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Presenting a Model of Organizational Pride in Tehran Municipality: A Qualitative Study

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to develop and explain a qualitative model of organizational pride in Tehran Municipality by identifying its underlying dimensions, components, and thematic structure from the perspectives of academic experts, organizational specialists, and municipal managers. This study employed a qualitative research design using thematic analysis. The statistical population consisted of university faculty members in the fields of public administration, human resource management, and organizational behavior, experienced organizational experts, and senior managers of Tehran Municipality. Participants were selected through purposive sampling followed by snowball sampling. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Saturation was reached after the twelfth interview, although three additional interviews were conducted to ensure completeness, resulting in a final sample of fifteen participants. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews lasting between 60 and 120 minutes. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic network analysis with the support of MAXQDA 2024 software. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking, peer review, participant feedback, and expert evaluation procedures were employed. Inter-coder reliability was assessed using Holsti's coefficient, which indicated a high level of agreement. The analysis revealed that organizational pride in Tehran Municipality is a multidimensional construct composed of three overarching themes, twelve organizing themes, and one hundred twenty basic themes. The first overarching theme, identity and belonging pride, encompassed deep organizational belonging, pride in individual and team development, pride in workplace and welfare, security and reward-based validation, and pride in cultural and traditional heritage. The second overarching theme, mission-oriented and value-based pride, included social impact competence, ethical credibility and organizational transparency, and respect for leadership and senior management. The third overarching theme, efficiency and performance pride, comprised organizational credibility and position, competence in innovation and performance achievements, credibility of processes and systems, and pride in qualitative and practical achievements. The findings indicated that organizational pride is formed through the interaction of employees' emotional attachment to the organization, commitment to meaningful public service and organizational values, and perceptions of organizational effectiveness, innovation, and social reputation. The findings demonstrate that organizational pride is a comprehensive and multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond emotional attachment and encompasses identity, values, social contribution, organizational reputation, leadership, innovation, and performance. In the context of Tehran Municipality, employees' pride is strengthened when they experience a strong sense of belonging, perceive their work as socially meaningful, trust organizational leadership and ethical practices, and recognize organizational competence and achievements. The proposed model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding organizational pride in public-sector organizations and offers practical insights for managers seeking to enhance employee engagement, commitment, citizenship behavior, and organizational effectiveness through the development of pride-enhancing organizational environments.

Keywords: Organizational Pride; Organizational Identity; Organizational Belonging; Public Organizations; Municipal Employees; Thematic Analysis; Tehran Municipality; Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Introduction

In contemporary organizations, human resources are increasingly recognized as the most valuable strategic asset and the primary source of sustainable competitive advantage. Beyond financial resources, technology, and physical infrastructure, organizations depend on employees who are emotionally committed, psychologically engaged, and behaviorally aligned with organizational goals. Consequently, scholars and practitioners have devoted growing attention to understanding psychological constructs that strengthen employees' attachment to their organizations and encourage them to contribute beyond formal job requirements. Among these constructs, organizational pride has emerged as a particularly important concept because it reflects a positive emotional and cognitive evaluation of organizational membership and serves as a powerful driver of desirable workplace attitudes and behaviors [1]. Organizational pride refers to the positive feelings employees experience when they perceive their organization as successful, respected, ethical, and meaningful. It is associated with a sense of honor, dignity, and personal value derived from being a member of a particular organization. Employees who experience organizational pride tend to identify more strongly with organizational goals and values, demonstrate higher commitment, and exhibit stronger intentions to contribute to organizational success [2]. As organizations increasingly operate in competitive and dynamic environments, understanding the mechanisms that create and sustain organizational pride has become a critical managerial concern.

The theoretical foundations of organizational pride are closely related to organizational identity and social identity perspectives. According to these approaches, individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups and organizations. When employees perceive their organization as reputable, ethical, and successful, they internalize this positive image as part of their own identity, leading to stronger feelings of pride and belonging. Organizational identity provides employees with a framework through which they understand who they are within the organization and how their contributions relate to broader organizational objectives [3]. Recent studies have further emphasized that organizational identity has become increasingly important in the context of rapid environmental and technological changes. Digital transformation initiatives, organizational restructuring, and Industry 5.0 developments require organizations to preserve a coherent sense of identity while simultaneously adapting to changing conditions. Under such circumstances, organizational pride serves as a mechanism that reinforces continuity, commitment, and emotional attachment among employees [4]. The relationship between organizational identity and pride suggests that employees are more likely to develop strong emotional bonds with organizations whose values, mission, and public image align with their personal beliefs and aspirations.

A growing body of empirical research has demonstrated that organizational pride produces numerous positive outcomes for both employees and organizations. One of the most frequently reported consequences is enhanced organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior refers to discretionary actions that are not formally required but contribute to organizational effectiveness. Employees who experience pride in their organizations are more likely to assist colleagues, voluntarily contribute additional effort, protect organizational interests, and represent the organization positively to external stakeholders. Evidence from healthcare settings indicates that organizational pride significantly increases nurses' willingness to engage in extra-role behaviors that benefit patients, colleagues, and the organization as a whole [5]. Similarly, research in hospitality organizations has shown that organizational pride strengthens employees' organizational citizenship behavior by enhancing the meaningfulness of work and reinforcing positive organizational perceptions [6]. These findings

suggest that organizational pride functions not only as an emotional state but also as a catalyst for constructive workplace behavior.

Organizational pride has also been linked to employee creativity, innovation, and performance. Creativity has become an essential capability in modern organizations because it enables adaptation, problem-solving, and continuous improvement. Employees who are proud of their organizations often perceive themselves as contributors to a meaningful and successful enterprise, thereby increasing their motivation to generate new ideas and pursue innovative solutions. Research conducted in the petrochemical industry demonstrated that organizational pride significantly predicts employee creativity and innovation-oriented behavior [1]. Likewise, studies examining organizational support, ethical climates, and positive workplace relationships have highlighted the role of pride in encouraging proactive behavior, knowledge sharing, and collaborative problem-solving [7]. Such findings indicate that organizational pride can serve as a valuable intangible resource that enhances organizational adaptability and long-term performance.

The antecedents of organizational pride have been examined from multiple perspectives. Leadership has consistently emerged as one of the most influential factors shaping employees' pride in their organizations. Effective leaders communicate a compelling vision, establish trust, create meaningful work experiences, and foster a supportive organizational environment. Research has shown that visionary leadership contributes to organizational pride both directly and indirectly through the development of organizational trust and stronger psychological attachment to the organization [8]. Participative leadership practices have also been associated with higher levels of organizational identification and membership pride, particularly when employees perceive that organizational decisions are inclusive and socially responsible [7]. Leadership therefore plays a crucial role in cultivating the conditions under which organizational pride can emerge and flourish.

Another important antecedent of organizational pride is organizational culture and the broader work environment. Employees are more likely to experience pride when they perceive their organization as fair, supportive, respectful, and aligned with meaningful values. Work-life balance, supportive human resource practices, and opportunities for personal development contribute significantly to positive organizational perceptions and employee well-being. Research has demonstrated that work-life balance is positively associated with organizational pride and job satisfaction, suggesting that organizations that support employees' personal and professional needs create stronger emotional bonds among their workforce [9]. Similarly, studies on quality of work life have emphasized that supportive organizational environments enhance employee involvement, engagement, and psychological attachment to the organization [10]. These findings highlight the importance of creating organizational contexts that promote both employee welfare and organizational effectiveness.

Corporate social responsibility and ethical conduct represent additional factors influencing organizational pride. Employees increasingly evaluate organizations not only on the basis of economic performance but also according to their social and ethical contributions. Organizations that demonstrate social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and ethical behavior tend to generate stronger feelings of pride among employees because such actions enhance organizational legitimacy and reputation. Research has shown that perceptions of corporate social responsibility positively influence organizational citizenship behavior through the mediating role of organizational pride [6]. Furthermore, employees who perceive their organizations as socially responsible and ethically guided are more likely to identify with organizational values and develop a sense of pride in membership [7]. Consequently, organizational pride reflects both internal organizational experiences and external evaluations of organizational conduct.

Recent studies have also highlighted the relationship between organizational pride and broader psychological constructs such as professional identity, organizational climate, organizational justice, and employee loyalty. Employees' perceptions of fairness, support, and respect contribute substantially to the development of positive organizational emotions. Organizational support has been found to strengthen employee loyalty through enhanced organizational identity and attachment [3]. Similarly, organizational justice moderates the effects of workplace behaviors on positive organizational outcomes and contributes to employees' perceptions of organizational legitimacy and trustworthiness [11]. Research conducted among nurses has further demonstrated that professional identity and organizational climate significantly influence workplace attitudes and embeddedness, highlighting the interconnected nature of identity-related constructs and organizational experiences [12, 13]. These findings suggest that organizational pride is embedded within a broader network of psychological and organizational factors that collectively shape employee behavior.

Despite the growing international literature on organizational pride, significant contextual differences exist across organizational sectors and cultural settings. Public organizations, particularly municipal institutions, operate under unique conditions characterized by extensive public accountability, service obligations, political influences, and complex stakeholder relationships. Employees working in municipal organizations are directly involved in delivering services that affect citizens' daily lives, including urban development, transportation, environmental management, public safety, and community welfare. Consequently, the sources and manifestations of organizational pride in municipal contexts may differ substantially from those observed in private-sector organizations. Municipal employees may derive pride not only from organizational achievements but also from their perceived contribution to public welfare, community development, and social impact. However, empirical investigations examining organizational pride within municipal settings remain limited, particularly in developing countries and Middle Eastern contexts [14].

In the Iranian context, organizational pride has received relatively limited scholarly attention despite its potential importance for improving employee commitment, organizational effectiveness, and public service quality. Existing studies have primarily examined organizational pride as a predictor or mediator of specific organizational outcomes, such as social responsibility, organizational citizenship behavior, and workplace attitudes [15]. Nevertheless, limited research has focused on identifying the underlying dimensions, components, and contextual determinants of organizational pride itself. This gap is particularly evident in large public organizations such as Tehran Municipality, where employees encounter unique organizational structures, cultural traditions, public responsibilities, and managerial challenges. Given the municipality's critical role in urban governance and service delivery, understanding the factors that foster organizational pride among its employees may provide valuable insights for strengthening employee engagement, improving organizational performance, and enhancing public trust.

Furthermore, recent developments in organizational studies emphasize that employee attitudes and identities are increasingly shaped by complex interactions among organizational culture, leadership, technological transformation, ethical values, social responsibility, and professional development opportunities [4, 16]. These multidimensional influences suggest that organizational pride should not be viewed as a single emotional response but rather as a multifaceted construct encompassing identity, values, mission, performance, and social contribution. A qualitative exploration is therefore necessary to uncover the underlying meanings, experiences, and dimensions associated with organizational pride in a complex public

organization such as Tehran Municipality. Such an approach enables researchers to capture rich contextual insights that may not be adequately represented through predefined quantitative measures.

Accordingly, the present study aims to develop and explain a qualitative model of organizational pride in Tehran Municipality by identifying its underlying dimensions, components, and thematic structure from the perspectives of academic experts, organizational specialists, and municipal managers.

Methodology

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach with the aim of identifying and explaining the components and indicators of organizational pride within Tehran Municipality. Given the exploratory nature of the research problem and the limited availability of comprehensive theoretical models addressing organizational pride in municipal organizations, a qualitative strategy based on thematic analysis was adopted. The qualitative approach enabled the researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, interpretations, and professional insights regarding the antecedents, manifestations, and consequences of organizational pride. The study was designed as an exploratory qualitative inquiry in which data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using a thematic network analysis framework.

The target population consisted of individuals with extensive academic expertise or practical experience in the fields of human resource management, organizational behavior, and municipal administration. To ensure the richness and credibility of the data, three groups of participants were included. The first group comprised university faculty members holding doctoral degrees and academic ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor in disciplines such as public administration, human resource management, and organizational behavior. The second group included experienced specialists and consultants with substantial professional backgrounds in human resource development, organizational behavior, and administrative management. The third group consisted of current and recently retired senior and middle-level managers from Tehran Municipality who possessed extensive managerial experience and direct involvement in organizational affairs.

Participant selection was carried out through purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling. Initially, several well-known experts who met the inclusion criteria were identified and invited to participate. Subsequently, each participant was asked to recommend other qualified individuals who could provide valuable insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that no new concepts, dimensions, or categories emerged from subsequent interviews. Saturation was reached after the twelfth interview; however, three additional interviews were conducted to ensure completeness and confirm the stability of the emerging themes. Consequently, the final sample consisted of fifteen participants with diverse academic, managerial, and professional backgrounds, providing a comprehensive perspective on organizational pride within the municipal context.

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which are considered one of the most effective techniques for exploring participants' lived experiences, interpretations, and perceptions in qualitative research. Prior to the commencement of data collection, an interview protocol was developed based on the research objectives and a preliminary review of relevant literature. The protocol included a set of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to

discuss their understanding of organizational pride, its determinants, manifestations, facilitating factors, barriers, and potential strategies for enhancement within Tehran Municipality.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through online communication platforms, depending on participants' availability and preferences. Each interview lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. At the beginning of each session, participants received a detailed explanation of the study objectives, ethical considerations, confidentiality measures, and their rights as research participants. Informed consent was obtained before proceeding with the interviews. Throughout the interview process, participants were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences and viewpoints freely, while the interviewer used probing questions to clarify responses and explore emerging themes in greater depth.

The interview questions focused on participants' conceptualizations of organizational pride, organizational factors contributing to pride among municipal employees, behavioral indicators of organizational pride, its influence on motivation and commitment, factors that may undermine pride, and recommendations for strengthening organizational pride within municipal organizations. To ensure accurate and comprehensive data capture, multiple recording methods were employed simultaneously, including audio recording, note-taking, and memo writing. Immediately after each interview, recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed carefully. To enhance data accuracy and reduce transcription errors, each transcript was checked and verified twice against the original recordings before being entered into the analysis process.

To establish the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, several validation procedures were employed. Member checking was conducted by providing participants with summaries of the findings and preliminary interpretations for feedback and confirmation. Peer review was performed by doctoral students and university faculty members familiar with qualitative research and organizational behavior. In addition, participant feedback and collaborative interpretation were utilized throughout the analysis process to ensure that the findings accurately reflected participants' perspectives. Continuous consultation with academic supervisors and experts further strengthened the credibility and dependability of the study.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis and thematic network analysis. This analytical approach was selected because it provides a systematic and rigorous framework for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. Thematic analysis enabled the researchers to move beyond simple descriptions and develop a comprehensive conceptual model of organizational pride based on participants' experiences and perspectives.

The analysis process began with data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts. During this stage, meaningful statements and relevant segments of text were identified and coded. Each interview was examined line by line, and initial codes were assigned to expressions, ideas, and experiences related to organizational pride. Similar codes emerging across different interviews were grouped together and refined through an iterative comparison process.

Following the initial coding stage, the extracted codes were organized into basic themes. These basic themes were subsequently clustered into broader organizing themes that represented higher levels of abstraction and conceptual integration. Through continuous comparison, reflection, and refinement, the organizing themes were further synthesized into overarching global themes representing the central dimensions of organizational pride within Tehran Municipality. This hierarchical process facilitated the construction of a thematic network that illustrated the relationships among concepts and provided a coherent representation of the phenomenon under investigation.

The analytical procedure followed three major stages. The first stage involved text reduction and coding, during which interview transcripts were transformed into meaningful analytical units. The second stage consisted of theme transformation and categorization, whereby basic themes were organized into higher-order thematic structures. The third stage focused on the exploration, interpretation, and description of thematic networks to identify the core dimensions and structural relationships underlying organizational pride. Throughout the analysis, the researchers continuously compared emerging themes with the original data to ensure conceptual consistency and analytical rigor.

To support the coding and thematic development process, MAXQDA 2024 software was utilized. The software facilitated data management, coding, theme organization, retrieval of coded segments, and visualization of thematic relationships. Reliability of the coding process was assessed using Holsti’s coefficient of intercoder agreement. A subset of the interview data was independently coded by two coders, and the resulting coefficient exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating a high level of coding consistency and reliability. The obtained agreement coefficient demonstrated that the identified themes and categories were sufficiently stable and dependable for developing the final qualitative model of organizational pride in Tehran Municipality.

Findings and Results

The qualitative findings were obtained through thematic analysis of 15 semi-structured interviews with academic experts, experienced specialists, and senior managers of Tehran Municipality. Although theoretical saturation was reached at the twelfth interview, three additional interviews were conducted to ensure the stability and comprehensiveness of the extracted themes. In the first stage, 610 initial codes were identified from the interview texts. After repeated review, comparison, integration, and refinement, these codes were organized into 120 basic themes, 12 organizing themes, and 3 overarching themes. The final thematic structure presents organizational pride in Tehran Municipality as a multidimensional phenomenon consisting of identity and belonging pride, mission-oriented and value-based pride, and efficiency and performance pride.

Table 1

Sample Initial Coding of Interviews

Row	Interview Extract	Basic Themes
1	I proudly say that I am part of a team that directly contributes to improving the quality of life of more than nine million people in this metropolis; this sense of responsibility is pride-generating.	Saying “I am an employee of Tehran Municipality”; recognition of the macro mission; impact on citizens’ quality of life
2	When major construction projects such as metro lines are completed, I feel that I have been part of history-making. This shared history is highly valuable.	Pride in organizational history; participation in major construction projects; influence on Tehran’s future
3	The work environment here is full of mutual respect. I feel that I work in a large family where everyone values one another.	Shared identity with colleagues; friendly and respectful relations; respectful work environment
4	I am proud of an organization that is committed to financial transparency and values citizens’ resources. This means organizational honesty.	Commitment to financial transparency; organizational honesty; trust in the organization
5	Our uniform is not merely clothing; when I wear it, I feel that I am an official representative of the city, and this strengthens my sense of social responsibility.	Pride in wearing the uniform; social responsibility; acceptance of public role
6	The training opportunities provided for improving our professional skills show that management seeks to develop competent human resources.	Participation in training courses; acquisition of unique skills; career development opportunities
7	Even on the hardest days and holidays, when we are in the field to provide services, our commitment to citizens increases and we feel genuine service orientation.	Service provision on holidays; high-quality services; social responsibility
8	When a complex urban problem is solved through coordination among different units, the public credibility of the organization increases, and we feel proud of it.	Solving urban problems; public credibility of the organization; teamwork spirit
9	Even outside working hours, I willingly speak about the municipality’s achievements; defending the organization is an ethical duty for me.	Defending the organization against unfair criticism; organizational loyalty
10	My sense of belonging to the municipality goes beyond salary; we are truly shaping the future of Tehran.	Deep sense of belonging; influence on Tehran’s future; organizational commitment
11	This is our organization, and I can confidently say that I enjoy good job security, which allows me to focus on my work.	Job security; reliable retirement system; timely salary payment
12	When I see that our projects are introduced nationally as successful examples of urban management, I feel organizational competence.	Leading institution in urban management; nationally exemplary projects; competence of senior management

13	Our organizational culture is based on shared values; these organizational traditions have made our collective identity very strong.	Strong organizational culture; organizational traditions; collective identity
14	Our management welcomes calculated risks, which shows that the organization values creativity and innovation.	Valuing innovation; support for calculated risks; encouragement of creativity
15	I feel that fairness in performance evaluation and resource allocation exists in this organization, and this increases motivation.	Rule of fairness and justice; fair performance evaluation; employee support
16	The high accuracy of my colleagues in implementing cleanliness and beautification projects has noticeably improved service quality.	Role in urban cleanliness and beautification; accuracy in project implementation; speed of action
17	I am confident that our organization focuses on strict compliance with rules and regulations; this stability and order are necessary for long-term success.	Observance of rules and regulations; organizational order; stability of procedures
18	Our internal processes are designed so that welfare facilities properly reach employees, and this organizational support is valuable.	Welfare facilities; reward and incentive system; organizational support
19	My participation in planning meetings and expressing views about process improvement strengthens my sense of ownership and belonging.	Participation in decision-making; being heard; sense of ownership
20	I introduce the municipality as a place that cares not only about the city but also about my career future, and I am proud of that.	Ideal workplace; career development opportunities; general pride in the organization

Table 1 shows that the initial coding process was based on meaningful statements extracted directly from the interview texts. The examples indicate that participants’ perceptions of organizational pride were not limited to emotional attachment, but also included public service, ethical credibility, managerial competence, work environment, job security, professional development, and perceived organizational impact. These initial codes provided the basis for forming broader basic themes.

Table 2

Formation of Organizing Themes

Basic Themes	Organizing Theme
Saying “I am an employee of Tehran Municipality”; deep sense of belonging; recognition of the macro mission; shared identity with colleagues; voluntary use of the municipality symbol; defending the organization against unfair criticism; pride in wearing the uniform; feeling of membership in a large family; introducing the municipality as an ideal workplace; pride in organizational history	Deep Organizational Belonging
Impact on citizens’ quality of life; participation in major construction projects; role in urban cleanliness and beautification; responsibility for sustainable development; participation in crisis management; promotion of citizenship culture; service provision on holidays; solving urban problems; services to special groups; influence on Tehran’s future	Social Impact Competence
Public credibility of the organization; positive reactions of others to the job; powerful technical and engineering hub; leading institution in urban management; hosting international events; influence on national policymaking; relative occupational superiority; membership in a large and complex organization; powerful brand; citizens’ respect	Organizational Credibility and Position
Observance of professional ethics; respectful work environment; rule of fairness and justice; commitment to financial transparency; valuing innovation; respect for cultural diversity; social responsibility; organizational charitable activities; attention to individual development; commitment to Islamic-Iranian values	Ethical Credibility and Organizational Transparency
Receiving national and international awards; organizational financial success; completion of complex projects; use of new technologies; solving unsolved problems; performance during the pandemic; nationally exemplary projects; high quality standards; innovation in urban services; creativity in problem-solving	Competence in Innovation and Performance Achievements
Competence of senior management; long-term vision of managers; valuing employees’ opinions; expertise-oriented management; integrity of managers; accountable managers; succession planning system; confidence in organizational guidance; capable female managers	Respect for Leadership and Senior Management
Cooperation with specialists; teamwork spirit; acquisition of unique skills; educational opportunities; participation in training courses; receiving valid certificates; usefulness of acquired experience; presence of experienced mentors	Pride in Individual and Team Development
Safe work environment; welfare facilities; priority of collective success; healthy competition; architecture and cleanliness of workplace; friendly and respectful relationships; attention to employee health; internal social networks; work-life balance	Pride in Workplace and Welfare
Autonomy at work; job security; competitive salary and benefits; sufficient non-cash benefits; reliable retirement system; receiving rewards; job stability; fair fringe benefits; proper insurance coverage; welfare facilities; income security	Security and Reward-Based Validation
Strong organizational culture; shared values; organizational traditions; internal cultural events; collective identity; organizational success stories; organizational symbols and rituals; organizational ceremonies; departmental subculture; pride in unified culture	Pride in Cultural and Traditional Heritage
Acceptance of new ideas; continuous process improvement; advanced information technology; smart systems; research and development; testing new ideas; learning environment; support for calculated risks	Credibility of Processes and Systems
High-quality services; accuracy in project implementation; citizen satisfaction; high work standards; timely delivery of work; attention to detail; positive feedback from clients; continuous quality improvement	Pride in Qualitative and Practical Achievements

Table 2 demonstrates the transition from basic themes to 12 organizing themes. The findings show that organizational pride in Tehran Municipality is shaped by a combination of affective, ethical, developmental, managerial, cultural, and performance-related factors. These organizing themes indicate that employees’ pride emerges both from internal organizational experiences and from the perceived public value of municipal work.

Table 3

Formation of Overarching Themes

Organizing Themes	Overarching Theme
Deep organizational belonging; pride in individual and team development; pride in workplace and welfare; security and reward-based validation; pride in cultural and traditional heritage	Identity and Belonging Pride
Social impact competence; ethical credibility and organizational transparency; respect for leadership and senior management	Mission-Oriented and Value-Based Pride
Organizational credibility and position; competence in innovation and performance achievements; credibility of processes and systems; pride in qualitative and practical achievements	Efficiency and Performance Pride

Table 3 presents the final thematic structure of the study. The 12 organizing themes were integrated into three overarching themes: identity and belonging pride, mission-oriented and value-based pride, and efficiency and performance pride. This structure shows that organizational pride in Tehran Municipality is formed through employees’ identification with the organization, their perception of meaningful public service and ethical values, and their evaluation of organizational competence, effectiveness, and achievements.

Table 4

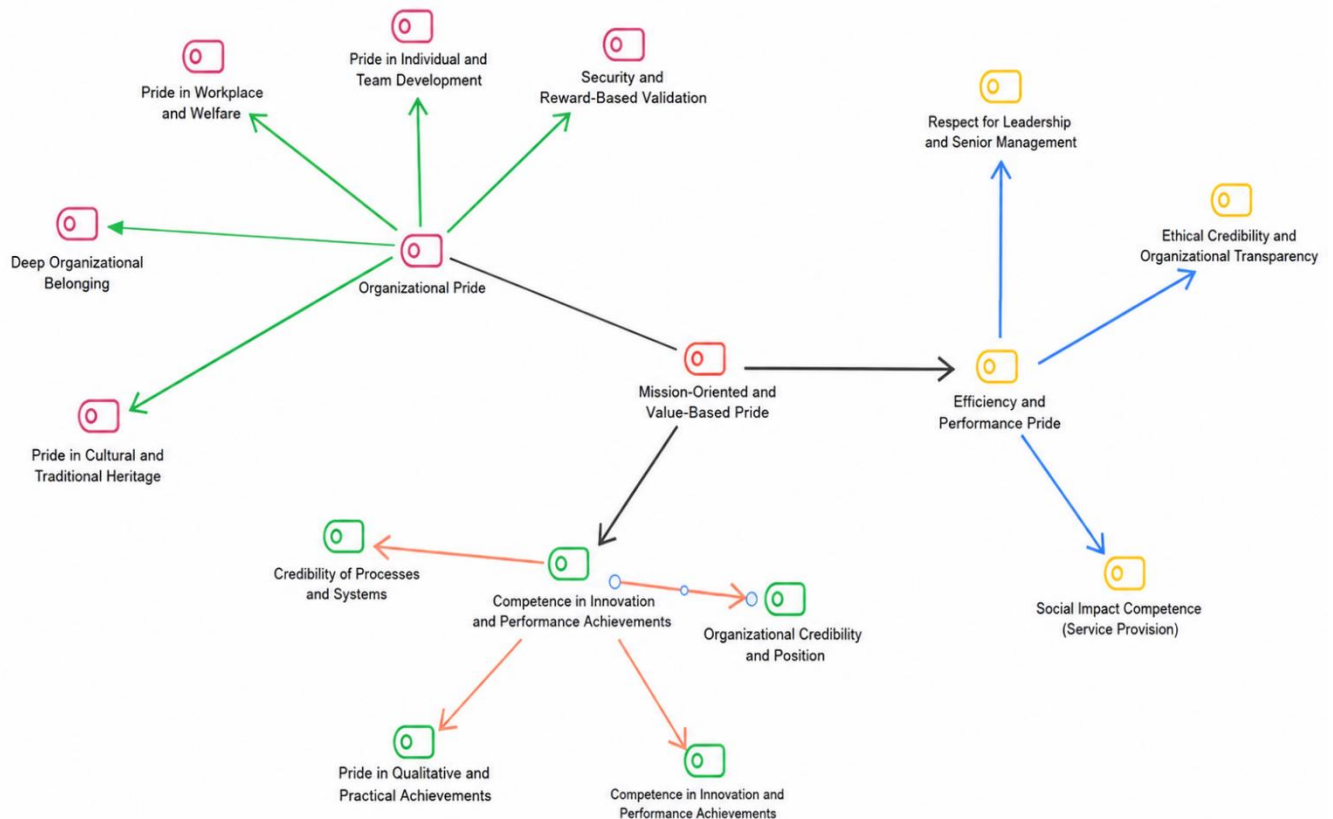
Final Qualitative Model of Organizational Pride in Tehran Municipality

Overarching Theme	Organizing Themes	Number of Basic Themes
Identity and Belonging Pride	Deep organizational belonging; pride in individual and team development; pride in workplace and welfare; security and reward-based validation; pride in cultural and traditional heritage	50
Mission-Oriented and Value-Based Pride	Social impact competence; ethical credibility and organizational transparency; respect for leadership and senior management	30
Efficiency and Performance Pride	Organizational credibility and position; competence in innovation and performance achievements; credibility of processes and systems; pride in qualitative and practical achievements	40
Total	12 organizing themes	120 basic themes

Table 4 summarizes the final qualitative model. The largest thematic area was identity and belonging pride, consisting of 50 basic themes, which indicates the central role of emotional attachment, organizational identification, workplace experience, welfare, security, and shared culture. Mission-oriented and value-based pride included 30 basic themes and reflected the importance of public service, ethical conduct, transparency, and leadership. Efficiency and performance pride included 40 basic themes and emphasized organizational reputation, innovation, process credibility, and service quality. Overall, the model suggests that organizational pride in Tehran Municipality is a layered construct shaped by belonging, value alignment, and perceived organizational effectiveness.

Figure 1

Final Model



Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to develop a qualitative model of organizational pride in Tehran Municipality through thematic analysis of experts’ and managers’ experiences and perceptions. The findings revealed that organizational pride is a multidimensional construct consisting of three overarching themes, namely identity and belonging pride, mission-oriented and value-based pride, and efficiency and performance pride. These overarching themes were further represented through twelve organizing themes and one hundred twenty basic themes, indicating the complex and multifaceted nature of organizational pride within public organizations. The results suggest that organizational pride extends beyond a simple positive attitude toward the workplace and encompasses a broad range of psychological, cultural, ethical, social, managerial, and performance-related dimensions. This finding is consistent with previous studies that conceptualize organizational pride as an emotional and cognitive state arising from employees’ positive evaluation of their organizational membership and organizational achievements [1, 2].

One of the most significant findings of this study was the emergence of identity and belonging pride as a major dimension of organizational pride. This overarching theme incorporated deep organizational belonging, pride in individual and team development, pride in workplace and welfare, security and reward-based validation, and pride in cultural and traditional heritage. These findings indicate that employees develop pride when they perceive themselves as meaningful members of a respected organizational community. Feelings of belonging, shared identity, organizational history, and collective values create a psychological bond between employees and the organization that strengthens organizational attachment and

commitment. This result aligns closely with organizational identity theory, which argues that employees derive part of their self-concept from organizational membership and experience pride when the organization possesses positive and distinctive characteristics [3]. Similarly, research has demonstrated that organizational identification significantly contributes to employee loyalty and positive workplace attitudes by strengthening employees' psychological connection to the organization [3, 7]. The findings also support recent arguments suggesting that organizational identity has become increasingly important in periods of organizational transformation, where pride serves as a stabilizing mechanism reinforcing continuity and commitment among employees [4].

The findings further showed that opportunities for personal growth, professional development, teamwork, and supportive workplace conditions play a central role in shaping organizational pride. Participants repeatedly emphasized educational opportunities, skill acquisition, collaboration with experienced colleagues, and a positive work environment as sources of pride. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that supportive organizational climates enhance employees' emotional attachment and positive evaluations of organizational membership. Research on work-life balance has demonstrated that organizations that provide supportive working conditions generate stronger organizational pride and higher job satisfaction among employees [9]. Likewise, quality of work life has been found to influence employee involvement and workplace commitment through the creation of positive organizational experiences [10]. The present findings therefore suggest that organizational pride is strengthened when employees perceive that the organization invests in their professional growth and well-being.

Another important result was the identification of mission-oriented and value-based pride as a fundamental dimension of organizational pride. This theme consisted of social impact competence, ethical credibility and organizational transparency, and respect for leadership and senior management. The prominence of these dimensions reflects the unique nature of municipal organizations, where employees frequently evaluate their work according to its impact on citizens and society. Participants expressed pride in contributing to urban development, improving citizens' quality of life, solving social problems, and supporting sustainable community development. Such findings indicate that employees derive pride not only from organizational success but also from the social value created through their work. These results are highly consistent with studies showing that meaningful work and corporate social responsibility strengthen organizational pride and citizenship behavior among employees [6]. Employees who perceive their work as socially valuable are more likely to develop emotional attachment to the organization and view their organizational membership as a source of personal significance [2].

The findings regarding ethical credibility and organizational transparency also deserve particular attention. Participants consistently highlighted fairness, justice, transparency, accountability, ethical conduct, and social responsibility as important sources of organizational pride. These findings suggest that employees experience pride when they perceive their organization as morally legitimate and socially responsible. Previous research similarly indicates that ethical organizational environments foster stronger organizational identification, trust, and pride among employees [6, 8]. The role of justice and fairness identified in this study is also supported by recent evidence demonstrating that organizational justice contributes significantly to positive workplace attitudes and organizational citizenship behaviors [11]. Therefore, organizational pride appears to be deeply connected to employees' perceptions of ethical integrity and organizational legitimacy.

Respect for leadership and senior management emerged as another important organizing theme within mission-oriented and value-based pride. Participants emphasized visionary leadership, managerial competence, integrity, responsiveness, and

support for employee participation as major contributors to organizational pride. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that leadership practices influence organizational pride through the development of trust, identification, and positive organizational perceptions [8]. Visionary leaders create a compelling sense of purpose and direction that strengthens employees' confidence in the organization and enhances their willingness to identify with organizational goals. Similarly, participative leadership approaches have been shown to increase organizational identification and pride by encouraging employee involvement and recognition [7]. The present findings reinforce the argument that leadership is not merely an administrative function but also a critical source of organizational meaning and pride.

The third overarching theme identified in this study was efficiency and performance pride, which included organizational credibility and position, competence in innovation and performance achievements, credibility of processes and systems, and pride in qualitative and practical achievements. Participants frequently referred to organizational reputation, public recognition, technological advancement, innovation, service quality, and successful project implementation as sources of pride. These findings suggest that employees derive pride from belonging to an organization that is perceived as competent, successful, and respected by external stakeholders. Such results are highly consistent with the literature emphasizing the importance of organizational reputation and prestige in shaping employee attitudes and organizational identification [7]. Employees are more likely to experience pride when their organization enjoys a favorable public image because organizational reputation becomes integrated into their own social identity.

The findings concerning innovation and organizational performance also correspond closely with previous empirical evidence. Participants associated pride with the successful completion of complex projects, adoption of new technologies, innovative problem-solving, and organizational achievements. Similar relationships have been documented in prior studies demonstrating that organizational pride enhances employee creativity and innovative behavior [1]. Employees who feel proud of their organization often exhibit greater motivation to contribute to organizational success and continuous improvement. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on process credibility, technological capability, and learning-oriented environments aligns with contemporary perspectives emphasizing the strategic importance of innovation and organizational adaptability in rapidly changing environments [4]. These findings indicate that organizational pride is not solely an emotional phenomenon but also reflects employees' evaluations of organizational competence and effectiveness.

The findings additionally revealed substantial interconnections among the three overarching themes. Identity and belonging pride, mission-oriented and value-based pride, and efficiency and performance pride appear to reinforce one another rather than operate independently. Employees who perceive their organization as socially valuable and ethically responsible are more likely to identify with it and feel proud of its achievements. Similarly, organizational success and public recognition strengthen employees' sense of belonging and reinforce positive evaluations of organizational values and leadership. This interconnected structure supports contemporary organizational theories suggesting that employee attitudes emerge from the interaction of multiple organizational and psychological factors rather than isolated influences [12, 13, 16]. Therefore, organizational pride should be understood as a holistic and multidimensional construct that integrates identity, values, relationships, leadership, performance, and social contribution.

Overall, the findings contribute to the organizational behavior literature by providing a comprehensive qualitative model of organizational pride within a public-sector context. While previous studies have often examined organizational pride as a predictor or mediator of specific outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior, loyalty, creativity, and social

responsibility [5, 6, 15], the present study extends existing knowledge by identifying the underlying dimensions and components that constitute organizational pride itself. The resulting model demonstrates that organizational pride within Tehran Municipality is rooted in employees' sense of identity and belonging, commitment to meaningful social service and ethical values, and confidence in organizational competence and achievements. Consequently, strengthening organizational pride may represent an effective strategy for enhancing employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, commitment, innovation, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the study was conducted exclusively within Tehran Municipality, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other public organizations, private-sector institutions, or different cultural contexts. Second, the qualitative nature of the research relied on participants' perceptions and experiences, which may be influenced by personal interpretations and organizational circumstances. Third, although theoretical saturation was achieved, the number of participants was relatively limited and may not capture all possible perspectives regarding organizational pride. Finally, the findings represent a specific organizational and temporal context and may evolve as organizational structures, leadership practices, and environmental conditions change over time.

Future studies are encouraged to validate the proposed model using quantitative methods and larger samples across different organizational settings. Comparative studies between public and private organizations could provide deeper insight into contextual differences in organizational pride. Researchers may also investigate the relationships between organizational pride and variables such as employee engagement, organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, innovative behavior, and job performance. Longitudinal studies examining the development of organizational pride over time would also contribute to understanding its dynamic nature. In addition, future research could explore the influence of digital transformation, organizational change, and emerging work arrangements on employees' organizational pride.

Managers should actively strengthen employees' sense of organizational belonging through inclusive communication, participation in decision-making, and recognition of employee contributions. Organizational leaders should promote ethical conduct, transparency, fairness, and accountability to enhance trust and pride among employees. Investment in employee development programs, training opportunities, career advancement pathways, and supportive workplace conditions can further reinforce positive organizational identification. Municipal organizations should also emphasize the social impact of employees' work and communicate organizational achievements effectively to strengthen employees' awareness of their contribution to society. Finally, developing innovative organizational processes, maintaining high service quality, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement can enhance organizational credibility and create stronger feelings of pride among employees.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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