UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

MEDIATION EFFECT OF JOB SATISFACTION ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING ORGANIZATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG LECTURERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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By

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Organizational commitment reflects the self-identification of lecturers within HEI, it has far-reaching implications on multifarious aspects in the organization. The low level of organizational commitment of lecturers continues to remain as one of the key issues faced by many higher education institutions (HEI) in China. This is reflected by the serious shortage of lecturers in China, let alone qualified lecturers to cope with the surging number of HEI. Findings from past research on the relationship of the learning organization, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were not in the context of Chinese lecturers in Heilongjiang province. Thus, this study was conducted to study mediating role effects of the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment among lecturers in HEI in Heilongjiang province, China.

This study utilized a correlational research design with multi-stage cluster sampling. The respondents were 452 lecturers from across 10 different HEIs. The self-administered questionnaire measure Learning Organization, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment. The learning organization questionnaire adopted from Yang et al. (2004) has seven dimensions, job satisfaction questionnaire adopted from Spector (1997) has nine dimensions and organizational commitment questionnaire adopted from Meyer and Allen (1991) has three dimensions. All these instruments were found to have good content validity and reliability scores.

Data were analysed with descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings show that the level of all the dimensions of the learning organization, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment was at a moderate level. Zero-order correlations show that most of the dimensions of the learning

organization, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were positively correlated. From the SEM conducted, it is found that job satisfaction significantly mediates the impact of learning organization on organizational commitment, specifically Continuous learning, Connection, and Strategic leadership. Job satisfaction is also found to be a stronger predictor of organizational commitment than learning organization.

The research implication strengthens the existing theory and models of the learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In this study, there are several practical implications for the various parties involved, the education administration team of HEI, training institutions, and the Ministry of Education. This study has clearly shown that both job satisfaction and learning organization in the HEI are pivotal to elevating the lecturer's organizational commitment.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

KEPUASAN KERJA SEBAGAI MEDIATOR ANTARA ORGANISASI PEMBELAJAR DAN KOMITMEN ORGANISASI DI INSTITUSI PENGAJIAN TINGGI

Oleh

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Januari 2022

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Komitmen organisasi memaparkan identiti pekerja dalam organisasi dan merupakan isu penting dalam menentukan pelbagai aspek dalam organisasi tersebut. Tahap komitmen organisasi pensyarah yang rendah terus kekal sebagai salah satu isu utama yang dihadapi oleh banyak institusi pengajian tinggi (IPT) di China. Ini dicerminkan oleh kekurangan tenaga pengajar di China, apatah lagi pensyarah yang berkelayakan untuk menghadapi peningkatan bilangan IPT. Penyelidikan lepas tentang hubungan organisasi pembelajar, kepuasan kerja dan komitmen organisasi adalah amat kurang di negara China, terutamanya dalam kalangan pensyarah dari wilayah Heilongjiang. Justeru, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji peranan kepuasan kerja sebagai mediator dalam hubungan antara organisasi pembelajar dan komitmen organisasi.

Kajian ini merupakan kajian bentuk korelasi dan menggunakan persampelan kluster pelbagai peringkat. Responden adalah seramai 452 orang pensyarah dari 10 IPT yang berbeza. Soal selidik yang ditadbir sendiri menggunakan tiga instrumen, organisasi pembelajar direka oleh Yang et al. (2004) yang mempunyai tujuh dimensi, kepuasan kerja direka oleh Spector (1997) yang mempunyai sembilan dimensi dan komitmen organisasi direka oleh Meyer dan Allen (1991) yang mempunyai tiga dimensi. Kesemua instrumen ini didapati mempunyai skor kesahan dan kebolehpercayaan kandungan yang baik.

Data dianalisis dengan deskriptif, korelasi bivariat, dan ujian SEM. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan tahap semua dimensi organisasi pembelajaran, kepuasan kerja dan komitmen organisasi berada pada tahap sederhana. Kolerasi tertib sifar menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan dimensi organisasi pembelajar, kepuasan kerja dan komitmen organisasi adalah berkorelasi positif. Pemodelan persamaan struktur yang dijalankan,

didapati kepuasan kerja memainkan peranan mediator dalam hubungan antara organisasi pembelajar dan komitmen organisasi, khususnya dalam pembelajaran berterusan, hubungan dan kepimpinan strategik. Kepuasan kerja juga memberi kesan kepada komitmen organisasi lebih daripada organisasi pembelajar.

Implikasi kajian ini mengukuhkan teori dan model sedia ada dalam organisasi pembelajar, kepuasan kerja dan komitmen organisasi. Dalam kajian ini, terdapat beberapa implikasi praktikal kepada pelbagai pihak yang berkenaan seperti pihak pentadbiran pendidikan IPT, maktab perguruan dan Kementerian Pendidikan. Kajian ini jelas menunjukkan bahawa kepuasan kerja dan organisasi pembelajar di IPT adalah penting untuk meningkatkan komitmen organisasi pensyarah.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:
- the research and the writing of this thesis were done under our supervision;
- supervisory responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2015-2016) are adhered to.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
HEI	High Education institution
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DLOQ	Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire
JSS	Job satisfaction survey
OCQ	Organizational Commitment Questionnaire
SEM	Structural Equation Model
TCM	Three-Component Model
AC	Affective Commitment
CC	Continuance Commitment
NC	Normative Commitment
JS	Job satisfaction
OC	Organizational commitment
LO	Learning organization
CL	Continuous Learning
ID	Inquiry and Dialogue
CT	Collaboration and Team learning
SS	Systems
EP	Empowerment
CO	Connection
SL	Strategic Leadership
JCM	Job Characters Model

CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimation
CR	Construct Reliability
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SPSS	Statistical Package of Social Science
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
CI	Confidence Intervals
M	Mean
SE	Standard Error

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This chapter provides the background of the study and identifies the problems. This is then followed by research questions and objectives of this study. After that, it highlights the importance of this study and how it will contribute towards curbing the issues pointed out in the problem statement. In the scope of the study, it lays out the limitations and delimitation of this study. This chapter ends with the crucial definitions of the variables in this study.

1.2 Background of the study

Higher Education Institution (HEI) plays the central role in driving this socioeconomic advancement, economic mobility as well as scientific and technological development in a country (Gu et al., 2018; Stephens et al., 2014). Besides providing accessibility of higher education to the massive public, HEI provides the much needed skilled labour in response to the changing labour market. Hence, back in 1999, the Chinese government launched the "*Action Plan for the Revitalization of Education in the 21st Century*" and expanded higher education enrollment aggressively. These past few decades have seen the number of HEI in China increase by leaps and bounds (NBS, 2019). There were only 1041 HEIs back in 2000 but there are now 3740 HEIs in 2019, which is more than triple (Wan, 2006). Similarly, the number of students enrolled had increased exponentially from 5.56 million students in 2000 to 40.04 million students in 2019, which is seven times higher.

Along with the expansion, there is also tremendous progress in faculty development, financial diversification, privatization and internationalization of HEI (Cai, 2013). In order to cope with the rapid development, HEI would need a group of dedicated and committed employees to build the HEI and strive towards better performance (Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Király & Géring, 2019). Since lecturers are the main workforce in HEI, they are the one determining the adaptability of the HEI in face of the disruptions caused by political, social, environmental, economic and technological changes. Among the many work-related attitudes of lecturers, organizational commitment is one of the most critical and influential variables in the field of organizational behaviour. This is because highly committed lecturers will have far-reaching implications on multifarious aspects that will greatly benefit the organization (Huang, 2016). The level of organizational commitment reflects the alignment of their employees' belief with the organizational goals and values, and the psychology between the employees and the organization (Erdogan & Cavli, 2019; Suma & Lesha, 2013).

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Multiple studies on organizational commitment have validated the positive and substantial relationship between organizational commitment and perception of effectiveness (Tang et al., 2003), task performance (Francesco & Chen, 2004), contextual performance (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015) as well as organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) (Wang et al., 2018). A committed lecturer is also known to exhibit more discretionary pro-social behaviour, puts in extra effort and goes the extra mile to improve the organization's efficiency as well as being capable of motivating the students to learn in the classroom better (Yilmaz & Kilic, 2017). In fact, organizational commitment also acts as a mediator on the effect of many important variables, such as leadership and organizational learning on turnover intention of the lecturers (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Gatling et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2017). Simply put, a committed employee is often directly involved in various aspects of the organization (Ting, 2011) and exhibits a high level of engagement in implementing the ideals or plans of the organization (Batugal, 2019).

Huge amount of studies have been conducted to identify the predictors of organizational commitment, ranging from demographic aspects to organizational behaviour. Some of the strong predictors of organizational commitment are leadership, organizational justice, perceived supervisor support and quality of work life (Farid et al., 2015; Kaselytė & Malūkaitė, 2013; Li et al., 2018; Othman et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2020; Yu, 2013). Among these predictors, job satisfaction emerged as one of the strongest attitudinal variables in predicting the level of organizational commitment (Ali & Bashir, 2018; Ashraf, 2020; Bao & Wang, 2012; Djaelani et al., 2020; French et al., 2020; Koesmono, 2014; Pham & Pham, 2016). Lecturers with a high level of job satisfaction will work wholeheartedly in implementing the organization's plan and contribute towards the attainment of organizational goals and objectives (Erdogan & Cavli, 2019).

On top of that, job satisfaction also plays a crucial role in strengthening the positive impact of job engagement, leadership, learning climate, organizational culture, organizational support, school climate, work-life balance on organizational commitment of educators (Claudia, 2018; Fitriyana et al., 2016; Jufrizen, 2018; Lotulung et al., 2017; Sakiru et al., 2018; Sari & Seniati, 2020; Shoshani & Eldor, 2016). At the same time, job satisfaction is even able to mitigate the adverse impact of job insecurity and job stress on organizational commitment of educators (Chalim, 2018; P. Li et al., 2017).

Besides affecting the level of organizational commitment, job satisfaction also has tremendous and serious implications on the educators, ranging from performance and organizational citizenship behaviour to burnout and motivation to leave the teaching profession (Shen et al., 2018). Basically, job satisfaction of employees affects almost every aspect of them in both their working life and private life as well. Thus, if an HEI wants to elevate its organizational performance, both the level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the lecturers will be essential (Gunawan et al., 2018; Narimawati, 2007; Tolentino, 2013)

Extensive numbers of studies have suggested designing a systematic organizational training for their employees; popularly refer to as Continuous Professional Development (CPD), as a way to strengthen the level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of lecturers (Bulut & Culha, 2010; Clarke et al., 2019; Ehrhardt et al., 2011; Erdem et al., 2014; Hanaysha, 2016; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Mahalingam, 2013; Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; Shoshani & Eldor, 2016). A productive learning environment in any organization will ensure that there is continuous growth in the capabilities of their employees and this will invariably create a productive working environment (Joo & Park, 2010). After all, the competitiveness and long-term survival of an organization, to a large extent, depends on the organisations' capacity to embrace and match the continuous changes in the environment of the VUCA world (López et al., 2005). Consequently, the concept of learning organization has piqued the interest of many organisations and researchers around the globe.

Learning organization can provide the necessary competitive edge to make the organization stand out from their competitors (Marquardt, 2019). It elevates the performance of the organization holistically, from individual, team and organizational as well as financial aspects. The impact of learning organization across various organizational outcomes such as creativity, innovation, employee engagement, knowledge transfer and performance of the HEI are well documented across multiple studies (Dee & Leišytė, 2016; Habtoor et al., 2017; Jones, 2018; Sutanto, 2017). Obviously, this includes its profound impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well (Atak & Erturgut, 2010; Balay, 2012; Hanaysha, 2016). Thus, a positive and favourable learning organization is a necessity today to strengthen the employees' commitment and job satisfaction (Lewis-Wilson, 2019).

In essence, learning organization encourages the inflow and outflow of knowledge within and between organisations as it strengthens the empowering leadership in the organization (Naqshbandi & Tabche, 2018). Employees do exhibit a higher level of organizational commitment when they perceive that their organization does invest in their growth and development in the organization (Joo, 2010). In short, all the three key variables, learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the lecturers are the vital ingredients for the survival of HEI today (Zhang & Jing, 2016). HEI ought to constantly reorganise, adopt new strategies and adapt to the changing pace of work in order to stay ahead and boost their effectiveness.

1.3   Problem statement

The low level of organizational commitment among lecturers currently is reflected by the serious shortage of lecturers, let alone qualified lecturers to cope with the surging number of HEI in China (Cai, 2013; He et al., 2020; Sadler, 2015). The result of low level of organizational commitment as turnover of lecturers can even reach up to 17% for those teaching in private higher vocational colleges. This is not surprising given that about 33% of educators in many developed nations would leave the teaching profession after a mere 5 years in the teaching profession (Cupit, 2019; Sutcher et al., 2016).

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The study conducted by Liu and Onwuegbuzie (2012) in China found that as many as 40.4% of educators reported that they were most likely to leave the teaching profession for another type of profession if there was opportunity. In 2018 alone, 46 HEI in Heilongjiang province were found to have high levels of talent outflow, with a total of 458 lecturers leaving the province. Similar study conducted by Mukhopadhyay (2019) found that many other provinces, such as Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Guangxi and Fujian, also struggled with high attrition rates among lecturers.

In order to fix this long-standing issue of organizational commitment among lecturers, identifying aspects of job satisfaction that can be improved are essential as it is a strong predictor of organizational commitment. Regrettably, similar to organizational commitment, the level of job satisfaction among lecturers in China is at an all-time low. Elmer and Crothall (2016) reported that there were a shocking number of strikes and protests among lecturers in China. Hundreds of lecturers demonstrated across numerous HEI such as City College of Dongguan Technology University and Chongqing Nanfang Translators College.

Ultimately, this boils down to transforming the HEI into a learning organization to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment of lecturers. While many multinational companies have their own organizational learning process, this is not the case with Chinese organisations. Private organisations especially are more concerned with short-term profits and quick fixes rather than providing learning opportunities for their employees' benefits and long-term growth of the organization (Bai et al., 2017). The management failed to see the opportunity cost associated with the lack of training of their employees. The most common excuse given by many HEIs is the lack of resources and funding. Even for government HEI, funding is extremely scarce and hard to come by unless they are one of the prestigious HEI such as being a part of the Project 98/5 or 21/1 (Costa & Zha, 2020).

This calls for urgent study to explore how learning organization practises can be improved in HEI in China. However, more often than not, those terminologies related to learning organization are often confused with one another (Bocanet & El Kassar, 2016). There are incorrect interchanges between the terminology of organizational learning and learning organization reported in many studies. Some of these studies are also quite limited in concepts, theoretical description and perceptual discussion. While there are some studies that discuss the existing state of the organization as well as the practises or requirements, they fail to explore how the learning organization accounts for the changes at various levels within the organisations, let alone how these influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Even from the substantial number of studies conducted on learning organization, only a small fraction of them are conducted in China. Unlike other countries, China has unique social capital such as *guanxi* (relationships), *li* (rite), *mianzi* (face) and *renqing* (obligations) that can affect the psychological states, organizational commitment and job satisfaction of the lecturers (Child, 2003). Study by Klassen et al. (2010) had indicated

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that the difference in cultural factors would affect the relationship between job satisfaction and other variables. Hence, there is a need to explore these variables in China.

Most of the studies conducted in China are inclined to focus on major provinces with metropolitan areas such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. There are very few studies that shed light on the level of learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment in other provinces of China, such as Heilongjiang province (Xia et al., 2020). Heilongjiang is one of the biggest provinces in China with 81 HEI across the huge 454 thousand km2 area. Yet, the innovation performance of the HEI is quite disappointing when compared to other provinces. Since China aspires to transform HEI (世界一流大学 shi jie yi liu da xue) into the hub that drives the development of the country, it is high time now to examine the current level learning organization of HEI.

1.4 Research objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine the role of job satisfaction as a mediator between learning organization and organizational commitment among lecturers in Higher Education Institutions in Heilongjiang province in China. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine the level of (a) learning organization, (b) job satisfaction and (c) organizational commitment;

2. Examine the relationships between (a) Continuous learning, (b) Inquiry and dialogue, (c) Collaboration, (d) Systems, (e) Empowerment, (f) Connection, (g) Strategic leadership, (h) job satisfaction and (i) organizational commitment

3. Assess the role of job satisfaction in mediating the relationship between the (a) Continuous learning, (b) Inquiry and dialogue, (c) Collaboration, (d) Systems, (e) Empowerment, (f) Connection, (g) Strategic leadership and organizational commitment;

4. Determine the extent of learning organization and job satisfaction in explaining the organizational commitment.

1.5 Research hypotheses

Corresponding to the objectives above, the following hypotheses were formulated. There are a total of 3 hypotheses for Objective 2 and 1 hypothesis for Objective 3. These hypotheses are further broken down into sub hypotheses that correspond to the relationship between the constructs of learning organization and job satisfaction as well as learning organization and organizational commitment.

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Objective 2 – Hypothesis Ha-1

There is a significant relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment.

Ha-1-1:   There is a significant relationship between Continuous learning and organizational commitment

Ha-1-2:   There is a significant relationship between Inquiry and dialogue and organizational commitment

Ha-1-3:   There is a significant relationship between Collaboration and organizational commitment

Ha-1-4:   There is a significant relationship between Systems and organizational commitment

Ha-1-5:   There is a significant relationship between Empowerment and organizational commitment

Ha-1-6:   There is a significant relationship between Connection and organizational commitment

Ha-1-7:   There is a significant relationship between Strategic leadership and organizational commitment

Objective 2 – Hypothesis Ha-2

Ha-3: There is a significant relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment

Objective 3 – Hypothesis Ha-3

Job satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment.

1.6   Significance of the study

This study examines the various psychological constructs, learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment of lecturers in HEI. Thus, this study will contribute towards various aspects in the field of education.

Firstly, China has unique social capital such as *guanxi* (relationships), *li* (rite), *mianzi* (face) and *renqing* (obligations) that can affect the psychological states, organizational commitment and job satisfaction of the lecturers (Child, 2003). Organizational *guanxi* was found to enhance job satisfaction and affective commitment, but it also reduced continuance and normative commitment (Chen & O'Leary, 2018). Hence, there is a need to explore the relationship between these variables in China, which may be different from the studies in other countries.

Secondly, this study assesses the level of learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the Heilongjiang province. It is hopeful that this study will help to analyse the issues that are affecting HEI in this province, both in positive and negative ways. This study will also bridge the gap in the lack of studies of these variables in HEI. The measured level will serve as an ideal comparison between HEI in different provinces for future studies.

Thirdly, this study will contribute towards a deeper understanding of the antecedents and consequences associated with learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. With insight into the relationship between different dimensions of learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment will allow better policy and interventions to be produced at the management and governmental level. This will allow a comprehensive approach and emphases the strength of the learning organization and advance HEI into an ideal learning organization.

Fourthly, based on the underpinning job characteristic model connect the main theories on dimension of learning organization and two factor theories as well as three organizational commitment model to carry out the theoretical framework so this study will provide an integrative framework on how to tackle the issue of organizational commitment in Heilongjiang province of China from the aspect of dimensions of learning organization and job satisfaction.

Finally, this study will provide an understanding on the unique mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment. This study will contribute towards a better understanding of lecturers' psychological states in Heilongjiang province. This will be useful not only to the management in HEI but to the Ministry of Education of China in designing specific interventions that can elevate organizational commitment of lecturers and hopefully, be able to retain the best talent in the country. This will have a butterfly effect on numerous other aspects that contribute to practice in the field of Education Administration.

1.7 Scope of the study

Every study has its own limitations and delimitations. Based on the Classification of Instructional Program (NCES, 2020), this study examines the issue of learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the field of education. Education is the field that deals with all the aspects of teaching and learning that ranges from the theory and practice to the administration, research and support provided in the course. Specifically, this study falls under the branch of educational administration and supervision. This branch of education concerns the general principles and ways in managing a broad range of educational institutions that covers three aspects: responsibility areas, process and skills (Ibrahim & Abdalla, 2017). This study explores planning and organization in the HEI in order to identify ways to improve organizational commitment of the lecturers.

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Firstly, being exploratory in nature, this correlational study did not provide a causal relationship between learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Secondly, there are too many antecedents that can directly or indirectly affect the level of organizational commitment of the lecturers. This study intends to focus on the two strongest and most relevant predictors, job satisfaction and learning organization. Thirdly, this study focused on the possible role of job satisfaction as the mediator in the relationship, thus ignoring other possible mediators or moderators in this relationship.

Fourthly, it is not possible to collect the data from the entire population due to constraints in time and resources. Thus, this is a cross-sectional design that captures the complex process of organizational commitment at a certain point of time. Since job satisfaction and organizational commitment are psychological constructs that could fluctuate throughout the year, lecturers may, at different times, exhibit different levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment due to the nature of their work (Nathaniel et al., 2016). This includes the lecturers' experience of test-related stress at the end of the academic year.

The delimitation in this study comes on the selection of locations and participants. Firstly, this study only covers one province in China. Secondly, although all Chinese people may speak a common Chinese language, due to its sheer size, different geographical locations has their own unique culture and dialect. Variance may also result from varying development and socioeconomic level in different provinces. Thirdly, while HEI comprises teaching and non-teaching staff, this study only focuses on the teaching staff (lecturer). This is because lecturers constitute the main workforce in any HEI and thereby, directly determine the quality of the HEI itself.

1.8   Assumptions

From the background of the study, it is shown that low levels of organizational commitment among lecturers have serious repercussions, and both learning organization and job satisfaction plays a central role in elevating organizational commitment.

Firstly, since this study involves the measurement of perceptions of lecturers, it is assumed that the various instruments that have designed and tested vigorously are able to measure the intended variables. From the epistemological perspective of positivism, learning organization, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are viewed as measurable and able to be reported by the participants (Saunder, 2016). Specifically, Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) is used to measure learning organization, Job satisfaction survey (JSS) is used to measure job satisfaction and Three-Component Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) is used to measure organizational commitment.

Secondly, from the ontological perspective of positivism, it is assumed that the nature of reality is real and there is only one true reality where all measurements made from different perspectives in this study can provide a generalisation. This means that while this study only collects data from few HEI, it can provide a generalisation to other HEI in China. Similarly, other past studies that measure these variables using the same instruments in this study are comparable. Finally, the theoretical framework in this study is developed using theories and models that are developed from other countries. It is assumed that while these theories and models are not developed in China, they are applicable in China.

1.9   Definitions of terminology

The section defined the important terms that would be used in this study: organizational commitment, learning organization, job satisfaction, higher educational institutions and demographic variables.

1.9.1   Organizational commitment

Conceptual definition: In this study, organizational commitment is defined as the devotion and loyalty of the lecturer to the organization due to the strong alignment of their personal expectations with that of the organization. It is the feeling and psychological bond of an employee with the organization as a whole, which is linked to the motivation to leave or stay in the organization (Joo & Park, 2010).

Operational definition: Based on the Three component model of organizational commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1991), organizational commitment is measured using Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). This instrument has 24 items that are categorized into three separate dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

1.9.1.1   Affective commitment

Affective commitment is the emotional attachment and sense of belonging as a part of the organization. It is nurtured from the social relationships, positive feelings and view of the employee within the organization (Meyer, 2016).

1.9.1.2   Continuance commitment

Continuance commitment is the cognitive evaluation of the employee on the amount of investment that had been put into the organization and would be seen as lost or reduced should the employee leave the organization (Dixon et al., 2014). This included but not

limited to the amount of salary, benefits, privilege and authority given to the employee (Yilmaz & Kilic, 2017).

1.9.1.3 Normative commitment

Normative commitment is the sense of obligation displayed by the employee due to personal belief, moral understanding or work philosophies and social norms in the society (Yilmaz & Kilic, 2017). Employees felt that they should stay merely because they felt strongly that it was the right thing to do based on their personal beliefs that were nurtured over time.

1.9.2 Learning organization

Conceptual definition: In this study, learning organization is defined as the ideal state of the organization when it could excel in generating and gathering new knowledge, relating them and applying in improving its behaviour based on the new knowledge and insights. There are three aspects in a learning organization: (1) the entire organization constantly engages in continuous learning, (2) there is a systematic structure that manages the learning process and (3) the learning process leads to improvement and transformation in the organization's performance (Yang et al., 2004).

Operational definition: Based on the Learning Organization Framework from Marsick and Watkins (2003), learning organization measured using Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ). This instrument has 21 items that are categorized into seven separate dimensions: Continuous learning, Inquiry and dialogue, Collaboration and team learning, Systems, Empowerment, Connection and Strategic leadership.

1.9.2.1 Continuous learning

Continuous learning refers to the creation of continuous learning opportunities in the organization so that the employees can have an ongoing education and growth in the workplace. The organization purposely integrates learning into the work as an on-the-job training programme. Employees are provided with time to support learning and they will be rewarded for learning. This encourages them to identify skills that they will need for their work and constantly seek out opportunities to learn.

1.9.2.2 Inquiry and dialogue

Inquiry and dialogue refers to the advocate of inquiry and dialogue in the organization so that the employees will regularly improve their reasoning skills and listening capacity.

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This builds the culture where employees can freely question, experiment and provide feedback in the organization to improve their job performance.

1.9.2.3   Collaboration and team learning

Collaboration and team learning refers to the culture of collaboration and team learning in the organization where employees learn as a team. The workplace is tailored to encourage the teams to work collectively by tapping into different modes of thinking. Every member of the team is treated equally and consistently revised their thinking through discussions. Their group achievement is rewarded by the organization.

1.9.2.4   Systems

Systems refers to the creation of systems to capture and share learning in the organization so that new knowledge generated will be captured and shared effectively across the organization. Technology systems are integrated in the workplace and constantly being maintained to ensure the employees who need the knowledge can tap into them fluidly.

1.9.2.5   Empowerment

Empowerment refers to the empowerment of employees toward a collective vision in the organization so that every employee is aware of their current status and will work together towards the new vision. Regardless of their positions in the organization, all employees are accountable and responsible to achieve this joint vision as they are directly involved in creation and implementation of the vision. This motivates them to take initiatives as well as calculated risks in order to achieve the joint vision.

1.9.2.6   Connection

Connection refers to the connection between the organization and its environment. Employees are requested to look at the bigger picture, think globally and systematically. This allows them to be aware of the effect of their work on its internal and external environment, followed by changes to their work practices to improve their job performance.

1.9.2.7   Strategic leadership

Strategic leadership refers to the cultivation of leaders that advocate and champion learning in the organization. These leaders think strategically and tap into the strength of organizational learning to steer the organization towards new directions and markets.

They empower others, coach them and frequently share information about current industry trends, competitors and organizational directions.

1.9.3   Job satisfaction

Conceptual definition: In this study, job satisfaction is defined as the perception of the lecturer and sense of fulfilment derived from the physical and psychological aspects of work. It is the sense of satisfaction that the lecturer derives from their job and within the working area (Munyengabe et al., 2017).

Operational definition: Based on the Facets of Job Satisfaction by Spector (1997), job satisfaction is measured using Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). This instrument has 36 items that evaluates various aspects of job satisfaction that is divided into 9 separate dimensions: Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe benefits, Contingent rewards, Operating procedures, Co-workers, Nature of work and Communication.

1.9.4   Higher Educational Institution (HEI)

In China, the education system is divided into higher education, secondary education, primary education, correctional work-study schools, special education and pre-school education (MOE, 2020). In this study, the Higher Educational Institution (HEI) is any social institution that provides higher education to the public and it is self-sustaining financially through tuition fees that it charges on students, government grants or contracts and donations from the public (Fitzgerald et al., 2019). In China, HEI could be categorized either horizontally based on programmes being offered or vertically based on hierarchical systems.

Based on the programmes being offered, HEI can be categorized as Regular HEI, Adult HEI and Other Non-government HEIs as shown in Figure 1.1. The regular HEI includes both HEIs offering degree programmes as well as higher vocational colleges.

If it is based on a hierarchical system, HEI can be categorized into Project 98/5 universities and Project 21/1 universities at the top, non-project universities in the middle and vocational colleges at the bottom. The distinctive difference between them is the amount of subsidy provided by the government. HEI can also be categorized into those directly administered by MOE in the central government, administered by provincial educational bureaus and privately-owned. In this study, sampling is done based on the programmes being offered.

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                          │     HEI     │
                          │    3740     │
                          └──────┬──────┘
            ┌────────────────────┼────────────────────┐
  ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
  │   Regular HEI   │   │    Adult HEI    │   │  Other non-     │
  │      2688       │   │       268       │   │ government HEI  │
  │                 │   │                 │   │      784        │
  └────────┬────────┘   └─────────────────┘   └─────────────────┘
     ┌─────┴─────┐
┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ HEIs offering│ │    Higher    │
│    degree    │ │  vocational  │
│  programme   │ │   college    │
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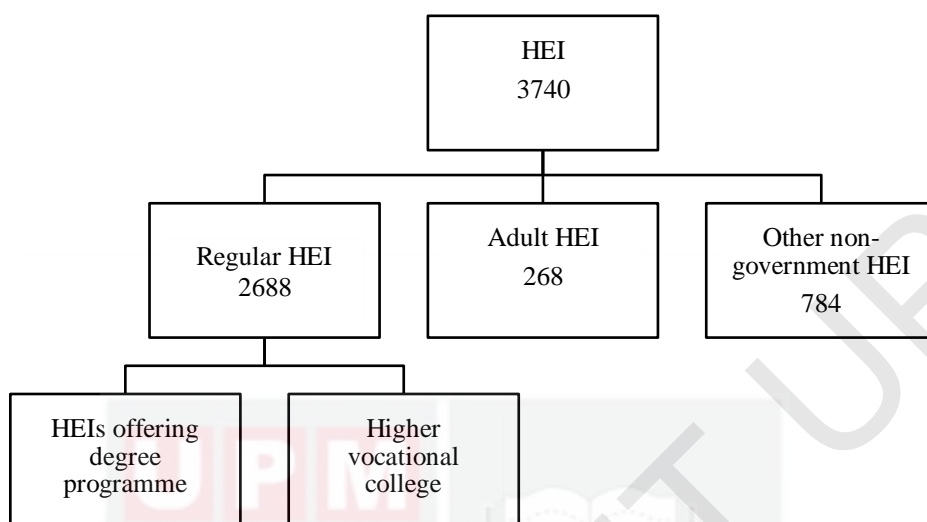
Figure 1.1 : Number of HEI in China (2019)

1.9.5   Gender

Gender is defined as the biological sex assigned at birth (APA, 2019). This disregards the person's attitudes, feelings, behaviour or sexual orientation. In this study, gender is categorized into male and female groups.

1.9.6   Professional life cycle

Huberman (1989) divided the professional life cycle of educators into 5 stages: survival and discovery, stabilization, experimentation and activism, serenity and disengagement. The motivation and commitment of educators were found to peak during mid-career of active experimentation and activism (Day & Gu, 2007). Lester and Horton Jr (2018) suggested a similar stage for lecturers: early-career faculty, mid-career faculty and late-career faculty. In China, the minimum qualification required for an individual to teach in HEI is a Bachelor's degree, which is usually completed by the age of 22 years old (OECD, 2016). In this study, age is divided into four categories: < 30 years old (stabilization), 2 is 31–40 years old (experimentation and activism), 3 is 41–50 years old (serenity) or 4 is > 50 years old (disengagement).

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