

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG LECTURERS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: EVIDENCE FROM SHANDONG PROVINCE, CHINA

Dai Ming¹
Fanny Kho Chee Yuet^{2*}

¹ Faculty Management and Economics, Sultan Idris Education University
Email: daiming0429@163.com

² Faculty Management and Economics, Sultan Idris Education University
Email: fannykcy@fpe.upsi.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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Abstract: *The stability and professional development of lecturers have become critical issues for private universities striving for sustainable development. This study aims to examine the level of organizational commitment among lecturers in private universities in Shandong Province, China, and to investigate whether organizational commitment differs across demographic characteristics. A quantitative survey was conducted among lecturers from six private universities using Meyer et al.'s (1993) Organizational Commitment Scale. Data from 1,147 valid questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA. The findings reveal that lecturers generally demonstrate a relatively high level of organizational commitment, with affective commitment recording the highest mean score, followed by normative and continuance commitment. Significant differences were identified across gender, age, years of service, and current position, whereas educational level showed no significant effect. These findings provide empirical evidence for understanding organizational commitment in China's private higher education sector and offer practical implications for university administrators in developing strategies to enhance lecturer retention, organizational stability, and institutional sustainability.*

Keywords: *Private universities; Lecturers; Organizational commitment*

Introduction

Organizational commitment is an important predictor of lecturers' work attitudes and turnover intentions. Organizational commitment has been defined from different perspectives. Morrow (1983) described it as employees' identification with organizational goals, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and desire to maintain organizational membership. Meyer et al. (1993) further conceptualized organizational commitment as comprising affective, continuance, and normative commitment, emphasizing employees' emotional attachment, perceived costs of leaving, and moral obligation to remain with the organization. These perspectives suggest that organizational commitment reflects both employees' psychological attachment and their intention to remain within the organization.

Existing studies have shown that higher levels of organizational commitment are associated with stronger job satisfaction, lower turnover intentions, and greater organizational effectiveness (Morrow, 1983; Meyer et al., 1993). In private universities, the issue of lecturer turnover has become increasingly prominent.

High turnover rates not only increase personnel management costs and disrupt normal teaching operations but also contribute to job dissatisfaction, reduce organizational effectiveness, and negatively affect the morale of remaining lecturers. These challenges weaken organizational cohesion, undermine teaching quality, and hinder the sustainable development of private universities. Therefore, understanding lecturers' organizational commitment has become essential for improving institutional stability and long-term organizational performance.

In recent years, with the rapid expansion of private higher education in China, maintaining a stable and high-quality lecturer workforce has become a major challenge for private universities. Compared with public universities, private universities often face disadvantages in salary, welfare benefits, career security, and social recognition, which may further influence lecturers' organizational commitment. This study focuses on private universities in Shandong Province, China. Through a questionnaire survey, it examines the current status of lecturers' organizational commitment, analyzes differences across demographic characteristics, and proposes recommendations for improving organizational commitment among lecturers in private universities.

Literature Review

Concept of Organizational Commitment

The concept of organizational commitment was first formally introduced by Grusky (1966), who examined the relationship between career mobility and commitment among managers in publicly held companies. Grusky suggested that organizational commitment is closely associated with identification, loyalty, and organizational development, and that organizational rewards can significantly strengthen employees' commitment to their organizations.

Morrow (1983) further conceptualized organizational commitment as consisting of three core elements: strong identification with organizational goals and values, willingness to exert effort for the organization, and willingness to remain within the organization.

Ardani (2017) argued that when individuals invest substantial time and effort in organizational activities, they gradually develop a stronger sense of belonging and identification, thereby enhancing organizational commitment.

Recent studies have further extended the concept of organizational commitment in higher education. Chen et al. (2024) suggested that organizational commitment reflects lecturers' psychological attachment, willingness to contribute to institutional goals, and intention to remain with their institutions. Compared with earlier definitions that primarily emphasized loyalty and organizational membership, recent perspectives place greater emphasis on the interaction between individual psychological factors and organizational support, highlighting the dynamic nature of organizational commitment in contemporary higher education.

In higher education, organizational commitment refers to the extent to which lecturers identify with their institutions, accept institutional goals and values, and are willing to remain and contribute to institutional development. High levels of organizational commitment among lecturers are associated with greater teaching engagement, improved job performance, and lower turnover intentions.

Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

To better understand organizational commitment, scholars have proposed multiple dimensional models, including two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and five-dimensional frameworks. Staw (1977) classified organizational commitment into attitudinal commitment and behavioral commitment. Attitudinal commitment emphasizes psychological attachment to the organization, whereas behavioral commitment refers to commitment driven by practical constraints such as position, seniority, and economic considerations.

Stevens et al. (1978) divided organizational commitment into normative commitment and exchange commitment. Normative commitment reflects employees' internalization of organizational values and goals, whereas exchange commitment emphasizes reciprocal benefits between employees and organizations.

Among these models, the three-component model proposed by Meyer et al. (1993) remains the most widely accepted. This model includes affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to lecturers' emotional attachment to their institutions; continuance commitment reflects the perceived cost of leaving the organization; and normative commitment refers to a sense of moral obligation to remain.

In the Chinese context, Ling et al. (2006) localized the concept by proposing a five-dimensional framework consisting of affective commitment, ideal commitment, normative commitment, economic commitment, and opportunity commitment.

Among the existing models, Meyer et al.'s (1993) three-component framework remains the most widely adopted in organizational commitment research because it provides a comprehensive understanding of employees' emotional attachment, perceived costs of leaving, and moral obligation to remain. Compared with other multidimensional models, this framework has been extensively validated across different cultural and organizational contexts, including higher education institutions. Given its strong theoretical foundation, extensive

empirical support, and suitability for examining lecturers' organizational commitment, the present study adopts Meyer et al.'s (1993) three-component framework.

Recent Research on Lecturers' Organizational Commitment

Recent studies have further expanded the understanding of lecturers' organizational commitment in higher education settings. A systematic literature review by Chen et al. (2024) analyzed 30 studies published between 2018 and 2024 and found that lecturers' organizational commitment is influenced by both individual and organizational factors. Individual factors include age, gender, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and career satisfaction, whereas organizational factors include leadership style, institutional support, management effectiveness, and working environment.

Recent empirical evidence also suggests that leadership plays an important role in strengthening organizational commitment. Ting and Ismail (2025) found that transformational leadership significantly improves lecturers' organizational commitment by fostering supportive academic environments and enhancing lecturer leadership capacity.

Additionally, work environment and job satisfaction have been identified as important predictors of lecturers' commitment. Bankole (2024) reported that positive work engagement and supportive working conditions contribute significantly to higher job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment among university lecturers.

Recent studies have further demonstrated that supportive organizational environments and effective institutional management contribute to strengthening lecturers' organizational commitment and reducing turnover intentions (Cassim et al., 2024; Ramli & Salleh, 2025).

These recent findings indicate that lecturers' organizational commitment is shaped by a combination of demographic, psychological, and institutional factors. Recent empirical evidence also suggests that organizational support serves as an important mechanism linking institutional practices with lecturers' work performance and commitment (Syahsudarmi et al., 2024). Therefore, examining differences across demographic variables remains highly relevant, particularly in the context of private universities where employment conditions and career development opportunities differ substantially from those in public institutions.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Instrument

This study employed a quantitative research design using a questionnaire survey to examine organizational commitment among lecturers from six private universities in Shandong Province, China. The respondents comprised full-time lecturers working in these institutions. The survey instrument was adapted from the Organizational Commitment Scale developed by Meyer et al. (1993), which conceptualizes organizational commitment in three dimensions: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

The original scale consisted of 18 items, with six items measuring affective commitment, six items measuring continuance commitment, and six items measuring normative commitment.

Previous studies have demonstrated satisfactory reliability for the three subscales, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .85, .83, and .77, respectively (Meyer et al., 1993).

All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger organizational commitment.

Pilot Test and Questionnaire Revision

A pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire before formal data collection. Following Qiu's (2013) recommendation that a sample size of at least 200 is adequate for preliminary testing, four private universities located in Jinan, Qingdao, and Weifang were selected for pilot testing.

A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed, and 225 were returned, yielding a response rate of 93.75%. After excluding incomplete or invalid responses, 208 valid questionnaires were retained, resulting in a valid response rate of 92.4%.

Descriptive statistical analyses, including mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, were conducted to examine the distribution characteristics of the pilot sample. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the lecturers' organizational commitment scale was .944, indicating high internal consistency and sound reliability, sufficient to support this study, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Cronbach's α Coefficients for Each Dimension of the lecturer Organizational Commitment Scale

Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's α Coefficient
Affective Commitment (CA)	6	0.924
Continuance Commitment (CC)	6	0.807
Normative Commitment (CN)	6	0.907
Lecturers Organizational Commitment Scale (OC)	18	0.944

To ensure high construct validity of the scale, exploratory factor analysis was conducted using principal component analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation. Three common factors were extracted, four cross-loading items were deleted, reducing the scale from 18 to 14 items, and the formal questionnaire was finalized.

Sampling and Data Collection

Convenience sampling was adopted in the formal survey while considering regional diversity and institutional representation across Shandong Province. Six private universities were selected from different regions of the province, including economically developed eastern coastal areas, central Shandong, western Shandong, and Jinan. A total of 1,500 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 1,358 questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 90.5%. After removing incomplete and invalid responses, 1,147 valid questionnaires were retained for final analysis, resulting in a valid response rate of 84.5%. The demographic variables examined in this study included gender, age, education level, years of service, and current position, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistical Summary of Sample Characteristics

Background Variable	Group	Sample Size	Percentage
Gender	Male	388	33.8%
	Female	759	66.2%
Age	Under 30	276	24.1%
	31—40	581	50.7%
	41—50	236	20.6%
	Over 51	54	4.7%
	Junior College	22	1.9%
Education	Bachelor's	296	25.8%
	Master's or above	829	72.3%
	Under 5	421	36.7%
Years of Service	6—10	361	31.5%
	11—15	252	22.0%
	Over 16	113	9.9%
Current Position	Teaching-only	717	62.5%
	Teaching + Administrative	215	18.7%
	Administrative-only	215	18.7%

Reliability and Validity Testing

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS to examine construct validity. Factor loadings for all retained items exceeded .50, indicating acceptable convergent validity. The composite reliability (CR) values for affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment were .853, .711, and .876, respectively, all exceeding the recommended threshold of .70 (Hair et al., 2009). The average variance extracted (AVE) values were .538, .458, and .540, respectively. Although the AVE value for continuance commitment was slightly below .50, it remained above the acceptable threshold for exploratory research (Hair et al., 2009). The reliability and validity of the lecturer organizational commitment scale are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Reliability and Validity Analysis of lecturer Organizational Commitment

Dimension	Item	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Affective Commitment	CA1	0.676	0.853	0.538
	CA3	0.740		
	CA4	0.773		
	CA5	0.737		
	CA6	0.738		
Continuance Commitment	CC2	0.698	0.711	0.458
	CC3	0.795		
	CC6	0.506		
	CN1	0.734		
Normative Commitment	CN2	0.748	0.876	0.540
	CN3	0.721		
	CN4	0.784		
	CN5	0.723		
	CN6	0.698		

The factor loadings of all items in the organizational commitment scale exceeded 0.50, and the critical ratios (CR) of the three dimensions were 0.853, 0.711, and 0.876 respectively, surpassing the standard for sound construct reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) values were 0.538, 0.458, and 0.540. According to Hair et al., an AVE greater than 0.5 is ideal. However, since AVE is the arithmetic mean of the squared factor loadings (SMC), an AVE above 0.36 is acceptable. Therefore, the convergent validity of the lecturer organizational commitment scale in this study is acceptable, and the scale can be used as a tool for subsequent research.

Research Findings

Status of Organizational Commitment among lecturers in Private Universities

The means and standard deviations of each dimension of organizational commitment among private university lecturers are presented in Table 4. The mean scores, ranked from high to low, are affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment, with means of 4.106, 4.016, and 3.919, respectively. In terms of the dispersion of respondents' perceived scores, affective commitment showed the smallest individual differences.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of Each Dimension of Organizational Commitment among Private University lecturers

	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Affective Commitment	5	4.106	0.539
Continuance Commitment	3	3.827	0.694
Normative Commitment	6	4.016	0.593
Lecturer Organizational Commitment	14	4.008	0.520

Analysis of Differences in Organizational Commitment by Background Variables

Independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to examine differences in lecturer organizational commitment across five background variables: gender, age, education, years of service, and current position. When the ANOVA results reached statistical significance, the Scheffé post hoc test was used for multiple comparisons. The results are as follows.

Gender

An independent-samples t-test was used to analyze differences in organizational commitment by gender. As shown in Table 5, $t = 2.398$, $p = 0.017$, indicating a significant gender difference. Male lecturers exhibited higher organizational commitment than female lecturers.

Table 5. t-test Summary of Organizational Commitment by Gender among Private University lecturers

	Gender	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Organizational Commitment	Male	4.059	0.496	1145	2.398*	0.017
	Female	3.981	0.530			

Note: * $p < 0.05$

Age

One-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in organizational commitment across age groups. As shown in Table 6, $F(3, 1143) = 9.256$, $p = 0.000$, indicating significant differences

across age groups. Post hoc comparisons revealed that lecturers over 51 showed significantly higher commitment than those under 30, lecturers aged 41—50 showed significantly higher commitment than those under 30, and lecturers aged 41—50 also showed significantly higher commitment than those aged 31—40.

Table 6. Summary of Differences in Organizational Commitment by Age among lecturers

Dimension	Age Group	Mean	SD	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p
Organizational Commitment	1	3.903	0.575	Between Groups	7.344	3	2.448	9.256	0.000
	2	3.997	0.505	Within Groups	302.320	1143	0.246		
	3	4.121	0.460	Total	309.664	1146			
	4	4.156	0.503						

Note: 1. Under 30, 2. 31—40, 3. 41—50, 4. Over 51; *** $p < 0.001$

Education

One-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in organizational commitment by education level. As shown in Table 7, $F(2, 1144) = 1.760$, $p = 0.173$, indicating no significant differences in organizational commitment across education levels.

Table 7. Summary of Differences in Organizational Commitment by Education among lecturers

Dimension	Education	Mean	SD	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p
Organizational Commitment	1	4.175	0.441	Between Groups	.950	2	0.475		
	2	3.976	0.468	Within Groups	308.715	1144	0.270	1.760	0.173
	3	4.014	0.538	Total	309.664	1146			

Note: 1. Junior College, 2. Bachelor's, 3. Master's or above

Years of Service

One-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in organizational commitment by years of service. As shown in Table 8, $F(3, 1143) = 6.414$, $p = 0.000$, indicating significant differences. Post hoc comparisons revealed that lecturers with 11—15 years of service showed significantly higher commitment than those with under 5 years of service.

Table 8. Summary of Differences in Organizational Commitment by Years of Service among lecturers

Dimension	Years of Service	Mean	SD	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F / p / Post hoc
Organizational Commitment	1	3.931	0.542	Between Groups	5.127	3	1.709	6.414 0.000 3>1
	2	4.014	0.532	Within Groups	304.538	1143	0.266	
	3	4.104	0.475	Total	309.664	1146		
	4	4.056	0.449					

Note: 1. Under 5, 2. 6—10, 3. 11—15, 4. Over 16; *** $p < 0.001$

Current Position

One-way ANOVA was used to examine differences in organizational commitment by current position. As shown in Table 9, $F(2, 1144) = 14.183$, $p = 0.004$, indicating significant differences. Post hoc comparisons revealed that lecturers holding concurrent administrative positions exhibited significantly higher commitment than teaching-only faculty.

Table 9. Summary of Differences in Organizational Commitment by Current Position among lecturers

Dimension	Position	Mean	SD	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F / p / Post hoc
Organizational Commitment	1	3.855	0.563	Between Groups	2.932	2	1.466	5.467 0.004 2>1
	2	4.065	0.500	Within Groups	306.733	1144	0.268	
	3	3.983	0.517	Total	309.664	1146		

Note: 1. lecturer, 2. lecturer with Administrative Duties, 3. Administrative Staff; ** $p < 0.001$

Discussion

As a key variable for measuring lecturers' work attitudes and turnover intentions, organizational commitment has a significant impact on school efficiency and effectiveness. The findings of this study show that lecturers in private universities maintain strong emotional ties to their institutions, while exhibiting significant differences across personal background variables.

Regarding the three dimensions of organizational commitment, affective commitment recorded the highest score among the three components, indicating that lecturers' commitment is primarily driven by emotional attachment and identification with their institutions. This finding is consistent with Meyer et al. (1993), who suggested that affective commitment represents the strongest form of organizational attachment because employees remain with organizations based on personal involvement and shared values.

Normative commitment also demonstrated a relatively high level, suggesting that lecturers perceive a sense of responsibility and obligation toward their universities. This result reflects the important role of professional identity and academic responsibility in shaping lecturers' commitment within higher education institutions.

In contrast, continuance commitment obtained the lowest mean score, indicating that lecturers' intention to remain may be less influenced by economic benefits or the perceived costs of leaving. This finding suggests that private universities should not rely solely on employment stability or external incentives but should strengthen organizational culture, career development opportunities, and institutional support to enhance long-term commitment. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies, which emphasized the importance of organizational support and professional development in strengthening lecturers' commitment (Chen et al., 2024; Bankole, 2024).

For private universities to continue advancing intensive development, they must continuously improve lecturers' organizational commitment through investment and capacity building across multiple dimensions.

Retaining Core Lecturers and Supporting Young Lecturers

The findings indicate that lecturers with greater age and longer years of service demonstrate stronger organizational commitment. This suggests that experienced lecturers are more likely to develop stable professional identities and stronger institutional attachment. Conversely, younger lecturers and those with shorter tenure generally exhibit lower commitment and higher turnover tendencies. Private universities should therefore prioritize the retention of experienced lecturers while simultaneously supporting the professional growth of younger lecturers. Competitive compensation packages, comprehensive welfare benefits, and long-term career security are essential for retaining core lecturers. In addition, mentorship programs pairing senior and junior lecturers may help accelerate professional development and strengthen organizational commitment among younger staff. Recent studies have similarly emphasized the importance of career support and institutional investment in improving lecturers' organizational commitment (Chen et al., 2024).

Building Professional Development Platforms Based on Lecturers' Needs

Professional development opportunities are essential for strengthening lecturers' organizational commitment, particularly continuance commitment. When lecturers perceive clear career advancement opportunities, they are more likely to remain committed to their institutions. Private universities should provide structured career planning support, transparent promotion pathways, and diversified training opportunities. Institutions may establish accelerated promotion mechanisms for lecturers who demonstrate outstanding achievements in teaching, research, and student development. In addition to pre-service training, in-service professional development should also be strengthened through funded study visits, advanced degree opportunities, academic exchange programs, and industry internships. Recent studies have consistently suggested that lecturers are more likely to remain committed when institutions provide adequate professional development opportunities and clear career advancement pathways (Bankole, 2024; Ramli & Salleh, 2025; Silvia et al., 2025).

Encouraging Participation in Administrative Work

This study found that lecturers with administrative responsibilities demonstrate significantly higher organizational commitment than teaching-only lecturers. This finding suggests that involvement in administrative work may enhance lecturers' understanding of institutional governance and strengthen their sense of responsibility toward organizational development. Private universities may encourage lecturers to participate in administrative and decision-making processes in addition to teaching and research activities. Increased participation in governance can improve communication between management and lecturers, strengthen institutional trust, and foster shared responsibility for organizational goals. Previous studies have indicated that participative leadership, visionary leadership, and learning-oriented organizational practices can effectively strengthen employees' organizational commitment in higher education institutions (Andari et al., 2024; Ting & Ismail, 2025).

Building a Supportive Organizational Culture

A supportive organizational culture plays a critical role in strengthening lecturers' affective and normative commitment. Private universities should foster an institutional culture based on respect, fairness, inclusion, and shared values. This can be achieved by improving teaching and research environments, investing in campus infrastructure, upgrading teaching facilities, and providing sufficient academic resources. Universities should also establish transparent communication mechanisms and supportive management practices to strengthen trust between lecturers and administrators. Moreover, providing assistance for lecturers' personal and family-related needs—such as childcare, healthcare, and work-life balance—may further enhance lecturers' emotional attachment to their institutions. (Tanjung et al., 2025). Recent studies have consistently reported that supportive organizational environments, effective institutional support, and positive workplace relationships contribute significantly to lecturers' job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment (Bankole, 2024; Cassim et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2024; Syahsudarmi et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study examined lecturers' organizational commitment in private universities in Shandong Province, China, using Meyer et al.'s (1993) three-component framework of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Through a questionnaire survey of lecturers from six private universities, the study investigated the overall level of organizational commitment and analyzed differences across demographic variables, including gender, age, education level, years of service, and current position.

The findings indicate that lecturers in private universities generally demonstrate a relatively high level of organizational commitment. Among the three dimensions, affective commitment scored the highest, followed by normative commitment and continuance commitment. This suggests that lecturers tend to remain in their institutions primarily because of emotional attachment and value identification rather than economic or practical considerations.

The study also identified significant differences in organizational commitment across several demographic variables. Male lecturers demonstrated higher organizational commitment than female lecturers. Older lecturers showed stronger commitment than younger lecturers, and lecturers with longer years of service exhibited stronger organizational attachment than those with shorter tenure. Additionally, lecturers with administrative responsibilities reported

significantly higher commitment than teaching-only lecturers. However, educational level was not found to have a significant influence on organizational commitment.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from private universities in China and enriching the understanding of lecturers' organizational commitment in the context of private higher education. The findings further support recent studies suggesting that organizational commitment is shaped by demographic, professional, and institutional factors (Chen et al., 2024; Ting & Ismail, 2025).

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to private universities in Shandong Province, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Second, the use of convenience sampling may introduce sampling bias. Third, this study mainly examined demographic variables and did not include psychological or organizational variables such as leadership style, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational support.

Future research may expand the geographical scope, adopt longitudinal research designs, and incorporate additional variables to further explore the mechanisms influencing lecturers' organizational commitment in private universities.

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