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Research on the influence of intramural intangible cultural heritage activities on primary school students' continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage

Nanxi Yin

USC-SJTU Institute of Cultural and Creative Industry, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

yinnx1223@sjtu.edu.cn

Abstract. Using a sample of 605 elementary school students from grades 1 to 6 in two primary schools in Dalian, Liaoning Province, China, as the sample, this study explores the factors influencing students' interest in continuing to learn Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) through school-based ICH activities. Grounded in the CAC theoretical model, the value theory of ICH, and ethnic identity theory, the research aims to provide fresh insights into the dissemination of ICH in schools and the development of children's cultural education. The study categorises students' perceived value of ICH activities into six dimensions: historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, economic, and social. It also examines a chained mediation effect composed of ethnic identity and cultural confidence. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study empirically investigates the influencing factors and pathways. The findings reveal that all six dimensions of value significantly enhance students' ethnic identity, which, in turn positively influences cultural confidence. Through this chained mediation effect, ethnic identity and cultural confidence play a crucial role in increasing students' sustained interest in learning ICH.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, learning interest, empirical research, pedagogy, primary school students

1. Introduction

This research explores whether campus intangible cultural heritage programs can foster lasting learning interest among elementary students. Culture is the sum of material and spiritual wealth created by humans throughout social development, with Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) serving as a vital manifestation of culture. A deeper exploration of ICH can highlight the unique charm of these projects, distinguishing them within cultural communication and creating focal points in the dissemination process [1]. Ensuring the sustainable development of ICH while meeting evolving cultural needs remains a central objective of ICH research [2].

ICH holds both research and practical significance in the field of cultural education. The Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, issued by the General Office of the State Council, emphasises that ICH should be integrated into national education consistently. It advocates for the development of a curriculum and textbook system dedicated to ICH, alongside the publication of general education materials on the subject. Additionally, it recommends offering specialised ICH courses in primary and secondary schools and encourages the establishment of inheritance bases for representative national ICH projects within these institutions [3].

As a crystallisation of human civilisation and wisdom, ICH is a key representation of traditional culture, exerting a profoundly positive impact on students' future development. Strengthening the connection between school education and ICH preservation through initiatives such as 'intangible cultural heritage entering campuses' is essential for fostering appreciation and continuity in cultural education [4].

2. Theoretical basis and research hypotheses

2.1. Dimensions of Iintangible cultural heritage perceived value

There is no unified academic standard for the dimensions of ICH value, as they vary based on the specific research context. Su et al. identified six dimensions of ICH value through empirical research: historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, social, and

economic [5]. Subsequent research on ICH identity in tourist destinations retained this six-dimensional framework, categorising cultural value into historical, spiritual, symbolic, aesthetic, and economic dimensions [6]. Throsby and Hutter, however, take a simplified approach, reducing ICH values to two key dimensions: economic and cultural [7, 8]. This study adopts the six-dimensional classification method, applying it to primary school students' perception of ICH activities, categorising their value into historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, social, and economic dimensions.

2.2. Research on learning interest

Learning interest reflects learners' active engagement with new information and their spontaneous curiosity, demonstrating a drive to explore knowledge [9]. Eccles et al. categorise task value into multiple types, one of which is utility value - defined as the extent to which an individual perceives a task as useful or relevant to personal life, functioning as a tool for achieving broader goals [10, 11]. Experimental studies have shown that utility value interventions can improve students' learning interest and actual learning performance [12]. Hidi and Renninger proposed a four-stage model of interest development, with activity value - an individual's perception of a task's significance - acting as the initial trigger for interest generation [13]. Additionally, effect value (the perceived usefulness of an activity) can further stimulate learning interest and influence learning decisions [14]. While previous research has identified the factors that ignite learning interest, little attention has been given to the role of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and ICH-related activities in fostering this interest. Thus, this study examines whether the value of ICH activities influences primary school students' sustained interest in learning ICH and investigates the specific pathways of this effect.

2.3. CAC theoretical model

In 1993, Eagly and Chaiken systematically explored the formation and transformation of attitudes and their influence on behaviour from the perspective of attitude psychology in their book The Psychology of Attitudes. They introduced the three-dimensional structural model of attitudes: Cognition: an individual's beliefs, thoughts or knowledge about an object; Affection: an individual's emotional response or feeling towards the object, including like or dislike; Conation: an individual's behavioural tendency or intention formed based on his attitude, which includes planning to take or avoid actions related to the attitudinal object [15].

The CAC framework is widely applied in explaining a wide range of decision-making and behavioural processes, including consumption decisions [16], social behaviours [17], health behaviours [18], online behaviours [19], and so on. For example, CAC theory has been utilised to construct a structural equation model to explore the relationship between consumer emotional intelligence, utilitarian value, shopping satisfaction, continuous use intention and electronic loyalty [16]. The basic condition for the generation of tourists' cultural identity towards natural landscapes lies in the ecological characteristics and constructed cultural representations of the landscape object itself. Crucial factors include embodied synesthetic perception, activation of collective memory, and group interaction among tourists. The final manifestation of the generation of cultural identity is the expansion of cognitive content, the enrichment of emotional orientation, and the diversity of behavioural choices [17].

The three types of frameworks mainly adopted for COVID-19 epidemic information (guidance, consequence, and mitigation) activate two distinct emotional arousal mechanisms: energy and tension. Energy arousal encourages the public to forward information, whereas tension arousal significantly increases the public's willingness to share emotions through original statements [18]. The shift in WeChat Moments users' information behaviour from active participation to lurking stems from difficulties in recognising the audience, self, and platform within the communication context. This ambiguity alters users' value perception of Moments-related information behaviour, leading to emotional burnout, which ultimately causes the transition from active engagement to passive lurking [19].

This study constructs a structural equation model based on the CAC framework, using the value of non-genetic inheritance activities on campus – categorised into historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, social, and economic levels as independent variables. These factors influence primary school students' sustained interest in learning intangible cultural heritage by shaping their ethnic identity and cultural confidence.

Based on the above summary, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The perception of the historical value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H2: The perception of the aesthetic value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H3: The perception of the symbolic value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H4: The perception of the spiritual value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H5: The perception of the social value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H6: The perception of the economic value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

2.4. Research on ethnic identity and cultural confidence

Research on ethnic identity traces its origins to Erikson's self-identity model in psychological studies, which suggests that self-identity development spans an individual's progression from childhood to adulthood [20]. Marcia theorises that individuals evolve through distinct stages of ethnic identity: diffusion (lacking a clear identity), foreclosure (making commitments without exploration) or moratorium (exploration stage), ultimately culminating in ethnic identity achievement. In this final stage, individuals gain a clear understanding of their nation through in-depth exploration and firmly identify with their ethnic identity [21, 22].

Studies indicate a significant correlation between the ethnic identity psychology of Vietnamese refugees and their behavioural tendencies in social conflict situations [23]. Additionally, cultural identity education in Chinese culture has varying degrees of positive influence on the psychological processes of knowledge, emotion and behaviour of primary and secondary school students [24]. Furthermore, the sense of identity within the Chinese nation serves as a key mediator in how the media richness of intangible cultural heritage short videos impacts teenagers' cultural confidence [25].

Based on the above summary, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H7: The perception of historical value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' ethnic identity recognition.

H8: The perception of aesthetic value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' ethnic identity recognition.

H9: The perception of symbolic value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' ethnic identity recognition.

H10: The perception of spiritual value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' ethnic identity recognition.

H11: The perception of economic value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' ethnic identity recognition.

H12: The perception of social value of intangible cultural heritage activities in schools has a positive impact on primary school students' ethnic identity recognition.

H13a: Ethnic identity plays an intermediary role between historical value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H13b: Ethnic identity plays an intermediary role between aesthetic value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H13c: Ethnic identity plays an intermediary role between symbolic value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H13d: Ethnic identity plays an intermediary role between spiritual value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H13e: Ethnic identity plays an intermediary role between economic value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H13f: Ethnic identity plays an intermediary role between social value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H14: Ethnic identity positively affects primary school students' confidence in intangible cultural heritage.

H15a: Ethnic identity and confidence in intangible cultural heritage play a chain intermediary role between historical value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H15b: Ethnic identity and confidence in intangible cultural heritage play a chain intermediary role between aesthetic value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H15c: Ethnic identity and confidence in intangible cultural heritage play a chain intermediary role between symbolic value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H15d: Ethnic identity and confidence in intangible cultural heritage play a chain intermediary role between spiritual value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H15e: Ethnic identity and confidence in intangible cultural heritage play a chain intermediary role between social value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

H15f: Ethnic identity and confidence in intangible cultural heritage play a chain intermediary role between economic value and the continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage.

3. Research model and questionnaire scale design

3.1. Questionnaire scale item design

This study measures six independent variables, two mediating variables, and one dependent variable. The assessment of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) activity value is based on the six-dimensional scale developed by Su et al. [5]. Ethnic identity is measured using the six-item scale designed by Phinney and Ong [26], while confidence in ICH culture is evaluated through the cultural confidence questionnaire developed by Zhou Ting and Bi Chongzeng [27]. The measurement of continuous learning interest in ICH is derived from the learning interest dimension in the Elementary Student Coding Attitudes Survey (ESCAS), as designed and applied in Mason and Rich's research [28].

3.2. Structural equation model design

According to the CAC perception-affection-behaviour model, the structural equation of this study is designed as shown in Figure 1.

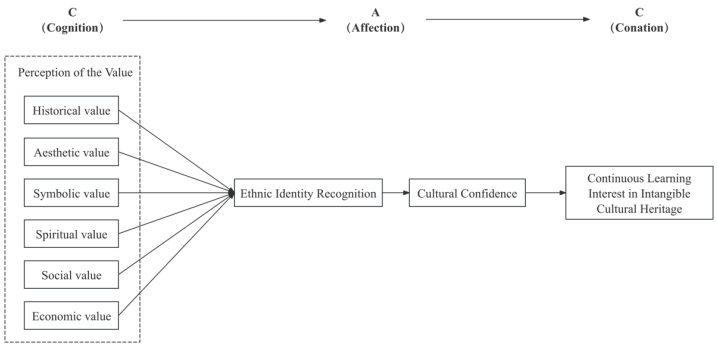

Figure 1. Structural equation model

4. Data analysis and hypothesis testing

4.1. Characteristics of sample data

Before the formal research, 200 pre-survey questionnaires were distributed. Based on the analysis of the collected responses, the items were further refined. In the formal research stage, after obtaining consent from both the schools and parents, questionnaires were distributed across two primary schools in Dalian. A total of 824 questionnaires were issued, with 605 valid responses obtained after excluding invalid submissions - resulting in a recovery rate of 73.42%. The sample included 249 boys and 326 girls, reflecting a relatively balanced gender ratio.

Since 2015, Dalian City, Liaoning Province has established 85 inheritance institutes, with more than 40 inheritors from 26 projects engaging with schools. By 2022, these initiatives had reached over 35,000 students. Additionally, the Dalian Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance Institute Construction Project has continuously expanded the scope of ICH activities in schools while diversifying their formats.

In 2023, the Practice Case of Intangible Cultural Heritage Entering Campuses in Dalian City, Liaoning Province, submitted by the Dalian Cultural Center (Dalian Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center), was recognised as an excellent practice case in the 2021 Intangible Cultural Heritage Entering Campuses collection and display initiative. This activity was supported by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, hosted by China Youth Daily, and managed by China Youth Network [29].

Therefore, selecting this region as the sample placement area for the study aligns with the representative cases of ICH activities in schools and supports the objectives of this research.

4.2. Reliability and validity analysis

Data analysis and statistical evaluation were conducted using SPSS and AMOS. The total Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.941, indicating high reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values for each dimension - historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, economic, and social value; students' ethnic identity recognition; confidence in intangible cultural heritage culture; and continuous learning

interest in ICH - are 0.871, 0.832, 0.863, 0.811, 0.865, 0.834, 0.895, 0.904, and 0.895, respectively, further confirming strong internal consistency.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient for the scale items is 0.936, supporting the suitability of factor analysis. The independent variable CMIN/DF is 1.127, with RMSEA at 0.014, CFI at 0.996, GFI at 0.97, and NFI at 0.969 - all indicating excellent model fit. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each independent variable range between 0.588 and 0.6257, exceeding the threshold of 0.5, while Composite Reliability (CR) values fall between 0.8106 and 0.8707, surpassing the benchmark of 0.7.

Additionally, the square root of the AVE value for each independent variable is greater than its correlation coefficient with other variables, confirming strong discriminant validity in the scale.

4.3. Model fitness test

The maximum likelihood method was used to test the fitting degree of the structural equation model in this study. The results show that the CMIN/DF value is 2.389, the RMSEA is 0.048, the CFI is 0.929, the GFI is 0.850, the IFI is 0.929, the TLI is 0.923, and the NFI is 0.884, proving that the research model has good fitting validity.

4.4. Direct path test

AMOS 26.0 was used to construct and test structural equations, with the results presented in Table 1. The standardised coefficients for historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, economic, and social values in relation to students' continuous learning interest in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) are 0.145, 0.148, 0.224, 0.138, 0.093, and 0.137, respectively.

Symbolic value significantly influences students' sustained learning interest in ICH at the 0.001 level. Historical value (P = 0.001), aesthetic value (P = 0.001), spiritual value (P = 0.003), and social value (P = 0.003) are significant at the 0.005 level, but not at 0.001. Economic value (P = 0.036) does not have a significant effect on continuous learning interest in ICH. Consequently, hypotheses H1, H2, H4, H5, and H6 are not supported, whereas H3 is confirmed.

Regarding ethnic identity recognition, the standardised coefficients for historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, economic, and social values are 0.2, 0.224, 0.169, 0.148, 0.177, and 0.244, respectively—all significant at the 0.001 level. This confirms that these six dimensions positively influence primary school students' ethnic identity. As a result, hypotheses H7, H8, H9, H10, H11, H12, and H14 are supported.

Table 1. Correlation coefficient of direct path. table with 16 rows and 7 columns

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
historical value → ethnic identity recognition	0.2	0.037	4.572	***
aesthetic value → ethnic identity recognition	0.224	0.039	4.957	***
symbolic value → ethnic identity recognition	0.169	0.038	3.873	***
spiritual value → ethnic identity recognition	0.148	0.04	3.304	***
economic value → ethnic identity recognition	0.177	0.037	4.059	***
social value → ethnic identity recognition	0.244	0.038	5.393	***
ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence	0.429	0.052	8.988	***
intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.128	0.045	2.649	0.008
historical value → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.145	0.039	3.245	0.001
aesthetic value → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.148	0.04	3.195	0.001
symbolic value → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.22	0.039	4.933	***
spiritual value → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.138	0.041	3.006	0.003
economic value → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.093	0.038	2.096	0.036
social value → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.137	0.039	2.942	0.003
ethnic identity recognition → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.106	0.057	1.862	0.063

4.5. Mediation effect test

The mediation effect was tested using the Bootstrap method in AMOS, with results presented in Table 2. The mediation effect of ethnic identity recognition on the relationship between historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, and economic value and

continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) was examined. The confidence interval of the Bootstrap under the 95th percentile method contains 0, indicating no significant mediation effect.

For social value, the confidence interval of the Bootstrap under the 95th percentile method is [0.001, 0.056], and under the 95% bias correction method, it is [0.002, 0.059]—neither containing 0. Thus, H13a, H13b, H13c, H13d, and H13e are not supported, while H13f is confirmed.

Additionally, the chain mediation effect of ethnic identity and cultural confidence in ICH was tested across historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, economic, and social values and continuous learning interest in ICH. The confidence intervals of the Bootstrap under the 95% bias correction method are [0.003, 0.024], [0.004, 0.026], [0.003, 0.021], [0.002, 0.02], [0.003, 0.022], and [0.004, 0.027], respectively, while under the 95th percentile method, the intervals are [0.002, 0.021], [0.003, 0.024], [0.002, 0.019], [0.001, 0.018], [0.002, 0.02], and [0.003, 0.026]—none containing 0. Therefore, H15a, H15b, H15c, H15d, H15e, and H15f are supported.

Table 2. Mediating effect test. table with 12 rows and 6 columns

Path	Effect Estimate	95% bias correction method		95th percentile method	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
historical value → ethnic identity recognition → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.021	0.001	0.05	0	0.048
aesthetic value → ethnic identity recognition → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.024	0.001	0.053	0	0.052
symbolic value → ethnic identity recognition → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.018	0.001	0.044	0	0.042
spiritual value → ethnic identity recognition → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.016	0.001	0.041	0	0.039
economic value → ethnic identity recognition → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.019	0.001	0.047	0	0.045
social value → ethnic identity recognition → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.026	0.002	0.059	0.001	0.056
historical value → ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence→ continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.011	0.003	0.024	0.002	0.021
aesthetic value → ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.012	0.004	0.026	0.003	0.024
symbolic value → ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.009	0.003	0.021	0.002	0.019
spiritual value → ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence→continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.008	0.002	0.02	0.001	0.018
economic value → ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence→continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.01	0.003	0.022	0.002	0.02
social value →ethnic identity recognition →intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.013	0.004	0.027	0.003	0.026
aesthetic value → ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.012	0.004	0.026	0.003	0.024
symbolic value → ethnic identity recognition → intangible cultural heritage cultural confidence → continuous learning interest in intangible cultural heritage	0.009	0.003	0.021	0.002	0.019

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Conclusion

1. Primary school pupils' perception of the historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, economic, and social value of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) activities in schools positively influences their ethnic identity and cultural confidence, which in turn

enhances their continuous learning interest in ICH. The findings, based on a sample from Dalian City, indicate that local school-based ICH activities comprehensively reflect the value of ICH and significantly contribute to strengthening pupils' ethnic identity. As their ethnic identity deepens, primary school students develop greater self-confidence in their country's ICH, fostering sustained learning interest. The integration of ICH into schools plays a crucial role in advancing children's cultural education, yielding promising results in raising cultural awareness, fostering cultural confidence, and stimulating interest in cultural learning.

2. Ethnic identity and cultural confidence in ICH function as a chain mediating effect between pupils' perception of ICH value and their interest in continuing to learn ICH. Previous studies have confirmed the simple mediating role of ethnic identity and its positive influence on cultural confidence [25]. However, this study presents a slightly different conclusion: it identifies a chain mediation effect in which ethnic identity and cultural confidence jointly influence primary school students' behavioural intention to continue learning ICH. The findings suggest that pupils' sustained learning interest in ICH follows a gradual process. Their perception of the historical, aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, economic, and social values of school-based ICH activities first enhances their identification with China's ethnic identity, subsequently strengthening their confidence in China's ICH, and ultimately inspiring their continuous learning interest.

5.2. Suggestions

1. Continuously promoting intangible cultural heritage (ICH) activities in schools is essential for enhancing the quality of children's cultural education. Integrating ICH into education requires a deep understanding and respect for its characteristics, alongside consideration of children's cognitive development to identify aspects of ICH that stimulate their interest and creativity [30]. Currently, the implementation of ICH activities in schools nationwide has produced promising results. This study demonstrates that participation in ICH activities significantly strengthens primary school students' ethnic identity and cultural learning interest. Moving forward, it is necessary to sustain and expand these initiatives to cultivate young people with a strong national consciousness and cultural confidence under the guidance and influence of schools.

2. Diversifying the range and presentation of ICH activities in schools can further enhance student engagement. Research indicates that 69.3% of individuals favour a digital model for ICH learning, while 83.3% agree or strongly agree that this approach benefits their learning experience [31]. Currently, most school-based ICH activities rely on traditional formats such as interactions with inheritors, lectures, and interest-based courses, with limited innovation. In the future, schools could explore new presentation methods such as the digitisation of ICH activities to further stimulate students' interest in participation, encourage active learning of ICH skills, and contribute to the ongoing promotion of ICH culture.

5.3. Deficiencies and prospects

Due to limitations in scope and methodology, this study does not fully encompass the impact of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) activities across different regions and schools. Future research should expand the sample size and geographical coverage to strengthen the validity of findings and draw more compelling conclusions.

Additionally, the research model and perspective remain incomplete, as other unexamined factors may influence primary school students' ethnic identity, cultural confidence, and continuous learning interest in ICH. Further refinement of research methods and model design is necessary to uncover a broader range of influences on children's cultural education.

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