Work Engagement and Organizational Commitment Relationship with Career Growth

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The study aims to explore the correlation between work engagement and organizational commitment from an organizational standpoint, and their influence on career advancement from the perspective of graduates

Aims(s) – It will examine graduates' career growth (career goal progress, professional ability development, organizational return growth, career advancement growth), organizational commitment (affective Commitment, continuance Commitment, normative Commitment) and work engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption) .

Question :

Is there a significant relationship between the graduates' career growth and each of the following?

a. Sustenance of their work engagement

b. Manifestation of their organizational commitment

Hypothesis :

Work engagement and organizational commitment positively correlate with graduates' career growth.

Design/methodology/approach – This research adopts a quantitative approach with a correlational research design.

The Utrecht Group's frame of reference has largely shaped the concept of work engagement. The majority of the articles examined used UWES as a tool, according to Zahari and Kaliannan's systematic review (2022). The most accepted tool to measure Organizational Commitment is that of Allen and Meyer (1990). and generalization of findings across various studies.

Spearman-rank correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between graduates' career growth and sustenance of their work engagement and manifestation of their organizational commitment.

Findings – There is a significant relationship between the level of career growth and work engagement among the participants. Additionally, their level of career growth also shows a significant positive correlation with their commitment to the organization. Employees with more excellent career advancement opportunities tend to be more invested in their work and demonstrate a more substantial commitment to the organization.

Limitations of the study – through consistent investment in the professional development of their employees, firms not only enhance job engagement but also foster a highly proficient and driven staff. Ultimately, this positive cycle of advancing in one's profession and being dedicated to the company helps achieve overall success and ensure its long-term existence.

Originality/value – This research endeavor on graduates' work engagement, organizational commitment, and career growth proves to be highly beneficial for the government. holds significant importance as it aims to generate empirical evidence about workplace attitudes among business master's and doctorate students, as opposed to relying solely on theoretical speculation. Lastly, the industry/company/employer will also benefit from this study by having committed employees who can contribute much to the attainment of the organizations' goals and objectives.

1 INTRODUCTION

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) forecasts released in early January, it is projected that the global unemployment rate will rise from 5.1% to 5.2% by the year 2024. This increase is expected to lead to an additional two million individuals actively searching for employment. The data from the ILO indicates that there are ongoing disparities between nations with low and high income levels. In addition, it has been observed that young individuals have a 3.5-fold higher probability of experiencing unemployment when compared to the general adult population. Moreover, a considerable proportion of employees are encountering challenges in fulfilling their financial responsibilities, which is a matter of considerable apprehension (Whiting, 2024).

This emphasizes the pressing requirement to establish avenues for enhancing skills and generating employment in order to address the disparity between job demand and the existing workforce. In addition, efforts to assist young individuals in entering the workforce and acquiring valuable experience can contribute to a decrease in the unemployment rate among this demographic. Effective collaboration among stakeholders, such as government agencies, educational institutions, and businesses, is essential for tackling these challenges and fostering a sustainable and inclusive economy.

As of May 2022, the unemployment rate among individuals aged 16 to 24 in China stands at 18.4 percent, marking the highest percentage observed since the commencement of data publication by authorities in 2018. This figure represents an increase from 14.3 percent in December of the previous year. China's largest cities, such as Shanghai, have experienced a decline in economic growth because of COVID regulations. However, China is currently witnessing an unprecedented number of 11.79 million university and college students graduating this year.

In light of the rising job turnover, employees are understandably focused on their own career growth, while organizations prioritize enhancing work engagement and organizational commitment to boost efficiency and gain a competitive edge (Jermsittiparsert, 2020). Work engagement is a motivational state that can significantly impact various work outcomes, including employee safety, turnover intention, organizational commitment, and employee performance, among others (Tomás et al., 2022).

Self-determination theory states that people can have higher motivation to work autonomously when their jobs can fulfill basic psychological needs such as personal autonomy, competence, and relationships (Ryan & Desi, 2020). The Job Demand - Resources Model (JD-R Model) further suggests that valuable resources such as social support, professional training, development opportunities and compensation incentives provided by the organization can increase work motivation (Shen, et al., 2019). The relationship between career growth and work engagement can be understood through the theory of self-determination. The fulfillment of three psychological needs, as outlined in self-determination theory, is crucial for effectively motivating workers and promoting optimal performance and well-being. The individual's sense of effectiveness and mastery over their environment, known as the need for competence, is crucial. Additionally, it is important for individuals to perceive themselves as agents of their own behavior rather than being influenced solely by external pressures, which is referred to as the need for autonomy. Lastly, the need for relatedness emphasizes the significance of meaningful connections with others (Gagné et al., 2022). Self-determination theory states that people are motivated to work with higher levels of autonomy when their work satisfies their basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and interpersonal relationships.

The underlying relationship between work engagement and organizational commitment can be connected using the JD-R Model. Since employees have a high demand for personal growth, when the support provided by the organization can better promote the development of employees, individuals should be able to generate motivation and behavior to actively engage in work. Work engagement is a concrete manifestation of motivation. Research shows that highly engaged employees who are passionate and dedicated to their work can lead to positive behavior and performance (Weng et al. 2017).

2 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNING

The core principles of self-determination theory are in harmony with humanistic values. One concept that stands out is Autonomy. The concept of autonomy is central to SDT. This is in line with the humanistic

perspective, which emphasizes the importance of personal agency and the ability to make choices that align with one's true self.

The humanistic approach is grounded in a vision that encompasses economic inclusivity, social justice, and ecological sustainability in social and organizational development. This vision acknowledges the diversity of knowledge systems, worldviews, and concepts of wellbeing, while also affirming the existence of universally shared values. This perspective advocates for a comprehensive methodology in examining organizations as intricate socio-economic and socio-technological systems that prioritize the growth of their personnel. It acknowledges the diverse personal, social, civic, and economic objectives of both the individual and the organization in terms of development (Череп et al., 2023). In order to maximize individual potential and drive overall company success, it is crucial to cultivate a culture of continuous growth and learning within the organization. This approach highlights the significance of implementing sustainable practices that not only provide short-term benefits to the organization but also guarantee long-term viability and success. Through the alignment of personal and organizational goals with shared values and principles, a harmonious and thriving environment can be established that places a high priority on the well-being of all stakeholders.

Numerous studies have shown that a large part of the variance in organizational commitments can be explained by work motivation (Ćulibrk, et al., 2018). Syamsuri (2017) concluded about elementary school in Samarinda that work motivation has directly positive effect to the organizational commitment, Widarto & Anindita (2018) used Structural Equation Modeling in research and also concluded that high work motivation has a clear impact on organizational commitment, and high job satisfaction will form high organizational commitment.Organizational commitment refers to the extent to which individuals identify with and engage with the organization. The research conducted by Sucipto et al. (2022) is supported by the notion that organizational commitment is demonstrated through various behaviors, such as trust, embracing organizational values, exerting significant effort for the organization's benefit, and displaying strong loyalty. Aguinis & Kraus (2022) argue that when employees' needs are met, their talents are developed and their values are expressed, they become more active and emotionally attached to the organization. Turnover is posing a threat to work engagement (Remegio et al., 2021). Mahmoodi (2018) thinks that reciprocity is a universal norm of people's behavior, when employees feel that the organization aids their personal development, they will feel that they should increase their work engagement and return to the organization.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the unemployment rate among young people aged 16 to 24 has soared to 20.1%. This means that on average, 1 in 5 newly graduated college students may not be able to find a job. Can graduates contribute to career growth through work engagement and organizational commitment? Careers are a continuous and evolving process, rather than a fixed endpoint. Throughout a career, individuals experience various seasons that encompass growth, development, emerging opportunities, setbacks, adversity, unexpected changes, and transitions. These passages provide insight into the fact that career planning is a continuous process that goes beyond simply selecting a major, earning a degree, and entering the workforce. Professional life is a continuous and enduring journey (Davis, 2023).

The study aims to explore the correlation between work engagement and organizational commitment from an organizational standpoint, and their influence on career advancement from the perspective of graduates.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It will examine graduates' career growth (career goal progress, professional ability development, organizational return growth, career advancement growth), organizational commitment (affective Commitment, continuance Commitment, normative Commitment), and work engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption).

Question
Is there a significant relationship between the graduates' career growth and each of the following?
a. Sustenance of their work engagement
b. Manifestation of their organizational commitment

Hypothesis:

Work engagement and organizational commitment positively correlate with graduates' career growth.

Work Engagement is often defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002).Schaufeli & Bakker (2004).Vigor has been assessed by the following six items: high levels of energy and resilience, willingness to invest effort, not being easily fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties.Dedication is assessed by five items that refer to deriving a sense of significance from one's work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about one's job, and feeling inspired and challenged by it. Absorption is measured by six items that refers to being totally and happily immersed in one's work and having difficulties detaching oneself from it so that time passes quickly, and one forgets everything else that is around them.

Organizational commitment is an essential factor for enhancing organizational productivity and efficiency is solid organizational commitment among employees. (Abdirahman et al., 2018).Affective Commitment concept is based on the theory of social exchange (SET).   Continuance Commitment is the tendency of employees to remain with the organization in order not to lose their existing position and the benefits they have received from years of commitment (Wang, 2020). Normative commitment, employees form a sense of commitment under the constraints of social responsibility and social norms. (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021).

Career Growth is important to highlight the significant role that individuals play in career development, both within and across organizations. Career Goal Progress. Many employees are eager to learn about the various career paths available within their organizations ("Workers Want More Info on Career Growth.," 2023). Professional ability development. A significant number of employees express a desire for increased satisfaction in their work through the availability of more career exploration opportunities ("Workers Want More Info on Career Growth.," 2023). Organizational return growth. There is a correlation between the availability of promotion opportunities and the likelihood of a career advancement within the organization. Promotion serves as a long-term incentive for employees (Tomás et al., 2022).Career advancement growth. The group brings additional career promotion opportunities, but it significantly increases the possibility of career promotion for the subordinate group. (wang, 2021).In China, older employees have stronger expectations and requirements for the advancement growth.

4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. This method requires different techniques to systematically explore the social processes of applying numerical or statistical data and assumes that the researcher can measure the phenomenon under research (Watson, 2015). In this research explored the relationship between the level of sustenance of Work Engagement and manifestation of Organizational Commitment as well as Career Growth.

Participants for the study were those who had graduated from Chinese universities and earned a bachelor's degree or above. There were graduates from a wide range of age groups, genders, and educational backgrounds included in the sample. These graduates represented a variety of universities located all around China.The questionnaire issued includes but is not limited to the last three years of graduates. There are about 11.79 million graduates in China in 2024. The selection on who will participate was made by the counsellor to graduates from undergraduate level and above.

Anticipating a 10 percent non-response rate, the researcher targeted at least 423 respondents. A total of 500 questionnaires were issued, and out of these, 487 questionnaires were returned, and 487 were valid. Of the 487 respondents, 41.6 % were male, and 58.4 % were female. Regarding age, Early middle-aged adults account for 28.3%, and Young and Late middle-aged adults account for 71.7%. Franssen, T., Stijnen, M., Hamers, F., et al. (2020) divided adults into young adults (19-34 years), early middle age (35-49 years), and late middle age (50-65 years), which coincided with this research. From their educational background, Doctor and Master is 29.8%, and Bachelor is 70.2%.

The Utrecht Group's frame of reference has largely shaped the concept of work engagement. The majority of the articles examined used UWES as a tool, according to Zahari and Kaliannan's systematic review (2022). The most accepted tool to measure Organizational Commitment is that of Allen and Meyer (1990). and generalization of findings across various studies.

Career growth Scales developed by Weng et al. (2010) were used to measure the four dimensions of career growth: career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration growth. Career goal progress was measured by four questions: (1) "my present job moves me closer to my career goals," (2) "my present job is relevant to my career goals and vocational growth," (3) "my present job sets the foundation for the realization of my career goals," and (4) "my present job provides me with good opportunities to realize my career goals." Professional ability development was measured by four questions: (1) "my present job encourages me to continuously gain new and job-related skills," (2) "my present job encourages me to continuously gain new job-related knowledge,"(3)"my presen tjobencouragesmetoaccumulatericherworkexperiences," and (4) "my present job enables me to continuously improve my professional capabilities." Promotion speed was measured by four questions: (1) "my promotion speed in the present organization is fast," (2) "the probability of being promoted in my present organization is high," (3) "compared with previous organizations, my position in my present one is ideal" and (4) "compared with my colleagues, I am being promoted faster." Finally, remuneration growth was measured by three questions: (1) "my salary is growing quickly in my present organization," (2) "In this organization, the possibility of my current salary being increased is very large," (3) "Compared with my colleagues, my salary has grown morequickly." All scales showed good evidence of reliability with coefficient alphas for career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration growth being .85, .86, .86, .80, and .78, respectively. Spearman-rank correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between graduates' career growth and sustenance of their work engagement and manifestation of their organizational commitment.

5 RESULT

Relationship of the following to the graduates' career growth with sustenance of their work engagement and the manifestation of their organizational commitment. According to the findings, there is a significant relationship between the level of career growth and work engagement among the participants. Additionally, their level of career growth also shows a significant positive correlation with their commitment to the organization. The findings indicate that employees with more excellent career advancement opportunities tend to be more invested in their work and demonstrate a more substantial commitment to the organization. This emphasizes the significance of offering growth and learning opportunities in the workplace to enhance employee engagement and loyalty.

Table 1. Relationship (using Spearman correlation coefficient) of the following to the graduates' career growth with sustenance of their work engagement

Career Growth	Correlate	r	P-value	Relationship
Career Goal Progress	Vigor	0.537	<0.001	Significant positive
	Dedication	0.602	<0.001	Significant positive
	Absorption	0.548	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Work Engagement	0.596	<0.001	Significant positive
Career Ability Development	Vigor	0.582	<0.001	Significant positive
	Dedication	0.654	<0.001	Significant positive
	Absorption	0.567	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Work Engagement	0.635	<0.001	Significant positive
Organizational Return Growth	Vigor	0.589	<0.001	Significant positive
	Dedication	0.599	<0.001	Significant positive
	Absorption	0.546	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Work Engagement	0.611	<0.001	Significant positive
Career Advancement Growth	Vigor	0.532	<0.001	Significant positive
	Dedication	0.485	<0.001	Significant positive
	Absorption	0.513	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Work Engagement	0.543	<0.001	Significant positive
Overall Career Growth	Vigor	0.645	<0.001	Significant positive
	Dedication	0.658	<0.001	Significant positive
	Absorption	0.611	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Work Engagement	0.676	<0.001	Significant positive

The level of career growth among respondents has a significant positive correlation with the sustenance of their work engagement. There is a direct connection between graduates' level of career growth and how long they maintain their work engagement. This relationship works both ways, meaning higher career growth leads to higher work engagement and vice versa. One possible reason is that when individuals experience higher career growth, they feel more accomplished and satisfied. This, in turn, serves as a motivation for them to continue putting in effort at work. Conversely, consistent dedication to work can also increase chances for professional growth, establishing a cycle of positive outcomes. Investing in professional development and maintaining high levels of work engagement can have positive outcomes for both employees and organizations.

According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the idea of competence revolves around achieving a harmonious equilibrium between challenge and skill levels. This enables individuals to participate in activities that strike a balance between being too simple and too challenging, while also having the required skills to successfully accomplish the task. The study conducted by Szulawski et al. (2021) reveals that competence had the most significant impact among the three needs examined. The authors propose that even in the presence of external rewards, the fulfillment of the need for competence can have a beneficial impact on performance.

People who felt confident in their abilities were more likely to feel motivated and engaged in their work. It appears that a sense of mastery and accomplishment is a key motivator for individuals to excel in their endeavors. In addition, the study emphasizes the significance of nurturing individuals' sense of competence, as it has the potential to enhance their satisfaction and overall well-being. By offering opportunities for individuals to push their limits and enhance their abilities, organizations can support individuals in achieving their maximum potential and excelling in their pursuits.

This means that as graduates become more engaged in their work (measured by Vigor, Dedication, Absorption), they also experience more progress in their careers (measured by Career Goal Progress), develop better skills for their jobs (measured by Career Ability Development), see greater returns on investment from their organization (measured by Organizational Return Growth) and have more opportunities for advancement in their careers (measured by Career Advancement Growth). Employees who displayed a higher level of creativity and fostered strong relationships with their bosses while having a more significant say in their work responsibilities were more inclined to discover ways to align their current jobs with their desired futures (Martinez et al., 2021).

Table 2 shows the relationship between graduates' career growth and their organizational commitment. It provides evidence that having strong organizational commitment can lead to better outcomes in terms of career growth for graduates.

Graduates' professional growth positively correlates with their commitment to the organization. The association between professional advancement and commitment to work implies that companies should prioritize providing employees with possibilities for personal and professional progress to cultivate a strong sense of loyalty and dedication. Facilitating indispensable assistance for career advancement and executing efficient tactics for professional development are crucial for cultivating employees' commitment to the organization. Training programs that improve skills and job capacities, together with a supportive learning environment, positively impact the overall development of employees. Considering the subjective aspects that influence career advancement, this is equally significant. Historically, there was a significant focus on offering external motivators, such as promotions and financial support, to foster dedication to the organization.

Table 2. Relationship (using Spearman correlation coefficient) of the following to the graduates' career growth with Manifestation of their organizational commitment

Career Growth	Correlate	r	P-value	Relationship
Career Goal Progress	Affective Commitment	0.436	<0.001	Significant positive
	Continuance Commitment	0.356	<0.001	Significant positive
	Normative Commitment	0.333	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Organizational Commitment	0.448	<0.001	Significant positive
Career Ability Development	Affective Commitment	0.388	<0.001	Significant positive

	Continuance Commitment	0.376	<0.001	Significant positive
	Normative Commitment	0.351	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Organizational Commitment	0.451	<0.001	Significant positive
Organizational Return Growth	Affective Commitment	0.403	<0.001	Significant positive
	Continuance Commitment	0.311	<0.001	Significant positive
	Normative Commitment	0.441	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Organizational Commitment	0.447	<0.001	Significant positive
Career Advancement Growth	Affective Commitment	0.410	<0.001	Significant positive
	Continuance Commitment	0.240	<0.001	Significant positive
	Normative Commitment	0.511	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Organizational Commitment	0.415	<0.001	Significant positive
Overall Career Growth	Affective Commitment	0.464	<0.001	Significant positive
	Continuance Commitment	0.335	<0.001	Significant positive
	Normative Commitment	0.496	<0.001	Significant positive
	Overall Organizational Commitment	0.494	<0.001	Significant positive

The level of career growth among respondents demonstrates a significant positive correlation with their organizational commitment. There is a direct relationship between graduates' level of career growth and organizational commitment. In other words, as graduates experience more incredible career growth, their commitment to the organization increases, and vice versa.

The outcomes of this present study are congruent with the conclusions of the previous research inquiry carried out by Balushi et al. (2022), where the public sector in Oman has been unsuccessful in retaining skilled employees due to two primary interconnected factors: the absence of a well-defined career program implemented by employers, resulting in a lack of strong organizational commitment among employees.

According to a survey conducted among HR experts in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore, there is widespread agreement that the prevalent practice of "job hopping" in these Asian countries is deeply rooted in the culture and is a commonly held attitude among Asian employees (Lee et al., 2019). This perspective can lead to a lack of building a solid bond with the organization, ultimately leading to below-average job performance and a strong inclination to leave the company. The survey data from Lee et al. (2019) suggests that employees are more likely to consider leaving their current job when career advancement prospects are lacking. Additionally, a decrease in loyalty towards the company influences this intention to leave. Although changing jobs frequently may provide immediate advantages, it can ultimately harm an individual's long-term job performance and commitment to the organization.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the study answers the question of the relationship between career growth and work engagement and organizational commitment. Organizations must prioritize providing essential amenities and creating a favorable workplace environment while implementing strategies promoting increased employee commitment. Furthermore, through consistent investment in the professional development of their employees, firms not only enhance job engagement but also foster a highly proficient and driven staff. Ultimately, this positive cycle of advancing in one's profession and being dedicated to the company helps achieve overall success and ensure its long-term existence.

While this study has answered significant inquiries, it has solely examined a limited aspect of the issue. Subsequent investigations should explore the additional work attitudes and behaviors displayed by graduates. It would be intriguing to ascertain the compatibility between the graduates and their respective professional roles. Do the graduates' talents, interests, and personality attributes match their current job? Examining the extent to which their present job fulfills their essential demands in the workplace after the pandemic would be an intriguing subject to explore.

Moreover, it is necessary to investigate various geographic regions in China to ascertain any disparities among study sites. Researchers could do a comparative analysis between Chongqing and Guangzhou, for example. Regarding the educational environment, Chongqing strives for complete modernization, while Guangzhou is proud of its esteemed institutions and varied educational ecology. Additionally, it would

be fascinating to juxtapose the professional advancement of alumni employed in diverse sectors (such as the automotive industry against higher education).

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