Organizational Commitment: Evaluating the Influence of Work-Life Quality on Early-career Staff in a Research Institute

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Abstract

This research explores the intricate relationship between the quality of work life (QWL) and organizational commitment among Early-career staff in a Chinese research academy. The well-being of employees is increasingly recognized as a critical aspect of organizational success. Researching QWL and organizational commitment can help identify areas where improvements can be made to support the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of early-career staff, leading to higher job satisfaction and overall happiness. Employing a quantitative approach, this study utilizes 330 respondents from questionnaire survey and subsequent regression analysis to collect primary data and analyze employee perspectives. The findings emphasize a predominantly positive perception of QWL among Early-career staff, coupled with a favorable view of organizational commitment. Notably, the academy's tendency to prioritize position replacement over termination in response to work challenges nurtures a strong sense of commitment among employees. The implications suggest that such a commitment-focused approach, addressing QWL dimensions, can foster loyalty and reduce turnover, promoting a more stable and dedicated Early-career workforce.

Keywords: quality of work life; organizational commitment; early-career staff; Chinese research academy; employee perspectives

1. Introduction

The concept of quality of work life (QWL) traces its origins to the United Kingdom in the 1960s and has since gained global recognition, influencing management practices across enterprises. Within the field of organizational human resource management, the interplay between QWL and organizational commitment holds significant importance, as noted by researchers Alexandra et al. (1994) This connection directly impacts employees' commitment to their organizations, with variables like work happiness, a sense of belonging, and emotional satisfaction playing pivotal roles, as highlighted by Guest et al. (2021).

A critical concern in the management community is the widespread issue of high-frequency turnover, which is often linked to low quality of work life and organizational commitment. Researchers such as Lopes et al. (2023) have identified this challenge as a pressing issue, underscoring the need for organizations to address and enhance the quality of work life and organizational commitment to mitigate turnover and foster a more stable and dedicated workforce.

Studying early-career staff in a research institute such as the Dunhuang Research Academy is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, early-career researchers often bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and energy to their respective fields, which can invigorate research endeavors and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Understanding their experiences, challenges, and aspirations can help institutions tailor support systems and mentorship programs to facilitate their professional development and retention within the organization. Additionally, investing in the growth and success of early-career staff can contribute to the long-term sustainability and excellence of the research institute, ensuring a robust pipeline of talent for future leadership roles and advancing the institution's mission in preserving and promoting cultural heritage, as exemplified by the Dunhuang Research Academy.

The Dunhuang Research Academy, located in Gansu Province, China, is renowned for its commitment to the preservation, research, and dissemination of cultural artifacts from the ancient Silk Road, particularly the Mogao Caves. The academy attracts scholars and researchers from diverse academic backgrounds, including archaeology, art history, conservation science, and religious studies. Within this dynamic environment, early-career staff members often comprise recent graduates or junior researchers who are passionate about delving into the rich cultural heritage of Dunhuang and contributing to scholarly advancements in their respective disciplines. These individuals typically possess a strong academic foundation, demonstrated through degrees from prestigious universities both in China and abroad, and exhibit a keen interest in interdisciplinary collaboration and the application of modern research methodologies to the study of historical artifacts. Despite their enthusiasm and potential, early-career staff members at the Dunhuang Research Academy face unique challenges, including navigating the complexities of research funding, establishing themselves within the academic community, and balancing research commitments with professional

development opportunities. As such, understanding the needs and experiences of these individuals is paramount for fostering their growth and ensuring the continued success of the academy's mission.

Thus, this research explores the content and theory of the work and life quality of knowledge workers in scientific research institutions. By comprehensively understanding the current state of work and life quality among early-career staffs in such institutions, the research aims to propose effective suggestions and countermeasures for their management (Easton and Van Laar, 2018). Given the recognized impact of work-life quality on organizational commitment, this research poses a specific question: To what extent do quality of work-life influence organization commitment within a research academy in China?

2. Literature Review

Quality of Work Life refers to the degree of satisfaction and satisfaction in the process of work and life. It includes professional or life experience, financial income and happiness, social interaction, and physical health. QWL involves many measurement standards, mainly including general well-being, home-work interface, job-career satisfaction, control at work, working condition, and stress at work (Srinivasaiah, et al., 2023). Cummings and Worley (2014) offers insights into organizational development interventions aimed at improving QWL, including discussions on employee empowerment and work-life balance. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) presents the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which emphasizes the role of job resources in promoting employee well-being and QWL. Shuck and Rose (2013) explores the relationship between HRM practices, employee engagement, and organizational performance, offering insights into how HRM can enhance QWL. Jensen et al. (2020) provides guidelines for organizations to promote QWL through mental health initiatives in the workplace. Decramer et al. (2013) explores the impact of performance management systems on employee satisfaction and QWL in higher education settings. Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) introduces the Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ), a tool for assessing various aspects of job design that influence QWL.

Organizational commitment refers to the extent to which individuals in an enterprise or institution agree with the organization's participation and values (Ma, et al., 2022). In the organizational commitment, the individual determines the degree of trust with the organization, especially the unexpected behavior of the job function that cannot be reflected and specified in the contract. Because the definition of organizational commitment is relatively flexible, scholars have their own different standards for understanding organizational commitment (Gaan and Shin, 2023; Tian, et al., 2023).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory elucidates the nexus between the QWL and organizational commitment by categorizing workplace factors into motivation and hygiene factors (Malik and Naeem, 2013). The theory posits that motivational factors play a pivotal

role in enhancing job satisfaction and, consequently, organizational commitment. These motivation factors encompass elements intrinsic to the work itself, such as achievement, identification, responsibility, progress, and personal growth. In contrast, hygiene factors, identified by the theory, primarily serve as preventive measures against employee dissatisfaction rather than actively contributing to satisfaction. These hygiene factors include working conditions, relationships with colleagues, policy regulations, the quality of supervision, basic salary, and additional financial benefits. According to Lee et al. (2022), while motivation factors hold the key to fostering satisfaction, hygiene factors are crucial for averting dissatisfaction.

The factors contributing to motivation, such as recognition, achievement, responsibility, and the nature of the work itself, are intimately tied to the content of the job and the internal sentiments of employees. On the other hand, hygiene factors, encompassing the quality of supervision, relationships with colleagues, working conditions, organizational policies, and remuneration, focus on external aspects that can prevent discontent but may not inherently drive satisfaction (Alrawahi, et al., 2020).

In essence, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory emphasizes that enhancing the QWL and organizational commitment requires a dual approach. While motivational factors directly contribute to job satisfaction, hygiene factors act as foundational elements that prevent dissatisfaction. Organizations aiming to foster commitment and positive work experiences should not only focus on improving intrinsic motivation factors but also ensure that the basic hygiene factors are adequately addressed to create a conducive work environment (Ma, et al., 2022). Thus, this research highlights the interplay between QWL, organizational commitment, and various organizational factors, underscoring the need for research to develop comprehensive frameworks and hypotheses to understand and promote employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

Conceptual framework

The relationship between QWL and organizational commitment is significant as it influences the development of conceptual frameworks and hypotheses in organizational development and human resource management literature. Cummings and Worley (2014) argue that a positive QWL fosters a sense of belongingness and fulfillment among employees, leading to higher levels of organizational commitment. This proposition aligns with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), which suggests that job resources, including those related to QWL, contribute to employee engagement and commitment.

Moreover, Shuck and Rose (2013) suggest that a supportive organizational culture and effective human resource management practices can enhance both QWL and organizational commitment. They propose that systems theory provides insights into the interconnectedness

between various organizational elements, such as QWL initiatives, HR practices, and employee commitment, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to organizational development. Jensen et al. (2020) further emphasize the importance of promoting QWL, particularly through mental health initiatives, in enhancing organizational commitment. They argue that addressing employee well-being contributes to a positive organizational culture and strengthens the emotional bond between employees and the organization, ultimately leading to higher levels of commitment.

Decramer et al. (2013) suggest that the alignment between employee performance management systems and organizational values can influence employee satisfaction and commitment. They emphasize the role of organizational culture and system features in shaping employees' perceptions of fairness and support, which in turn affect their commitment to the organization. Additionally, Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) emphasize the importance of job design in promoting QWL and its impact on organizational commitment. Their work on the Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) provides insights into how job characteristics and the nature of work influence employee attitudes and behaviors, including commitment to the organization.

The following conceptual framework provides a holistic perspective on the factors such as general well-being, home-work interface, job-career satisfaction, control at work, working condition, stress at work that influencing organizational commitment as follow:

Quality of work life
X_1 General well-being
X_2 Home-work interface
X_3 Job-Career satisfaction
X_4 Control at work
X_5 Working condition
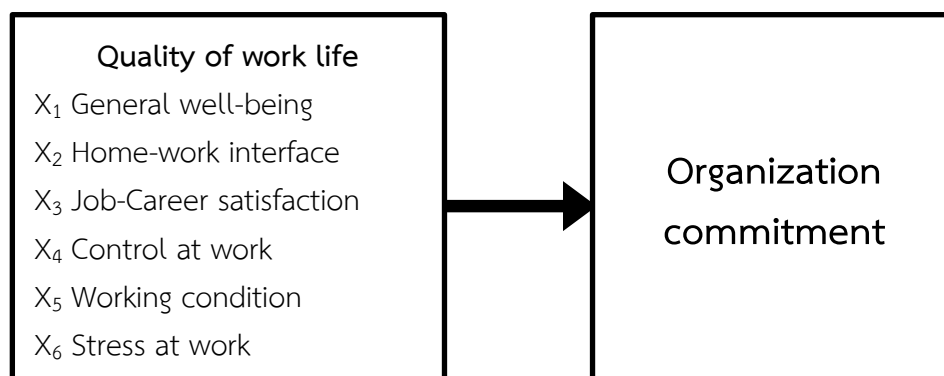X_6 Stress at work

→ **Organization commitment**

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

The following hypotheses provide a comprehensive overview of the diverse factors that may influence organizational commitment. Recognizing the interconnectedness of well-being, work-life balance, job satisfaction, autonomy, working conditions, and stress is crucial for understanding and fostering a positive organizational commitment among employees.

General well-being refers to an individual's overall satisfaction and happiness with various aspects of their life, including their physical, emotional, and mental health. It is reasonable to hypothesize that employees who experience higher levels of general well-being are more likely to feel positively towards their organization and exhibit greater commitment.

This hypothesis is grounded in the assumption that employees who feel content and fulfilled in their personal lives are likely to bring that positivity into their work environment, resulting in higher levels of engagement, loyalty, and commitment to the organization.

Hypothesis 1: General well-being has influence impact on organization commitment.

The home-work interface pertains to the interaction between an individual's personal and professional lives, including the balance or conflict between the two domains. It is expected that employees who perceive a harmonious integration between their home and work lives will exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment. Conversely, those experiencing challenges or conflicts in managing their responsibilities at home and work may demonstrate lower levels of commitment to the organization. This hypothesis is based on the premise that a supportive and accommodating work environment, which enables employees to effectively balance their personal and professional obligations, fosters a greater sense of commitment and loyalty.

Hypothesis 2: Home-work interface has influence impact on organization commitment.

Job-career satisfaction reflects an individual's contentment and fulfillment with their current job role and prospects for career advancement within the organization. It is hypothesized that employees who are satisfied with their job and perceive opportunities for growth and development are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of organizational commitment. This hypothesis is rooted in the belief that employees who find their work fulfilling and meaningful are motivated to invest their time and effort into contributing to the organization's success, thereby strengthening their commitment to its goals and objectives.

Hypothesis 3: Job-career Satisfaction has influence impact on organization commitment.

Control at work refers to the degree of autonomy, authority, and decision-making power that employees perceive in their job roles. It is anticipated that employees who feel empowered and have a sense of control over their work processes and outcomes will exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment. This hypothesis is based on the idea that employees who are granted autonomy and trust by their organization are more likely to feel valued and engaged, leading to a greater commitment to achieving organizational objectives and fostering a positive work environment.

Hypothesis 4: Control at work has an influence impact on organization commitment.

Working conditions encompass various factors such as physical environment, safety, equipment, and resources provided by the organization to support employees in performing their job roles. It is hypothesized that employees who perceive favorable working conditions,

characterized by adequate resources, safe and comfortable facilities, and supportive infrastructure, are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of organizational commitment. This hypothesis is grounded in the notion that a conducive work environment enhances employee well-being, satisfaction, and productivity, ultimately contributing to greater commitment and loyalty to the organization.

Hypothesis 5: Working conditions has influence impact on organization commitment.

Stress at work refers to the perceived pressure, demands, and challenges experienced by employees in their job roles. It is expected that employees who experience high levels of work-related stress may demonstrate lower levels of organizational commitment. This hypothesis is based on the understanding that prolonged exposure to stressors in the workplace can negatively impact employee morale, motivation, and engagement, potentially leading to decreased commitment to the organization. Conversely, organizations that effectively manage and mitigate stressors in the work environment may cultivate a more positive and supportive culture, thereby enhancing employee commitment and retention.

Hypothesis 6: Stress at work has an influence impact on organization commitment.

3. Methodology

This research adopts the method of questionnaire survey. Through large-scale surveys, this research has fully mastered a large number of first-hand research materials, so as to obtain some regular knowledge to guide practical activities.

Population and sample

Population of this study is 600 Early-career staffs at the Dunhuang Academy, that is defined as population of this research. This research adopts Yamane sample size formulation (Yamane, 1973). This research adopts random sampling.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \qquad n = \frac{600}{1+600(0.05)^2} = 240$$

where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = acceptable sampling error (0.05)

Research instrument

The research instrument used in this study is a closed-ended questionnaire, which means that respondents are provided with predefined response options to choose from, rather

than open-ended questions where they can freely express their thoughts. The questionnaire comprises four parts; demographic, Work-Life Quality, and Organizational Commitment.

Data collection

Based on the data required for population, sample, and sampling in this research, this research post the questionnaire on the questionnaire star. By sending a link to the questionnaire star to the manager at the research academy, they were asked to fill out the questionnaire online, collect the data, and then conduct data analysis. Out of 240 expected responses, ultimately this research collected 330 questionnaires. The response rate is 137.50%. The response rate is consistent with Aaker et al. (2001), indicating that a minimum response rate of at least 20% is required. Finally, the data was organized through questionnaire stars, and further data analysis was conducted.

Data analysis

Use SPSS to analyze the original data, research the relationship between the variables of QWL and organizational commitment, and finally verify the hypothesis and draw the research conclusion. This research performed data analysis in these following steps:

Section 1 presents descriptive data in the form of average, frequency, standard deviation and percentage. This survey collects data on six levels of attitudes.

Table 1 Levels of attitudes

Points	Attitudes	Levels	Degree of attitude
6	Strongly agree	5.20-6.00	Strongly agree
5	Agree	4.36-5.19	Agree
4	Slightly Agree	3.52-4.35	Slightly Agree
3	Slightly disagree	2.68-3.51	Slightly disagree
2	Disagree	1.84-2.67	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree	1.00-1.83	Strongly disagree

Section 2 contains inferential statistics based on correlation and multiple regression. A correlation analysis reveals the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive statistics on demographic information

Table 1 Descriptive statistics on demographic information

Demographic information	Frequency	Valid percent
Gender		
Male	171	51.82%
Female	159	48.18%
Age		
18-26 years old	54	16.36%
27-40 years old	51	15.45%
41-55 years old	114	34.55%
above 55	111	33.64%
Education		
Below undergraduate	143	43.33%
Bachelor	137	41.52%
Graduate degree and above	50	15.15%
Job position		
Front-line manager	266	80.61%
Middle-level manager	64	19.39%

Table 1 revealed a balanced gender representation with a slight male predominance (52% male respondents compared to 48% female respondents). In terms of age demographics, 34.55% fell into the 41 to 55 years age group, while 33.64% were over 55 years old. Educational qualifications varied, with 43.33% holding a bachelor's degree or below, 41.52% possessing a bachelor's degree, and 15.15% having a graduate degree or higher. Job positions indicated that 80.61% were front-line managers, while 19.39% held middle-level managerial roles. These findings suggest a diverse sample reflective of different age groups, educational backgrounds, and managerial positions. Such diversity enhances the robustness of the survey's insights into the relationship between demographics and factors such as quality of work life and organizational commitment among early-career staff in a Chinese research academy.

4.2 Descriptive Statistic on QWL and Organizational Commitment and Correlation analysis

This research explores the impact of QWL and Organizational Commitment. The descriptive analysis results are shown in the table below.

Table 2 The relationship between QWL (X) and Organization commitment (Y)

	X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4	X_5	X_6	Y
Mean	4.67	4.65	4.69	4.61	4.62	4.56	4.62
Standard deviation	0.97	0.99	0.95	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.89
Level of perception	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
X_1 General well-being	1						
X_2 Home-work interface	0.87	1					
X_3 Job-Career satisfaction	0.84	0.86	1				
X_4 Control at work	0.83	0.84	0.83	1			
X_5 Working condition	0.86	0.85	0.81	0.80	1		
X_6 Stress at work	0.81	0.79	0.80	0.78	0.78	1	
Y (Organization commitment)	0.91	0.90	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.83	1

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on various dimensions related to QWL. Job-career satisfaction received a high average score of 4.69, suggesting strong agreement among respondents regarding satisfaction with their jobs and career paths. Similarly, general well-being scored an average of 4.67, indicating a positive perception of overall well-being among participants. The home-work interface dimension received an average score of 4.65, reflecting respondents' agreement on the balance and integration between their work and home lives. These high scores across job-career satisfaction, general well-being, and home-work interface underscore a positive perception of QWL among respondents, suggesting that they feel content, satisfied, and balanced in their work environments. These findings are indicative of a conducive work environment within the Chinese research academy, which is essential for fostering organizational commitment and employee retention.

It also reveals that the Pearson correlation coefficient evaluates the statistical connection between two continuous variables. Due to its covariance-based approach, it is considered the most accurate method for quantifying the relationship between variables of interest. The Pearson correlation coefficients between QWL and organizational commitment with a correlation coefficient of 1% and statistical significance. Thus, it can be seen that there is a correlation between QWL and organization commitment. However, high level of correlation among independent variables are in concern, this research performs VIF test to detect potential multicollinearity problem, which will be presented in the following table.

4.3 Regression analysis

Table 3 Regression Analysis of QWL on organization commitment

	Coefficients	SE	t Stat	P-value	VIF
Constant	0.19	0.08	2.33	0.02*	
X_1 General well-being	0.23	0.04	6.00	0.00**	6.21
X_2 Home-work interface	0.19	0.04	5.21	0.00**	6.18

	Coefficients	SE	t Stat	P-value	VIF
X_3 Job-Career satisfaction	0.16	0.03	4.45	0.00**	5.17
X_4 Control at work	0.16	0.03	4.81	0.00**	4.48
X_5 Working condition	0.15	0.03	4.29	0.00**	4.82
X_6 Stress at work	0.08	0.03	2.58	0.01*	3.63

**,* denotes significance level at 0.01, and 0.05 respectively.

Table 3 presents the results of a regression analysis examining the impact of QWL dimensions on organizational commitment. The findings reveal a robust and statistically significant correlation between QWL components—General well-being, Home-work interface, Job-Career satisfaction, Control at work, Working conditions, and Stress at work—and organizational commitment. The high R^2 and adjusted R^2 values, coupled with low p-values for individual coefficients, affirm the model's efficacy in explaining and predicting organizational commitment based on QWL dimensions. Importantly, the nuanced relationships between factors such as home-work interface, job-career satisfaction, control at work, and stress at work, and organizational commitment are acknowledged to vary based on individual differences, organizational culture, and contextual influences, supporting the acceptance of hypotheses 1 to hypotheses 6 (Maswani, et al., 2019; Bobbio, et al., 2022).This not only validates the conceptual framework but also underscores the importance of considering diverse factors when exploring the complex interplay between QWL dimensions and organizational commitment. The implications of these findings extend beyond theoretical insights, offering practical guidance for organizations seeking to enhance employee commitment through targeted improvements in QWL aspects. It should be note that the severity of correlation among independent variables presented in table 2. Partly, VIF greater than 5 consider cause for concern. Fortunately, no VIF greater than 10, which indicates a serious collinearity problem (Menard, 2001)

5. Conclusions and Recommendation

This research, undertaken through a comprehensive questionnaire survey administered to employees within a research academy in China, successfully validated its hypotheses. The conclusive insights derived from the regression analysis presented in Tables 5 underscore a compelling and statistically significant correlation between QWL dimensions—specifically, general well-being, home-work interface, job-career satisfaction, control at work, and working conditions—and organizational commitment among the surveyed participants.

The results illuminate a prevalent positive perception of QWL among Early-career staff members, intertwined with a favorable outlook on organizational commitment. This finding suggests that the organization's emphasis on fostering a conducive work environment and addressing various aspects of employee well-being has translated into a stronger commitment from the Early-career workforce.

A notable discovery is the organization's strategic approach to addressing employee work challenges. The inclination towards position replacement over termination signifies a commitment-centric management strategy. This approach not only reflects the organization's dedication to retaining and nurturing its workforce but also contributes significantly to the observed heightened sense of commitment among employees, particularly during challenging professional situations.

In essence, these findings not only affirm the alignment of the research outcomes with the initially hypothesized relationships but also provide valuable insights into the organizational practices and policies that contribute to the positive interplay between QWL and organizational commitment. Such strategic choices, as revealed by this research, can serve as a benchmark for other institutions aiming to enhance both the well-being and commitment of their employees in the face of workplace challenges.

The findings of the regression analysis examining the impact of Quality of Work Life (QWL) dimensions on organizational commitment have several implications. Firstly, the robust and statistically significant correlation between QWL components and organizational commitment underscores the importance of employee well-being and satisfaction in fostering commitment to the organization. High R^2 and adjusted R^2 values, along with low p-values for individual coefficients, indicate that the model effectively explains and predicts organizational commitment based on QWL dimensions, providing a valuable tool for organizational leaders to assess and improve employee commitment. Additionally, recognizing the nuanced relationships between QWL dimensions and organizational commitment, which may vary based on individual differences, organizational culture, and contextual influences, highlights the need for tailored approaches to address specific aspects of QWL within different organizational contexts. By acknowledging these complexities and considering diverse factors, organizations can develop targeted strategies to enhance employee commitment through improvements in QWL aspects such as general well-being, home-work interface, job-career satisfaction, control at work, working conditions, and stress at work. Overall, these findings offer both theoretical insights and practical guidance for organizations seeking to foster a positive work environment and cultivate a committed workforce.

While the research focused on employees of a research academy in China, future research could benefit from a more diverse and expansive sampling strategy. Including participants from different industries, regions, and cultural backgrounds would provide a broader perspective on the relationship between QWL and organizational commitment.

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