analysis method was conducted based on the grounded theory

approach. Accordingly, axial coding was performed with 15 interviews with experts to examine categories and subcategories in relation to their dimensions and characteristics. To discover how the categories relate to each other, Strauss and Corbin's (2010) analytical tool was utilized. At this stage, the codings were carefully categorized based on the six theoretical conditions of grounded theory. The paradigm model of this research was designed according to Strauss and Corbin's paradigm model. Given these factors and conditions, the cultural navigation model and process in Iran's cultural domains were designed. The primary focus of this research was to explain the factors that contribute to the development of this concept. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between the categories based on the paradigm model, as evaluated and confirmed by the study participants.
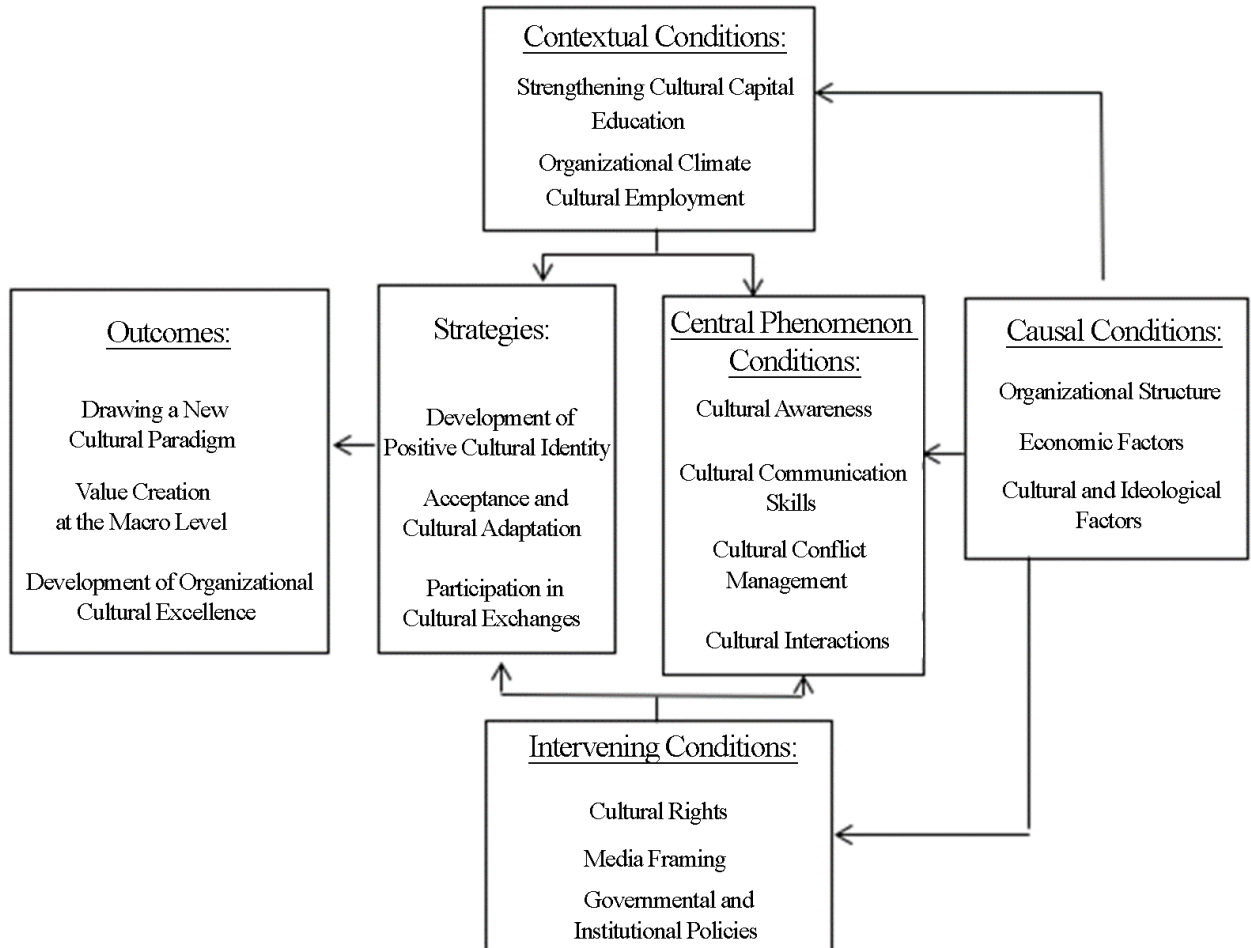

Figure 1. Paradigm Model from the Qualitative Section

In this study, six main variables were selected to be examined based on a conceptual model. The normality of the data was evaluated using skewness and kurtosis indices. The sample included 86 respondents. The validity and reliability of the constructs were assessed using the measurement model, and the model's fit was evaluated using covariance-based structural equation modeling through the statistical packages "SPSS" (version 20) and "SmartPLS" (version 2). The use of structural equation modeling to assess latent variables better represented the conceptual relationships. As Mittal and colleagues noted, "the partial least squares approach assumes that individual variables change one-to-one with the rest of the model, and the model fit indicators are controlled in the measurement model". Furthermore, this method calculates a bootstrap standard error and generates approximate t-values for testing the significance of structural paths. Therefore, as shown in Table 1, all variables are in a favorable state.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Research Variables' Dimensions

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organizational Structure	155	3.242	3.250	0.777	-0.264	0.254
Economic Factors	155	3.163	3.200	0.740	-0.142	-0.199
Cultural and Ideological Factors	155	3.088	3.000	0.846	-0.084	0.199
Laws and Policies	155	3.077	3.000	0.862	0.071	-0.313
Strengthening Cultural Capital	155	3.060	3.000	0.805	-0.117	-0.650
Education	155	3.645	3.750	0.718	-0.064	-0.633
Organizational Climate	155	3.824	3.750	0.736	-0.354	0.086
Cultural Employment	155	3.071	3.000	0.785	-0.090	-0.601
Cultural Rights	155	3.164	3.200	0.773	0.052	-0.144
Media Framing	155	3.285	3.250	0.685	-0.097	-0.488
Governmental and Institutional Policies	155	3.394	3.333	0.937	-0.333	-0.405
Cultural Awareness	155	3.371	3.500	0.609	0.085	-0.014
Cultural Communication Skills	155	3.518	3.667	0.756	-0.111	-0.310
Cultural Conflict Management	155	3.209	3.200	0.817	0.107	-0.019
Development of Positive Cultural Identity	155	3.285	3.200	0.810	0.143	-0.092
Cultural Flexibility and Adaptation	155	3.044	3.000	0.751	-0.095	0.224
Participation in Cultural Exchanges	155	3.140	3.167	0.735	-0.028	0.032
New Cultural Paradigm Formation	155	3.002	3.000	0.813	-0.064	0.019
Value Creation at the Macro Level	155	3.276	3.167	0.831	-0.315	0.137
Development of Organizational Cultural Excellence	155	3.022	3.000	0.834	-0.131	-0.179
Causal Conditions	155	3.152	3.133	0.659	-0.178	-0.259
Contextual Conditions	155	3.422	3.333	0.573	0.098	-0.494
Intervening Conditions	155	3.262	3.250	0.657	0.073	-0.121
Central Phenomenon Conditions	155	3.340	3.333	0.635	0.190	0.019
Strategies	155	3.155	3.188	0.644	-0.019	0.514
Outcomes	155	3.118	3.067	0.705	-0.230	-0.059

To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used. The reliability results for each variable show that all values are above 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability. For validity assessment, convergent and divergent validity were utilized. Table 2 shows the findings related to convergent validity. The obtained results for convergent validity indicate that the latent variables in the model had an AVE value greater than 0.50, suggesting that the measurement models' convergent validity is acceptable.

Table 2. Results of Variable Validity Assessment

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Q²
Education	0.783	0.791	0.860	0.606	0.343
Cultural Awareness	0.714	0.900	0.774	0.548	0.207
Value Creation at the Macro Level	0.901	0.903	0.924	0.671	0.518
Cultural Employment	0.823	0.828	0.895	0.739	0.445
Cultural Flexibility and Adaptation	0.812	0.814	0.869	0.570	0.355
Strengthening Cultural Capital	0.786	0.798	0.860	0.607	0.352
New Cultural Paradigm Formation	0.828	0.843	0.885	0.660	0.419
Development of Organizational Cultural Excellence	0.861	0.863	0.900	0.643	0.452
Development of Positive Cultural Identity	0.880	0.883	0.912	0.676	0.488
Organizational Climate	0.781	0.792	0.859	0.604	0.344
Cultural Rights	0.820	0.831	0.875	0.586	0.379
Strategies	0.908	0.917	0.921	0.529	0.345
Organizational Structure	0.792	0.796	0.865	0.617	0.358
Governmental and Institutional Policies	0.880	0.885	0.926	0.807	0.548
Contextual Conditions	0.871	0.880	0.893	0.560	0.267
Cultural Transformation	0.920	0.925	0.931	0.577	0.385
Intervening Conditions	0.876	0.891	0.899	0.536	0.332
Central Phenomenon Conditions	0.875	0.894	0.899	0.537	0.328
Economic Factors	0.887	0.897	0.918	0.692	0.514

Cultural and Ideological Factors	0.853	0.853	0.911		0.773	0.495
Media Framing	0.774	0.724	0.802		0.513	0.232
Laws and Policies	0.760	0.792	0.861		0.675	0.353
Cultural Conflict Management	0.847	0.865	0.892		0.627	0.434
Participation in Cultural Exchanges	0.832	0.846	0.878		0.549	0.369
Cultural Communication Skills	0.793	0.900	0.831		0.621	0.263
Outcomes	0.922	0.924	0.932		0.581	0.39

In this research, the evaluation of the confirmatory factor analysis model was conducted using the critical root mean square error of approximation index. The permissible threshold for this index is 0.10. For this model, the index value was 0.093, which is below the threshold of 0.10, indicating that the model has a good fit and that the research data aligns well with the theoretical structure and factor model.

The second set of findings in this research pertains to the evaluation of the structural model test, which is conducted after the confirmation of validity and reliability. Using this model, the research hypotheses were tested. Figure 2 shows the results obtained from the output of the SMARTPLS2 software. According to this model, the factor loadings were significant at the 95% confidence level, and all t-statistic values fell outside the range of -1.96 to +1.96.
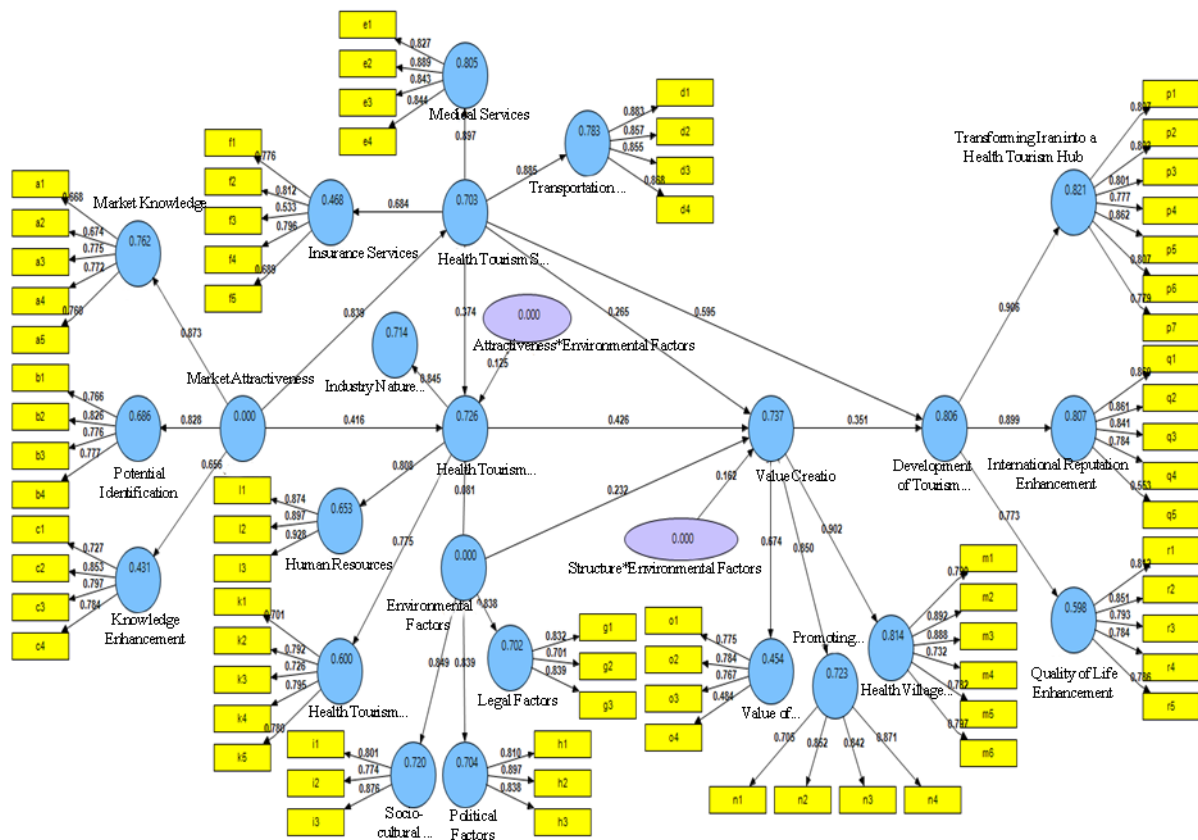

Figure 2. Structural Model of the Research in the Standard State

The results of the hypotheses are shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Beta	t	Significance Level	Hypothesis Status	Relationship Direction
Cultural Transformation -> Cultural Innovation	0.813	29.174	0.000	Confirmed	+
Cultural Transformation -> Cultural Change	0.792	27.349	0.000	Confirmed	+
Cultural Transformation -> Cultural Innovation	0.393	5.114	0.000	Confirmed	+
Cultural Agility -> Strategic Culture	0.195	2.298	0.009	Confirmed	+
Cultural Agility -> Cultural Innovation	0.329	4.415	0.000	Confirmed	+
Cultural Change -> Strategic Culture	0.353	4.706	0.000	Confirmed	+

Cultural Change -> Cultural Innovation	0.216	3.080	0.002	Confirmed	+
Cultural Innovation -> Strategic Culture	0.488	7.237	0.000	Confirmed	+
Strategic Culture -> Cultural Identity	0.870	47.799	0.000	Confirmed	+

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the role of cultural navigation in the development of cultural identity was examined, and the results indicated that cultural navigation, as an internal capability and process, significantly impacts the formation and strengthening of cultural identity in individuals and communities. Cultural navigation refers to the ability of individuals and groups to move, interpret, and interact within different cultural contexts. This concept is particularly important in multicultural societies or those experiencing rapid cultural changes. In the quantitative section, based on the designed questionnaire, the quantitative model of the research was developed. Additionally, the findings align with the results of previous studies [7, 8, 11, 14]. These studies demonstrated that cultural navigation could serve as an effective tool for developing and strengthening cultural identity in multicultural societies. Individuals with a higher capacity for cultural navigation can create a dynamic, multifaceted, and adaptable identity by accepting and integrating various cultural elements, enabling them to interact more effectively in changing cultural environments. As a result, it is suggested that cultural and educational policymakers invest in developing cultural navigation skills to build a society with stronger and more cohesive cultural identities.

For practical suggestions to further develop and strengthen cultural navigation and its impact on cultural identity in different societies, attention should be given to practical strategies, executive actions, and applicable programs. These recommendations can be implemented at individual, organizational, and social levels, with the goal of improving cultural competencies, creating opportunities for intercultural interaction, and strengthening multicultural identities.

At the individual level, organizing intercultural training workshops is recommended. These workshops can focus on enhancing intercultural skills such as recognizing cultural differences, managing cultural conflicts, and fostering cultural flexibility. Training on techniques like active listening, intercultural negotiation, and interpreting body language in multicultural settings should also be provided. Designing language and culture training courses is another suggestion. Such courses should introduce different languages while familiarizing participants with the values,

norms, and traditions of each culture, and encourage the learning of a second language to improve communication in multicultural environments.

Developing intercultural mentoring programs is also suggested. These mentoring programs could pair individuals with rich cultural experience (such as first-generation immigrants) with newcomers or those needing guidance in intercultural interactions, with the aim of boosting confidence and increasing cultural knowledge. Creating support networks, especially intercultural support groups, for those who work or study in multicultural environments would provide opportunities to share experiences and learn from one another.

At the organizational level, formulating diversity management strategies is crucial. Companies and organizations should develop comprehensive diversity management policies, including acceptance programs, cultural training, and the creation of flexible work environments. Establishing Diversity and Inclusion Committees to oversee adherence to cultural values and resolve conflicts is essential. Promoting the creation of multicultural environments can be achieved by designing programs that encourage teamwork among individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds and initiating intercultural projects to enhance cooperation and effective interaction among employees.

Hosting organizational cultural events, such as international festivals, cultural days, and seminars to introduce different cultures, is another effective strategy. Programs such as National Cuisine Days, Traditional Attire Days, or art exhibitions displaying various cultures could be implemented to showcase cultural diversity within organizations. Additionally, developing intercultural leadership programs for managers and organizational leaders can empower them to lead multicultural teams and address cultural conflicts effectively.

At the social level, establishing cultural education centers in local communities would provide opportunities for individuals to learn about different cultures and participate in interactive programs, such as cultural roundtables or book clubs. These centers could serve as hubs for increasing cultural awareness and strengthening layered identities. Encouraging intercultural art projects by supporting artistic and cultural projects (such as theater, music, and visual arts)

that depict intercultural interactions is also suggested. Organizing joint exhibitions and inviting artists and writers from diverse cultural backgrounds could foster a deeper understanding of multiculturalism.

Cultural exchange programs in schools, universities, and educational institutions should be designed and implemented to encourage students to participate in exchange programs, including student exchanges, cultural camps, and joint research projects. Finally, establishing digital cultural platforms to share stories, experiences, and cultural challenges from around the world could further promote intercultural understanding and awareness. These platforms could include websites, blogs, and online forums aimed at spreading cultural knowledge and fostering intercultural comprehension.

At the policy-making level, developing educational and cultural policies is critical. Intercultural education programs in schools and universities should be designed to raise cultural awareness among younger generations, and cultural studies should be integrated into curricula alongside training in cultural navigation skills. Supportive laws that promote cultural diversity and ensure equal opportunities for minorities to participate in social and cultural activities should be enacted, along with legal frameworks to protect cultural rights and eliminate discrimination.

Providing financial support for intercultural projects is also necessary. Scholarships and grants should be offered for projects and research related to the development of cultural navigation and identity, and funding should be provided for studies on the effects of cultural navigation on the development of cultural and social identities.

One of the limitations of this research is that it was conducted cross-sectionally, making it difficult to draw conclusions about causality. The large number of questions in the questionnaires led to a lengthy implementation time, which may have affected the accuracy of participants' responses.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

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Declaration of Interest

Funding

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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