

PREDICTING LECTURER TURNOVER INTENTION IN CHINESE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: THE ROLES OF JOB SATISFACTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Xinbei YAO¹ and Chuleerat KONGRUANG^{2*}

1 College of Graduate Studies, Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat,
Thailand; 1132084945@qq.com

2 GSCR, School of Accountancy and Finance, Walailak University, Nakhon Si
Thammarat, Thailand; chuleerat.ko@wu.ac.th (Corresponding Author)

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on the turnover intention of lecturers in two private universities in Guangzhou, China. Using stratified random sampling, data were collected via questionnaires from 340 lecturers. The results of statistical analyses revealed significant negative correlations between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Higher satisfaction and commitment levels corresponded to lower turnover likelihood. These findings have implications for HR management in higher education and other sectors. Private universities can enhance lecturer retention by improving work environments, investing in staff welfare, and promoting democratic school governance. Future research could focus on specific enhancement strategies.

Keywords: Turnover Intention, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment

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INTRODUCTION

Maintaining a stable teaching workforce in contemporary education poses a significant challenge, especially within private universities in China where the turnover intention among lecturers has emerged as a particularly acute issue. Recent statistics indicate that the annual turnover rate of lecturers in some private universities has reached as high as 23%, far exceeding the average turnover rate in public institutions. Such a high turnover not only disrupts the continuity of academic programs but also exerts a detrimental impact on educational quality. Frequent departures of lecturers lead to teaching and research stagnation, causing psychological distress among students and impeding the seamless transfer of knowledge, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of talent cultivation.

Despite the severity of this problem, many private universities have, until now, failed to address it adequately. Their overemphasis on recruitment channels and the pursuit of high-profile talents has overshadowed the critical issue of retaining existing faculty. This oversight stems from a lack of understanding of the underlying factors driving lecturer turnover.

Job satisfaction, which hinges on the congruence between employee expectations and the actual work environment, plays a pivotal role. In private universities, often constrained by limited financial resources, teachers frequently cite dissatisfaction with welfare packages as a primary reason for resigning. When lecturers are content with their working conditions, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of dedication and productivity, optimizing the utilization of human resources.

Organizational commitment, on the other hand, encapsulates the emotional bond and loyalty that teachers feel towards their institution. In Western educational contexts, robust legal frameworks safeguard teachers' rights, fostering a sense of job security that, in turn, bolsters their commitment and reduces turnover. In contrast, Chinese private universities have, in the past, predominantly focused on salary and career advancement opportunities, neglecting the cultivation of a deep-seated organizational commitment among their teaching staff.

Given the close interrelationship between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention, it becomes evident that lecturers who feel valued and supported within their institutions are less inclined to seek alternative employment. Understanding these dynamics is, therefore, crucial for devising effective strategies to stabilize the faculty.

This study delves into the impact of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on the turnover intention of lecturers at Guangzhou Huashang Private University. By doing so, it aims to identify the key measures necessary to enhance faculty retention and, in turn, propel the sustainable development of the institution.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Definition of Turnover Intention

Over the past few decades, numerous scholars have delved into the turnover intention of employees across diverse organizations. Different perspectives have emerged in defining this concept. Tett (1993) regarded turnover intention as an individual's conscious manifestation of the desire to leave an organization, measured within a particular time span and being part of the cognitive turnover process. Yusliza, Nadia, and Chuah (2015) emphasized that it represents an employee's contemplation of changing jobs or leaving their current position, mainly focusing on the cognitive aspect rather than immediate actions.

Ahmet (2022) provided a more comprehensive definition, stating that turnover intention is a specific attitude formed before taking actual actions like leaving, which results from a combination of economic, social, and psychological factors, highlighting its complexity. Rice (2001) linked it to job-related factors, defining it as the tendency to leave due to job dissatisfaction, stress, lack of organizational support, or the presence of better job

opportunities. Hidayati Arshad and Fadilah Puteh (2015) noted its close relationship with actual turnover behavior and its predictive role.

However, there are still some gaps in the existing research on turnover intention. Most studies have been conducted in general corporate settings, and there is a lack of in-depth exploration of the turnover intention of lecturers in private universities. The unique characteristics of the private university teaching environment, such as its financial constraints and specific management models, may lead to different influencing factors for turnover intention, which need further research.

Definition of Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a complex construct that reflects an employee's overall emotional reaction to their job. Locke (1976) defined it as a positive emotional state that arises from evaluating work experience based on the perceived gap between expected and actual performance. Mishra (2013) concurred, stating that it is a general attitude depending on how well the job meets an individual's needs and expectations.

Scholars often discuss job satisfaction in relation to job characteristics, including compensation, career opportunities, coworker relationships, and the work environment. Paais and Pattiruhi (2020) emphasized that satisfied employees are more productive. Riyadi (2020) pointed out that motivated and loyal employees with high job satisfaction contribute more to the company. Asim (2019) identified factors such as compensation, career development, supervision, and job clarity as related to job satisfaction. Wei (2023) stated that it is influenced by both positive and negative factors, which determine employees' engagement.

Nevertheless, the existing research on job satisfaction in the context of private-university lecturers is insufficient. Although some general factors related to job satisfaction have been identified, the specific impact of factors like the unique academic environment and the nature of teaching work in private universities on job satisfaction remains unclear.

Definition of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been extensively studied. Porter et al. (1974) described it as "the strength of identification with and involvement in an organization", emphasizing employees' beliefs in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, as well as their willingness to stay. Meyer and Allen (1991) revised this definition, proposing a three-component model: affective commitment (emotional attachment), normative commitment (sense of obligation), and continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving). This model broadened the understanding of organizational commitment by considering emotional, cognitive, and social factors.

Brian, Carlan, and Nelson (2010) framed it as a state of alignment between employees' values and the organization's purpose to promote loyalty. O'Reilly (1989) described it as a psychological connection with characteristics such as job engagement, loyalty, and alignment with values. Rodríguez, Rad, and Sánchez (2023) stated that it is influenced by employees' effort and loyalty and the organization's reciprocal efforts.

In the field of private-university research, there is a lack of in-depth exploration of how to enhance organizational commitment among lecturers. The existing research has not fully considered the unique challenges and opportunities in private universities, such as the relatively weaker cultural heritage and the need for more flexible management models, which may affect the formation and enhancement of organizational commitment. This study aims to fill these gaps by using the definition from Rodríguez, Rad, and Sánchez (2023) to explore the influence of organizational commitment on the turnover intention of private-university lecturers..

Hypothesis development

H1: There is a significant statistical correlation between job satisfaction and turnover intention in private university teachers.

H2: There is a significant statistical correlation between organizational commitment and turnover intention in private university teachers.

From the literature review, the conceptual framework can be drawn as shown in Figure 1.

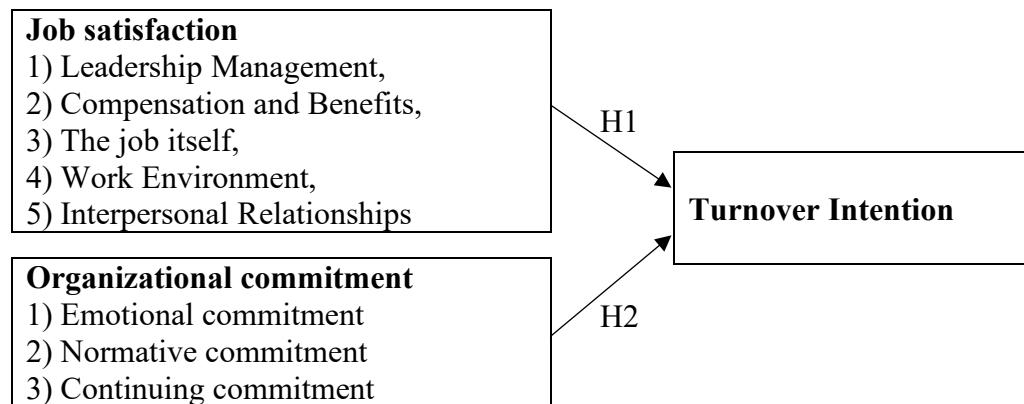


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a survey research method targeting 1,507 lecturers at Guangzhou Huashang College and Guangzhou Huashang Vocational College. Yamane's formula determined a sample size of around 316, but 340 samples were surveyed using multi-stage random sampling. Initially, the two universities were chosen as primary units. Subsequently, departments within each were randomly selected, followed by random lecturer selection from these departments. This approach ensured a representative sample from the diverse lecturer population and was more resource-efficient than simple random sampling.

A pre-tested questionnaire, validated for content and construct validity by expert review and factor analysis, was used. Its reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, indicated high internal consistency. The 30-item questionnaire covered job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention, using a 5-point Likert scale.

Data analysis involved simple descriptive statistics for an overview and multiple regression to test hypotheses, examining the impact of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention. This method was chosen for its ability to assess multiple variables' effects and meet regression assumptions, ensuring result validity.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Geographical data of the samples

The research results found that the male and female sample groups were nearly balance with 52.06% male and 47.94% female respondents. Most of the were 31-40 year old (42.65%), followed by 21-30 (26.47%), 41-50 (23.53%), 51-60 (5%), and over 60 (2.35%). The workforce is skewed towards younger and middle aged individuals, which may impact their willingness to leave as career aspects change. 80.29% of the samples are the members of political parties, showing political engagement, and 79.41% are married, indicating stable family commitments. Their educational qualifications is relatively high, with 48.23% having a Doctoral degree and 44.71% a Master's degree. Only 7.06% have an education level below a bachelor's degree, which in line with the institution's high educational standards focus. Their professional positions are lecturers, the largest group (50.29%), followed by associate professors (25.88%), assistant professors (20.59%), and professors (7.35%). In term of the job roles, most of them are responsible for teaching (48.24%), administrative positions (42.65%), and teaching and administrative roles (9.11%), with diverse responsibilities affecting job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For the subject areas, Engineering is the main one

(63.24%), followed by Liberal Arts (25%), Science (8.53%), and Economics and Management (3.23%). Academic expertise is distributed in science (46.76%), liberal arts (18.23%), engineering (20.59%), and other fields (14.42%). For teaching and work experience, 45.88% of the samples had 3-5 years of teaching experience, with others having less than 3 years (29.41%), 6-8 years (18.23%), or more than 8 years (6.48%). Similar pattern for work experience, with 44.71% having less than 3 years, indicating relatively new faculty. In term of income level, most of the samples are earning 6,000-7,000 yuan per month (36.76%), followed by those with 5,000-6,000 yuan (28.26%). Income, career advancement, and role diversity significantly influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and ultimately turnover intention.

Descriptive Statistical on Job Satisfaction

Table 1 analysis shows that the highest mean scores for job satisfaction are for the school's working environment and interpersonal relations. Employees strongly agree they're comfortable with the school and its surroundings (mean 4.60), have good communication and cooperation with coworkers (mean 4.55), and get colleagues' support (mean 4.43). The facilities and academic atmosphere are also favorably rated (means 4.48 and 4.47 respectively). Regarding career development and compensation, teachers are satisfied too. School rules are seen as fair (mean 4.51), promotion opportunities are positively rated (mean 4.53), and salary aspects like alignment with expectations and fairness of distribution are well regarded (means 4.57 and 4.54). Employees consider holidays and benefits reasonable (mean 4.54) and feel their job enables them to realize their potential (mean 4.56). They also report a sense of fulfillment (mean 4.51) and increased interest in teaching (mean 4.43). Overall, the average job satisfaction score is 4.53, showing a positive perception of the work environment, career prospects, and support. In summary, the positive score reflects a good match between expectations and experiences, though there's room for improvement in areas like team communication and career development to boost satisfaction and engagement further.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of job satisfaction

Question	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of perception
1) School rules and regulations are fair and reasonable.	4.51	1.41	Agree
2) Participate democratically in the development of the school system.	4.61	1.30	Agree
3) Good teachers always have the right opportunity for promotion.	4.53	1.23	Agree
4) The actual salary is more in line with one's expectations.	4.57	1.28	Agree
5) Salaries are distributed fairly among teachers.	4.54	1.32	Agree
6) Holidays and other benefits are reasonable.	4.54	1.32	Agree
7) My job enables me to realize my potentials.	4.56	1.36	Agree
8) I'm more interested in the teaching profession.	4.43	1.39	Agree
9) I can obtain a great sense of fulfillment from my work.	4.51	1.35	Agree
10) The classrooms, laboratories, offices and other supporting work conditions are favorable.	4.48	1.37	Agree
11) I feel comfortable with the school and the surrounding natural environment.	4.60	1.33	Agree
12) The academic atmosphere of the school is strong.	4.47	1.34	Agree
13) Good communication and cooperation with coworkers.	4.55	1.36	Agree
14) Colleagues support and help me in my work.	4.43	1.35	Agree
15) I agree with my coworker's style.	4.60	1.34	Agree
Job Satisfaction	4.53	1.34	Agree

Descriptive statistical analysis of organizational commitment

Table 2 reveals the following in the analysis of organizational commitment:

Continuance commitment: It has the highest mean scores. The academy's pledge to enhance employees' economic value has a mean of 4.50 (Agree). The efforts to retain employees have a mean of 4.43 (Agree), and job security assurance has a mean of 4.34 (Agree). This indicates that employees feel secure and valued, which helps in reducing turnover.

Emotional commitment: It shows positive results. Employees agree that the academy offers a good working platform (mean 4.44, Agree) and recognizes their performance (mean 4.37, Agree). They also feel that their work goals and values are respected (mean 4.35, Agree). However, the academy's support in problem-solving (mean 4.29, Slightly Agree) and task alignment (mean 4.23, Slightly Agree) have lower scores, pointing out areas that need improvement.

Normative commitment: It has relatively lower mean scores. Employees moderately agree on recognition for extra work (mean 4.28, Slightly Agree), understanding of personal issues (mean 4.25, Slightly Agree), and concern for living conditions (mean 4.24, Slightly Agree). This shows that the organization has a basic supportive culture, but making improvements in these aspects could enhance employees' sense of duty.

Overall, the average organizational commitment score is 4.33, demonstrating employees' positive view of their relationship with the academy. While there are strengths in terms of economic stability and emotional aspects, focusing on improving normative commitment could further boost loyalty and engagement among employees.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of organizational commitment

Question	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of perception
Emotional commitment			
1) The academy can notice my excellent performance.	4.37	1.39	Agree
2) The academy provides appropriate platform to work.	4.44	1.47	Agree
3) The academy thinks highly of my work goals and values.	4.35	1.44	Agree
4) The academy offers assistance for the problems that I come across in my work	4.29	1.42	Slightly agree
5) The academy will let me be in charge of the work most suitable for me.	4.23	1.47	Slightly agree
Continuance commitment			
6) The academy never cut the salary	4.34	1.40	Agree
7) If I decide to leave, the academy will persuade me to stay.	4.43	1.38	Agree
8) Academy don't fire people easily.	4.34	1.45	Agree
9) The academy will reassign positions instead of firing employees.	4.34	1.46	Agree
10) The academy pledges to foster your economic value within the organization.	4.50	1.44	Agree
Normative commitment			
11) The academy rewards me for my extra work.	4.28	1.45	Slightly agree
12) The academy show understanding for occasional absenteeism caused by personal matters.	4.25	1.49	Slightly agree
13) The academy cares about my living condition.	4.28	1.49	Slightly agree
When the profits are high, the academy will increase the salaries of employees.	4.30	1.47	Slightly agree
14) When making decisions, the academy takes the interests of employees into account.	4.24	1.48	Slightly agree
Organizational commitment			
	4.33	1.45	Agree

Descriptive Statistical on Turnover intention

Table 3 shows that in the analysis of turnover intention, the highest mean scores are related to employees' plans to seek new job opportunities (mean 2.75, Slightly agree) and employment in a different company (mean 2.69, Slightly agree). This indicates some consideration for job changes, though not a high commitment to leaving. When facing work difficulties, employees sometimes think about quitting (mean 2.66, Slightly disagree), suggesting work challenges can affect their thoughts but not strongly indicating a likelihood of departure.

Conversely, employees are less likely to pursue entrepreneurship (mean 2.61, Slightly disagree) or let go of opportunities for work-related ideals (mean 2.62, Slightly disagree). Overall, the average turnover intention score is 2.67 (Slightly disagree), meaning most employees are not seriously considering leaving or changing careers.

In summary, while there are signs of turnover intention, the scores suggest employees are not highly dissatisfied or eager to leave. The moderate levels reflect occasional consideration of alternatives but not active planning to quit. The organization could focus on addressing work challenges and improving job satisfaction to reduce such thoughts.

Table 3 Descriptive statistical on Turnover intention

Question	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of perception
I plan to look for new job opportunities.	2.69	1.44	Slightly agree
On numerous occasions, I let slip the chance to achieve my work related ideals.	2.62	1.49	Slightly disagree
I'm planning to seek employment in a different company.	2.75	1.44	Slightly agree
When I encounter difficulties in my work, from time to time	2.66	1.52	Slightly disagree
I think about quitting the company.			
I frequently think about establishing my own company and becoming an entrepreneur.	2.61	1.44	Slightly disagree
Turnover intention	2.67	1.47	Slightly disagree

Table 4 Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Beat						
Constant	6.303				21.723	0.000		
X1: Job satisfaction	0.653		0.491		9.436	0.000	0.725	1.380
X2: Organizational commitment	0.178		0.147		2.830	0.005	0.725	1.380

R² = 0.33, Adjust R² = 0.335, F = 86.293, Sig. = 0.000

Regarding the individual predictors, Job Satisfaction (X1) has a significant negative impact on turnover intention, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.491 (p < 0.001). This means that an increase in job satisfaction leads to a significant decrease in employees' turnover intention. On the other hand, Organizational Commitment (X2) has a negative but statistically insignificant impact on turnover intention, with a Beta coefficient of 0.147 (p = 0.005). Despite the negative relationship, the lack of significance for Organizational Commitment in this model indicates that it may not be a crucial factor in predicting turnover intentions compared to job satisfaction.

Table 5 Hypothesis test results

Research Hypotheses	Result
H1: There is a significant statically corelate with job satisfaction and turnover intention in the private university teachers.	Supported
H2: There is a significant statically corelate with organizational commitment and turnover intention in the private university teachers.	Supported

The overall conclusion from the hypothesis testing indicates that both organizational commitment and job satisfaction are crucial factors in reducing turnover intention. However, job satisfaction appears to have a more substantial effect on reducing turnover intention compared to organizational commitment. Therefore, private universities should focus on enhancing both organizational commitment and job satisfaction by fostering a positive work environment, improving leadership quality, and strengthening interpersonal relationships. These efforts will help retain qualified teachers and minimize turnover rates.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This study delves into the impact of private university lecturers' job satisfaction on their turnover intention. The overall turnover intention among these teachers is relatively high, influenced by multiple factors including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the work environment.

Lecturers' job satisfaction is found to be moderate in certain aspects. For instance, management opacity, limited development opportunities, and insufficient benefits fail to meet their expectations. Organizational commitment significantly impacts turnover intention; teachers with high organizational commitment tend to have lower turnover intention, and it plays a more crucial role than job satisfaction in reducing turnover. Statistical analysis validates that both job satisfaction and organizational commitment are key variables influencing turnover intention.

Creating a favorable working environment and strengthening organizational commitment, such as clarifying career paths, paying more attention to teachers, and providing appropriate benefits, can effectively reduce turnover rates and contribute to long-term talent retention.

In comparison with previous studies, this research indicates that job satisfaction and organizational commitment negatively affect lecturers' resignation intention, which is consistent with the general findings of other studies De Gieter et al. (2011), Joo (2010). However, there are also differences. Regarding the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention, private university lecturers in this study show moderate satisfaction and unmet expectations due to external factors like market competition and policy pressure.

For the link between organizational commitment and turnover intention, this study highlights its importance in reducing turnover intention among private university teachers, which is consistent with other research results Sudaryono (2014), he emphasized that organizational commitment is important for organizational development, promotes employee loyalty and engagement, and promotes long-term stability. . Additionally, it is found that organizational commitment has a greater impact on job satisfaction in Thailand's private universities. Moreover, the unmet expectations in career development are a key factor for resignation. The lack of promotion opportunities and opaque promotion processes drive teachers to seek other opportunities, emphasizing the importance of professional development support.

This study confirms the significance of both job satisfaction and organizational commitment in reducing turnover intention and points out the need to meet teachers' expectations and enhance the transparency of career development, which is distinct from previous research.

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