

Long Term Orientation and Organizational Commitment:
The Moderation of Age in Chinese Workers

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ABSTRACT

There has been relatively little research conducted on long-term orientation related to organizational commitment and age. This study intends to address this research gap by means of a quantitative approach. With a sample of 194 Chinese workers that answered a questionnaire we tested a moderation model of age in the relationship between Long Term orientation and both affective and normative organizational commitment.

Findings show long term orientation is positively associated to affective commitment but not with normative commitment. Age was found to negatively moderate the relationship between long-term orientation and affective commitment, which goes against expectations. Young long-termed oriented workers were the ones that leveraged more affective commitment when compared to older long termed oriented workers.

Findings are discussed at the light of literature and suggestions made as to the practical use for organizational and HRM policies as well as for future studies.

Keywords: Long Term Orientation; Organizational Commitment; Age Moderator; Generational Differences; China.

JEL Code: M12 (Personnel management), M14 (corporate culture)

RESUMO

Houve relativamente pouca pesquisa sobre a relação entre a orientação de longo prazo, o compromisso organizacional e a idade. Este estudo visa abordar essa lacuna de pesquisa através de uma abordagem quantitativa. Com uma amostra de 194 trabalhadores chineses que responderam a um questionário testamos um modelo de moderação da idade na relação entre a orientação de longo prazo e o compromisso organizacional afetivo e normativo.

Os resultados mostram que a orientação de longo prazo está positivamente associada com o compromisso afetivo, mas não com o normativo. Verificou-se que a idade modera negativamente a relação entre a orientação de longo prazo e o compromisso afetivo, o que contraria as expectativas. Os trabalhadores jovens com orientação para o longo prazo foram os que alavancaram mais o compromisso afetivo quando comparados com os trabalhadores mais velhos igualmente orientados para o longo prazo.

Os resultados são discutidos à luz da literatura e sugestões feitas sobre a sua aplicação nas políticas organizacionais e de GRH, bem como para estudos futuros.

Palavras-Chave: Orientação para o longo prazo; Implicação organizacional; Idade; Diferenças geracionais; China.

Classificação JEL: M12 (Gestão de pessoas), M14 (cultura organizacional)

INTRODUCTION

Long Term Orientation (LTO) is a very important marker of Chinese culture as it lasts for centuries and have been a cornerstone of Chinese policy and long-term stability and commitment in society. However, the opening of China brought globalization and with it, not only a fast-growing economy but it also the possibility that short-term pressure operates so to adapt to the new paradigm in a global culture convergence phenomenon (Magnusson et al., 2008). The younger work generations have contact with such short-term pressure and may shift from traditional long-term. Such change can be seen both as a sign of adaptation but also a liability if one considers the possibility that LTO may not coexist well with contradictory values or even become less preferred when facing short-term pressures.

Organizations are very interested in guaranteeing a person-organization fit when attracting candidates because it brings many advantages (O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Judge, 1994; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005; Chen, Sparrow, & Cooper, 2016; Hamstra, Van Vianen & Koen, 2018) among which retaining and motivating employees to excel in their performance. LTO sets the baseline for this macro level person-organization fit in China. These values originate in the traditional Chinese philosophy such as Confucianism, emphasizing the law and the state of inequality in social roles as a way to guarantee order and social structure. In Siu (2003) report, the researcher hypothesized that respondents with higher scores on Chinese work values (closely related to LTO according to Carson, Baker & Lanier, 2014) will have greater confidence and loyalty to their organizations to work harder and report higher levels of job performance. In the formation of social interaction, the behavior of emotional expression may have the most important meaning (Pasupathi, Carstensen, Turk-Charles & Tsai, 1998). This emotional expressiveness at work influences the organizational commitment of employees. Thus, organizations need to work hard to improve the “work values” that can satisfy employees, and attract and retain talent to minimize negative emotional feeling of employees and achieve high organizational commitment.

The emotional dimension of human resources in organizational settings is especially valued in Academia as in the last two decades, research on emotions became a new trend in organizational

research (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Elfenbein, 2007). This interest by scholars and practitioners stem from many reasons among which productivity. Positive emotions are expected to favor productivity while negative emotions are expected to hamper productivity due to conflict, difficult communication or team relations. It has become widely accepted that the feelings of employees in the workplace are closely related to their motivation at work, employee turnover, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, anti-productive behavior and even creativity (Yang et al., 2016). Thus, affective organizational commitment is a key variable in anticipating the effects of Human Resource Development policies.

However, generational differences may play an important role. Nowadays, “Post-90s” (people born between 1990 and 2000) have become the predominant age group of the candidates, and there are differences in the way this cohort thinks and feels among which positive thinking, a high sense of individual freedom, more self-centered attention, and a short-term focus in receiving feedback (Westernman & Yanamura, 2007; DelCampo, Haggerty & Knippel, 2017; Ray & Singh, 2018). Because these generational differences may operate at the subconscious level it is very important to understand them and study emotional experience against the background of established organizational norms and value orientation at work. Generational gaps must be taken into consideration to balance tradition and innovation as well as in making decisions such as recruiting new entrants.

Therefore, we intend to answer the following questions:

- ◆ Is LTO less strong in new generations?
- ◆ What is the benefit that LTO brings to organizations concerning affective organizational commitment?
- ◆ Is there a moderation effect of age in the relationship between LTO and affective organizational commitment?

To explore this subject, this research is based on the context of the contemporary Chinese job market, aiming to study an emotional dimension of work, identifying how extensively LTO and age interact as an expression of generational cohort to produce affective organizational commitment. The research has a quantitative nature to test hypotheses relating these variables. The ultimate applied purpose is to discover the work values that Chinese employees are seeking

to provide some reference for improving job performance and minimize the cost of personal turnover and productivity.

This dissertation will explore akin literature with the purpose of motivating the hypotheses and design a research model to be quantitatively tested. It will detail methodological options made as regards research design, procedure, sample and data analysis strategy. It will finish by showing results and discussing them at the light of the literature and the hypotheses that are being tested.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research problem involves two constructs that should be developed, namely Long Term Orientation and Affective Organizational Commitment. Because generations are at the core of the study, we will also explore how this concept relates with the previous ones.

1.1 Long Term Orientation (LTO)

Values have a very important role in the orientation and regulation of people's own behavior. Values determine self-awareness of a person, which directly influences and determines ideals, beliefs, goals of life, and the nature of the pursuit of direction (Arieli, Sagiv & Roccas, 2019). There are many models and theoretical approaches to values built in the West, but the overarching nature of values has been also deeply studied in the East. To understand LTO, one needs to take both literatures into consideration.

Since the 1970s, theoretical research on work values has been continuously improved, and has attracted the attention of researchers in China and abroad. The first scholar to propose the concept of work values is Super (1970). He thought that work values concerned individuals work-related goals together with their internal needs, the work features and the individuals pursue. In a similar way Schwartz (1999) define it as the transposition of general life goals to the work context as a means to achieve rewards through work. These views are focused on individual needs, including Brown (2002), Zytowski (2006), who also agree that individuals' preferences (cognition and intent) for a particular job will satisfy the individual. Other definitions, however, approach it from the point of view of standards or criteria (e.g. Dose, 1997; Elizur, 1984) and argue that these values are the criteria individuals use to judge and determine their preferences, in a similar way to an ideology that directly conditions their behavior.

Chinese scholars focus on defining work values from the level of standards or criteria. Ning (1996) states that work values are an internal scale to measure various career advantages, meanings and importance in society. Ling et al. (1999) believe that work values are the beliefs and attitudes of people towards work, or the expression of value orientation.

Work values are known to vary within the same cultural group and to be shared by individuals that belong to different cultural groups (Carter, 1991). China is no exception as shown by

Ralston, Egri, Karam, Li & Fu (2018) findings that work values vary across regions in China. However, there is a fundamental layer that is shared across all China. Some scholars in China have proposed the integration of the three values of China's current society: the value system based on Confucianism; the socialist value system (cultural values are not core values but are influenced and guided by core values); and the value of the commodity economy and the market economy (Zhang, 2011).

In the face of the rapid development of contemporary China, globalization has brought about the collision of Eastern and Western cultures, which has changed some of Chinese traditional values. From the perspective of the formation of values, people build values by accumulating knowledge and experience in society. And, in our life, different social groups have important implications for the formation of values (for example, families, schools, and organizations).

According to the general phenomenon in Chinese society, as people grow up, their values are constantly developing (Chen & Lian, 2015). Most people have a stable position in society in middle age, and therefore, their personal values are relatively stable and difficult to change. In traditional Chinese philosophies, such as Confucianism (with emphasis on harmonious social relations - guanxi – reciprocity, loyalty, and long-term orientation), the value of work was strongly emphasized and taken as the basis of social order and management. Chao (1990) proposed a theoretical analysis based on Chinese historical background (Confucianism) where the following values are backed up in Confucianism: trust, subtlety, guanxi, face protection, and loyalty. More specifically in Confucian philosophy “Qin Qin Zun Zun 亲亲尊尊” in the Book of the Rites and Great Biography (Liji 礼记, 2017), which means close to those who should be close, respecting those who should be respected, and means maintaining the hierarchy; perseverance “Ku Jin Gan Lai 苦尽甘来” which means no sweat, no sweet; and loyalty related to the work “Zhong 忠”, which means people treat their work or organization with due diligence. According to Chao (1990) these long-lasting values still prevail in organizations of Chinese societies.

For the present research, we opted to take work values from the individual approach as an expression of individual needs (Schwartz, 1999) combined with Confucianism (Chao, 1990) so that we can more accurately define work values of Chinese characteristics. Arguably, the most

distinguishing feature in Chinese culture was Confucian dynamism (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) which was later named as long term orientation (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

1.1.1 Structure and Measurement of LTO

In the present research, the definition of LTO based on Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (Hofstede, 2001). The cultural dimension theory is a framework for measuring cultural differences between countries. From 1967 to 1973, Hofstede conducted a global-scale survey of cultural values at IBM. His team conducted two rounds of surveys of IBM employees in various countries, distributed more than 116,000 questionnaires in 72 countries and recovered the answers in more than 20 languages. The focus of the survey and analysis is on the country differences in the values of employees in each country. According to the results of data analysis, Hofstede (1983) divided different cultural values into four dimensions: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. A fifth dimension was added five years later by Hofstede and Bond (1988) that would reflect Confucian values: Confucian dynamism, that basically correspond to the degree of long term orientation that is valued by society. This was named after its fundamental role in Chinese culture (Franke, Hofstede & Bond, 1991; Hofstede, 1993).

LTO was originally defined as a forward-looking attribute to identify different values facing the present and the future (Hofstede, 1991). Hofstede's LTO helps us further study the values and structure of Chinese culture. On January 27, 2014, a review article signed by Market Me China, a specialized consultancy firm in Chinese culture, issued an online paper entitled “What Geert Hofstede tells us about Chinese business culture”, published in Chinese business culture. It pointed out that China is a long-term society. In the most Chinese concept, success and Long-term efforts are inseparable in the life. Chinese people are not limited to immediate satisfaction, but when they invest in something, they are more expecting long-term development. Therefore, the pleasure of long-term benefits will be more attractive than short-term pleasure. Landy and Becker (1987) found that there are four motivation-oriented factors work together to affect individual performance: direction of effort, intensity of effort, persistence, and work strategy. In general, certain value-based characteristics will affect these performance determinants,

helping to explain differences in performance. In addition, it explains why the Chinese are more likely to exhibit work-oriented behaviors in the long term.

These features are not constant across generations in China. With a large sample crossing three generations in China (Cultural Revolution generation, Transitional generation, and Millennial generations) and controlling for the effects of gender, education and position, Chen and Lian (2015) found that oldest generation differ from the newer. Likewise, the newest generation valued more intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The value traits that showed no differences were social status (power), and some dimensions of relationship reward, namely supportive supervisor, helping people, social service and caring for parents. These generational differences must account for common ground as despite the newer generation is less traditional than the previous ones, they still keep most of the traditional long-term oriented work values, as found by another study (Haslett & Leidel, 2015) comparing US and Chinese students. In this study the Chinese sample was less individualistic and therefore more focused on relationships at work and less focused on instrumental values, which is closer to LTO.

In summary, we conclude that individuals from Chinese cultures were found to tend to exhibit long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1993; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Lin, Shi, Prescott & Yang, 2018). Such a tendency to follow a long-term approach to life may be rooted in the doctrines taught by Confucius (e.g., frugality and persistence). These values establish the common denominator but are not fixed and tend to be less present in newer generations. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Age is positively associated with LTO

1.2 Organizational commitment

American sociologist Howard Becker first proposed the view of commitment in 1960 as the individual's recognition and trust in the goals and values of the organization, and the positive emotional experience that it brings. Mowday et al. (1979) proposed the view of affective commitment as the recognition of employees on goals and values of organization.

Based on Becker (1960) and Mowday et al. (1979), Meyer and Allen (1984) distinguished two

components of commitment: affective commitment and continuance commitment. In 1991 Meyer and Allen divided the model to become a three-component model of commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Organizational commitment is defined as “a psychological state that reflects the relationship between employees and organizations, implying employee whether to continue to stay in the organization's decision.” (p. 67).

Since then, Meyer and Allen's definition of organizational commitment has been recognized by most scholars as a classic theory and then, as the basis for further research. Chinese scholars, Ling, Zhang and Fang (2000), developed five-component model of commitment (affective commitment, normative commitment, ideal commitment, economic commitment, and opportunity commitment), based on the three-dimensional theory of Meyer and Allen.

Organizational commitment gradually developed into a complete theoretical foundation. In the development of this field, the multi-component division is very suitable for further discussion. Meyer and Allen’s (1991) three-component and Ling et al. (2000) five-component model, both share the affective and normative commitment. (see table 1)

Table 1

Summary of concepts: affective commitment and normative commitment

Scholars	Affective Commitment	Normative Commitment
Meyer & Allen (1991)	The degree to which an individual agrees with the organization, that is, the employee emotionally agrees with the organization, put into the organization, and dependent on the organization. Affective commitment is formed by factors such as job characteristics, organizational management characteristics, interpersonal relationships within the organization, organizational reliability and fairness. Changes in the influencing factors can lead to fluctuations in Affective commitment.	In the long-term work, employees are bound by social responsibility and social norms, and they choose to stay in the organization because of their own responsibilities, which is a manifestation of employee obligations.

Ling, Zhang & Fang (2000)	Employees agree with the organization, have deep emotions, and are willing to contribute to the survival and development of the organization. They do not care about remuneration and will not leave or quit under any temptation.	Employees have higher ideals, while emphasizing the principle of being a person, with a sense of social responsibility and obligation.
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These are the most central components of organizational commitment. Affective commitment has been found to predict important outcomes in HRM, namely employee turnover, job performance (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005), helping others, doing extra-work, or sharing information (Solinger et al., 2008). Actually, Solinger et al. (2008) study found that affective commitment prediction of these outcomes, as well as organizational citizenship behavior, was stronger than continuance or normative commitment. On the basis of this Mercurio (2015) elaborated in the sense of considering affective commitment as the core essence of organizational commitment thus answering the call by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) for a conceptual integration in the field.

The widest used measure of organizational commitment is most probably Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model questionnaire that independently evaluates the individual score for the three components. Although it might be important to keep in mind Ling et al. (2000) development that proposed the five-dimensional organizational commitment model combining the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, we considered the core role affective commitment plays in organizations as well as previous findings stating the robustness of normative commitment. Consequently, we opt to focus to study these components only.

1.3 Relevance of LTO and Organizational Commitment

Research on the relationship between LTO and organizational commitment is not very abundant although there is some research conducted with closest proxy: Chinese work values. LTO is the main predictor of organizational identification (Baker, Carson & Carson, 2009) as well as proactive behavior in organizations (Carson, Baker & Lanier, 2014). This is understandable

because LTO individuals value patience, persistence and postpone their rewards for the sake of future rewards (Hofstede, 2001). Research conducted in China has been relating Chinese work values and organizational commitment mainly in the medical, educational, service and new generations of employees (Liu & Li, 2016). These authors found a positively association between Chinese work values and organizational commitment in young Chinese workers which suggests LTO is an endurable social value.

International studies have shown that intrinsic work values (cognitive and instrumental) are positively related to organizational commitment, and work values influence individual engagement, retention, and willingness to work for the organization (e.g., Tayyab & Tariq, 2001).

Departing from the interconnection between organizational commitment and LTO, we expect LTO to favor both affective and normative commitment. We thus hypothesize that:

H2: LTO is positively associated with organizational commitment.

H2a: LTO is positively associated with affective commitment.

H2b: LTO is positively associated with normative commitment.

1.4 Time based approach

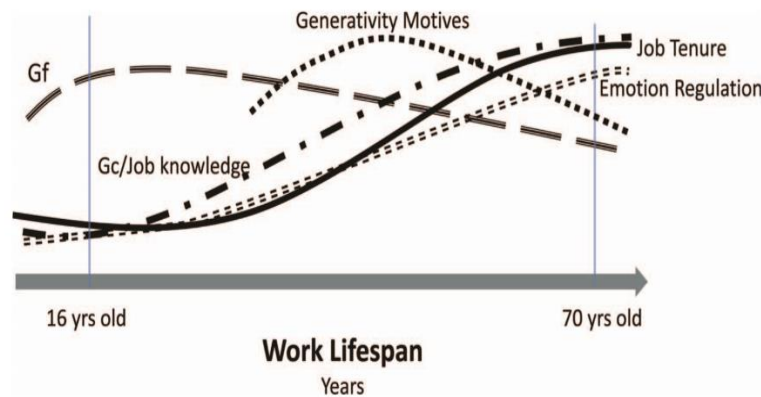
Time is an important dimension in studying organizational behavior (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Shipp & Cole, 2015), especially because effects are expected to take some time to occur, and likewise, because of taking into account generational effects as an overall expression of context macro level variables affecting HR. So, age is an important attribute of any person, not only because it is intrinsically an indication of generation and cohorts (Markert, 2004), but also due to life phases (Guest, 2002), differences in personal values (Egri & Ralston, 2004) and work values (Parry & Urwin, 2011) or in the dynamics of job satisfaction (Dobrow, Ganzach & Liu, 2018).

In this study, we associate age with different generations to explore the relationship with LTO and organizational commitment. We referenced the research of Ruth Kanfer et al. (2013) on the attributes of people in working life, which help us to define work-related of age. Through these age-related changes we look for commonalities with China's long-term orientation values and

organizational commitments. On the scope of this paper, we will refer the summary of the work lifespan (Kanfer et al., 2013) to determine age-related changes in two parts (see figure 1).

Figure 1

Age related trends in person attributes over the work lifespan.



Source: Kanfer et al. (2013)

* Fluid intelligence (Gf): term introduced by Raymond Cattell referring to undifferentiated abilities that can “flow” into different domains.

* Crystallized intelligence (Gc): term introduced by Raymond Cattell to refer to the crystallized products of interactions of fluid abilities with environmental exposure.

1.4.1 Age related changes and LTO

The first change Kanfer et al. (2013) pointed out concerns fluid intelligence (Gf). This kind of intelligence refers to the capacity in solving novel problem and using memory which tend to decline in later decades in life (Salthouse, 2011). From this point of view, we consider that in addition to the weakening of fluid ability brought about by normal aging, traditional Chinese values involved in the work are not easy to change for older workers. Across life span the motivation of individuals change which also affects career goals (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). Thus, older workers may accept less on new things and are more focused on preservation while younger worker more open to innovation and are more focused on their own development (Innocenti, Profili & Sammarra, 2013). This view can be used as one of the present study’s research directions, focusing on the different feedback from young workers and older workers

on LTO. Younger workers are more in the growth stage, and the time spent in contact with society is relatively shorter than that of older workers. Their values are more malleable, keeping up with the development of the Chinese era (e.g., the ability to innovate); older employees are more in the maintenance of the inherent traditional values (e.g., emphasis on hierarchy between leader and subordinate).

The second change concerns crystallized intelligence (G_c), defined as the knowledge-related abilities acquired through education and experience, including knowledge, responsibility, and emotional regulation in the organization (Beauducel, Brocke & Liepmann, 2001). Figure 1 shows that as we age, the level of knowledge gradually increases and will continue to 65-70 years. Therefore, we put forward some hypotheses that the emotional regulation in crystallized intelligence may be reflected in affective commitment (e.g., employee's emotional dependence on the organization); at the same time, the sense of responsibility in crystallized intelligence may also be reflected in the normative commitment, employees in the long-term under the influence of social responsibility, should have a strong sense of obligation towards the organization.

In summary, crystallized intelligence is the cognitive ability (experience-based) acquired in practice, while fluid intelligence is a physiologically based cognitive ability. According to the study of Ma (2004), in the Chinese social context, fluid intelligence declines with age to the example of all other societies. However, crystallized intelligence has been developing throughout human life stages and it is related to traditional culture and does not decrease due to age. It is only after 25 years of age that the rate of development is slowing down. When people solve problems, they can invest in fluid intelligence and develop crystal intelligence. And then we can speculate that in daily work, employees have different growth backgrounds, which creates the formation of values and leads to different ways of doing things. They develop a higher level of organizational commitment through age growth (accumulation of practice and work experience).

Therefore, we hypothesize that age has some relationship with LTO and organizational commitment, and that it interacts with LTO to produce organizational commitment. If such interaction occurs, we expect it to be positive, i.e. that age intensifies the relationship between

LTO and organizational commitment, with the expectable stronger effect between LTO and commitment in older workers and weaker effects in younger ones. Therefore:

H3: Age moderates the positive relationship between LTO and organizational commitment in such a way that higher age reinforces that relationship.

H3a: Age moderates the positive relationship between LTO and affective commitment in such a way that higher age reinforces that relationship.

H3b: Age moderates the positive relationship between LTO and normative commitment in such a way that higher age reinforces that relationship.

1.5 Research model

Integrating all the key variables and hypothesized relationships between these, lead us to draw the following research model (Figure 2).

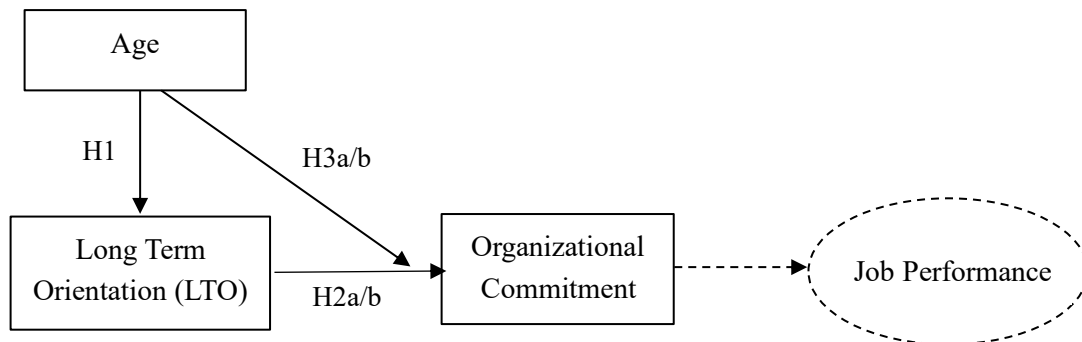


Figure 2 - Relation Chart of Variables: Age, LTO, Organizational Commitment and Job Performance

2. METHOD

This work is based on a quantitative approach that seeks to analyze differences in job performance in China through Long Term Orientation, organizational commitment and age. It also aims to compare different age groups as a moderating variable between LTO and organizational commitment. Thus, for this research, the data collection will develop through a survey by questionnaire and having as unit of analysis the individual within the context of working population in China. With the use of these data, we intend to throw light to the relationships with a focus on LTO and age as a boundary condition.

2.1 Sample

We use targeted sampling methods to select state-owned and private companies in different economic sectors including finance, media, education, healthcare, construction, and service industries. The resources available as well as time limitations disallowed stratified sampling as it would take too much time to negotiate. Thus, we opted to do a convenience sample and trust the snow-ball effect would bring unbiased sample with a varied background. Consequently, we opted to distribute a survey through the WeChat social platform to get a wide range of sample data.

The data collection work began on January 4, 2019 and ended on January 18, 2019. During this period, we distributed links to the questionnaire to the working population in different industries. During the collection process, we only accepted questionnaires that were 100% filled which summed up to a valid sample of 213 questionnaires. In the process of cleaning up the data, 19 invalid questionnaires were found (due to monotonous or inconsistent responses which suggested lack of attention). Therefore, our final sample amount to 194 individuals.

The sample comprises 91 males and 103 females, and shows has different industries, including finance (banking, insurance), medical care, education, civil servants, and media. It is worth mentioning that respondents from the service industry accounted for 42.8% of the total sample. Regarding the marital status of employees, 27.3% were single, 68.6% were married, and 4.1% were divorced or widowed, or separated. The age was divided into three groups, 37.1% were 35 years old or below, 26.3% were between 36 and 45, and 36.6% were 46 years old or above.

(Median = 40.73, SD = 12.054).

2.2 Measures

Long Term Orientation was measured with an adjusted version of Bearden, Money and Nevins' (2006) scale based on Hofstede's (2001) Long-Term Orientation Scale (LTO) that comprehends a total number of eight items. The scale measures the Confucian values commonly accepted in Chinese societies and has been found to be valid and reliable across many western countries (Hassan, Shiu & Walsh, 2011). Because this research targets organizational settings, we adjusted items so to reflect a work focus (Table 2.1). Each item was rated from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (6).

Table 2.1

Long-term orientation items

Items	
1. Respect for tradition in the work is important to me.	5. I work hard for success in the future.
2. I have a long-term plan for my work.	6. I don't mind giving up today's fun for future career / work success.
3. Family heritage has influenced me in my work.	7. Traditional Chinese values involved in the work are important to me.
4. I value a strong link to my past work.	8. Persistence in the work is important to me.

Source: Based on Bearden, Money & Nevins (2006)

Organizational Commitment was measured with the 12-item Affective and Normative Commitment Scale (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional dependence, recognition and input to the organization. The employee's loyalty and hard work to the organization is mainly due to the deep feelings of the organization, not the material benefits (Item 1-6). Second, normative commitment reflects the employee's sense of obligation to remain in the organization. It is a commitment of employees to stay in the organization due to the social responsibility of long-term social influence (Item 7-12). Each item was rated from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (6). (See Table 2.2)

Table 2.2

Organizational affective and normative commitment Scale

Items Affective Commitment	Items Normative Commitment
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	7. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.
2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	8. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.
3. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization.	9. I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.
4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.	10. This organization deserves my loyalty.
5. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.	11. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.
6. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	12. I owe a great deal to my organization.

Source: Based on Meyer & Allen (1993)

Regarding the demographic information section, we collected age, gender, education level, occupation and marital status. Based on the study sample, Table 3 shows the minimum and maximum values, the mean value, the standard deviation, and the Pearson coefficient. At the same time, it also shows the scores of the long-term orientation and organizational commitment (affective commitment and normative commitment) of the sample report.

The survey was deployed online and distributed via wechat, which can improve efficiency, facilitate the collection of data, and ensure the integrity of the questionnaire. The survey targeted active working population only. A total of 213 questionnaires were collected, and the effective questionnaire was 194. The basic characteristics of the sample are shown in the table 4.

Table 3
Descriptive and bivariate statistics

		Min-Max	Median	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Age	18-66	39.79	12.05	1					
2	Gender	1-2	-	-	-.285**	1				
3	Education	1-7	-	-	-.265**	.013	1			
4	LTO	2-5	3.98	.53	.365**	-.113	-.036	(.74)		
5	OC_Affect	1-5	3.20	.74	.022	.030	-.035	.273**	(.80)	
6	OC_Norm	1.25-5	3.28	.69	.146*	.096	-.082	.235**	.566**	(.76)

LTO: Long Term Orientation; OC_Affect: affective organizational commitment; OC_Norm: normative organizational commitment. Cronbach's alpha shown in parenthesis.

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

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

Table 4
Sample structure (N=194)

Variable	Distribution	Frequency	Percent	Total
Gender	Male	91	46.9	194
	Female	103	53.1	
Age	18-35 years old	72	37.1	194
	36-45 years old	51	26.3	
	Over 46 years old	71	36.6	
Education	Primary education	0.0	0.0	194
	Secondary education	14	7.2	
	Junior college education	45	23.2	
	Bachelor	99	51.0	
	Master	33	17.0	
	PhD	3	1.5	

3. RESULTS

3.1 Correlation analysis of age and LTO

For the hypothesis 1, we simply conducted an OLS regression taking age as a predictor and LTO as outcome. The analysis showed a significant positive association ($\beta=.365$, $p<.001$) that fully supports hypothesis 1 (Table 5).

Table 5
Regression model for age and LTO

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.341	.124		27.024	.000
	Age	.016	.003	.365	5.421	.000

a. Dependent Variable: LTO

3.2 Correlation analysis of LTO and organizational commitment

The following hypotheses concern the overall test of direct and indirect effects. Therefore, we opted to conduct both hypotheses test with SPSS Macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2018) that conducts a bootstrapping procedure to verify the significance of possible association between the predictor and outcome variables while, simultaneously, testing for the significance of the interaction term between the continuous moderator variable and the predictor variable. This implies testing the significance of direct and interaction effects. The indirect effect is the result of the multiplication of the path between LTO and age and how the direct effect changes according with that interaction.

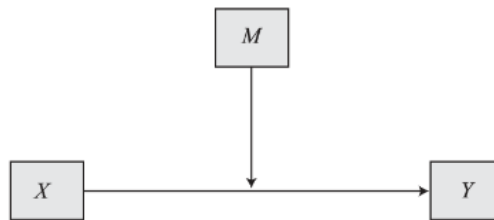
We used the default PROCESS parameters of 5000 bootstrap samples tested within a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) of 95% as recommended by Hayes (2018). Under this technique, any association path (or effect) is judged as significant (for a 95% confidence interval) when the value “zero” is not comprehended within the interval from the lower bound of the CI to the upper bound. So, if the lower bound CI is negative and the upper bound CI is

also negative, we can trust that the effect is significant. The same is valid if both are above zero. However, if one is negative and the other positive, or vice versa, we cannot trust the effect is significant.

Because the outcome variable (organizational commitment) comprehends two components (affective and normative commitment) we conducted analyses separately for each. We could have used Structural Equation Modelling (Hair et al., 2013) but the sample size is not sufficient to offer reliable data analysis for this technique. Therefore, we opted for PROCESS Macro.

Figures 3.1 & 3.2

Model Templates for PROCESS for SPSS (Hayes, 2018)



For Affective Commitment, the moderation model test showed the overall model is able to account for 10.3% of variance of the affective organizational commitment (see Table 6).

Table 6
Moderation model test for affective commitment

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.3210	.1030	.5025	7.2376	3.0000	189.0000	.0001

The test of direct effects showed LTO had a significant positive association with affective commitment (B=1.12, p=.0016, CI95 [.4330, 1.8192]), that age did not have any significant association (B=.0682, p=.0588, CI95 [-.026, .1391]) but the interaction term did show a significant association (B=-.0185, p=.0395, CI95 [-.0360, -.0009]) (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1
Moderation model test for LTO, age and interaction term

Model (Affective Commitment)						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-1.0248	1.3778	-.7437	.4580	-3.7427	1.6931
LTO	1.1261	.3514	3.2048	.0016	.4330	1.8192
Age	.0682	.0359	1.9014	.0588	-.0026	.1391
Int_1	-.0185	.0089	-2.0737	.0395	-.0360	-.0009

By analyzing the conditional effects of the predictor cut by the age values, findings show that age makes a difference up to 53 years-old, approximately (Table 7.2). By consulting Johnson-Neyman table that shows the conditional effect of the LTO at different values age for a more detailed age values, we found that cut point lies at 46.8 years-old. After this age there is no longer a direct association between LTO and affective commitment.

Table 7.2
Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator (s)

Age	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
25.00	.6644	.1532	4.3359	.0000	.3621	.9666
40.00	.3873	.1052	3.6806	.0003	.1798	.5949
52.96	.1480	.1706	.8676	.3867	-.1885	.4845

As regards normative commitment, the test of direct effects showed LTO had no significant association ($B=.5232$, $p=.1219$, $CI95 [-1.5437, 3.6649]$), that age was also not significantly associated ($B=.0291$, $p=.3979$, $CI95 [-.0387, .0970]$) and the interaction term did not show a significant association ($B=-.0063$, $p=.4593$, $CI95 [-.0232, -.0105]$) (see Table 7.3).

Table 7.3
Moderation model test for LTO, age and interaction term

Model (Normative Commitment)						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.0606	1.3202	.8034	.4228	-1.5437	3.6649
LTO	.5232	.3367	1.5539	.1219	-.1410	1.1873
Age	.0291	.0344	.8472	.3979	-.0387	.0970
Int_1	-.0063	.0085	-.7415	.4593	-.0232	.0105

As can be seen from Tables 7.1 and 7.3, LTO and the two-component of organizational commitments behave differently. LTO and affective commitment are positively related, while LTO and normative commitment are not related.

We used MODGRAPH PROGRAM (Jose, 2013) to output the graphical moderation analyses (see figure 4.1 and 4.2). About the regulatory effect of age on Long Term Orientation-organizational commitment. Figure 4.1 shows that age interacts with LTO so that older age reduces the relationship between LTO and affective commitment and younger age intensifies this relationship. In addition, the slope analysis shows that as the employee ages, the slope reduces, meaning that the relationship between LTO and affective commitment is weakened with age. Therefore, age is a moderator of LTO–affective commitment relation. Younger employees reported higher LTO and affective organizational commitments than older employees. Therefore, Age is a negative buffer when studying the interaction between LTO–organizational commitment.

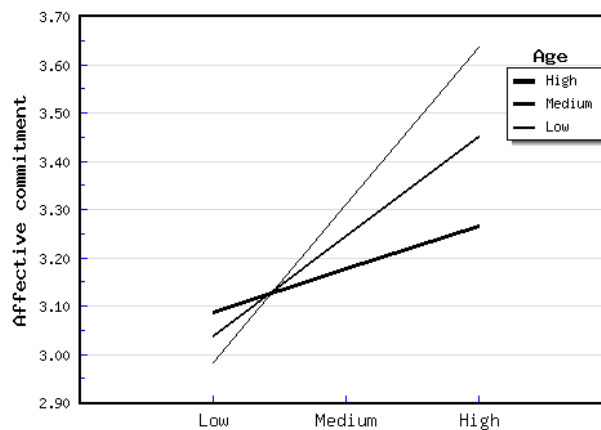


Figure 4.1 – The Moderating effect of age on the relationship between LTO and affective commitment for H2a/3a

These results offer support to hypothesis 2a (there is a significant positive effect between LTO and Affective Commitment), but there is also a moderation effect that does not follow the same direction as stated in hypothesis 3a. We were expecting a stronger positive relation between LTO and affective commitment with age, but it is quite the opposite. It is in the young people that LTO push higher level of affective organizational commitment.

Figure 4.2 shows that as regards normative commitment we find show no significant path between the variables as well as a non-significant interaction effect, thus not supporting

hypotheses H2b and H3b.

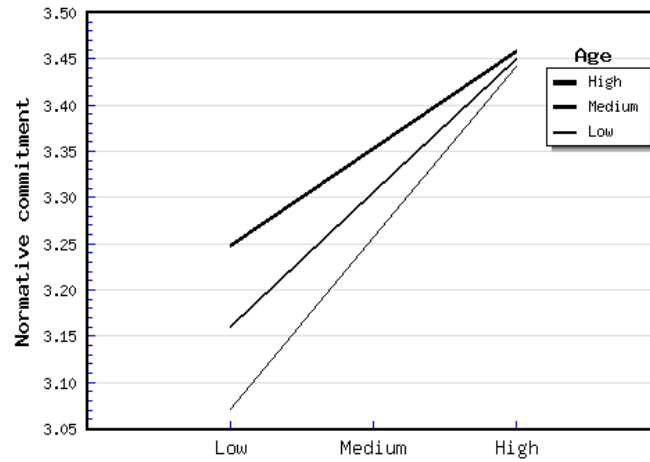


Figure 4.2 – The Moderating effect of age on the relationship between LTO and normative commitment for H2b/3b

The hypothetical results are summarized in the following table 9:

Table 9

Result table of hypothetical test

No. hypothesis	Hypothetical content (Positive correlation)	Validation results
H1	Age has a positive association with LTO	Support (Positive Correlation)
H2	LTO has a positive association with organizational commitment.	Partial support
H2a	LTO has a positive association with affective commitment.	Support
H2b	LTO has a positive association normative commitment.	Not Support
H3	Age moderates the relationship between LTO and organizational commitment <i>in such a way that higher age reinforces that relationship</i>	Rejected
H3a	Age moderates the positive relationship between LTO and affective commitment <i>in such a way that higher age reinforces that relationship</i>	Rejected (opposite effect)
H3b	Age moderates the positive relationship between LTO and normative commitment <i>in such a way that higher age reinforces that relationship</i>	Rejected (no moderation)

The integration of all findings, considering the full research model is depicted in Figure 2.

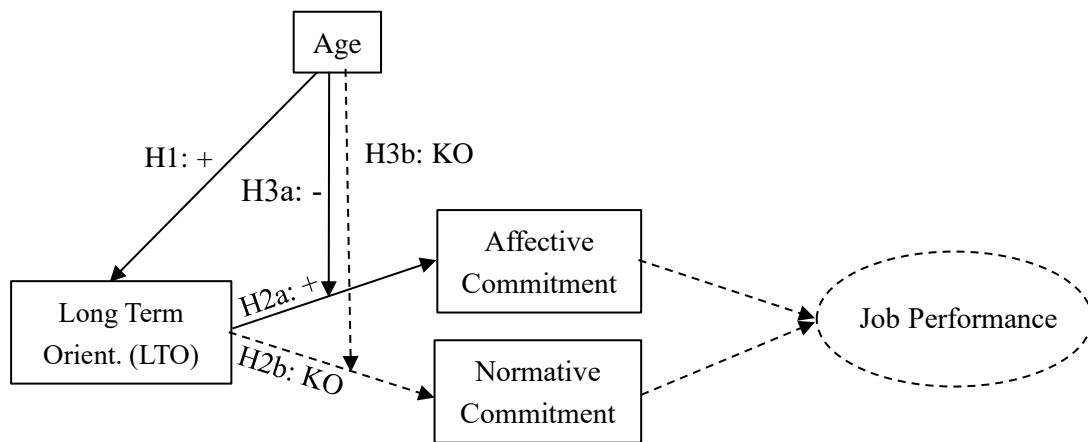


Figure 2 - A Model of LTO and Results of Hypotheses

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section will discuss the results of the hypothesis test in the previous section. Discussion concerns analyzing possible explanations, harvest the revelations, and point out the deficiencies as well as opening venues for future research.

The purpose of this study was to explore the direct and indirect (regulatory) role of age on the relationship between LTO and organizational commitment. Due to the centrality that LTO has in Chinese society, and exploring possible age-related differences due to the pressures of globalization for the short-term, we opted to conduct the empirical research with Chinese workers from different economic.

Overall, findings support the reasoning leading to hypotheses although there was a surprising and counter-intuitive finding concerning how age interacts with LTO to build commitment. First, the mean value found for LTO ($M=3.98$, $sd=.53$) as well as the fact that none of the participants ever signaled the “1” in the 5-point Likert scale, is clearly showing that LTO prevails in Chinese society exactly as Chao (1990) advocated. However, by **supporting H1**, findings show LTO is higher in the older workers, which is consistent with views of Innocenti, Profili and Sammarra (2013) but somehow justifies the sense of more traditional view by Chao (1990) as suggesting it is a value that is waning in the new generations. So, together, these

findings offer some assurance our research motivation was founded. Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) views may help explaining this because older workers have stronger traditional values and are harder to develop than younger workers.

The result proves the direct relationship between LTO and organizational affective commitment but not with normative commitment which **supported H2a but not H2b**. This means as LTO increases so does affective commitment which is in line with findings of Baker Carson & Carson (2009) for identification with the organization or Liu and Li (2016) in China context. Naturally that promoting a sense of persistence, postponing rewards for the sake of future rewards, and patience create the ground that nurtures LTO as Hofstede (2001) stated. However, our results showed that one can find different levels of LTO for equivalent normatively committed workers. This can be explained because normative commitment is based on a sense of duty that is socialized across the entire society at the early years in life (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Concerning the moderator effect of age, findings were surprising. Although there is an interaction effect of age in the relationship between LTO and affective commitment it was the older group that showed the smallest value increase in affective commitment due to LTO. The valence of the moderation was opposite to the one hypothesized. Some theories can support these findings as younger generations are more focused on growth while older generations are more focused on maintenance (Ebner, Freund & Baltes, 2006). Theory proposes that younger adults are more likely to persist in optimizing performance, while older adults persisted in minimizing losses. Therefore, our findings suggest organizations gain more from reinforcing LTO in younger workers as they respond more positively than older ones to this value framework. They react to a greater extent and give back organizations higher value of affective commitment. Still, one must keep in mind that older workers have a stronger sense of LTO. It is also possible that being experienced in working life and life itself, older workers have better emotional regulation capacity as proposed by Kanfer et al. (2013). This finding is not in line with the propositions found in literature about LTO and age. This can possibly be due to the specific Chinese cultural context which adds to extant theory and may open ways for further research.

These findings are also of applied value as Chinese organizations may gain from understanding that employees of different generations have different influences and predictions on LTO and the components of organizational commitment. Therefore, the organization that wants to favor commitment (in the most valuable form of “affective commitment”) should take targeted measures to show employees they should value LTO. This can be done by investing in stable high commitment human resources policies and rewarding loyalty, not just short-term performance (Kwon, Bae & Lawler, 2010). This is of special importance as short-termism in top management leaders is known to lead to negative outcomes in business (Brauer, 2013; Lin, Shi, Prescott & Yang, 2018).

In practical terms, organizations may benefit from considering the following recommendations: First, **strengthen the career management of employees**. Because LTO is associated with age we can see the impact of different generations of employees on work values. We further propose that LTO will affect the moral value of the individuals, including their focus on traditional culture and life planning, which is a subtle and long process. Based on life experience, we can predict that high-level LTO employees pay more attention to traditions and expect a stable future outlook, and this outlook for the future is in long-term (this has a popular expression in the Chinese proverb “长线钓大鱼 Throw a long line to catch big fish”). Traditions of past (experiences) affect individuals' standards of ethics (standard of conduct). Within these ethical standards, there is the value of the "balance of the mind" as a measure of morality to plan for the future, such as the success of a career. Googins (2002) stated that people with low LTOs had less perception of ethical behavior, mainly because they were more concerned with short-term effects (current developments, economic interest), which are usually unimportant. Therefore, setting long-term goals also lead to the willingness to achieve greater results through long-term persistence. This is also the embodiment of perseverance in Confucianism, or that the suffering we have experienced in the past and the present compensates as it leads to better life in the future.

Another advantage that LTO inducement has for organizations lies in the fact that long term oriented individuals being more focused on the future and less prone to pay attention to unethical interests (for example, retaliation, dishonesty, and illegal behavior). In short, organizations can foster a climate and culture that develops a sense of LTO with employee tenure. This perfectly fits with the

Chinese popular wisdom that says: “沧海桑田 Cang Hai Sang Tian” meaning: “With the torrent of time, the seas can become mulberry fields”. Mutations are embedded in Chinese traditional mindset but has an enormous price: time. Therefore, we should also know how to choose when appropriate. Second, **establish a scientific training system**. In our research sample, there is a significant positive correlation between LTO and affective commitment. Continuously updating and improving the training methods and contents, taking into consideration the specificities of different generations of employees, and adjusting the learning methods to new employees and old employees is a strategical decision. Liu and Li (2016) proposed that organizations should develop diverse training programs based on the different needs of employees and improve their knowledge and competencies. The training orientation that enterprises follow should be adjusted to the needs of employees at any time. With more targeted training, enterprises can more accurately foster “Person-job fit” but because LTO is beneficial in young employees it is important that training also targets “person-organization fit”, i.e., through providing soft-skills training as well as organizational cultural training. Because LTO is positively related with age, it could be useful to involve the older employees in the training of the younger ones.

Thirdly, **working climate: communication culture between generations**. Communication is the key to managing younger and older employees. Organizations cannot expect to find in the new generations the same expectation as regards how managers communicate, how organizations communicate, and what sort of communication channels and systems are useful in professional life. So, it is not sufficient to convey LTO values but they will only be effective with new generations if they are conveyed by means of the adequate channels. The cultural backgrounds of young and old employees are different, and there are intergenerational differences in work values, emotional expressivity and thinking style. Young employees are more proactive in communication, and they are good at using new resources, such as making full use of social platforms such as WeChat (establishing many chat groups) to build communication channels within the enterprise. Communication through software in mobile phone can reduce the distance between employees and form a comprehensive communication network. Thus, establishing and consolidating the psychological contract between organizations and employees, and indirectly improving the organizational commitment of employees. In Confucianism, the concept of hierarchy is emphasized.

In the modern workplace, innovative communication methods can weaken the hierarchy and position differences and promote parallel communication. It is conducive to the formation of a more appropriate organizational atmosphere within the enterprise, and promotes the enthusiasm of employees.

Fourth, organizational commitment is a proxy of job performance. According to the research conclusions, the valuable result is: age is moderator variable of LTO and affective commitment, and work values have positive effects on affective commitment through age. Although some HR decision makers could consider affective commitment as an optional feature in organizations, in fact, being such a strong proxy of performance, especially in the long term, it should be valued as such. Consequently, managers should set goals as regards how much affective commitment they want to foster in their respective organizations.

All these findings must be judged at the light of methodological and theoretical options made. Some we take as the best and other just what was possible due to circumstances. Therefore, this study may have limitations due to the sample selection procedure. Data for this study were derived from the sample questionnaire which was not randomly distributed, and therefore, may not be taken as representative of the Chinese society. Also, the fact that respondents work in different organizations does not allowed the control for organizational level variables such as organizational culture. The fact that all data are provided by the same person, makes this study prone to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The magnitude of associations and the fact that a mediation effect was found encourage belief that there was no such bias due to common source / common method (Siemson, Roth & Oliveira, 2010). It is especially important to consider that “age” as a variable is not prone to individual subjective bias due to any kind of theory-guessing people might have. We trust they had no reason to provide information about their age that differed from their true age. Lastly, although Meyer and Allen’s (1991) organizational commitment scale has been extensively validated worldwide, it has come to our knowledge that a possible alternative organizational commitment scale that is more akin of Chinese characteristics of employees could have been used. Namely the 5-component scale by Ling et al. (2000) which could have led to more powerful findings as has the advantage of having been generated in a Chinese context and language.

Future research may benefit from addressing some of these issues and also better exploring why younger workers that adopt long standing social values such as LTO are the ones that show greater affective commitment. Leadership relation with workers should also be taken into consideration as social values do not operate alone and leaders are known to have a central role in Chinese organizations due to high power distance.

To conclude, the results of this study suggest one can improve job performance by adjusting employees' emotional experiences in the Chinese job market. In contact with Confucianism at work, from cultural roots to the growth of job performance, this process is in line with China's historical development. For younger employees, the organization can take viable measures (e.g. Training) to foster LTO while bridging them with older workers who have higher LTO. Overall, LTO is a strategic intangible asset organization can nurture to increase productivity and operate with more stable expectation about the future of its employees and, therefore, of the organization itself.

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6. ANNEX: QUESTIONNAIRE



Questionnaire

Long term orientation and organizational commitment: the moderation of age in Chinese workers

Dear Respondent,

A very good day to you.

My name is Dong Siwen and I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Human Resource Development Policies (MPDRH) at ISCTE Business School, Lisbon. As part of the research requirement of the MPDRH program, I am conducting a research study on the long term orientation and organizational commitment and related with age moderator.

I would like to invite you please to complete the questionnaire that will take only few minutes. All the data in this survey will be kept private and confidential. This survey is for education and research purposes only.

Your response to this survey is highly appreciated. Without your help, I would not be able to complete this research assignment which is needed to fulfill my graduation requirements.

Please do not hesitate to email me (dong_siwen@iscte-iul.pt) if you need any clarification regarding this survey.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dong Siwen

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the Chinese characters '董斯文' (Dong Siwen).

Section A: Demographic

Instruction: Please select or write down the appropriate response for each of the items given below.

1. Are you currently working or do you have any work experience?
 Yes
 No

2. Please state in which industry are you working / or did you have your latest work experience?
 Banking
 Finance
 Manufacture
 Services
 Other. Please specify: _____

3. Gender
 Male
 Female

4. Please specify your age: _____ years old

5. What is your highest level of education?
 Primary education (9 years or less)
 Secondary education (12 years)
 Junior college education
 Bachelor
 Master
 PhD
 Other. Please specify: _____

Section B: Long Term Orientation (LTO)

Instruction: Below are listed eight values related with work. Please indicate how much to you think they apply in your case. State your level of agreement or disagreement by using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree

- ___ 1. Respect for tradition in the work is important to me.
- ___ 2. I have a long-term plan for my work.
- ___ 3. Family heritage has influenced me in my work.
- ___ 4. I value a strong link to my past work.
- ___ 5. I work hard for success in the future.
- ___ 6. I don't mind giving up today's fun for future career / work success.
- ___ 7. Traditional Chinese values involved in the work are important to me.
- ___ 8. Persistence in the work is important to me.

Section C: Organizational Commitment

Instruction: Below are questions measuring how you relate with your organization. Please select the number that represents your opinion the most for each of the items given below.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree		neutral		strongly agree

- ___ 1. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer.
- ___ 2. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.
- ___ 3. I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.
- ___ 4. This organization deserves my loyalty.
- ___ 5. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.
- ___ 6. I owe a great deal to my organization.
- ___ 7. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
- ___ 8. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
- ___ 9. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization.
- ___ 10. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.
- ___ 11. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.
- ___ 12. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Finally, just for statistical purposes, we would like to ask you kindly to reply to the following couple questions.

1. What is your professional status?

- Student
- Work student
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Retirement
- Domestic

2. Marital status:

- Single
- Married
- Divorced or widowed, or separated
- Other. Please specify: _____

**Thank you for your participation
All responses will be kept private and confidential.**