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Article

Literature Review and Future Prospects of Research on Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction of Foreign Language Teachers in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

This study provides a systematic analysis of empirical research concerning the impact of foreign language education policy reforms in China on university foreign language instructors' organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Adhering to the PRISMA 2020 framework, a total of 134 studies published between 2004 and 2024 were retrieved from Web of Science and Scopus databases. Following the removal of duplicates and a rigorous screening process, eight studies were selected for inclusion. These were subjected to thematic analysis focusing on policy reforms, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. The review indicates that recent reforms, including methodological innovations in language instruction, integration of information and communication technology, and the adoption of research-oriented assessment approaches, significantly shape teachers' professional experiences. Although a minority of instructors perceive these changes as avenues for professional growth, the majority report experiences of emotional strain, identity dissonance, and diminished job satisfaction, particularly within under-resourced institutions. Key factors influencing teachers' organisational attitudes and professional performance include institutional support, inequitable distribution of resources, research-related pressures, access to mentoring, and individual psychological attributes such as self-efficacy and emotional regulation. The findings bear significant relevance for policymakers and university leaders, emphasising the need for policy enactment that is responsive to contextual demands, equitable allocation of resources, and reform processes that prioritise teachers' perspectives. Strengthened institutional support mechanisms are essential to safeguard teachers' well-being and to foster sustained organisational commitment.

Keywords

Foreign Language Education Policy, Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, University Foreign Language Teachers, Systematic Review, China, PRISMA.

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Introduction

Over the past twenty years, the professional lives of university educators have undergone profound transformations due to comprehensive reforms across the education sector. Within this context, job satisfaction and organisational commitment have emerged as pivotal constructs in understanding teachers' engagement, well-being, and loyalty to their institutions (Jackson, 2018; Shu, 2022). University foreign language instructors in China encounter a distinctive set of challenges. The introduction of research-oriented evaluation systems, the internationalisation of curricula, and ongoing pedagogical reforms have substantially altered their professional environment (Luo, 2023; Shi, Xue, & Zhang, 2015; Zhou, Law, & Lee, 2021). These systemic changes create dual pressures for educators, balancing institutional performance expectations with instructional quality requirements. Consequently, foreign language teachers frequently navigate competing demands that influence their professional identity, emotional health, and long-term organisational commitment (Xing, 2022). Foreign language education constitutes a central component of China's higher education framework, supporting the country's global integration, economic growth, and academic exchange initiatives. In response to globalisation and evolving national priorities, Chinese universities have implemented extensive reforms in language education over the last two decades (Pan, 2011). These reforms encompass curriculum restructuring, pedagogical innovations, expansion of English and other foreign language programmes, and performance-based evaluation of teaching staff. Collectively, these measures have redefined the professional experiences of foreign language instructors.

At the core of these reforms are university foreign language teachers, tasked with preparing students for international communication and scholarly engagement (Borg, 2006). Their evolving responsibilities are accompanied by rising institutional expectations, administrative duties, and research productivity pressures (Richards et al., 2013). While some educators regard these reforms as opportunities for professional development, others experience role conflict, limited career progression, and emotional fatigue. These evolving circumstances have direct implications for two foundational aspects of the academic workforce: organisational commitment, defined as the psychological attachment to one's institution (Jung, 2022), and job satisfaction, conceptualised as the affective and cognitive appraisal of one's work (Lintanga & Rathakrishnan, 2024). Although existing research underscores the importance of job satisfaction and organisational commitment for teacher performance, motivation, and retention (Jung, 2022; Önder, Akçıl, & Cemaloğlu, 2019), there is limited empirical evidence examining how recent foreign language education policy reforms specifically affect these outcomes. The literature presents divergent experiences: some educators benefit from enhanced institutional support and access to professional development, whereas others face increased workloads, constrained promotion opportunities, and heightened research expectations. This variability indicates that institutional and individual factors interact complexly in shaping teachers' professional attitudes and well-being.

To address this knowledge gap, the present study conducts a systematic review of the literature, guided by PRISMA 2020 protocols. It investigates the influence of evolving foreign language education policies in China on the job satisfaction and organisational commitment of university foreign language instructors, drawing upon peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 2004 and 2024. The review provides a comprehensive perspective on the impact of structural policy changes on frontline educators and offers evidence-based recommendations to optimise policy implementation and institutional support mechanisms. This review has three specific objectives: (1) to synthesise the principal characteristics of job satisfaction and organisational commitment among foreign language instructors within Chinese higher education; (2) to examine the effects of foreign language education reforms on these outcomes; and (3) to identify and analyse institutional and individual determinants of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, including their interactions, in shaping teachers' professional experiences and performance outcomes.

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks on Organisational commitment and Job Satisfaction

Establishing a robust theoretical framework is essential for investigating organisational commitment and job satisfaction among Chinese university foreign language instructors. Well-grounded theories elucidate the mechanisms through which teacher motivation develops, alongside work satisfaction and institutional allegiance. This study draws upon Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of Organisational

Commitment, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, providing a coherent basis for analysing the psychological and organisational factors shaping the professional environments of foreign language educators. Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model conceptualises organisational commitment as comprising three interrelated dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment reflects an employee's emotional attachment to their institution, often resulting in sustained tenure due to genuine alignment with the work environment and institutional values (Mercurio, 2015). For Chinese foreign language instructors, affective commitment is influenced by professional autonomy, positive student interactions, and institutional support for career progression. Continuance commitment emerges from recognition of the costs associated with leaving the institution, particularly for teachers who have invested significant effort and perceive limited external employment opportunities. Maintaining strong retention is especially pertinent for foreign language educators in China, where institutional stability and constrained career mobility reinforce continuance commitment (Jin, 2010). Normative commitment, by contrast, arises from perceived societal and organisational expectations, compelling teachers to remain due to moral or social obligations. Within the Chinese academic context, educators experience these pressures through professional responsibilities to students and broader institutional expectations. Collectively, the model provides a nuanced understanding of the factors motivating teachers to sustain their roles, while also accounting for cases in which dissatisfaction persists despite continued tenure.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory frames job satisfaction through the interplay of motivators and hygiene factors. Key internal motivators that enhance satisfaction include achievement, recognition, meaningful work, and opportunities for professional development (Alshmemri, Shahwan-Akl, & Maude, 2017). Foreign language instructors report satisfaction derived from positive student engagement, academic recognition, and access to pedagogical advancement. Conversely, hygiene factors, including salary, job security, administrative support, and adequate working conditions, primarily prevent dissatisfaction rather than actively generating satisfaction. Many Chinese foreign language teachers encounter dissatisfaction due to excessive workloads, bureaucratic constraints, and inadequate remuneration (Xu & Connelly, 2009). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs complements Herzberg's framework by categorising human motivation into physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation needs (Poston, 2009). Inadequate fulfilment of basic needs such as security and compensation can undermine job satisfaction, while restricted opportunities for esteem and self-actualisation may diminish organisational commitment. Self-Determination Theory emphasises the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering motivation and job satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2012). The theory highlights that professional autonomy is crucial for educators, yet rigid institutional policies can impede instructional independence, adversely affecting satisfaction. Competence, defined as confidence in professional abilities, may be compromised when teachers lack sufficient training or face oversized classes. Similarly, the need for meaningful connections with students and colleagues influences both job satisfaction and organisational commitment, with inadequate relational fulfilment contributing to diminished engagement and professional fulfilment.

Foreign Language Education Policies in Chinese Universities

The foreign language education landscape in Chinese universities has undergone substantial transformation due to national development priorities, increasing globalisation, and evolving educational objectives. Over recent decades, strategic language policies have shifted away from an exclusive focus on English, promoting multilingual competency through diverse linguistic pathways and instructional reforms (Cohen, 2014). These policy adaptations have fundamentally influenced both the professional practices of foreign language instructors and their overall job satisfaction. Foreign language education policies in China trace back to the early twentieth century, when instruction was limited to elite institutions. Following 1949, Russian emerged as the dominant foreign language, reflecting China's political alignment with the Soviet Union. The economic reforms and opening-up policies of the late 1970s repositioned English as the primary foreign language of instruction, aimed at strengthening China's global economic engagement (Liu, 2015). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, government initiatives sought to standardise English education via curriculum development, teacher training, and assessment frameworks. By the early 2000s, English instruction had become compulsory across all educational levels, from primary to tertiary institutions. The formalisation of English as a mandatory university subject represented a major milestone in China's foreign language policy landscape. The Ministry of Education introduced the College English Test (CET) in 2004, establishing English

proficiency as a graduation requirement. This reform compelled higher education institutions to recruit qualified language instructors while aligning instructional practices with standardised examination criteria. As English proficiency became a central objective, teaching methods increasingly emphasised communicative language teaching (CLT) and technology-enhanced learning. These shifts generated new challenges, with instructors confronting heavier workloads, prescriptive curricula, and rigorous performance evaluation mechanisms that constrained pedagogical autonomy.

Current policies aim to cultivate global competitiveness by encouraging proficiency in multiple foreign languages beyond English. Government programmes support the teaching of languages such as Spanish, Russian, French, and Japanese to enhance diplomatic and international collaboration (Zeng & Yang, 2024). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has further directed language education policies towards the promotion of languages spoken in partner countries (Johnston, 2019). Consequently, the demand for bilingual instructors has increased, alongside expanded professional development opportunities, although these developments have also highlighted resource shortages and inconsistent institutional support across universities. Recent curriculum modifications emphasise the integration of digital technologies, competency-based assessment, and interdisciplinary approaches. University faculty now employ blended learning models, combining artificial intelligence tools, virtual classrooms, and adaptive learning platforms to enhance language instruction (Castro, 2019). While these innovations introduce novel pedagogical opportunities, they also necessitate continuous professional development and adaptation to emerging digital teaching methodologies. Instructional practices have shifted from rote memorisation towards application-oriented learning, increasing the expectation for teachers to implement interactive, student-centred strategies. Modern educational reforms therefore require instructors to balance traditional academic standards with contemporary, technology-driven pedagogical approaches.

Organizational Commitment of Foreign Language Teachers

The extent to which educators maintain their affiliation with higher education institutions, reflected in organisational commitment, plays a pivotal role in shaping their retention and goal-directed behaviours. In Chinese universities, foreign language instructors develop their organisational commitment through a combination of workplace environment, institutional support, opportunities for professional advancement, and interactions with colleagues and administrators. Extensive policy reforms, alongside broader cultural shifts, significantly affect how teachers relate to their institutions and the duration of their intended tenure. Institutional environment and support constitute central determinants of teacher commitment. Environments that promote professional autonomy, provide sufficient resources, and ensure job stability tend to enhance teachers' attachment to their institutions. Instructors who perceive that their contributions are valued and respected are more likely to participate actively in academic and organisational activities. Conversely, excessive workload demands, bureaucratic constraints, and restricted decision-making authority can generate frustration and reduce engagement. In some universities, educators are compelled to adhere to rigid assessment frameworks, which limit their capacity to implement innovative teaching practices. Insufficient provision of instructional resources or lack of recognition may inadvertently diminish commitment, contributing to higher attrition rates. Opportunities for career development also exert a significant influence on organisational commitment. Teachers with access to transparent career advancement pathways, professional development programmes, and avenues for academic progression generally demonstrate stronger attachment to their institutions. In China, many foreign language instructors aspire to secure permanent academic roles or senior positions; however, limited tenure-track positions, constrained promotion prospects, and prioritisation of research outputs over teaching excellence can generate dissatisfaction (Moloney & Xu, 2015). Access to professional training, research funding, and participation in academic conferences is crucial for sustaining motivation, yet disparities in availability across institutions can hinder professional growth (Han & Yin, 2016). Universities that lack structured career progression frameworks risk losing talented staff to institutions offering more favourable opportunities.

Interactions with colleagues and management critically shape employee commitment. Positive, collaborative relationships foster a sense of belonging, reinforcing long-term organisational engagement. Teachers' commitment is strengthened when they work alongside supportive peers, receive constructive feedback from supervisors, and benefit from professional guidance (Gao & Zhang, 2020). In contrast, hierarchical management structures, inefficient administration, and limited communication channels can undermine faculty-administration relations. Foreign language instructors in some institutions report professional isolation from

decision-making processes and inadequate recognition of their contributions. Erosion of trust arising from opaque policy implementation further weakens commitment levels. Policy reforms and cultural transformations within Chinese higher education exert a considerable influence on language teachers' organisational commitment. Institutions introducing new pedagogical methods, online learning platforms, and expanded language curricula require continuous adaptation from their teaching staff. While some educators perceive these developments as opportunities for professional growth, others respond negatively due to increased workload and job insecurity. Moreover, globalisation-oriented policies have prioritised recruitment of native-speaking foreign instructors, sometimes at the expense of job security for local teaching staff.

Job Satisfaction of Foreign Language Teachers

Job satisfaction constitutes a central determinant of both professional performance and overall contentment among foreign language instructors in Chinese higher education institutions. Satisfaction in the workplace is influenced by multiple factors, including opportunities for career development, professional growth, stress management, and financial remuneration. When educators experience high levels of job satisfaction, teacher retention and instructional effectiveness improve, whereas unsupportive working conditions contribute to burnout and elevated turnover rates. Workload and stress management are among the most significant factors impacting job satisfaction. Foreign language instructors often manage large class sizes, extensive teaching schedules, and administrative duties. The additional pressure of preparing students for standardised examinations further intensifies occupational stress. Innovations in curriculum, such as the integration of digital learning tools and student-centred pedagogies, can further increase demands on teachers. In the absence of adequate institutional support, these pressures result in emotional exhaustion and decreased motivation. Conversely, manageable workloads coupled with access to stress-relief resources correlate with higher levels of job satisfaction.

Financial compensation, benefits, and professional recognition also significantly influence satisfaction. Although certain elite universities offer competitive remuneration, many institutions provide comparatively low salaries, particularly for local instructors. Disparities in pay between local and foreign educators, with the latter often receiving additional perks such as housing allowances, exacerbate dissatisfaction. Insufficient financial incentives and a lack of acknowledgment for teaching excellence undermine motivation and weaken institutional loyalty. Regular salary adjustments, targeted incentives, and structured recognition programmes can serve to enhance job satisfaction. Opportunities for professional development and career progression are equally critical. Educators value avenues for growth, including participation in training workshops, academic conferences, and research activities. However, access to such professional development remains inconsistent, and obtaining research funding or support for international engagement presents ongoing challenges (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Career advancement is often constrained, with promotion dependent on research productivity rather than teaching proficiency, leaving many instructors in stagnant positions and generating frustration. Universities that establish transparent promotion pathways and invest in professional training foster a sense of career progression, thereby enhancing job satisfaction.

Additional pressures arise from large class sizes and rigid curricular structures. Instructors managing substantial student cohorts face limitations in providing personalised instruction or implementing interactive teaching strategies. Balancing standardised testing requirements with flexible, student-centred approaches proves challenging, while prescriptive curricula constrain lesson planning, rendering teaching repetitive and less fulfilling. High turnover rates and limited career development opportunities further compound workplace stress. Job insecurity is a persistent issue for foreign language educators, with many employed on short-term contracts that provide minimal professional stability. The resultant instability drives educators to seek positions with greater security, disrupting educational continuity for students. Job satisfaction among Chinese university foreign language instructors can be substantially improved through the establishment of clear career pathways, enhanced remuneration, and strengthened institutional support mechanisms.

Methodology

Research Design

This study undertook a systematic review of the literature following the PRISMA guidelines to maintain a high level of methodological transparency, consistency, and replicability. The PRISMA framework

provided a structured process for locating and evaluating relevant studies, guiding the screening and data extraction phases, and allowing a critical appraisal of potential sources of bias. This approach ensured that the findings of the review are robust, credible, and methodologically defensible.

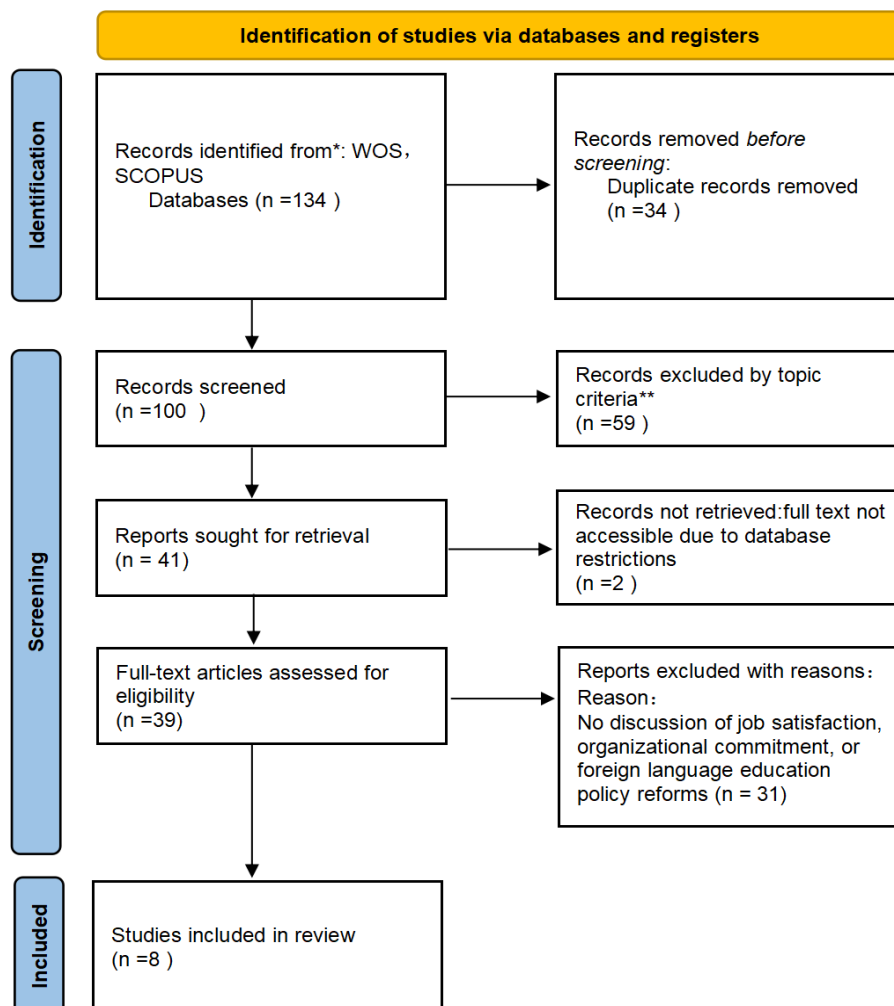


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Chart.

Data Source and Search Strategy

The initial literature search was conducted using the SCOPUS and Web of Science (WOS) databases, covering publications from 2004 to 2024. These databases were selected for their extensive indexing of peer-reviewed research in the field of education, providing a reliable foundation for investigating the effects of foreign language policy reforms on university foreign language instructors' organisational commitment and job satisfaction in China. The search strategy employed a combination of targeted keywords in article titles, abstracts, and subject headings, including "foreign language education policy" paired with "teachers' job satisfaction" and "foreign language education policy" paired with "teachers' organisational commitment." These terms were further refined by incorporating "China" and "universities" to ensure the retrieval of studies directly relevant to the Chinese higher education context. This approach was designed to capture a comprehensive yet focused set of studies that explore the complex interplay between policy reforms, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment among foreign language educators. Keywords were systematically applied across both databases to maximise coverage of studies that align with the aims of the review while remaining context-specific. The initial search yielded 59 records from WOS and 75 records from SCOPUS, as summarised in Table 1. Following a meticulous screening process based on predefined inclusion criteria—specifically, empirical studies focused on foreign language instructors in Chinese universities and addressing

either organisational commitment or job satisfaction— only eight studies, four from each database, met the criteria for inclusion. [Table 1](#) highlights the selectivity of the screening process and emphasises the importance of these databases in providing high-quality evidence for systematic review.

Table 1: Summary of Database Searches and Selected Records.

Database	Initial Records Retrieved	Final Selected
WOS	59	4
SCOPUS	75	4

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined to guarantee that only studies of high relevance and methodological quality were considered for the review. A detailed summary of these criteria is presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers	Non-peer-reviewed articles, editorials, opinion pieces
Time Frame	Published between 2004–2024	Studies published before 2004
Language	English	Non-English
Study Focus	Foreign language education policies, teacher job satisfaction, organizational commitment in Chinese universities	Studies focusing on general education policies without relevance to foreign language teachers and studies not explicitly discussing universities in China
Relevance	Studies explicitly addressing policy changes and their impact on teacher commitment and satisfaction	Studies that do not explicitly examine the effects of policy changes on teacher organizational commitment or job satisfaction
Accessibility	Studies where the full text is accessible	Studies where the full text is not accessible

Screening and Selection Process

Data extraction and synthesis were conducted systematically to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. Key details, including study characteristics, design, sample information, and findings on job satisfaction and organisational commitment, were compiled into structured tables. Thematic analysis focused on three domains: foreign language policy reforms, determinants of job satisfaction, and factors influencing organisational commitment. Each study was assessed for interactions among institutional, individual, and policy-level variables shaping teachers' professional experiences. This approach enabled identification of convergent and divergent patterns, providing a nuanced understanding of how policy changes and institutional support impact teacher outcomes in Chinese higher education.

Results

Key Characteristics of Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment among Foreign Language Teachers

Within the context of ongoing reforms in foreign language education at Chinese universities, the levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment among foreign language instructors have emerged as pivotal determinants of teacher retention, professional engagement, and instructional effectiveness. The literature consistently indicates that job satisfaction among Chinese university foreign language instructors is generally moderate to low, largely due to elevated emotional exhaustion, institutional stressors, and uneven resource distribution. For example, a survey of 536 instructors at four-year universities demonstrated that those teaching at non-211/985 institutions exhibited lower enthusiasm for research, attributable to more stringent evaluation pressures, ambiguous career pathways, and insufficient mentoring structures, compared with colleagues in elite universities.

Emotional exhaustion emerged as the most pervasive negative factor affecting teachers' professional experiences. Prior studies of 428 EFL instructors, reported elevated levels of emotional fatigue, which were strongly associated with diminished self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Limited psychological resources

among educators heightened the risk of burnout, undermining both their professional engagement and organisational commitment. Conversely, the development of a positive professional identity was identified as a key factor enhancing job satisfaction and institutional attachment. Prior qualitative studies revealed that instructors who successfully cultivated multiple identities as teacher-researchers reported higher self-esteem, stronger professional identification, and greater embeddedness within their institutions. These findings align with prior research emphasizing that a clearly defined and established professional identity constitutes a critical source of long-term organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Afshari et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2020).

Furthermore, prior literature quantitatively demonstrated a significant positive relationship between organisational commitment and job satisfaction, indicating that these constructs jointly influence teachers' engagement in professional development activities. Their study suggested that while the precise directional relationship remains an area for further investigation, the two variables are closely intertwined across educators' professional trajectories. Collectively, the evidence portrays organisational commitment and job satisfaction among Chinese university foreign language teachers as multifaceted phenomena, shaped by complex emotional pressures, institutional inequalities, and the negotiation of professional identity. While systemic challenges and psychological strain underpin dissatisfaction and commitment issues, a well-formed professional identity and adequate institutional support function as stabilising factors that substantially enhance teachers' professional experiences and overall engagement.

The Impact of Foreign Language Education Policy Reforms on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Reforms in China's foreign language education, including initiatives such as the College English Teaching Reform Guidelines, the restructuring under the "Five-Only" policy, and the introduction of research-oriented evaluation mechanisms, have substantially reshaped the professional landscape for university foreign language instructors. Prior literature also described that the 2007 College English Curriculum Requirements shifted instruction from traditional teacher-led models toward learner-centered, ICT-integrated approaches, emphasizing increased learner autonomy. However, practical implementation encountered significant barriers, including inadequate technological infrastructure, insufficient teacher training in ICT skills, and assessment systems ill-equipped to prioritise innovative pedagogy over conventional metrics. These obstacles generated adaptive pressures for teachers, undermining initial enthusiasm and contributing to diminished motivation and job satisfaction.

Further evidence of policy-induced strain is highlighted in prior study, which noted that the heightened emphasis on research performance particularly in non-research-intensive institutions placed substantial demands on instructors lacking adequate institutional support, such as access to competent mentors and research facilities. Consequently, teachers experienced ongoing professional identity tensions while attempting to balance teaching and research responsibilities, often reporting feelings of marginalization, role conflict, and reduced alignment with institutional expectations.

Scholars also identified pronounced emotional strain among EFL instructors in response to the "publish-or-perish" culture reinforced by the "Five-Only" reforms. Instructors' capacity for emotional regulation played a crucial role in determining their reactions to institutional changes. Those employing proactive coping strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, tended to sustain higher levels of organisational commitment, whereas teachers lacking emotional and institutional support frequently reported frustration and helplessness, weakening their identification with organisational goals. Instructors in well-supported elite universities benefited from structured mentoring systems, protected research time, and clearly defined professional development pathways. In contrast, those at ordinary universities faced ambiguous promotion criteria and limited research opportunities, adversely affecting professional motivation and potentially eroding their commitment to institutional objectives.

Overall, foreign language policy reforms have not exerted uniform effects across Chinese higher education. While reforms aim to enhance teaching quality and academic output, their impact is mediated by the availability of institutional resources, the methods of implementation, and teachers' capacity for emotional adaptation. Effective reform requires not only clearly defined objectives and adequate funding but also targeted professional and emotional support systems to mitigate negative consequences for teachers' professional identity, emotional well-being, and, ultimately, their job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Key Factors Influencing Foreign Language Teachers' Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

A systematic synthesis of the eight studies indicates that the job satisfaction and organisational commitment of Chinese university foreign language instructors result from the intricate interaction of institutional, professional, and psychological factors. Literature also revealed that robust institutional support including structured mentoring programs, access to adequate research facilities, and clearly defined career trajectories substantially enhanced teachers' research motivation, particularly in elite "985" and "211" universities. Conversely, instructors in standard universities frequently exhibited declining research engagement, attributable to insufficient mentorship, ambiguous promotion pathways, and heightened performance assessment pressures. These disparities in institutional resources were closely linked to variations in organisational commitment and professional engagement among educators.

Previous research underscores that perceived organisational support is a strong predictor of teachers' organisational commitment. Accordingly, differences in institutional provisions are likely to exert a pronounced influence on both commitment levels and professional involvement. Supporting this notion, scholars also have demonstrated that job satisfaction and organisational commitment are tightly interconnected, jointly shaping teachers' propensity to participate in professional development activities. Their structural equation modelling highlighted the pivotal role of institutional contexts as mediators in fostering positive organisational attitudes and continuous professional growth. From a professional identity perspective, prior literature emphasises the importance of cultivating a clear, integrated professional role, particularly the dual identity of teacher-researcher. When instructors successfully negotiated and embraced these dual roles, they exhibited higher levels of professional engagement and job satisfaction. However, unresolved identity conflicts, often stemming from inadequate institutional resources or unrealistic expectations, led to marginalisation and diminished motivation, ultimately undermining organisational commitment.

Psychological factors also emerged as critical determinants of teachers' resilience under institutional pressures. It is described in prior literature that self-efficacy significantly mitigated emotional exhaustion and burnout, enabling teachers to cope more effectively with occupational stress. Similarly, scholars identified that the use of emotional regulation strategies especially cognitive reappraisal and proactive coping was crucial for managing stress during periods of institutional turbulence. Teachers equipped with effective emotional coping mechanisms maintained stronger commitment to their institutions, whereas those with limited strategies experienced helplessness and resistance to organisational change. Workload and performance evaluation pressures were repeatedly identified as key stressors diminishing job satisfaction and commitment. Studies also reported that ICT-oriented teaching reforms, combined with insufficient involvement in policy development, inadequate training, and excessive teaching responsibilities, contributed to significant professional fatigue and resistance. Scholars further highlighted that rigid, results-oriented assessment systems exacerbated identity conflicts and emotional burnout, reducing teachers' willingness and capacity to engage constructively with institutional objectives.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the interplay between institutional structures, professional identity, and personal psychological resources fundamentally shapes the organisational commitment and job satisfaction of foreign language educators in Chinese universities. Positive organisational outcomes are contingent upon supportive institutional mechanisms, well-defined career pathways, and the integration of professional identity with adequate emotional resilience. A holistic approach that simultaneously addresses policy implementation, resource allocation, professional identity development, and psychological support is essential for promoting sustained job satisfaction, commitment, and long-term professional engagement among foreign language teachers.

Discussion

Overview of Key Findings

This systematic review synthesises a substantial body of empirical research on the organisational commitment and job satisfaction of Chinese university foreign language instructors amidst continuous educational policy reforms. Across the studies analysed, a recurring pattern of moderate-to-low job satisfaction was evident. While not a direct measure of satisfaction, it is demonstrated that pronounced emotional exhaustion among instructors likely serves as an indirect indicator of diminished job satisfaction. Additional

contributing factors identified include disparities in institutional resources between elite and regular universities and the stress induced by abrupt or challenging policy transitions. Collectively, these findings underscore that institutional contexts represent a significant source of dissatisfaction, which is further compounded by psychological stress stemming from policy turbulence and unequal resource distribution.

The review also highlights mitigating factors that appear to buffer these negative outcomes. Chief among these is the cultivation of a positive professional identity, particularly through the successful integration of dual roles as teacher and researcher, which functions as a critical psychological resource supporting both organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Moreover, the evidence indicates a strong, reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment, suggesting that these constructs mutually reinforce each other over the course of instructors' professional trajectories. In summary, the findings point to the necessity of multifaceted institutional interventions that address systemic inequalities, clarify career progression pathways, and reinforce psychological support mechanisms. Such holistic strategies are essential for enhancing teachers' resilience, facilitating adaptive responses to ongoing policy reforms, and ultimately promoting sustained professional satisfaction, engagement, and organisational commitment among foreign language educators in Chinese higher education.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This review highlights several critical implications for policymakers and university administrators. First, disparities in institutional resources, including access to equitable mentoring, transparent promotion pathways, and adequate research support, must be addressed through targeted measures to alleviate professional pressures, particularly in less prestigious institutions. Second, performance evaluation frameworks should move beyond rigid, research-focused criteria to encompass more holistic assessments that prioritise teaching quality, mentorship, and opportunities for professional development. Such reforms can help reduce role conflicts and mitigate emotional exhaustion among instructors. Third, fostering professional identity construction, especially the integration of teaching and research responsibilities, is essential. Providing clear guidance and structured development opportunities can significantly strengthen instructors' job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Finally, systematic emotional support initiatives, such as resilience-building programs and counselling services, should be implemented to equip teachers with the skills necessary to manage stress effectively during periods of policy change.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This systematic review has several notable limitations. First, the analysis was confined to eight empirical studies that met the inclusion criteria, which restrict the breadth and generalisability of the findings. Second, the majority of the reviewed studies employed cross-sectional designs, limiting the ability to draw causal inferences between variables. Third, the exclusive focus on English-language publications from selected databases may have overlooked relevant research published in Chinese-language journals. Given these limitations, future investigations should broaden literature searches to include a wider array of databases, grey literature, and unpublished sources to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the field. Longitudinal research designs are also necessary to clarify causal relationships and assess the enduring impact of policy reforms on teachers' organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Additionally, future studies should explore the psychological mechanisms and contextual factors that mediate or moderate the effects of institutional pressures, professional identity, and other variables on teacher outcomes.

Conclusion

This systematic review examined the impact of foreign language teaching policy reforms on the organisational commitment and job satisfaction of university foreign language instructors in China. Analysis of the eight selected empirical studies indicated that overall job satisfaction among these teachers ranged from moderate to low, heavily influenced by high levels of emotional exhaustion, uneven institutional resource distribution, and abrupt policy changes. Conversely, the development of a positive and clearly defined professional identity was found to enhance both organisational commitment and job satisfaction, acting as a protective factor against the negative consequences of institutional and policy pressures. The review identifies

targeted institutional interventions to address resource inequalities and improve teachers' professional experiences, including refined evaluation frameworks, structured support for professional identity formation, and comprehensive emotional support systems. Future research should adopt broader search strategies, employ longitudinal designs, and explore the psychological and contextual mechanisms that shape teacher experiences. Such efforts are essential for enhancing teacher well-being, strengthening organisational cohesion, and improving the overall quality of educational provision within Chinese higher education institutions.

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