

## *Original Paper*

# Effects of Work-Life Balance on Organizational Commitment: A Study in China's State-Owned Enterprise

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### **Abstract**

*Work-life balance is a heavily researched area of interest focusing on how well employee's work and personal life are balanced. As there is still a lack of literature on work-life balance in China's context, our research attempts to explore in depth the topic. This paper explores the effects of employee work-life balance on organizational commitment in China's context. Questionnaire was used to collect data in a state-owned enterprise and the sample size was 363. Quantitative research method was used for data analysis. This study finds that work-life balance is significantly and positively linked to organizational commitment in China's context. Also, employee work-life balance is correlated with demographic and occupational factors. As the findings indicate that work-life balance can contribute to positive organizational outcomes, we suggest China's organizations to attach more emphasis on employee work-life balance and take initiatives to help employee balance their work and personal life.*

### **Keywords**

*employee work-life balance, organizational commitment, demographic factor, China's context*

### **1. Introduction**

Work-Life Balance (WLB) is a heavily researched area of interest. It emphasizes the "quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life" and deals with culture of overtime (Guest, 2002, p. 255). Workers in China have experienced longer working hours and greater stress in the last two decades, which brought about increased work-life conflict and challenged employee work-life balance (Lei, 2015). With the aim of enhancing the existing literature, this study explores the effects of employee work-life balance on organizational commitment in China's context. Also, the correlations between work-life balance and employee demographic and occupational factors are examined. Data collection, which was conducted in a state-owned enterprise, is based on a sample of 363 employees.

The finding that work-life balance contributes to positive organizational outcomes in China's context lends theoretical support to organizations to concern and improve employee work-life balance.

### *1.1 Backgrounds of Work-Life Balance Issues to China's Context*

#### *1.1.1 Economic Restructuring and Decline in Job Security*

Lowe, Schellenberg, & Davidman (1999) state that the decline in lifelong career employment and job security can contribute to increased Work-Life Conflict (WLC), as Work-Life Balance (WLB) is usually treated subordinate to securing employment. Additionally, employees who worry about job security tend to experience high level of stress and endure long working hours, non-supportive and unhealthy working conditions. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, the dominated planned economic system and the high concentration of public ownership generated a high level of job security for workforce in China (Lei, 2015). However, since the early 1990's when the market-oriented economic system was introduced, a range of major economic restructurings took place which caused high unemployment rate and decreased job security (Lei, 2015).

With a series of key reforms implemented in state-owned enterprises, the market-centered industrial relations began to predominate. State-owned enterprises experienced massive downsizing to increase efficiency and profitability, and the dominated employee permanent contracts were mainly substituted by fixed-term contracts (Deng, 2010). Also, a more stringent employee appraisal system was adopted by most state-owned enterprises (Lu, 2008). These changes have brought greater work stress, reduced job security, and increased work-life conflict. Therefore, workers in China have been confronted with increasing challenges to work-life balance.

#### *1.1.2 Increased Working Hours*

In the past two decades, China's employees have experienced increased working hours. According to China's Labor Protection Law conducted since 1995, legal day working hours should not exceed 8, weekly working hours should be no more than 40, and generally overtime should be less than 1 hour per day (China's State Council). However, according to the China's 2012 Workers Balance Index Research Report, more than 30 percent of employees report that they have to work 55 hours or more per week (Zhu, 2012). More than 42% of employees working in Shanghai, China's second largest city, report that their average working hours exceed 50 per week (Gao, 2006). The research conducted in China's enterprises by Zhang, Duxbury & Li (2006) indicates that employees work 46 hours weekly on average, with 93% working above 40 hours, and more than 62% above 50 hours, compared with only 13.7% in Canada.

#### *1.1.3 Enhanced Awareness of Work-Life Balance*

An organization's need to recruit and retain valued employees is the main reason to increased concern on WLB. Higgins, Duxbury & Johnson (2000) find that for highly-skilled workers, organizations that care about employee WLB are more attractive. Stavrou & Ierodiakonou (2016) state that organization's

neglecting on WLB might cause conflict for the new generation of workforce as they value discretion in work, high family satisfaction and meaningful personal activities. In order to attract and retain valued employees, organizations today are more motivated than ever to offer employees autonomy and take initiatives to help employees balance their work and family (Lowe, 2000).

Today young workers in China have higher demand on WLB and they want to achieve satisfaction both from work and personal life (Yuan & Zhang, 2016). Research indicates that compared with the older generation, “after 1980’s” generations in China need more autonomy and control on their work and attach more emphasis on WLB when they choose a job (Yuan & Zhang, 2016).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Work-Life Conflict (WLC)

WLC occurs when the “cumulative demands of these many work and non-work life roles are incompatible in some respect and so that participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in the other role” (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 3). Initially WLC focused on the work interference with family, but now it has extended to the impact that work exerts on individual stress, relationship, family satisfaction and well-being (Russell & Bowman, 2000; Cieri, Holmes, Abbott, & Pettit, 2002).

Duxbury & Higgins (2001) conceptualize WLC as role overload (too much is needed to do, but having too little time to do it) and role interference (incompatible demands between work and non-work life). Role interference involves two dimensions: work interference with personal life and personal life interference with work. In the former case, interference occurs when work responsibility makes it difficult for an employee to perform responsibility in personal life, and in the latter, interference arises when personal life responsibility hinder performance at work.

Conflict between work and non-work life has a number of negative outcomes that have been reported in the literature. In terms of job attitude, inability to balance work and non-work responsibility is associated with reduced job satisfaction, decreased organizational commitment and poorer morale (Higgins et al., 2000). Behavioural outcomes of work and non-work life conflict include reduced work effort, decreased performance, and increased absenteeism and turnover (Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997). Research conducted by Higgins et al. (2000) finds that in Canadian firms, the average absenteeism record of employees with low WLC is 5.9 days of work per year, while this record of employees with high WLC is more than doubled, about 13.2 days per year. WLC also imposes negative impact on employee’s family, personal life and general health. High WLC is linked to marital problems, reduced family and life satisfaction, and increased risks of perceived stress, burnout, depression and other stress-related illnesses (Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996).

Empirical research shows that a set of demographic and occupational factors, including age, gender,

marital status, parental status, education level and job type, have impact on WLC (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). However, outcomes are in discrepancy. In terms of age, some research show that age is associated negatively and linearly with WLC (Mennino, Rubin, & Brayfield, 2005; Winslow, 2005), while others state that employees in their middle age reported the highest level of work and non-work conflict (Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002; Schieman, Glavin, & Milkie, 2009).

Gender is considered as a significant factor to the research in WLC as females still perform the main role of caregiver and housekeeper in terms of domestic responsibilities (Cross, 2010; Adame, Capliure, & Miquel, 2016). Duxbury & Higgins (2001) states that women experience higher levels of WLC than men do, and gender acts as a significant mediator when appraising employee perception of WLC and the ability to balance their work and family demands (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lee, 1994). By contrast, men experience higher level of work interference with personal life, as they tend to spend more time on work (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004).

Employees who have been married or have children in family reported higher level of WLC, as the presence of a spouse or children in household might be associated with increased level of domestic work and responsibility, and thus the level of WLC (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005).

Education level is positively and linearly linked to level of work and non-work interference in some empirical research (Grzywacz et al., 2002; Mennino et al., 2005). This is due to the fact that although well-educated employees tend to be provided more autonomy and control on the timing and pace of work, they also tend to have more authority, decision-making latitude, stress, and workload (Schieman et al., 2009).

Research also shows that employees in high occupational status, such as professional and managerial position, are more likely to report higher levels of WLC than their peers in lower status do (Mennino et al., 2005; Schieman et al., 2009). Employees in higher organizational status might be exposed to longer working hours and higher workload, and thus they tend to perceive greater stress and higher WLC (Schieman et al., 2009).

## *2.2 Work-Life Balance (WLB)*

Although work-life balance has become an increasingly frequent field to research, there is not yet “a well-accepted definition of construct” for work-life balance (Lyness & Judiesch, 2014, p. 96). Dundas (2008), cited in Noor (2011, p. 240) states that WLB is about “effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and all other personal activities such as family, community activities, voluntary work, personal development, leisure and recreation”. Guest (Haar, Russo, Sune, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014), conceptualizes work-life balance as the quality of working life and its connection to personal life and activities and emphasizes an individual’s subjective perception on how well the work and the rest of life are balanced. Clark (2000) states that WLB suggests a high level of satisfaction on both work and personal life and a low level of work and non-work interference.

Greenhaus & Allen (2011) identify three commonly used ideas that conceptualize work-life balance: (1) absence or low level of work-family conflict; (2) high involvement in fulfilling multiple roles and commitments in both work and personal life; (3) high satisfaction and fulfillment across multiple roles. Their conceptualization of WLB is a more comprehensive one, as it involves employee actualization of multiple roles beyond work including family, social contact, and other activities and emphasizes the significance of personal values (Lyness & Judiesch, 2014). Therefore, WLB is defined as “an overall appraisal of the extent to which individuals’ effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are consistent with their life values at a given point in time” (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011, p. 174).

A large number of empirical research have focused on the relations between WLB and employee attitudinal and organizational outcomes. The research by Virick, Lilly & Casper (2007) on layoff survivors in high-tech sector finds that WLB has a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Also, the outcome of research conducted by Kinnie, Hutchison, Purcell, Rayton & Swart (2005) indicates that WLB is positively linked to organizational commitment of all employee groups regardless of the types of professional. This research also shows that policies adopted by the organization to help employee balance their work and family demands is associated with increased affective commitment. Allen (2001), cited in Cegarra-Navarro, Cegarra-Leiva, Sanchez-Vidal & Wensley (2015), explores whether WLB can benefit the organization, and they find that high level of perceived work-life balance results in stronger motivation and commitment that enhance organizational performance. WLB decreases employees’ desire to leave, increases involvement and commitment to the organization, thus reducing absenteeism and enhancing organizational productivity (Bloom & Van, R., 2006; Dupre & Day, 2007; Giardini & Kabst, 2008; Adame-Sanchez, Gonzalez-Cruz, & Martinez-Fuentes, 2016). Initiatives that organizations implement to help their staff balance work and personal life are able to improve organizational outcomes by strengthening their job satisfaction and commitment (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007; Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2015).

### *2.3 Key Arguments and Research Questions*

This research focuses on the issue of employee WLB in China’s context. Firstly, it studied the relationship between WLB and a series of demographic and occupational factors. Secondly, the relationship between WLB and organizational commitment were assessed, with demographic factors as controlled variables

RQ 1: What are the correlations between employee WLB and demographic/ occupational factors?

RQ 2: Does WLB have a significant and positive effect on organizational commitment?

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### *3.1 Data Collection and Sampling*

We took two months to collect data in a state-owned enterprise in China. It was a medium-sized enterprise with 412 employees and was founded in the late 1980's. Its business mainly involves investment and finance, e.g., industry equity investment and trust investment. We chose this enterprise for the following reasons. Firstly, this organization treated its staff as a significant strategic resource and had a tradition to concern employee well-being rather than just its economic return. We had contacted the HR manager of four enterprises prior to the research, and only this organization showed interest in our research. Secondly, employees were in high quality as this organization was quite demanding on education background and qualifications in its recruitment. Therefore, they were easier to be explained the aim of our research and the contents of the questionnaire. Finally, the HR manager of this organization had talked to some of his colleagues and found that most of them were interested and would like to participate in our research. The high rate of voluntary participation is more likely to bring authentic and reliable outcomes.

We used online self-administrated questionnaire to collect data. Questionnaires were distributed to each employee, and 363 completed questionnaires were received with the response rate of 88.11%. Employees were informed that the participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time. The reasons why the rest of employees did not participate were either they were not interested in the research or they were too busy with work. Therefore, this study was based on a sample of 363 employees. The questionnaire comprises three parts (Full questionnaire is shown in the Appendix): the first part collects basic information including demographic and occupational variables; the second part measures employee WLB through a 7-point Likert scale; the third part measures organizational commitment using a 7-point Likert scale.

### **4. Limitations**

Limitations of conducting a research in a single organization are linked to the generalis ability of its findings. However, there are also advantages as the contextual variables such as organizational culture and managerial style can be controlled. Secondly, although a large scale of factors can affect organizational commitment, this research controlled only demographic and occupational factors in the multiple regressions performed between WLB and organizational commitment. We had to neglect other factors, as squeezing many more items into the questionnaire might cause respondents' distraction and mental exhaustion, and thus undermined authenticity and accuracy of the results.

## 5. Measures

### 5.1 Measuring Demographic and Occupational Variables

Basic information including demographic information (e.g., age, gender, marital status, and education level) and occupational information (e.g., position type, contract type, and tenure) were collected from respondents. Marital status is divided into two types—single and married, with single including four subcategories, non-married, separated, divorced and widowed. Dependent children are classified as those under the age of 18. The contract type is categorized into fixed-term and permanent, as only these two types of contract are adopted in this organization. Tenure is measured in years that employees have continuously worked for this organization. In terms of position type, it is classified into non-managerial and managerial ones.

The descriptive statistics of demographic and occupational characteristics of the sample are presented in table one.

**Table 1. Demographic and Occupational Data of the Sample**

	N	%
Age	363	100
18-29	57	15.7
30-39	96	26.4
40-49	132	36.4
50-59	51	14.0
60 or above	27	7.4
Not specified	0	0
Gender	363	100
Male	204	56.2
Female	159	43.8
Not specified	0	0
Education level	363	100
High school graduate	36	9.9
Attended some college	21	5.8
Associate degree	102	28.1
Bachelor degree	123	33.9
Postgraduate degree	76	20.9
Not specified	5	1.4
Marital status	363	100
Single	144	39.7

Married	217	59.8
Not specified	2	0.5
Dependent children	363	100
Yes	211	58.1
No	152	41.9
Not specified	0	0
Type of contract	363	100
Fixed term	207	57.0
Permanent	153	42.2
Not specified	3	0.8
Position type	363	100
Managerial	89	24.5
Non-managerial	272	75.0
Not specified	2	0.5
	Mean	SD
Tenure	16.12	5.61

As to age, respondents between 40 to 49 constituted the largest percentage at 36.4%, followed by 30-39 age groups taking up 26.4%. 27 of the respondents were 60 or above, only at 7.4%. Regarding gender, there were 204 male respondents taking up 56.2%, while 159 females at 43.8%. In terms of education level, most of the respondents had received higher education, with 123 respondents (33.9%) with bachelor degree, 102 respondents (28.1%) with associate degree, and 76 (20.9%) respondents with postgraduate degree. The majority of respondents (59.8%) were married, and 58.1% of respondents reported that they had dependent children in their family. Regarding the type of contract, 207 respondents (57%) had fixed-term contract, compared to 153 respondents (42.2%) with permanent contract. The number of respondents in managerial position was 89 (24.5%), while that in non-managerial position is 272 (75%). Tenure was required to be reported in number of years, and the mean and standard deviation was 16.12 and 5.61 respectively. Questions that respondents do not choose an answer are classified into the item “not specified”, but only very few respondents refuse to provide their demographic information.

### 5.2 Measuring Work-Life Balance

WLB was assessed by the scale developed by Hayman (2005). This scale has three dimensions to measure WLB, including Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), and Work/Personal Life Enrichment (WPLE). 7-point Likert scale was used as instrument, with anchors ranging from “1=Never” to “7=Always”. This scale includes total 15



questions with question 1 to 7 measuring WIPL, question 8 to 11 measuring PLIW, and question 12 to 15 measuring WPLE. The reliability of the scale had been measured by Hayman (2005), with the Cronbach alpha value .93 for WIPL, .85 for PLIW, .69 for WPLE, and .70 for the total scale of WLB. Descriptive statistics of WLB and its three subscales are presented in Table Two.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for WIPL, PLIW, WPLE, and WLB**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
WIPL	363	2.71	5.00	3.47	.74
PLIW	363	2.25	5.25	3.10	.82
WPLE	363	3.00	5.75	4.50	.78
WLB	363	3.33	5.47	4.62	.69

### 5.3 Measuring Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was measured by the three-component model of commitment developed by Allen & Meyer (1990). According to this model, organizational commitment incorporates three dimensions: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment refers to employee emotionally attached to, involved in, and identified with their employers (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Continuance commitment refers to the recognition of the profit associated with continued participation and the costs associated with leaving the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Normative commitment refers to the “perceived obligation to remain with the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1). As we changed the way of wording for several items, reliability analysis for organization commitment and its subscale was performed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

Results of reliability of organizational commitment are shown in table three.

**Table 3. Test of Reliability for Organizational Commitment**

	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
Affective commitment	.91	5
Continuance commitment	.82	5
Normative commitment	.87	5
Organizational commitment	.79	15

Alpha value was .91 for the scale of affective commitment, .82 for the scale of continuance commitment, .87 for the scale of normative commitment, and .79 for the scale of organizational commitment. Generally, alpha value should be above .7 to indicate acceptable internal consistency of a scale (Pallant, 2007). Therefore, the scales we adopted to measure organizational commitment and its three subscales are proved internally consistent with each other.

Descriptive statistics for organizational commitment and its three subscales are shown in Table Four.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment and Organizational Commitment**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affective commitment	363	2.20	5.80	4.28	.94
Continuance commitment	363	2.60	6.00	5.12	.87
Normative commitment	363	1.80	5.60	4.59	1.06
Organizational commitment	363	2.20	5.60	4.62	.92

## 6. Analysis and Results

### 6.1 Correlations Analysis

Correlations were conducted to test the relationship between demographic/occupational factors and WLB. Two-tail significance levels of the correlation coefficients were calculated.

Correlation coefficients of demographic/occupational factors with WLB and its subscales are presented in Table Five.

Age was strongly and negatively related to WIPL and PLIW, while showed a positive correlation with both WPLE and WLB. Tenure was negatively correlated with both WIPL and PLIW, and its correlation with PLIW was comparatively strong ( $r = -.405$ ;  $p < .05$ ). It showed a moderately positive relationship with WPLE and WLB. Regarding gender, female employees tended to experience lower level of WIPL and WLB but higher level of PLIW and WPLE. Education level indicated an unremarkably positive correlation with WIPL, PLIW and WPLE, while a negative correlation with WLB. Married employees inclined to have a significantly increased level of PLIW ( $r = .415$ ;  $p < .05$ ), and a moderately higher level of WIPL. Being married was negatively connected with both WPLE and WLB. Having dependent children were considerably correlated with PLIW ( $r = .524$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and moderately with WIPL ( $r = .296$ ;  $p < .05$ ). However, it indicated a negative relation with both WPLE and WLB. Managerial position had a

strong positive correlation with WIPL, but its relationship with WPLE ( $r=.096$ ;  $p<.05$ ) was comparatively small. It was strongly and negatively correlated with WLB, but insignificantly correlated with PLIW. Permanent contract were slightly correlated with WIPL, PLIW, WPLE, and WLB.

**Table 5. Correlation Coefficients of Demographic/Occupational Factors with WIPL/PLIW/WPLE/WLB**

	WIPL	PLIW	WPLE	WLB
Age	-.309 *	-.423 * *	.145 *	.415 * *
Tenure	-.281 *	-.405 *	.204 *	.347 *
Being Female	-.462 * *	.389 *	.154 * *	-.129 *
Education Level	.157 *	.112 * *	.169 * *	-.194 *
Being Married	.242 * *	.415 *	-.179 *	-.295 * *
Having Dependent Children	.296 *	.524 *	-.167 *	-.328 *
Managerial Position	.416 *	-.057 *	.096 *	-.384 * *
Permanent Contract	-.082 *	.071 *	.048 *	.075 *

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 6.2 Measuring the Effects of WLB on Organizational Commitment

Hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to assess the effects of WLB on organizational commitment and on its subscales. R value for part correlation coefficient was tested. R square value illustrates how much a predictor variable uniquely explains the total variance in the outcome variable (Pallant, 2007). The Sig value of each variable was checked. Generally, a Sig value should be below .05 to indicate a significant unique contribution that a predictor variable makes to an outcome variable (Pallant, 2007).

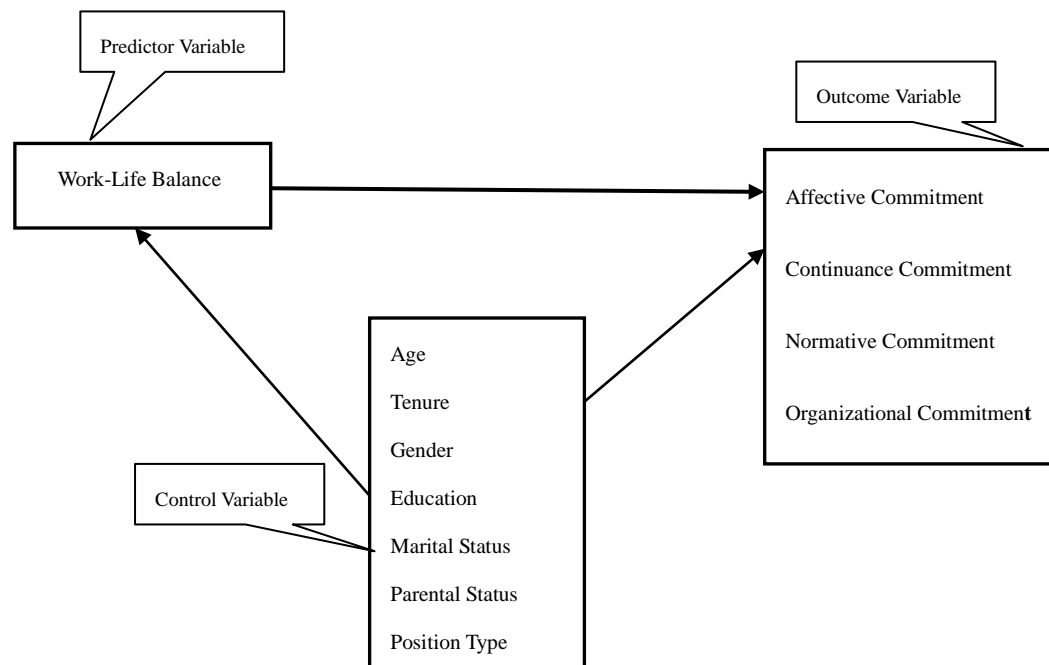
### 6.3 Framework of Multiple Regressions

A range of demographic and occupational variables have been found to be associated with organizational commitment. Mathieu & Zajac (1990) find that age is a positive predictor of employee commitment as the older employees perceive less alternative employment options are available, as well as they have a greater history with their organization. As regarding to gender, empirical research shows

that women report higher level of commitment than men, and this might be due to the fact that women having to overcome more barriers than men to achieve their position in the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Married employees tend to be more committed to organization as the responsibility to support the family increases their need to remain with the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Cohen (1993) finds that tenure is positively related to commitment as longer length of service means stronger investment and greater history with the organization. Empirical research has shown that education level is positively linked to continuance and normative commitment, as a good education level is related to a better professional position (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Gaertner & Nollen (1989) stated that employees at higher job levels generally have higher commitment than those at lower levels, and this is attributed to the reason that employees in higher position enjoy more autonomy and control on their work. Employees with permanent contract report higher level of commitment than those with fixed-term or temporary contract, which is typically explained by permanent contract providing employees with higher job security (Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994).

To assess the effects of WLB on organizational commitment, WLB functions as a predictor variable and organizational commitment as well as its subscales as outcome variables. Demographic and occupational factors serve as controlled variables in the multiple regressions.

Figure one presents the framework of multiple regressions between WLB and organizational commitment.



**Figure 1. Framework of Multiple Regressions between WLB and Organizational Commitment**

#### 6.4 Multiple Regressions Analysis

Table Six shows the results of regressions between WLB and affective commitment.

WLB presented a significantly positive relationship with affective commitment and uniquely explained 17.6% of its total variance. Managerial position and permanent contract were positively related to affective commitment and made considerable contribution to the variance respectively. Age and tenure showed a positive relation with affective commitment and made a moderate contribution to the total variance. Education level was positively connected to the affective commitment and 6.1% of its variance was explained. By contrast, being female and being married showed a positive but comparatively small correlation with affective commitment. Having dependent children did not make significant unique contribution to the prediction of affective commitment as its sig value was above .05.

**Table 6. Regressions between WLB and Affective Commitment**

	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Sig</b>
WLB	<b>.420</b>	<b>.176</b>	<b>.002</b>
Age	<b>.287</b>	<b>.082</b>	<b>.017</b>
Tenure	<b>.341</b>	<b>.100</b>	<b>.006</b>
Being female	<b>.148</b>	<b>.022</b>	<b>.025</b>
Having dependent children	<b>.083</b>	<b>.007</b>	<b>.064</b>
			<b>Not significant</b>
Education level	<b>.246</b>	<b>.061</b>	<b>.004</b>
Being married	<b>.174</b>	<b>.030</b>	<b>.014</b>
Managerial position	<b>.435</b>	<b>.189</b>	<b>.002</b>
Permanent contract	<b>.349</b>	<b>.122</b>	<b>.001</b>

Table Seven presents the regression between WLB and continuance commitment. WLB was found significantly positively linked to continuance commitment, and it uniquely contributed to 13.3% of its total variance. The strength of relationship between permanent contract and continuance commitment was comparatively strong. Age and tenure showed a positive relationship with continuance commitment and separately made a moderate unique contribution to the variance. Managerial position indicated a positive relationship with continuance commitment and its contribution was comparatively considerable. Being female and being married indicated respectively 7.5% and 2.2% of the total variance of continuance commitment. Education level was the only controlled variable that was negatively correlated with continuance commitment, predicting 7.1% to the variance. Having dependent children did not make a significantly unique contribution to continuance commitment.

**Table 7. Regressions between WLB and Continuance Commitment**

	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Sig</b>
WLB	<b>.364</b>	<b>.133</b>	<b>.014</b>
Age	<b>.305</b>	<b>.093</b>	<b>.007</b>
Tenure	<b>.297</b>	<b>.088</b>	<b>.001</b>
Being female	<b>.273</b>	<b>.075</b>	<b>.006</b>
Having dependent children	<b>.143</b>	<b>.020</b>	<b>.058</b>
			<b>(Not significant)</b>
Education level	<b>-.266</b>	<b>.071</b>	<b>.001</b>
Being married	<b>.149</b>	<b>.022</b>	<b>.004</b>
Managerial position	<b>.347</b>	<b>.120</b>	<b>.002</b>
Permanent contract	<b>.431</b>	<b>.186</b>	<b>.002</b>

Table Eight presents the regressions between WLB and normative commitment.

WLB indicated a positive relationship with normative commitment and uniquely explained 11.7% of the total variance. Age and tenure separately made comparatively small contribution to the variance of normative commitment. Managerial position uniquely explained 17.8% of the variance, followed by permanent contract with explanation of 11.9%. Education level presented a positive correlation with normative commitment. Being married was positively linked to normative commitment with a comparatively small unique explanation of the variance. Being female and having dependent children did not make statistically significant unique contribution.

**Table 8. Regression between WLB and Normative Commitment**

	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Sig</b>
WLB	<b>.342</b>	<b>.117</b>	<b>.008</b>
Age	<b>.251</b>	<b>.063</b>	<b>.016</b>
Tenure	<b>.219</b>	<b>.048</b>	<b>.002</b>
Being female	<b>.118</b>	<b>.014</b>	<b>.052</b>
			<b>Not significant</b>
Having dependent children	<b>-.096</b>	<b>.009</b>	<b>.067</b>
			<b>Not significant</b>
Education level	<b>.285</b>	<b>.081</b>	<b>.022</b>
Being married	<b>.155</b>	<b>.008</b>	<b>.018</b>
Managerial position	<b>.422</b>	<b>.178</b>	<b>.001</b>
Permanent contract	<b>.345</b>	<b>.119</b>	<b>.002</b>

Results of multiple regressions between WLB and organizational commitment are presented in table nine.

WLB was positively associated with organizational commitment and uniquely explained 16.5% of the total variance. Age and tenure respectively made moderate contribution to the variance. Both managerial position and permanent contract were significantly associated with organizational commitment, contributing to 16.1% and 13.5% of the variance separately. Being female and being married made comparatively insignificant contribution to the total variance. Having dependent children did not make statistically significant unique contribution to the prediction of organizational commitment.

**Table 9. Regression between WLB and Organizational Commitment**

	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Sig</b>
WLB	<b>.406</b>	<b>.165</b>	<b>.001</b>
Age	<b>.273</b>	<b>.075</b>	<b>.001</b>
Tenure	<b>.255</b>	<b>.065</b>	<b>.004</b>
Being female	<b>.206</b>	<b>.042</b>	<b>.011</b>
Having dependent children	<b>-.104</b>	<b>.011</b>	<b>.069</b>
			<b>Not significant</b>
Education level	<b>.261</b>	<b>.068</b>	<b>.022</b>
Being married	<b>.157</b>	<b>.025</b>	<b>.016</b>
Managerial position	<b>.401</b>	<b>.161</b>	<b>.004</b>
Permanent contract	<b>.367</b>	<b>.135</b>	<b>.002</b>

## **7. Discussions**

### *7.1 The Relations between WLB and Demographic/Occupational Factors*

This research found out that the relationship between WLB and demographic/ occupational factors in China's context were mainly in line with the empirical evidence found in western countries.

Age had a strong and negative relationship with WIPL and PLIW, and was positively related to WLB. Tenure showed a quite similar relationship with WIPL, PLIW and WLB, as age does. As “an indicator of life position and stratification”, age influences patterns of tenure, meaning and conditions of work roles (Mirowsky & Ross 2003; Schieman et al., 2009, p. 967). Age brings differences in work-related resources and demands, which has impact on how an employee management his work and non-work life (Schieman et al., 2009). Older employees often enjoy higher occupational status, organizational support, greater autonomy, and higher job security, which can contribute to lower level of work and non-work conflict and higher WLB.

In terms of gender, we found that male employees had higher level of WIPL and WLB, but lower level of PLIW and WPLE than female employees did. Empirical research have provided explanations for gender disparity in WLC. Men tend to have higher occupational status with more authority and decision-making involvement than women do, and they are also more likely to work longer hours and extra hours without notice (Mennino et al., 2005). Greater work responsibility and longer working hours might explain their higher level of WIPL. Women tend to assume greater family responsibility, such as housework and children caring, which might be associated with increased PLIW and reduced WLB.

Being married and having dependent children showed a positive relationship with both WIPL and PLIW, while a negative relationship with WPLE and WLB. The explanation can be that having a spouse or children in the family brings about family responsibility and results in competing demanding between work and personal life (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Hochschild (1997), cited in Schieman et al. (2009, p. 968), states that marital and parental status might cause “a time bind for individuals in complex role arrangements”.

Regarding position type, managerial position was found associated with higher level of WIPL and lower level of WLB. Compared with employees in lower occupational status, managers tend to be exposed to longer hours, greater work stress, and more time pressures, which contribute to more conflicts between work and non-work life.

Education level was found positively linked to WIPL, PLIW, and negatively related to WLB. Mirowsky & Ross (2003), cited in Schieman et al. (2009), argues that education’s relevance to work and non-work conflict is associated with its relationship with occupational status and work conditions. Although employees with higher educational level might hold more autonomy and control on the timing and pace of work, they tend to have more authority, greater stress, and longer working hours (Mennino et al., 2005).

Permanent contract was found associated with higher WPIE and WLB. However, there is no such empirical evidence to explain it. The explanation might be that employees with permanent contracts enjoy higher job security, and therefore they are more likely to refuse overtime to balance their work and personal life.

## *7.2 Effects of WLB on Organizational Commitment*

This research found that employee WLB level was significantly and positively associated with affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, and organizational commitment.

Blau (1964), cited in Beauregard & Henry (2009), uses social exchange theory to explain the positive linkage between WLB and organizational commitment. According to this theory, when employees are treated favourably by the organization, they will feel obliged to respond in positive attitudes or behaviours towards the source of the treatment (Blau, 1964; Beauregard & Henry, 2009). When



employees achieve a high level of WLB, especially through the organization's provision of WLB practices, they feel they are favourably treated and will reciprocate in ways that benefit the organization, such as increased commitment.

Our research also found that managerial position and permanent contract, which were both positively related to employee commitment, explained a comparatively large percentage of the total variance. Gaertner & Nollen (1989) stated that employees at higher job levels generally have higher commitment than those at lower levels, and this is might because employees in higher position enjoy more autonomy, have greater sense of control on their work, and have more involvement in decision-making. Employees with permanent contract tend to report higher level of commitment than those with fixed-term contract, as permanent contract provides employees with higher perceived job security (Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994).

Age and tenure were found as positive predictors of organizational commitment. Reasons can be that the older employees perceive less available alternative employment options (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), and longer length of service means stronger investment and greater history with the organization (Cohen, 1993).

Being married was found associated with increased commitment, as married employees assuming greater financial responsibility to support their family, which increases the need to remain with the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

## 8. Implications and Directions for Further Study

This research attempts to extend contemporary studies of WLB to the China's context. As increased WLB was found to considerably contribute to positive organizational outcomes, we suggest that China's enterprises should attach more concern on employee WLB and take initiatives to help employee balance their work and personal life.

Further research will be conducted to check the relationship between WLB and other organizational outcomes in China's context, such as job satisfaction, performance, and turnover. Also, in future study, we will collect a larger sample cross-enterprises and cross-sectors rather than in a single one. Research on this area is considered to benefit both employees and organizations.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire on Work-Life Balance

Greetings! I am currently doing a research on work-life balance issues. I would like to take some of your time to answer this questionnaire. Please read the instructions carefully and fill out the questionnaire accordingly. The participation is voluntary and please feel free to withdraw at anytime. All responses will be kept confidential. Your sincerity and thoroughness in answering the survey will be much appreciated and will prove essential to the success of this study. Thank you very much for your participation.

#### Part One: Basic Personal Information

1. Name (Optional):
2. Gender (please tick): (1) Male (2) Female
3. What is your age: (1) 18-29 (2) 30-39 (3) 40-49 (4) 50-59 (5) 60 and above
4. What is your highest education level:  
 (1) High school graduate (2) Attended some college (3) Associate degree  
 (4) Bachelor's degree (5) Postgraduate degree
5. What is your current marital status:  
 (1) Single (non-married, separated, divorced and widowed) (2) Married
6. Do you have dependent children: (1) Yes (2) No
7. What is the type of your contract: (1) Permanent (2) Fixed-term
8. How many years have you been working in this organization:
9. What is the type of your position:  
 (1) Managerial position (2) Non-managerial position

#### Part Two: Work-Life Balance Scale

These scales are designed to measure your perceived work life balance. Please answer each item carefully and tick the number that corresponds to your choice on the blanks below.

1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Occasionally; 4=Sometimes; 5=Frequently;

6=Usually; 7=Always

1. Personal life suffers because of work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Job makes personal life difficult	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Neglect personal needs because of work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Put personal life on hold for work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Miss personal activities because of work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Struggle to juggle work and non-work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Dissatisfied with the amount of time for non-work activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Personal life drains me of energy for work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Too tied to be effective at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My work suffers because of my personal life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Hard to work because of personal matters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Personal life gives me energy for my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Job gives me energy to pursue personal activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Better mood at work because of personal life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Better mood because of my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Part Three: Organizational Commitment Scale

This questionnaire is designed to measure organizational commitment. Please answer each item carefully and tick the number that corresponds to your choice on the blanks below. *WLB is used as the abbreviation of work life balance in the questionnaire.*

- 1= **Strongly Disagree;**                      2= **Disagree;**                      3= **Somewhat Disagree;**  
4= **Neither Agree or Disagree;**                      5= **Somewhat Agree**                      6= **Agree**  
7= **Strongly Agree**

1. My achieved WLB makes me feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My achieved WLB makes me feel a strong sense of belongingness to my organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My achieved WLB makes me feel emotionally attached to this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My achieved WLB makes me feel like part of the family at my organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My achieved WLB makes me feel that this organization has a	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

great deal of personal meaning for me.							
6. My achieved WLB makes me feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My achieved WLB makes me feel that leaving this organization means scarcity of suitable alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My achieved WLB makes me feel that the costs of leaving this organization would be far greater than the benefit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My achieved WLB makes me feel that I would not leave the organization because of what I would stand to lose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My achieved WLB makes me feel that too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My achieved WLB makes me feel strong sense of obligation to remain with my current employer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My achieved WLB makes me feel that even if it were to my advantage, it would not be right to leave my organization now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. My achieved WLB makes me feel guilty if I left this organization now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. My achieved WLB makes me feel that even if I got another offer for a better job elsewhere, it would not be right to leave my organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My achieved WLB makes me feel that I would violate a trust if I quit my job with this organization now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7