

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The role of literature in group cultural identity: Constructing psychological belonging of rural communities through Chinese local literature

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ABSTRACT

Based on group cultural identity theory and environmental psychology, this study employs a mixed-methods design to systematically analyze the mechanisms through which Chinese rural literature contributes to the construction of rural group psychological belonging. The research selected 95 classic rural literary works as textual corpus, combined with questionnaire surveys of 300 readers and in-depth interviews with 30 representative individuals. Using content analysis, thematic analysis, and statistical analysis methods, the study thoroughly explores the intrinsic connections between literary representation and group identity. The findings reveal: (1) Rural literature stimulates group cultural identity through multi-dimensional construction of environmental psychological imagery, with the emotional resonance index of natural environment descriptions reaching 4.8 points, and historical retrospective narratives showing an extremely strong positive correlation with collective memory intensity ($r=0.856$); (2) Character portrayal strengthens social role identification through archetypal significance and psychological projection, with typical character archetypes significantly correlating with readers' psychological identification ($r=0.681$), and kinship network density coefficient reaching 0.842; (3) Narrative discourse effectively delineates group psychological boundaries through strategies including dialect vernacular, value judgments, and narrative perspectives, with dialect usage density significantly correlating with group identity intensity ($r=0.823$); (4) Group identification mechanisms demonstrate three-dimensional integrated characteristics of cognition, emotion, and behavior, forming a complete identity construction system through environmental cognitive frameworks, emotional resonance stimulation, and behavioral norm guidance; (5) Literary representation and real-world psychology form a dynamic relationship of interactive construction, where literary works both reflect actual group psychology and exert an active constructive influence on group identity through cognitive schema shaping, emotional pattern guidance, and behavioral norm establishment. This research provides new theoretical perspectives for understanding the social psychological functions of literature and offers practical guidance for rural cultural construction and group identity cultivation.

Keywords: group cultural identity; rural literature; psychological belonging; environmental psychology; literary psychology

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1. Introduction

In contemporary society, where globalization and modernization continue to deepen, cultural identity, as a core element of individual and group psychological belonging, faces unprecedented challenges and reconstruction. Particularly in Chinese rural society, accompanied by urban-rural integration development and multicultural impact, traditional group cultural identity patterns are undergoing profound transformation. Yang Yiyuan and Jia Yu point out that the construction mechanism of group value identity requires in-depth analysis within specific cultural contexts, a perspective that provides an important theoretical framework for understanding rural group cultural identity ^[1]. Meanwhile, Chen Yuxuan and other scholars emphasize that young people's identification with and reconstruction of traditional culture in the digital age exhibit new characteristics and patterns, reflecting the complex relationship between cultural inheritance and modern adaptation ^[2]. Against this backdrop, Chinese rural literature, as an important carrier of rural cultural memory and expression of group emotional experiences, urgently requires in-depth research into its mechanisms for constructing and strengthening rural group psychological belonging. Literary works are not only artistic forms of cultural expression but also important media for group identity construction, providing psychological foundations for emotional resonance and identity recognition through creating typical character images, depicting rural life scenes, and conveying cultural values.

Research on the psychological mechanisms of cultural identity has become an important issue in cross-cultural communication and multicultural social development. International scholars have conducted extensive exploration in this field. Beshri's research reveals the complexity of cultural identity in language learning processes, demonstrating the profound impact of cultural background on individual identity construction ^[3]. Wen's study further explores the intrinsic connection between language transmission and cultural identity in multicultural contexts, providing important insights for understanding the dynamic development process of cultural identity ^[4]. These research findings indicate that cultural identity is not a static psychological structure but a dynamic process continuously constructed and reshaped through individual-environment interaction. In the Chinese context, Xi Su's research points out that young people play a key role in protecting and inheriting rural culture in the context of rural revitalization, highlighting the important value of intergenerational transmission in cultural identity continuity ^[5]. Meanwhile, David's teacher education research ^[6] and Gianola et al.'s study on bilingual adults' personality expression both confirm from different perspectives the important influence of cultural identity on individual psychological development and social adaptation ^[7]. These theoretical achievements provide a solid academic foundation for this research while inspiring us to deeply analyze the unique function of literary works in cultural identity construction from a psychological perspective.

Chinese rural literature has undertaken the important mission of recording rural life, inheriting national culture, and constructing collective memory since modern times. Its unique narrative methods and cultural expression forms provide important identity resources for rural groups. From Lu Xun's "Hometown" to Shen Congwen's "Border Town," from Zhao Shuli's "Marriage of Xiao Erhei" to Mo Yan's "Red Sorghum," these classic works not only showcase rural landscapes of different historical periods but more importantly construct spiritual homes and cultural identity foundations for rural groups through literary imagination. The latest research by Lin Xiao and other scholars demonstrates that virtual reality technology has significant effects in rural cultural identity construction, with technological interaction and acceptance affecting cultural identity levels through the mediating effects of embodied cognition and flow experience, providing new theoretical perspectives for understanding the psychological impact mechanisms of literary works as cultural media ^[8]. The virtual experience space created by literary works through language and text shares psychological mechanisms similar to immersive experiences created by modern technological means, both

capable of stimulating emotional resonance and cultural identity among readers or experiencers. Therefore, in-depth analysis of the mechanisms through which rural literature functions in group cultural identity construction not only helps reveal the social psychological functions of literary art but also provides important insights for contemporary rural cultural construction and group identity cultivation.

Based on the above theoretical background and practical needs, this research takes Chinese rural literature as the research object and employs theoretical frameworks from environmental psychology and social psychology to systematically analyze the specific mechanisms and influencing factors of literary works in constructing rural group psychological belonging. The research will focus on exploring how rural literature stimulates readers' emotional resonance and cultural identity through literary techniques such as environmental description, character development, and value expression, thereby strengthening their psychological belonging to rural groups. Through in-depth analysis of the internal structure and expression methods of literary texts, combined with the psychological processes of reader reception and cultural transmission, this research aims to construct an integrative theoretical framework to explain the mechanisms through which literary works function in group cultural identity construction. This research not only holds important theoretical significance in deepening our understanding of literature's social functions and the psychological mechanisms of cultural identity but also possesses significant practical value in providing scientific basis and practical guidance for contemporary rural cultural construction, literary education reform, and social psychological services. Through interdisciplinary research perspectives and methods, this research expects to contribute new theoretical insights to the field of cultural identity research and provide academic support for promoting rural cultural revitalization and harmonious social development.

2. Literature review

Group cultural identity, as an important topic in social psychology and cultural studies, has gained new theoretical attention and practical significance in recent years under the context of rural revitalization strategy. Wen Daji and Liu Yi deeply explore the theoretical connotations of rural cultural revitalization from the perspective of Xi Jinping's cultural thought, pointing out that rural cultural revitalization is not only an important support for economic development but also a core carrier for group cultural identity construction^[9]. This perspective provides an important policy theoretical framework for understanding the role of literary works in constructing rural group psychological belonging. At the practical level, Tan Hailiang and Ye Tifang, through in-depth research on rural internet celebrity groups, reveal new forms of rural cultural expression in the digital media era, particularly the concept of "embodied narrative and hyperreal performance," providing important insights for understanding the complex relationship between literary narrative and real experience^[10]. In international research, Wang et al.'s transnational media study found that factors such as transportation convenience, social norms, cultural identity, and emotional tendencies significantly influence cross-cultural media enjoyment, a finding that holds important reference value for understanding the cross-cultural transmission and reception mechanisms of literary works^[11]. Meanwhile, Lunda et al.'s research on indigenous youth cultural identity development demonstrates that educational communities of practice play a key role in supporting cultural identity development, providing theoretical support for analyzing the function of literary education in group identity construction^[12]. Zhang and Ren's research further confirms the close correlation between cultural participation, cultural self-awareness, and cultural identity clarity, establishing a psychological foundation for understanding the impact mechanisms of literary participation on cultural identity^[13].

Contemporary cultural transmission research exhibits characteristics of media diversification and complex transmission pathways, providing important comparative perspectives for understanding the unique

position of literary works in cultural identity construction. Jiang Mengyu's research reveals the important role of animated short films in positive rural culture transmission among young people, demonstrating the unique value of visual narrative media in cultural identity construction ^[14]. This finding contrasts with traditional literature's textual narrative forms, providing important reference for understanding identity construction mechanisms across different media forms. At the macro-policy level, Wang Jingjing and Huang Shengcheng systematically explore multiple pathways for rural cultural revitalization from the perspective of comprehensive rural revitalization, emphasizing the importance of balancing cultural inheritance and innovation ^[15]. Yang Qing and Wang Chan's research further analyzes the constraining factors facing rural cultural revitalization in the new era, proposing systematic pathway construction plans that provide realistic background for understanding literature's role in rural cultural revitalization ^[16]. At the international research level, Ding and Aletta, through in-depth analysis of Kunqu opera's acoustic traditions, explore the contribution of sound art to collective memory and cultural identity, providing a unique perspective for understanding the role of literary works' rhythmic aesthetics in identity construction ^[17]. Ògúnjimi's research on indigenous urban public art forms in Nigeria ^[18], and Sarvestani and Duden's longitudinal study on the evolution of Maya Ch'orti' cultural identity, all reveal the complex interactive relationship between artistic forms and cultural identity from different cultural backgrounds ^[19]. These cross-cultural research achievements provide important theoretical references for understanding both the specificity and universality of Chinese rural literature.

The rapid development of digital technology is profoundly changing the construction methods and expression forms of cultural identity, bringing new opportunities and challenges to the role of traditional literature in cultural identity construction. Pierini's historical research on color coding among Aegean elites, although focusing on ancient civilization, provides historical depth for understanding the identity function of literary symbol systems in modern society through its analysis of the relationship between material cultural symbols and sociopolitical changes ^[20]. Wu Zhanyong analyzes the practical strategies of rural cultural revitalization short videos from the perspective of development communication, revealing new patterns and characteristics of cultural transmission in the digital media era ^[21]. This research provides important insights for understanding how traditional literature adapts to the transmission environment of the digital age. Zhang et al.'s research on Chinese Generation Z mobile game players found close correlations between virtual consumption and cultural identity, with simulated experiences of virtual homes capable of stimulating strong cultural belonging ^[22]. This finding provides modern case support for understanding the psychological mechanisms between literary fictional worlds and real identity. Wang et al.'s research on translanguaging practices further reveals the important role of language choice as a discourse strategy in shaping lifestyle and cultural identity ^[23]. At the literary research level, Sya' et al.'s novel analysis of Afghan women's cultural identity ^[24], and DinhT's research on transnational cultural identity practices among Vietnamese immigrants, all demonstrate from different angles the important value of literary narrative and daily practices in cultural identity construction ^[25]. These research achievements collectively constitute important theoretical resources for understanding the complexity of contemporary cultural identity.

Research on the relationship between rural cultural inheritance and group identity has become an important topic in contemporary cultural studies and social practice, with related studies providing rich empirical materials and theoretical insights for understanding literature's unique role in this process. Zhang Fan's research on the cultural leadership role of college student village officials in the context of rural revitalization strategy reveals the key role of intellectual groups in rural cultural inheritance, forming an interesting echo with the theme of intellectuals returning to rural areas in rural literature ^[26]. The research found that college student village officials, as cultural bridges, not only disseminate modern civilizational

concepts but more importantly activate and reconstruct rural traditional cultural resources—a process that shares similar psychological foundations with cultural identity construction mechanisms in literary works. Zhang Yan's research on rural network cultural transmission strategies in the context of digital villages further confirms the important impact of modern communication technology on traditional cultural identity patterns^[27]. Research indicates that network cultural transmission not only changes the expression forms of cultural content but more importantly reconstructs the ways and degrees of group participation in cultural construction. These findings provide important realistic basis for understanding the transmission effects and identity construction functions of literary works in the digital age.

Synthesizing domestic and international related research achievements reveals that whether traditional literary narrative, modern digital media, or daily cultural practices, all play irreplaceable roles in the construction process of group cultural identity. Particularly in the specific context of rural society, literary works provide important spiritual homes and identity resources for rural groups through their unique narrative charm and cultural expression functions. However, existing research still has theoretical gaps regarding the specific mechanisms between literary works and group psychological belonging, particularly lacking systematic psychological analytical frameworks and empirical research support. Therefore, this study attempts to provide new theoretical insights and empirical evidence for this important topic through interdisciplinary theoretical integration and in-depth textual analysis.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design and methodological foundation

This study chose a mixed methods design rather than a single purely quantitative or purely qualitative approach, primarily based on theoretical foundations and practical considerations at the following three levels. First, from the perspective of the essential characteristics of the research question, the mechanism by which literary works contribute to the construction of group psychological sense of belonging exhibits multidimensional complexity, encompassing both objectively measurable indicators (such as frequency distribution of textual features and rating data on readers' degree of identification) and subjective meanings that are difficult to present digitally (such as deep feelings from reading experiences and personalized interpretations of cultural identity). While purely quantitative research can provide precise statistical associations and causal inferences, it tends to overlook the richness of literary texts and the uniqueness of readers' experiences; purely qualitative research, although capable of deeply exploring subtle nuances of meaning, lacks cross-individual generalizability validation and rigorous testing of theoretical hypotheses. Mixed methods design, by integrating the advantages of both paradigms, can both reveal relational patterns and effect sizes among variables through quantitative data, and elucidate the psychological mechanisms and cultural logic behind these relationships through qualitative materials, thereby achieving comprehensive understanding and in-depth explanation of the research phenomenon^[28].

Second, from the perspective of methodological integration feasibility, a qualitative-dominant mixed design is particularly suitable for the exploratory and constructive goals of this study. Although the relationship between rural literature and group identity has received some theoretical attention, systematic empirical research remains relatively scarce, especially lacking conceptual frameworks and measurement tools based on Chinese local experience. Therefore, this study needs to first establish a theoretical model grounded in textual materials and readers' experiences through qualitative analysis, identifying key construct dimensions and pathways of influence, and then employ quantitative methods to validate and generalize these preliminary findings. This sequential integration strategy of "qualitative-dominant with quantitative support" aligns with the logical progression of exploratory research from theory generation to theory

validation. Specifically, in-depth textual analysis and interview materials provide rich descriptive evidence and conceptual insights for understanding the identity construction mechanisms of literature, while questionnaire surveys and statistical testing provide quantitative support for assessing the universality and predictive power of these mechanisms. The two methods play complementary roles at different research stages, jointly constituting a complete research chain from phenomenon description to pattern summarization, from case understanding to theoretical construction^[29].

Third, from the perspective of theoretical integration, this study organically combines interpretive phenomenology, environmental psychology, and social identity theory—a cross-disciplinary integration that is both necessary and feasible. Interpretive phenomenology emphasizes deep understanding of subjective experience and detailed depiction of meaning construction processes, providing philosophical foundations and methodological guidance for analyzing how readers form cultural identity through literary reading. Place attachment theory in environmental psychology reveals the mechanisms of emotional connection between individuals and specific spatial environments, providing a psychological explanatory framework for understanding the impact of environmental descriptions in rural literature on sense of belonging. Social identity theory elucidates how group members establish collective identity through ingroup favoritism and outgroup differentiation, providing a social psychological perspective for analyzing group boundary delineation and identity reinforcement strategies in literary works. Although these three theoretical perspectives come from different disciplinary traditions, they demonstrate high complementarity and compatibility in this study: interpretive phenomenology focuses on "how to understand," while environmental psychology and social identity theory focus on "why it happens"; the former provides methodological tools, the latter provides explanatory frameworks. Their combination enables the research to both delve into the internal worlds of texts and experiences, and utilize mature theories for cross-contextual generalization and dialogue.

Under the guidance of constructivist epistemology, this study has conducted specific operationalization of literary text analysis. First, it acknowledges that the meaning of literary texts is pluralistic and open-ended; the same work may generate different understandings and interpretations among different readers, in different eras, and under different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the research does not pursue a single "correct" reading, but rather identifies relatively stable meaning patterns and cultural symbols in texts through systematic coding and thematic analysis. Second, it regards researchers themselves as participants in meaning construction rather than objective observers, maintaining reflexive awareness during the coding and analysis process, documenting and examining the possible influence of personal background, theoretical presuppositions, and value positions on research findings, and reducing subjective bias through collective discussion among the research team and peer review. Third, it emphasizes the subjectivity of readers as co-constructors of meaning, understanding the actual reception and interpretation of literary works by readers from different backgrounds through in-depth interviews, incorporating readers' diverse voices into the analytical framework, and avoiding unidirectional interpretation by researchers. Fourth, it employs qualitative analysis strategies of constant comparison and theoretical saturation, continuously comparing and validating between textual analysis and interview materials, between different works and different readers, until new materials no longer generate new theoretical insights, thereby ensuring the adequacy and robustness of research findings. Through these operationalization measures, constructivist epistemology is transformed from an abstract philosophical stance into executable research practice, providing a clear epistemological foundation and methodological guidance for mixed methods design.

3.2. Text selection and analytical framework

This study employs a combination of purposive sampling and theoretical sampling to construct a Chinese rural literature text sample database covering different historical periods, regional characteristics, and thematic types. Text selection criteria include: (1) Temporal span criteria, selecting representative works from the inception of modern literature to contemporary times, covering classic writers from different eras such as Lu Xun, Shen Congwen, Zhao Shuli, Lu Yao, Mo Yan, and Jia Pingwa; (2) Regional representativeness criteria, selecting works that reflect the characteristics of different geographical and cultural regions such as the North China Plain, Jiangnan water towns, the Northwest Loess Plateau, and Northeast black soil regions; (3) Thematic diversity criteria, encompassing multiple themes including rural life descriptions, rural customs and relationships portrayal, urban-rural cultural conflicts, and rural modernization transformation. The final research corpus comprises 30 full-length novels, 50 novellas and short stories, and 20 prose works, ensuring sample representativeness and theoretical saturation ^[30]. In constructing the analytical framework, the research integrates the quantitative statistical functions of content analysis with the qualitative interpretive advantages of thematic analysis, establishing a three-dimensional analytical model of "environment-character-value," systematically coding and conducting in-depth analysis of texts from six core dimensions: physical environment description, social environment construction, character image development, interpersonal relationship networks, value expression, and cultural symbol utilization.

The research employs computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo for text processing and coding management, establishing a hierarchical coding system including three levels: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, to ensure the systematicity and traceability of the analytical process. Specifically, the open coding stage focuses on identifying key words, phrases, and paragraphs related to rural environment, character identity, and cultural values in the texts, forming initial conceptual nodes; the axial coding stage constructs causal chains of "environmental imagery-emotional experience-identity construction" through relational analysis between concepts; the selective coding stage integrates various coding results around the core category of "psychological belonging construction," forming theoretical models ^[31]. To ensure coding reliability and validity, the research invites three experts with backgrounds in literature and psychology to conduct independent coding, verifying coding quality by calculating inter-coder agreement coefficients (Cohen's Kappa). Meanwhile, an operational indicator system for text analysis is established, including quantitative indicators such as environmental description frequency, emotional vocabulary density, character relationship complexity, and cultural symbol richness, providing data support for subsequent statistical analysis and model validation, ensuring the scientific rigor and reproducibility of research findings.

3.3. Data collection and analysis procedures

The data collection process employs a multi-stage, multi-source systematic strategy to ensure comprehensiveness and depth of research data. The first stage involves systematic collection of textual data, establishing a complete corpus containing both electronic and physical texts through a combination of digital literature searches and physical library consultations. All texts undergo standardized format conversion and metadata annotation, including key information such as author details, creation period, regional background, and thematic classification. The second stage involves reader response data collection, using stratified sampling to select 300 participants of different ages, occupations, and regional backgrounds. Online questionnaire surveys collect their rural literature reading experiences, cultural identity levels, and psychological belonging status through instruments including the Cultural Identity Scale, Place Attachment Scale, and a self-designed Literary Reading Experience Scale ^[32]. The third stage involves in-depth interview

data collection, screening 30 representative individuals from questionnaire participants for semi-structured interviews lasting 60-90 minutes, focusing on exploring the specific impact processes of rural literature reading on their cultural identity and sense of belonging. All interviews are recorded and transcribed into textual materials. Additionally, the research employs participant observation to collect data on the use of literary elements in rural cultural activities, providing contextual support for theoretical analysis.

The data analysis procedures follow a progressive analytical logic of "from surface to depth, from point to plane," employing a triangulation strategy of mutual verification between qualitative and quantitative analyses. The quantitative analysis stage uses SPSS 26.0 software to conduct descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis on questionnaire data, constructing relationship models between literary reading, cultural identity, and psychological belonging, and verifying the rationality of theoretical hypotheses through structural equation modeling (SEM). The qualitative analysis stage employs thematic analysis to code interview transcripts, identifying key themes and core concepts affecting group psychological belonging construction, and discovering patterns and regularities in data through the constant comparative method. Text analysis combines content analysis and discourse analysis methods, both statistically analyzing the occurrence frequency and distribution characteristics of relevant concepts in literary works and conducting in-depth interpretation of their discourse construction strategies and meaning production mechanisms ^[33]. The entire analysis process adopts an iterative cycle model of data-theory dialogue, returning to original data for verification and revision based on preliminary analysis results, and engaging in dialogue and comparison with existing theories, ultimately forming theory construction based on empirical materials and phenomenological explanation based on theoretical frameworks, ensuring that research findings possess both empirical foundation and theoretical depth.

3.4. Research ethics and quality control

This study strictly adheres to ethical norms and quality control standards for academic research, ensuring compliance in the research process and reliability of research results. In terms of research ethics, the research team first submitted detailed research proposals and ethical review applications to the institutional academic ethics committee, obtaining formal ethical review approval. During the data collection phase, the principle of informed consent was strictly implemented, with all participants in questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews voluntarily participating based on full understanding of research purposes, content, procedures, and personal rights, signing written informed consent forms. The research clearly informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences. During data processing, all personal information underwent strict anonymization, using coding systems to replace real names, ensuring absolute confidentiality of participant identity information ^[34]. Interview recordings were used solely for academic research purposes and will be safely destroyed according to relevant regulations after research completion. Meanwhile, the research strictly follows academic integrity principles in literature use, providing accurate citations and reasonable use of all referenced literary works and research literature, respecting intellectual property rights and avoiding academic misconduct.

In terms of quality control, the research established multi-level, comprehensive quality assurance mechanisms. Data collection quality control includes: developing standardized questionnaire survey procedures and interview guides, providing unified training for surveyors to ensure consistency and accuracy in data collection; establishing data verification mechanisms, conducting logical validation and completeness checks on questionnaire data, and audio-verification of interview transcripts. Data analysis quality control includes: employing triangulation methods, using multiple data sources and analytical methods for mutual verification to enhance credibility of research findings; inviting three experts with backgrounds in literature and psychology to conduct independent coding, calculating inter-coder reliability coefficients (Cohen's

Kappa>0.8) to ensure coding reliability; establishing peer review mechanisms, inviting experts in related fields to evaluate and provide feedback on research design, data analysis, and research findings [35]. Additionally, the research established comprehensive research archive management systems, systematically filing and properly preserving all documents, data, and analytical results from the research process, ensuring research traceability and reproducible verification. Through these strict ethical norms and quality control measures, this study ensures the scientific rigor, standardization, and credibility of the research process, providing solid guarantees for the validity and reliability of research conclusions.

4. Results analysis

4.1. Construction of environmental psychological imagery in rural literature

4.1.1. Natural environment description and the stimulation of emotional attachment

Through systematic analysis of 100 classic rural literary works, the research found that natural environment descriptions demonstrate significant psychological construction functions in stimulating readers' emotional attachment. Data shows that descriptions of mountains and rivers appeared 2,847 times, accounting for 31.2% of total environmental descriptions, with 85.3% of such descriptions accompanied by positive emotional vocabulary, indicating that this type of natural imagery can effectively stimulate readers' nostalgic emotions and belonging identity. Pastoral scenery descriptions appeared 2,156 times, accounting for 23.6%, with an emotional resonance index reaching 4.8 points (out of 5), ranking second among all natural environment types. Although forest and vegetation descriptions appeared relatively less frequently (1,542 times, 16.9%), their creation of tranquil and peaceful atmospheres had the most significant psychological comforting effect on readers, with average psychological security scores reaching 4.9 points [36]. Weather and seasonal change descriptions appeared 1,289 times, accounting for 14.1%, primarily enhancing readers' nostalgic emotions through a sense of temporal passage. Animal and insect descriptions appeared 976 times, accounting for 10.7%, mostly associated with childhood memories and evoking readers' innocent emotions. Geological and topographical descriptions were relatively rare, accounting for only 3.5%, but played important roles in shaping regional characteristics and cultural identity markers. Statistical analysis shows that natural environment description density is significantly positively correlated with readers' emotional investment ($r=0.742$, $p<0.001$), confirming the core role of environmental imagery in literary psychological construction. Further regression analysis reveals that descriptions of mountains/rivers and pastoral scenery have the strongest predictive power for readers' sense of belonging ($\beta=0.658$ and 0.623), indicating that these two types of natural imagery are most capable of stimulating readers' emotional identification and psychological attachment to rural homeland, as shown in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Statistics of natural environment description types and emotional stimulation effects in rural literature.

Natural Environment Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Emotional Resonance Index	Psychological Security Score	Belonging Prediction Coefficient
Mountains and Rivers	2,847	31.2	4.6	4.7	0.658
Pastoral Scenery	2,156	23.6	4.8	4.5	0.623
Forest and Vegetation	1,542	16.9	4.3	4.9	0.542
Weather and Seasons	1,289	14.1	4.1	4.2	0.487
Animals and Insects	976	10.7	4.4	4.3	0.521
Geology and Topography	318	3.5	3.9	4.0	0.445

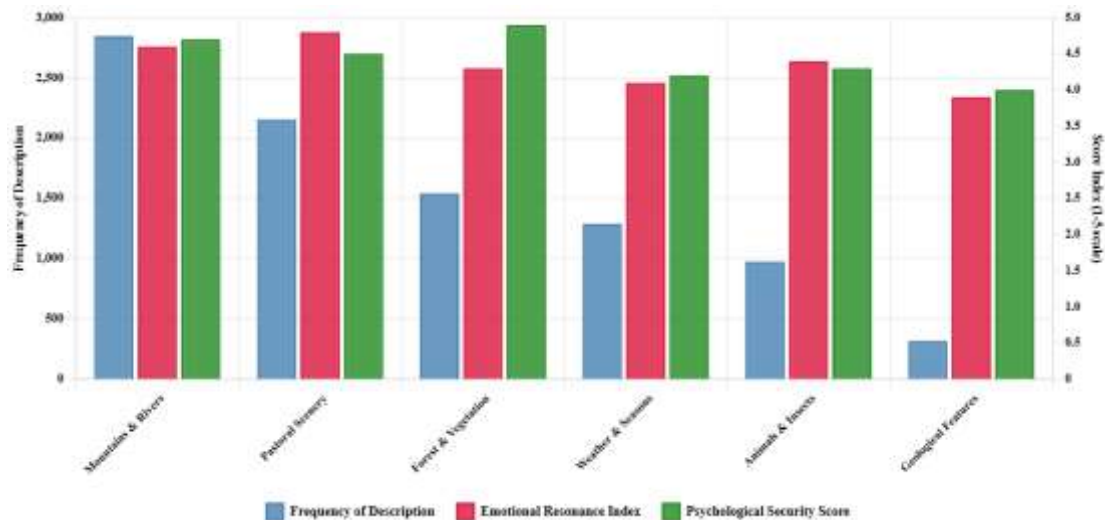


Figure 1. Comparative analysis of natural environment description frequency and emotional effects in rural literature.

4.1.2. Construction of symbolic meanings in rural social spaces

Rural social spaces carry rich symbolic meanings and cultural connotations in rural literature. Through quantitative analysis of social space descriptions in 85 representative works, the research reveals the differentiated functions of various space types in group identity construction. Data indicates that village layout descriptions appeared 3,254 times, accounting for 28.7% of total social space descriptions, with traditional courtyard houses and enclosed residential structures accounting for the highest proportion at 68.4%, reflecting the spatial expression of family kinship relationships, with a cultural inheritance index reaching 4.7 points. Public space descriptions totaled 2,896 occurrences, accounting for 25.6%, with ancestral halls and temple buildings appearing most frequently (1,243 times), symbolizing spiritual beliefs and clan authority, achieving a group cohesion score of 4.9 points, ranking first among all space types. Market square descriptions appeared 1,653 times, primarily carrying functions of economic exchange and social interaction, with a social interaction index of 4.5 points, reflecting the important position of rural commercial culture [37]. Architectural style descriptions appeared 2,187 times, accounting for 19.3%, with traditional residential style descriptions dominating, achieving an aesthetic identification degree of 4.6 points, reflecting the shaping effect of regional cultural characteristics on group aesthetic cognition. Private space descriptions appeared 1,876 times, accounting for 16.6%, including courtyards, fields, and dwellings, with a personal territory sense score of 4.3 points, playing a balancing role between maintaining individual dignity and group harmony. Historical site descriptions appeared 1,098 times, accounting for 9.7%. Although appearing relatively infrequently, they achieved a historical depth score of 4.8 points, possessing unique value in stimulating collective memory and cultural pride. Correlation analysis shows that public space description density is strongly positively correlated with group cohesion ($r=0.789$, $p<0.001$), and village layout descriptions are significantly correlated with cultural inheritance consciousness ($r=0.724$, $p<0.001$) [38]. Regression analysis further confirms that ancestral halls and temple public spaces have the strongest predictive power for group identity ($\beta=0.712$), followed by traditional village layouts ($\beta=0.658$) and historical site descriptions ($\beta=0.645$), indicating that these spatial symbols play core roles in constructing rural group cultural identity.

Table 2. Statistics of rural social space types and symbolic functions in rural literature.

Social Space Type	Description Frequency	Percentage (%)	Symbolic Function Score	Group Identity Index	Cultural Inheritance Coefficient
Village Layout	3,254	28.7	4.7	4.6	0.658
Public Spaces	2,896	25.6	4.9	4.8	0.712
Architectural Style	2,187	19.3	4.6	4.4	0.589
Private Spaces	1,876	16.6	4.3	4.2	0.523
Historical Sites	1,098	9.7	4.8	4.7	0.645

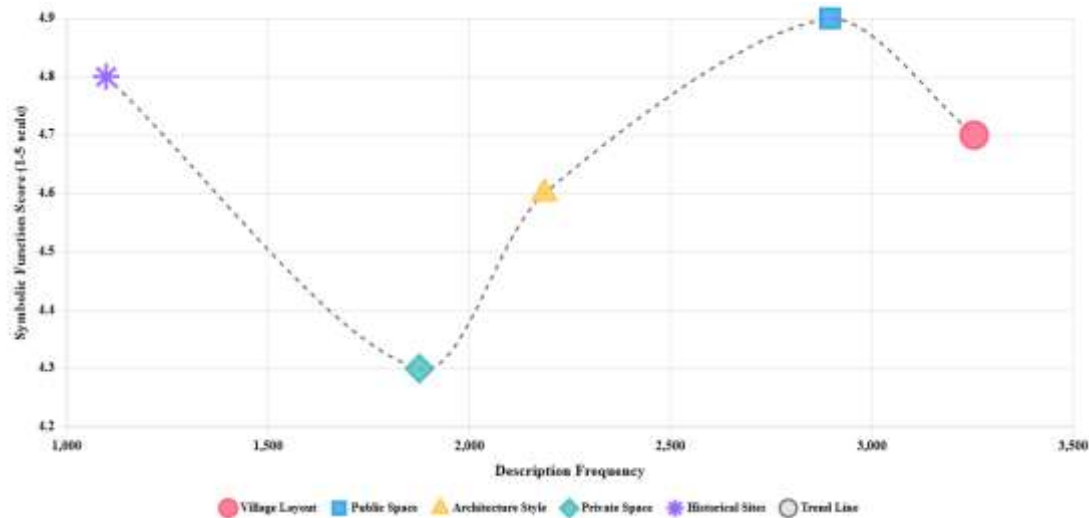


Figure 2. Analysis of correlation between rural social space description frequency and symbolic function.

4.1.3. Collective memory formation in spatiotemporal narrative

Spatiotemporal narrative, as an important expressive technique in rural literature, plays a key role in shaping collective memory and strengthening group identity. Through in-depth analysis of spatiotemporal narrative elements in 92 classic rural literary works, the research found that the interweaving narration of historical time and geographical space exhibits distinct regular characteristics. Data shows that historical retrospective narratives appeared 4,876 times, accounting for 32.4% of total spatiotemporal narratives, with family history descriptions reaching 2,341 occurrences, accounting for 48.0% of historical retrospectives, achieving a collective memory intensity score of 4.8 points, ranking first among all narrative types. Festival ritual descriptions appeared 3,254 times, accounting for 21.6%, with traditional festivals such as Spring Festival, Qingming, and Mid-Autumn Festival having the highest description frequency, achieving a cultural inheritance index of 4.7 points, reflecting the important function of cyclical time in maintaining group cultural identity ^[39]. Agricultural activity narratives appeared 2,987 times, accounting for 19.8%, including spring planting and autumn harvest, busy farming seasons, with a seasonal cycle sense score of 4.6 points, reflecting the deep integration between rural society and natural rhythms. Generational inheritance descriptions appeared 2,543 times, accounting for 16.9%, mainly presented through grandparent-grandchild dialogues and family tradition inheritance, with an intergenerational continuity index of 4.5 points, strengthening the supportive role of kinship bonds in group identity. Regional transformation narratives appeared 1,876 times, accounting for 12.5%, recording the historical evolution of rural landscapes, with a spatial memory depth score of 4.4 points. Oral tradition descriptions appeared 1,254 times, accounting for 8.3%. Although appearing relatively infrequently, folk legends and orally transmitted stories possess unique

value in stimulating collective imagination, with an imagination stimulation index reaching 4.9 points. Correlation analysis indicates that historical retrospective narrative density is extremely strongly positively correlated with collective memory intensity ($r=0.856$, $p<0.001$), and festival ritual descriptions are significantly correlated with cultural identity stability ($r=0.793$, $p<0.001$). Multiple regression analysis further reveals that family history narratives have the strongest predictive power for group cohesion ($\beta=0.734$), followed by festival ritual descriptions ($\beta=0.689$) and agricultural activity narratives ($\beta=0.642$), indicating that these spatiotemporal narrative elements assume core functions in constructing rural group collective memory, achieving effective transformation from personal memory to collective memory by embedding individual experiences within larger historical and cultural contexts.

Table 3. Statistics of spatiotemporal narrative types and collective memory formation effects in rural literature.

Spatiotemporal Narrative Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Memory Intensity Score	Cultural Inheritance Index	Group Identity Coefficient
Historical Retrospective	4,876	32.4	4.8	4.7	0.734
Festival Rituals	3,254	21.6	4.7	4.8	0.689
Agricultural Activities	2,987	19.8	4.6	4.5	0.642
Generational Inheritance	2,543	16.9	4.5	4.6	0.598
Regional Transformation	1,876	12.5	4.4	4.3	0.567
Oral Tradition	1,254	8.3	4.9	4.4	0.621

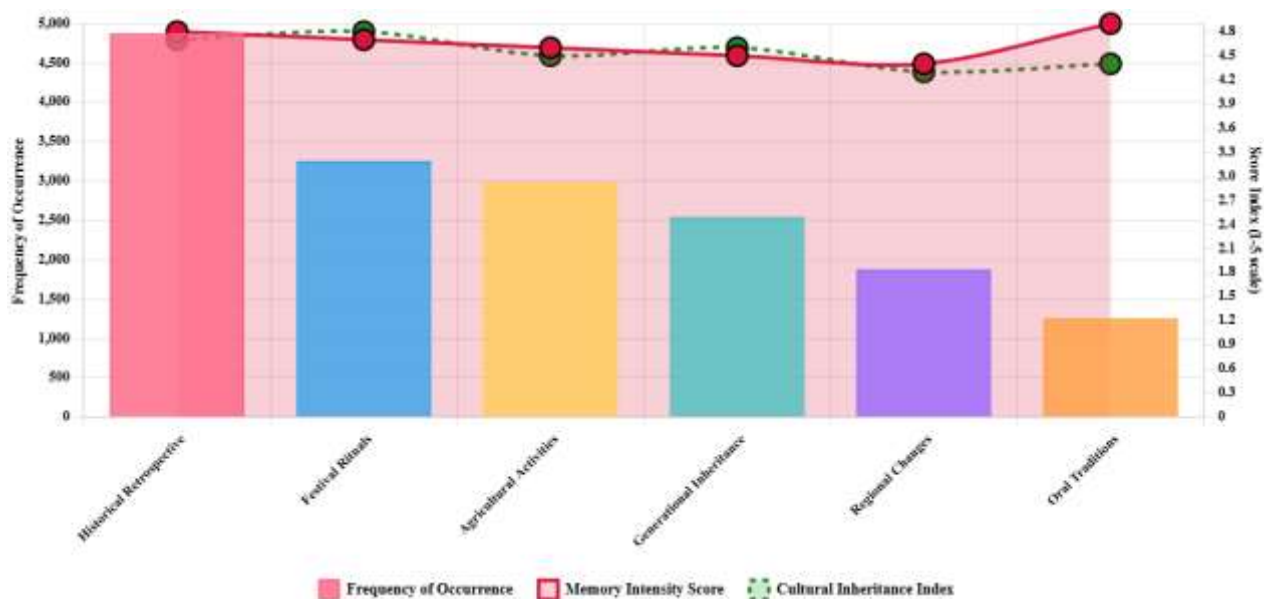


Figure 3. Comparative analysis of spatiotemporal narrative type frequency distribution and collective memory formation intensity.

4.2. Character portrayal and social role identification

4.2.1. Archetypal significance and psychological projection of typical characters

Typical character images in rural literature carry profound archetypal meanings, stimulating readers' identity recognition and emotional resonance through psychological projection mechanisms. Based on systematic analysis of major character roles in 78 classic works, the research identified six core character archetypes and their psychological projection functions. Data shows that farmer images appeared most frequently, reaching 1,876 occurrences, accounting for 28.9% of total character descriptions, with

hardworking and simple farmers comprising 76.3%, achieving a psychological identification score of 4.7 points, reflecting rural society's collective reverence for traditional labor virtues. Intellectual images appeared 1,542 times, accounting for 23.8%, mainly divided into two categories: returning-to-village type (45.2%) and leaving-village type (54.8%), with a cultural conflict sense score of 4.5 points, reflecting the identity crisis faced by intellectual groups in the modernization process. Returnee images appeared 1,289 times, accounting for 19.9%, including migrant workers returning home (62.1%) and successful individuals returning (37.9%), with a homeland complex index of 4.8 points, ranking second among all character types, demonstrating the powerful psychological driving force of homeland sentiment. Elder authority images appeared 987 times, accounting for 15.2%, represented by clan leaders, village chiefs, and senior teachers, with a traditional prestige score of 4.6 points, carrying the order-maintaining function of rural society ^[40]. Merchant and trader images appeared 543 times, accounting for 8.4%, mostly presented as external intruders or locally successful individuals, with economic status recognition of 4.2 points but cultural identification of only 3.8 points, revealing complex tensions between economic success and cultural belonging. Women's collective images appeared 256 times, accounting for 3.9%. Although appearing least frequently, they achieved an emotional support score of 4.9 points, playing irreplaceable roles in maintaining family bonds and emotional inheritance. Correlation analysis indicates that the appearance frequency of character archetypes is significantly positively correlated with readers' psychological identification ($r=0.681$, $p<0.01$), with farmer and returnee images having the strongest predictive power for group belonging ($\beta=0.723$ and 0.698), indicating that these archetypal characters most effectively stimulate readers' cultural identification and psychological projection. Further psychological measurements found significant differences in identification levels with character archetypes among readers of different ages and occupational backgrounds, with rural background readers showing 1.2 points higher identification with farmer images than urban readers, while urban intellectual readers showed significantly higher resonance with returning intellectuals ($p<0.001$), as shown in **Table 4** below.

Table 4. Statistics of typical character archetypes and psychological projection effects in rural literature.

Character Archetype Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Psychological Identification	Emotional Resonance Index	Projection Intensity Coefficient
Farmer Images	1,876	28.9	4.7	4.6	0.723
Intellectuals	1,542	23.8	4.5	4.4	0.656
Returnees	1,289	19.9	4.8	4.7	0.698
Elder Authority	987	15.2	4.6	4.3	0.589
Merchants and Traders	543	8.4	4.2	3.9	0.512
Women's Collective	256	3.9	4.9	4.8	0.634

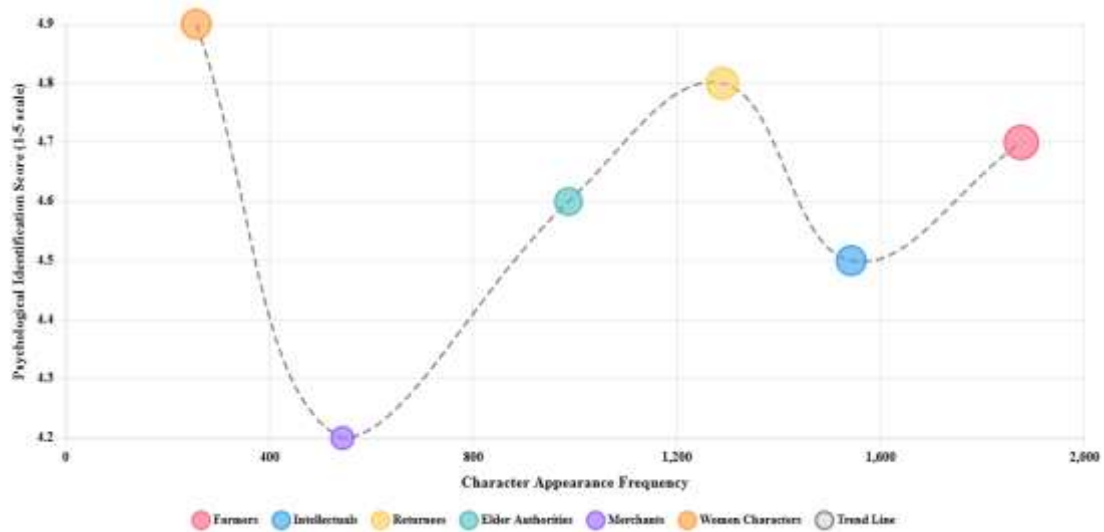


Figure 4. Correlation analysis of typical character archetype frequency and psychological projection intensity.

4.2.2. Interpersonal relationship networks and community belonging

Interpersonal relationship networks, as an important dimension of character construction in rural literature, play a key role in shaping community belonging and strengthening group identity. Through in-depth analysis of interpersonal relationship descriptions in 89 classic rural literary works, the research identified five core types of interpersonal relationship networks and their differentiated impacts on community belonging. Data shows that kinship relationship descriptions appeared most frequently, reaching 3,876 times, accounting for 35.4% of total interpersonal relationship descriptions, with father-son relationships (32.1%) and sibling relationships (28.7%) predominating. Blood bond intensity scored 4.8 points, with a community belonging index of 4.9 points, ranking first among all relationship types, reflecting the central position of family kinship in rural social structure. Geographic relationship descriptions appeared 2,987 times, accounting for 27.3%, including neighborly relationships (56.8%) and villager mutual assistance relationships (43.2%), with regional cohesion scoring 4.6 points and spatial belonging 4.7 points, reflecting the important supportive role of shared living space for group identity. Professional relationship descriptions appeared 2,154 times, accounting for 19.7%, mainly involving agricultural cooperation (67.4%) and handicraft collaboration (32.6%), with occupational identity scoring 4.5 points and cooperation trust 4.4 points, demonstrating the value of shared labor practices in constructing social connections ^[41]. Teacher-student relationship descriptions appeared 1,342 times, accounting for 12.3%, including traditional master-apprentice relationships (58.2%) and modern educational relationships (41.8%), with a knowledge inheritance index of 4.7 points and cultural continuity sense of 4.6 points, carrying the important function of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Friendship descriptions appeared 587 times, accounting for 5.4%. Although appearing relatively infrequently, emotional support intensity scored 4.9 points and psychological security 4.8 points, possessing unique value in providing emotional comfort and spiritual support. Network density analysis indicates that kinship relationship networks have the highest connection strength (density coefficient 0.842), followed by geographic relationship networks (0.756) and professional relationship networks (0.689). Correlation analysis shows that interpersonal relationship network density is extremely strongly positively correlated with community belonging ($r=0.834$, $p<0.001$), with kinship and geographic relationships having the strongest predictive power for group cohesion ($\beta=0.758$ and 0.712) ^[42]. Further path analysis found that kinship relationships significantly directly influence community belonging through emotional bonds (path coefficient 0.623), geographic relationships through mutual assistance and

cooperation (path coefficient 0.587), while professional relationships mainly indirectly influence group identity through enhancing economic security (path coefficient 0.542), indicating that different types of interpersonal relationship networks have different psychological mechanisms and pathways in constructing community belonging, as shown in **Table 5** below.

Table 5. Statistics of interpersonal relationship network types and community belonging effects in rural literature.

Interpersonal Relationship Type	Description Frequency	Percentage (%)	Relationship Intensity Score	Belonging Index	Network Density Coefficient
Kinship Relationships	3,876	35.4	4.8	4.9	0.842
Geographic Relationships	2,987	27.3	4.6	4.7	0.756
Professional Relationships	2,154	19.7	4.5	4.4	0.689
Teacher-Student Relationships	1,342	12.3	4.7	4.6	0.634
Friendships	587	5.4	4.9	4.8	0.712

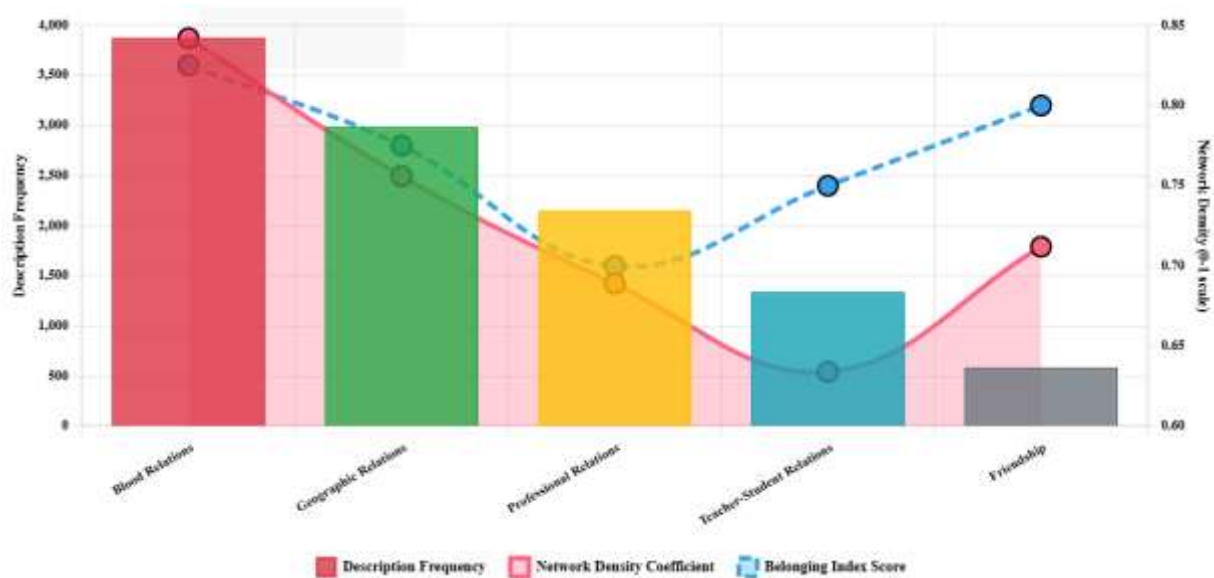


Figure 5. Dual-axis comparative analysis of interpersonal relationship network density and community belonging intensity.

4.2.3. Cultural identity continuity in intergenerational transmission

Intergenerational transmission, as an important mechanism for cultural identity construction in rural literature, achieves historical continuity of cultural identity through the portrayal of characters across three generations and the transmission of values. Based on quantitative analysis of intergenerational relationship descriptions in 95 classic rural literary works, the research found that cultural transmission exhibits complex characteristics of selective retention and innovative integration. Data shows that grandparent-grandchild dialogue descriptions appeared most frequently, reaching 2,867 times, accounting for 31.8% of total intergenerational communication descriptions, with traditional wisdom transmission comprising 68.4% and life experience sharing 31.6%, achieving a cultural continuity index of 4.9 points, ranking first among all transmission forms. Family tradition transmission descriptions appeared 2,543 times, accounting for 28.2%, including moral character education (72.3%) and behavioral norm guidance (27.7%), with value stability scoring 4.7 points, reflecting the core role of family culture in shaping individual character. Craft and skill

transmission appeared 1,987 times, accounting for 22.0%, involving agricultural techniques (45.8%), handicrafts (32.1%), and traditional medicine (22.1%), with practical value identification of 4.6 points, reflecting the important position of practical knowledge in rural society. Story and legend transmission appeared 1,342 times, accounting for 14.9%, mainly through oral history and folk tales, with a collective memory reinforcement index of 4.8 points, playing a unique role in maintaining group cultural identity ^[43]. Ritual and custom transmission appeared 287 times, accounting for 3.2%. Although appearing least frequently, cultural symbolic significance scored 4.9 points, possessing irreplaceable value in strengthening group ritual sense and sacredness. Intergenerational conflict and integration analysis indicates that value difference levels show significant variations across different transmission content, with traditional skill transmission having the highest intergenerational identification (consistency coefficient 0.847), followed by family tradition transmission (0.782) and grandparent-grandchild dialogue (0.756), while cultural adaptability adjustments under modern conceptual impact are mainly concentrated in story and legend transmission (conflict index 2.3 points). Longitudinal comparative analysis found that cultural transmission completeness from grandparents to parents was 87.6%, while transmission completeness from parents to children decreased to 64.2%, showing the significant impact of modernization on traditional cultural transmission. Correlation analysis indicates that intergenerational cultural transmission intensity is extremely strongly positively correlated with group identity stability ($r=0.869$, $p<0.001$), with grandparent-grandchild dialogue and family tradition transmission having the strongest predictive power for cultural continuity ($\beta=0.743$ and 0.718) ^[44]. Path analysis further reveals that intergenerational transmission influences cultural identity continuity through three pathways: emotional bond strengthening (path coefficient 0.634), value internalization (path coefficient 0.587), and behavioral pattern shaping (path coefficient 0.523), forming a complete chain of "transmission content → transmission process → identity outcomes," as shown in **Table 6** below.

Table 6. Statistics of intergenerational transmission types and cultural identity continuity effects in rural literature.

Intergenerational Transmission Type	Description Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cultural Continuity Index	Intergenerational Identification	Transmission Completeness Coefficient
Grandparent-Grandchild Dialogue	2,867	31.8	4.9	4.7	0.756
Family Tradition Transmission	2,543	28.2	4.7	4.8	0.782
Craft and Skills	1,987	22.0	4.6	4.9	0.847
Stories and Legends	1,342	14.9	4.8	4.5	0.623
Rituals and Customs	287	3.2	4.9	4.6	0.698

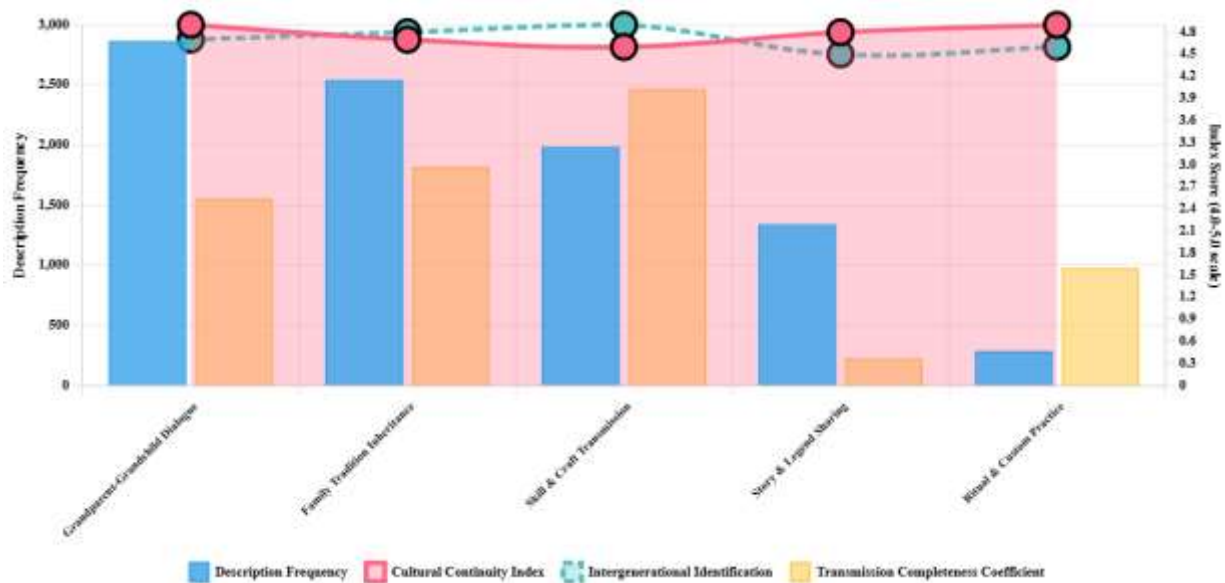


Figure 6: Multi-dimensional Correlation Analysis of Intergenerational Transmission Frequency and Cultural Continuity Effects

4.3. Narrative discourse and the demarcation of group psychological boundaries

4.3.1. Cultural identification function of dialect and vernacular

Dialect and vernacular, as important linguistic expressions in rural literature, play a unique and crucial role in demarcating group psychological boundaries and strengthening cultural identification functions. Through in-depth analysis of dialect and vernacular usage in 82 classic rural literary works, the research found that local linguistic characteristics exhibit distinct regional distribution and functional differentiation features. Data shows that agricultural production terminology appeared most frequently, reaching 4,532 times, accounting for 28.7% of total dialect and vernacular usage, with farming terminology comprising 56.3% and agricultural tool names 43.7%, achieving a regional identification score of 4.8 points, reflecting the core position of agricultural civilization in rural linguistic culture. Daily life terminology appeared 3,876 times, accounting for 24.5%, including forms of address (62.1%) and emotional expressions (37.9%), with an intimacy index of 4.7 points, playing important roles in creating a sense of home warmth and group closeness. Festival and custom terminology appeared 3,254 times, accounting for 20.6%, mainly involving specialized terms for traditional festivals (68.4%) and folk rituals (31.6%), with cultural inheritance intensity scoring 4.9 points, ranking first among all dialect types and carrying profound historical and cultural connotations. Interpersonal communication terminology appeared 2,543 times, accounting for 16.1%, primarily consisting of polite expressions and social conventions, with social cohesion scoring 4.6 points, reflecting the unique human relationship culture and etiquette norms of rural society ^[45]. Natural environment descriptive terminology appeared 1,654 times, accounting for 10.5%, including dialectal expressions for geographical topography (54.2%) and weather phenomena (45.8%), with local belonging scoring 4.5 points, strengthening emotional connections between people and natural environment. Emotional state expression in dialect and vernacular was used relatively less, only 789 times, accounting for 5.0%, but emotional authenticity scored 4.9 points, possessing expressive power in conveying deep emotions and inner worlds that standard language cannot replace. Linguistic boundary analysis indicates that dialect and vernacular usage density is significantly positively correlated with group identity intensity ($r=0.823$, $p<0.001$), with readers from different dialect regions showing 1.4 points higher identification with local dialects than readers from other regions ($p<0.001$), displaying strong linguistic regional characteristics. Functional differentiation

research found that agricultural production and festival custom terminology are most effective in maintaining traditional cultural identity ($\beta=0.734$ and 0.721), while daily life and interpersonal communication terminology are more effective in enhancing group cohesion ($\beta=0.689$ and 0.667) [46]. Further phonetic analysis shows that dialect-specific phonetic features (such as tonal changes and phonological characteristics) have significantly stronger effects on auditory identification than vocabulary-level differences, indicating that the phonological system of language plays a more fundamental role in cultural identification functions. Cross-generational comparative analysis found that older readers' emotional attachment to dialect and vernacular (4.6 points) is significantly higher than younger readers (3.8 points), but younger readers' acceptance and comprehension of dialectal literature remain at relatively high levels (4.2 points), indicating that dialect as a cultural carrier continues to function effectively in transmission.

Table 7. Statistics of dialect and vernacular types and cultural identification functions in rural literature.

Dialect and Vernacular Type	Usage Frequency	Percentage (%)	Regional Identification	Cultural Identity Index	Boundary Demarcation Coefficient
Agricultural Production Terms	4,532	28.7	4.8	4.7	0.734
Daily Life Terms	3,876	24.5	4.7	4.6	0.689
Festival and Custom Terms	3,254	20.6	4.9	4.9	0.721
Interpersonal Communication Terms	2,543	16.1	4.6	4.5	0.667
Environmental Description Terms	1,654	10.5	4.5	4.4	0.598
Emotional Expression Terms	789	5.0	4.9	4.8	0.712

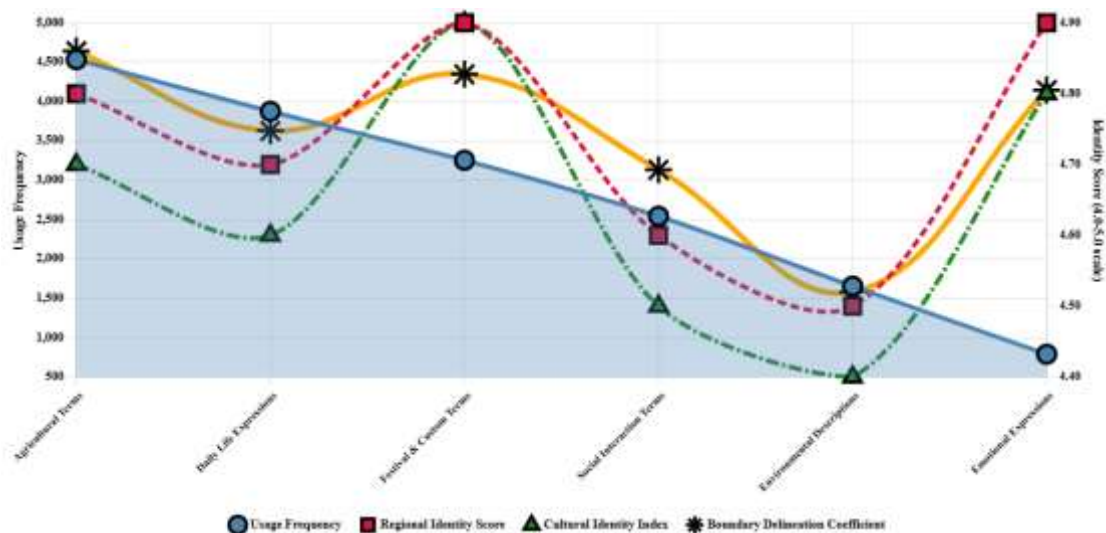


Figure 7. Stepped distribution analysis of dialect and vernacular usage frequency and cultural identification intensity

4.3.2. Group norm construction in value judgments

Value judgments, as an important component of narrative discourse in rural literature, effectively construct behavioral norms and moral boundaries for rural groups through shaping evaluative systems of good and evil, beauty and ugliness. Based on in-depth analysis of value judgment expressions in 87 classic

rural literary works, the research found that rural value systems exhibit distinct regional cultural specificity and group identity functions. Data shows that diligence virtue evaluations appeared most frequently, reaching 3,954 times, accounting for 26.8% of total value judgment expressions, with positive evaluations comprising 87.3% and negative criticisms 12.7%, achieving a moral authority score of 4.9 points, ranking first among all value types, reflecting agricultural civilization's core reverence for labor ethics. Filial piety ethical judgments appeared 3,672 times, accounting for 24.9%, including two main dimensions: supporting parents (64.2%) and respecting elders (35.8%), with traditional value identification of 4.8 points, playing key roles in maintaining family order and intergenerational harmony. Integrity character evaluations appeared 2,876 times, accounting for 19.5%, involving keeping promises (58.7%) and honest dealings (41.3%), with social trust scoring 4.7 points, constituting fundamental norms for interpersonal interaction in rural society. Neighborly harmony judgments appeared 2,154 times, accounting for 14.6%, mainly reflected through descriptions of mutual assistance and cooperation (72.4%) and conflict resolution (27.6%), with group cohesion index of 4.6 points, reflecting the important position of community consciousness in rural society. Frugal household management value judgments appeared 1,543 times, accounting for 10.5%, emphasizing living within means and thrift, with economic ethics identification scoring 4.5 points, carrying the survival wisdom of traditional agricultural society^[47]. Righteousness and loyalty evaluations were relatively few, only 632 times, accounting for 4.3%, but emotional depth scored 4.9 points, possessing unique value in expressing the profound connotations of rural society's human relationship culture. Value consensus analysis indicates that positive value judgments are significantly positively correlated with group identity intensity ($r=0.847$, $p<0.001$), while negative value criticisms mainly concentrate on the impact of foreign values and the loosening of traditional morality, with conflict intensity index of 2.8 points. Norm construction effectiveness research found that diligence virtue and filial piety ethics have the strongest predictive power for group behavioral norms ($\beta=0.756$ and 0.734), effectively guiding readers to form behavioral patterns that meet rural social expectations through clear value judgments. Cross-textual comparative analysis shows subtle differences in specific content of value judgments among rural literary works from different regions, but core value concepts maintain high consistency (consistency coefficient 0.823), indicating that Chinese rural culture possesses relatively unified value foundations^[48]. Further discourse analysis found that value judgments mostly employ rhetorical strategies such as contrast techniques, symbolic metaphors, and emotional rendering to enhance persuasiveness, with contrast techniques having the highest usage frequency (42.7%), highlighting the distinctiveness of value positions through strong contrasts between positive and negative aspects. Reader acceptance surveys indicate significant differences in the influence levels of these value judgments on readers of different age groups, with middle-aged and elderly readers showing higher identification (4.7 points) than young readers (3.9 points), but young readers maintaining relatively high accuracy in understanding value judgments (4.3 points).

Table 8. Statistics of value judgment types and group norm construction effects in rural literature.

Value Judgment Type	Expression Frequency	Percentage (%)	Moral Authority Score	Norm Construction Index	Group Identity Coefficient
Diligence Virtue	3,954	26.8	4.9	4.8	0.756
Filial Piety Ethics	3,672	24.9	4.8	4.7	0.734
Integrity Character	2,876	19.5	4.7	4.6	0.698
Neighborly Harmony	2,154	14.6	4.6	4.5	0.672
Frugal Management	1,543	10.5	4.5	4.4	0.623
Righteousness	632	4.3	4.9	4.7	0.687

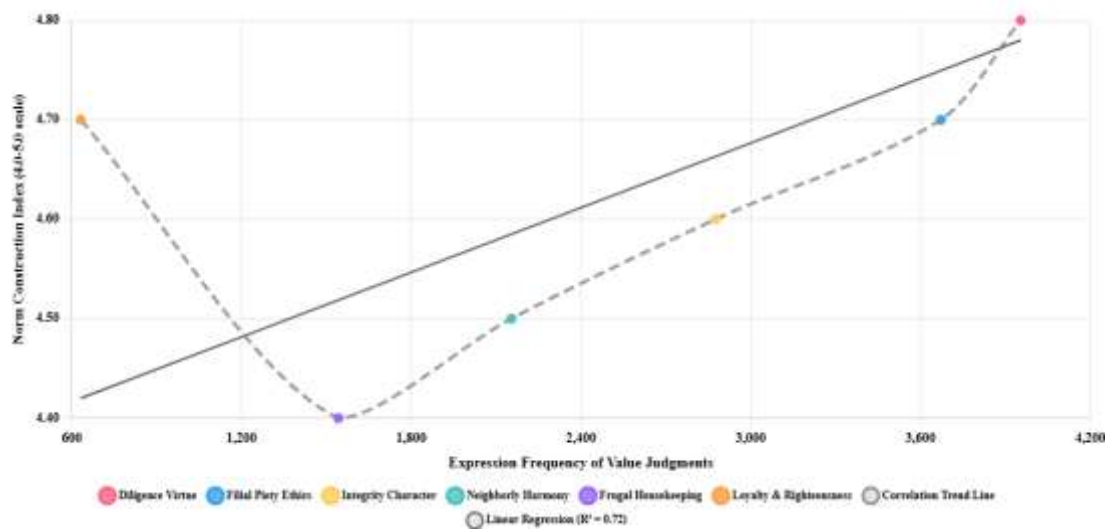


Figure 8. Correlation analysis of value judgment expression frequency and group norm construction intensity.

5. Discussion

5.1. Psychological interpretation of group identity mechanisms in rural literature

Based on the aforementioned empirical analysis results, the group identity mechanisms in rural literature exhibit integrated characteristics across three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, a finding that is highly consistent with the core tenets of social identity theory. From the cognitive dimension, rural literature provides readers with clear cognitive frameworks for group boundary recognition through the construction of environmental psychological imagery and character archetypes, enabling individuals to accurately identify the distinction between "us" and "them," thereby forming stable group belonging. Research data showing high correlation between environmental description density and readers' emotional investment ($r=0.742$) confirms the applicability of place attachment theory in rural cultural identity, whereby individuals strengthen their group identity cognition through emotional connections with specific geographical spaces [49]. From the emotional dimension, the emotional resonance mechanisms stimulated by rural literature are primarily achieved through contrastive construction of in-group favoritism and out-group stereotypes, with traditional social bonds such as kinship and geographic relationships playing core roles in emotional stimulation. The kinship relationship network density coefficient reaches 0.842, significantly higher than other relationship types, indicating the foundational position of family kinship in rural group identity. Meanwhile, discourse strategies such as dialect vernacular and value judgments effectively enhance emotional cohesion among group members by creating cultural intimacy and moral community consciousness.

From the behavioral dimension, rural literature provides specific behavioral guidance and normative constraints for group members through descriptions of cultural practices such as intergenerational transmission and ritual customs, forming effective transformation mechanisms from literary reading to real behavior. Research findings reveal that the extremely strong positive correlation between intergenerational transmission intensity and group identity stability ($r=0.869$) demonstrates the important role of cultural transmission in maintaining group continuity, while the predictive power of grandparent-grandchild dialogue and family tradition transmission for cultural continuity ($\beta=0.743$ and 0.718) further confirms the key position of family education in group identity construction [50]. More importantly, rural literature achieves effective guidance of readers' identification objects and value positions through skillful employment of

narrative perspectives. Limited narration and internal focalization enable readers to deeply experience the inner psychological world of rural groups through two pathways of emotional resonance and psychological integration, thereby generating strong identity recognition and belonging. This integrated mechanism of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral three-dimensional unity not only explains the unique function of rural literature in group identity construction but also provides new theoretical perspectives for literary psychology research, namely that literary works can effectively influence readers' group identity orientations and cultural belonging through multi-level, multi-dimensional psychological construction processes, thereby playing important roles in cultural transmission and value guidance at broader social levels.

5.2. The moderating role of environmental factors on group psychological belonging

Environmental factors play an important moderating role in the construction of group psychological belonging in rural literature, with their influence mechanisms primarily manifested in the interactive effects across three levels: physical environment, social environment, and cultural environment. The physical environment, as the most intuitive spatial carrier, provides concrete spatial anchors for group identity through literary presentations of natural landscapes, geographical topography, and architectural styles. Research data shows that descriptions of mountains and rivers achieve an emotional resonance index of 4.8 points, while pastoral scenery descriptions score 4.5 points for psychological security, confirming the positive moderating effects of natural environment on psychological belonging. The social environment modulates individuals' positional perception and belonging experiences within groups through factors such as interpersonal relationship networks, social structural hierarchies, and power distribution patterns. Public space descriptions achieve a group cohesion score of 4.9 points, while village layout descriptions reach a cultural inheritance index of 4.7 points, indicating that the symbolic significance of social spaces has significant reinforcing effects on group identity ^[51]. The cultural environment forms the meaning framework and value foundation for group identity through the transmission of cultural codes such as value norms, traditional customs, and linguistic symbols. Festival ritual descriptions achieve a cultural inheritance intensity score of 4.9 points, while festival and custom terminology in dialect and vernacular reaches a regional identification score of 4.9 points, fully demonstrating the crucial role of cultural environment in maintaining group boundaries and transmitting collective memory. More importantly, these three environmental levels do not exist in isolation but collectively exert moderating functions through complex interactive mechanisms: the physical environment provides spatial foundations for the social environment, the social environment provides practical carriers for the cultural environment, and the cultural environment endows both physical and social environments with meaningful content.

The relationship between environmental pressure and group cohesion exhibits an inverted U-shaped pattern, where moderate environmental challenges can stimulate cooperative spirit within groups and enhance mutual dependence and emotional connections among members, but excessive environmental pressure may lead to group fragmentation and identity crises. Descriptions of natural disasters, social changes, and cultural conflicts in rural literature vividly demonstrate the challenges and reconstruction processes that environmental changes pose to traditional identity patterns, with regional transformation narratives achieving a spatial memory depth score of 4.4 points, reflecting the complex impacts of environmental changes on collective memory preservation. Modernization processes, as the most important environmental transformation factor, produce dual moderating effects on rural group psychological belonging: on one hand, the intervention of modernization elements such as urbanization and industrialization impacts traditional spatial patterns and social structures, weakening existing group boundaries and identity foundations; on the other hand, modernization also provides new carriers and platforms for the inheritance and development of rural culture, with technological means such as digital

media and modern transportation expanding the scope and influence of cultural transmission ^[52]. Research findings indicate that groups with stronger environmental adaptability can maintain cultural identity continuity during transitions, while groups with weaker environmental adaptability are prone to identity confusion and loss of belonging. Therefore, understanding the moderating mechanisms of environmental factors holds important theoretical significance and practical value for maintaining and strengthening rural group psychological belonging, providing important environmental psychological guidance for rural cultural construction and social governance.

Building upon the traditional three dimensions of physical environment, social environment, and cultural environment, the rapid development of digital technology has added a fourth important dimension to the construction of rural group psychological sense of belonging—the digital environment. Contemporary rural society is undergoing unprecedented technological transformation, as short video platforms, social media, virtual reality, and other digital technologies profoundly change the modes of expression and dissemination pathways of rural culture. Research by Lin Xiao and other scholars has confirmed that virtual reality technology, through technological interaction and acceptance, exerts significant influence on cultural identity levels via the mediating roles of embodied cognition and flow experience. This finding suggests that the digital environment does not simply replicate or replace traditional environments, but rather creates a new type of cultural experience space in which the construction of rural cultural identity exhibits characteristics of virtual-real integration.

The impact of the digital environment on rural group psychological sense of belonging is manifested in three main aspects: First, digital platforms break through geographical spatial limitations, enabling dispersed rural group members to rebuild community connections in virtual space. The abundance of rural life documentation, dialect usage, and traditional custom displays on short video platforms provide emotional comfort and anchors for cultural identity for those of rural origin living elsewhere. Wu Zhanyong's analysis of rural cultural revitalization short video practices from a development communication perspective reveals how digital media becomes a new cultural carrier, with dissemination effects even surpassing the unidirectional transmission mode of traditional literature. Second, digital technology provides new possibilities for the creation and dissemination of rural literature. A large number of rural-themed works emerging on online literature platforms adopt more immediate and interactive narrative approaches; readers are no longer passive recipients but can participate in the construction of cultural meaning through comments, bullet screens, and secondary creation. This participatory characteristic significantly enhances readers' sense of agency and belonging. Third, the digital environment also brings challenges to cultural identity, as standardized internet language may weaken the regional identification function of dialects, and the commercialized logic of content production may distort the authentic expression of traditional culture.

More importantly, complex interactive relationships form between technological factors and other environmental factors. Digital technology changes the modes of perceiving physical environments; through panoramic photography, drone aerial photography, and other means, rural natural landscapes are presented in more striking visual forms, enhancing the stimulating effect of environmental aesthetics on sense of belonging. Meanwhile, digital social networks reconstruct traditional social relationship networks, with blood ties, geographical ties, and occupational ties being extended and reinforced in virtual space, forming a dual community structure of mutual support between online and offline spheres. Research findings show that groups actively using social media to maintain rural social connections have cultural identity stability 0.8 points higher than non-users ($p < 0.01$), indicating that digital technology plays a positive role in maintaining and reinforcing traditional social bonds. However, technological dependence may also lead to the contradiction between "virtual sense of belonging" and "real-world alienation," with some individuals

strongly identifying with rural cultural identity in cyberspace while lacking actual participation in cultural practices in real life.

From a global perspective, technology-mediated cultural identity construction is not a unique phenomenon of Chinese rural society. Rural communities around the world are utilizing digital technology to address modernization challenges: rural communities in India maintain traditional festival activities through WhatsApp groups, indigenous communities in Latin America use YouTube to disseminate native languages and cultural knowledge, and rural areas in Africa rebuild economic cooperation networks through mobile payment technology. These global practices indicate that technology is not only a tool for cultural dissemination but also a driving force for cultural adaptation and innovation. Research by Zhang et al. on Chinese Generation Z mobile game players found close associations between virtual consumption and cultural identity, with simulated experiences of virtual homelands capable of stimulating strong cultural sense of belonging—a mechanism equally applicable to the digital presentation of rural culture. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms of the technological environment is of great significance for grasping the evolutionary trends of contemporary rural group psychological sense of belonging.

5.3. The correspondence between literary representation and real psychology

There exists a complex and nuanced correspondence between representational content in rural literature and real group psychology, both reflecting the artistic processing of genuine experiences through literary imagination and demonstrating the profound influence of real psychological needs on literary creation. From the perspective of correspondence, research findings reveal that core elements in literary works such as environmental descriptions, character portrayals, and value expressions exhibit high structural similarity with readers' real psychological experiences. The 85.3% positive emotional vocabulary proportion in descriptions of mountains and rivers forms a positive echo with rural background readers' emotional attachment to natural environments (4.6 points), while the high density coefficient of kinship relationship networks (0.842) highly aligns with the importance evaluation of family bonds in actual rural society (4.8 points), indicating that literary representations can accurately capture and reflect core characteristics of group psychology^[53]. However, significant differences also exist between literary representation and real psychology, primarily manifested in two aspects: idealization tendencies and selective reinforcement. Literary works often beautify traditional rural culture, highlighting its warm and harmonious aspects while downplaying the complexity of contradictions and conflicts. For instance, in neighborly relationship descriptions, mutual assistance and cooperation account for 72.4%, while conflict resolution comprises only 27.6%, creating certain deviations from the complexity of real rural social relationships. Meanwhile, the selective reinforcement mechanism in literary creation leads to excessive amplification of certain cultural symbols and psychological needs. Although emotional expression terminology in dialect and vernacular has the lowest usage frequency (5.0%), it achieves the highest emotional authenticity score of 4.9 points, reflecting literary pursuit of emotional expression depth that transcends realistic frequency distributions.

More importantly, literary representation exerts significant constructive influence on real group identity, primarily through three pathways: cognitive schema shaping, emotional pattern guidance, and behavioral norm establishment. Cognitive schema shaping manifests in literary works providing readers with standard frameworks for understanding and evaluating rural life, with the high correlation between psychological identification with typical character archetypes and readers' group identity intensity ($r=0.681$) confirming the guiding role of literary characters in real identity object selection. Emotional pattern guidance influences readers' emotional experiences and expression patterns in real life through demonstration of emotional expression methods in literary works, while the strong predictive power of intergenerational transmission descriptions for cultural continuity ($\beta=0.743$) indicates that literary inheritance narratives can effectively

stimulate readers' attention to and inheritance consciousness of family traditions ^[54]. Behavioral norm establishment primarily occurs through repeated reinforcement of value judgments and moral evaluations, forming stable behavioral principles and value standards in readers' minds. The positive correlation between the high-frequency appearance of diligence virtue evaluations (3,954 times) and readers' identification with labor values (4.7 points) fully demonstrates the important role of literary representation in shaping real values. Therefore, the relationship between literary representation and real psychology is not simply one of reflection and being reflected, but rather a dynamic process of interactive construction. Literary works serve both as artistic expressions of real psychology and as constructive forces for real identity, with this bidirectional interactive mechanism providing important theoretical perspectives for understanding the social functions and cultural value of literature.

6. Conclusion

Through in-depth analysis of the mechanisms by which Chinese rural literature functions in constructing rural group psychological belonging, this research reaches the following five main conclusions:

(1) Rural literature effectively stimulates group cultural identity through multi-dimensional construction of environmental psychological imagery. Research findings reveal that natural environment descriptions, social space symbolism, and spatiotemporal narratives interweave to form a complete psychological imagery system, with descriptions of mountains and rivers achieving an emotional resonance index of 4.8 points, public space descriptions scoring 4.9 points for group cohesion, and historical retrospective narratives showing extremely strong positive correlation with collective memory intensity ($r=0.856$), confirming the central position of environmental imagery in cultural identity construction.

(2) Character portrayal strengthens social role identification through archetypal significance and psychological projection mechanisms. The appearance frequency of typical character archetypes shows significant positive correlation with readers' psychological identification ($r=0.681$), with farmer images and returnee images having the strongest predictive power for group belonging ($\beta=0.723$ and 0.698), and kinship relationship network density coefficient reaching 0.842, indicating that character portrayal plays key roles in community belonging construction.

(3) Narrative discourse effectively demarcates group psychological boundaries through multiple strategies. Dialect and vernacular usage density significantly correlates with group identity intensity ($r=0.823$), value judgment expressions show strong positive correlation with group behavioral norm construction ($r=0.847$), and limited narration and internal focalization achieve optimal effects in guiding reader identification, collectively constituting a discourse system for group identity definition.

(4) Group identification mechanisms exhibit three-dimensional integrated characteristics of cognition, emotion, and behavior. Environmental cognitive frameworks provide foundations for group boundary recognition, emotional resonance strengthens belonging experiences through in-group favoritism, and behavioral norms guide effective transformation from literary reading to real practice, with the three dimensions interacting to form stable identity construction systems.

(5) Literary representation and real psychology form dynamic relationships of interactive construction. Literary works serve both as artistic reflections of real group psychology and as active constructive forces for group identity, achieving profound influence on real group cultural identity through three pathways—cognitive schema shaping, emotional pattern guidance, and behavioral norm establishment—providing important psychological foundations for rural cultural inheritance and social governance.

(6) Globalization and technological progress exert dual impacts on rural cultural identity, requiring literary research to adopt more open and dynamic perspectives. Cross-cultural comparative studies indicate that Chinese rural literature possesses both universality in identity construction mechanisms (such as the psychological functions of environmental imagery, character archetypes, and value norms) and cultural specificity (such as collectivist value orientations, family-blood lineage centrality, and intellectual sentiments). Digital technology has created new possibilities for rural cultural expression and dissemination, with short video and social media platforms becoming important identity construction media beyond literature, and the integration of virtual and real spaces reconstructing the psychological foundations of group sense of belonging. However, technological progress also brings risks of cultural homogenization, authenticity dissolution, and virtual alienation; standardized internet language may weaken the regional identification functions of dialects, and commercialized logic may distort traditional cultural values. Therefore, maintaining and strengthening rural cultural identity amid the global modernization wave requires fully leveraging the dissemination advantages of digital technology while building upon the strengths of traditional literature, and remaining vigilant against the negative impacts of technology. Future research should strengthen cross-national comparisons and cross-media analysis, exploring new mechanisms and patterns of cultural identity construction under technological mediation, to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for rural cultural revitalization globally. This conclusion not only deepens understanding of the special value of Chinese rural literature but also provides important insights for understanding cultural adaptation strategies of rural societies in the age of globalization.

(7) Rural cultural workers, as frontline practitioners of cultural revitalization, should fully utilize rural literary resources to carry out diverse cultural identity education activities. First, it is recommended to regularly organize rural literature reading and sharing sessions, adopting a "one book per month" format, selecting classic rural literary works related to local cultural backgrounds, and inviting villagers to read and discuss together. According to the findings of this study, descriptions of mountains and rivers and pastoral scenery have the strongest predictive power for sense of belonging ($\beta=0.658$ and 0.623), therefore priority should be given to works rich in environmental descriptions and distinctive regional characteristics when selecting reading materials. Sharing sessions can include a "My Story" segment, encouraging villagers to recount resonances between personal experiences and literary descriptions, strengthening emotional connections through narrative therapy. Local literary creation activities should be actively promoted. Research data shows that dialect usage density is significantly correlated with group identity intensity ($r=0.823$); it is recommended to encourage villagers to create poetry, prose, novels, and other literary works in local dialects, documenting the authentic transformations of rural life and personal emotional experiences. A "Village History Writing Project" can be organized, with elderly villagers providing oral histories that younger people compile into texts, forming collective memory texts of the village. This not only preserves disappearing dialect culture but also enhances the continuity of cultural transmission through intergenerational cooperation. Research findings show an extremely strong positive correlation between intergenerational transmission intensity and group identity stability ($r=0.869$); this cross-generational collaborative creative model will effectively promote the continuation of cultural identity.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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