

**THE INFLUENCE OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS ON
TURNOVER INTENTION: THE MEDIATING
ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT
AMONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN
YUNNAN, CHINA**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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YUNNAN, CHINA**

by

LIU JING JIE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TI	Turnover Intention
JE	Job Embeddedness
OC	Organizational Commitment
OF	Organizational Fit
OL	Organizational Link
OS	Organizational Sacrifice
CF	Community Fit
CL	Community Link
CS	Community Sacrifice
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
SET	Social Embeddedness Theory

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APPENDIX A	COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE
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**PENGARUH KETERIKATAN KERJA TERHADAP NIAT PERLETAKAN
JAWATAN: PERANAN PERANTARA KOMITMEN ORGANISASI DALAM
KALANGAN PENSYARAH UNIVERSITI SWASTA DI YUNNAN, CHINA**

ABSTRAK

Kemajuan pesat dalam landskap pendidikan China, telah menjadikan institusi pendidikan tinggi swasta menyediakan diri mereka dalam mengambil peranan yang semakin penting ke arah pembangunan negara. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini tertumpu kepada niat perletakan jawatan dalam kalangan ahli fakulti universiti swasta di Yunnan, China. Dalam persekitaran pendidikan hari ini, perletakan jawatan ahli fakulti di universiti swasta di Yunnan telah menjadi isu yang perlu diberi perhatian. Sebagai tulang belakang kepada penyampaian pendidikan, kestabilan pensyarah adalah penting untuk kualiti pengajaran dan kemajuan institusi. Walau bagaimanapun, data yang dikeluarkan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan dan data di lokasi yang dikumpulkan daripada universiti swasta di Yunnan menunjukkan bahawa kumpulan ini menunjukkan kecenderungan untuk meninggalkan institusi tersebut. Untuk menangani perkara ini, kajian mencadangkan strategi yang bertujuan untuk memperkukuh Kelekatan Kerja (JE) dengan memupuk budaya organisasi yang menyokong dan meningkatkan integrasi pensyarah dalam institusi dan masyarakat sekeliling. Inisiatif ini direka bentuk untuk mengukuhkan Komitmen Organisasi (OC) dan mengurangkan niat perletakan jawatan, sekali gus menyokong pembangunan jangka panjang universiti swasta di Yunnan. Kajian ini berdasarkan Teori Tindakan Beralasan (TRA) dan Teori Penyertaan Sosial (SET). Mengikuti TRA, kajian mengenal pasti dimensi JE (Kesesuaian Organisasi, Pautan Organisasi, Pengorbanan Organisasi, Kesesuaian Komuniti, Pautan Komuniti dan Pengorbanan Komuniti)

sebagai pembolehubah utama. OC berfungsi sebagai faktor pengantara untuk menilai pengaruhnya terhadap kecenderungan perletakan jawatan. Pendekatan keratan rentas, menggunakan persampelan bermotif, telah diterima pakai untuk memilih peserta. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan, kajian literatur, dan analisis kuantitatif, menghasilkan 381 respons yang sah daripada universiti swasta di Kunming, Yunnan. Analisis telah dijalankan menggunakan perisian PLS-SEM, SPSS v28.0, dan SmartPLS 4.0 untuk mentafsir data dan mengesahkan hipotesis kajian. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat beberapa dimensi JE yang berkorelasi positif dengan niat perletakan jawatan. Kesesuaian Organisasi (OF), Pengorbanan Organisasi (OS), Kesesuaian Komuniti (CF) dan Pautan Komuniti (CL) khususnya telah mempengaruhi OC secara positif serta memberi kesan kepada niat perletakan jawatan. Sebaliknya, Pautan Organisasi (OL) dan Pengorbanan Komuniti (CS) tidak menunjukkan kesan yang ketara terhadap OC. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mencadangkan strategi yang berkesan untuk universiti swasta di Yunnan dalam menyelesaikan masalah mereka, sekali gus menyumbang kepada kestabilan perkembangan mereka. Dengan membentangkan perspektif baharu tentang TRA dan SET dalam amalan pengurusan, penyelidikan ini diakhiri dengan analisis batasan dan menawarkan cadangan untuk memaklumkan kajian seterusnya.

**THE INFLUENCE OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS ON TURNOVER INTENTION:
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG
PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN YUNNAN, CHINA**

ABSTRACT

Rapid advancement in China's educational landscape, made private higher education institutions preparing themselves in taking an increasingly significant role towards the country development. Thus, this research focused on the turnover intentions among faculty members of private universities in Yunnan, China. In today's educational environment, faculty members' turnover at private universities in Yunnan has become a noteworthy issue. As the backbone to the educational delivery, lecturer stability is essential to both teaching quality and institutional progress. However, data released by the Ministry of Education and on-site data collected from private universities in Yunnan indicate that this group shows an inclination towards leaving the institution. To address this, the study proposes strategies aimed at strengthening Job Embeddedness (JE) by cultivating a supportive organizational culture and enhancing lecturers' integration within the institution and the surrounding community. These initiatives are designed to strengthen Organizational Commitment (OC) and lower turnover intentions, thus supporting the long-term development of private universities in Yunnan. The study is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Social Embeddedness Theory (SET). Following TRA, the study identifies JE dimensions (Organizational Fit, Organizational Link, Organizational Sacrifice, Community Fit, Community Link, and Community Sacrifice) as key variables. OC serves as a mediating factor to assess its influence on turnover tendencies. A cross-sectional approach, utilizing purposive sampling, was adopted to select

participants. Data were gathered through surveys, literature review, and quantitative analysis, resulting in 381 valid responses from private universities in Kunming, Yunnan. Analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM, SPSS v28.0, and SmartPLS 4.0 software to interpret data and validate research hypotheses. The results reveal that there are few JE dimensions positively correlated with turnover intention. Specifically, Organizational Fit (OF), Organizational Sacrifice (OS), Community Fit (CF), and Community Link (CL) positively influenced OC, and impacting turnover intentions. In contrast, Organizational Link (OL) and Community Sacrifice (CS) did not show a significant effect on OC. This study aims to propose effective strategies for private universities in Yunnan in solving their problem, thus contributing to their stable progression. By presenting a fresh perspective on TRA and SET within management practices, this research concludes with an analysis of its limitations and offers recommendations to inform subsequent studies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of Chapter 1

This chapter provided a detailed overview of this study, including its background, problem statement, research questions, and main objectives. It also explored the study's scope and significance, addressing theoretical, practical, and additional perspectives.

1.2 Research Background

The research revealed that in the backdrop of intense global competition, employee mobility emerged as a critical challenge for organizations, particularly within human resource management. Consequently, employees' intention to leave was regarded as a preventative strategy against mobility and often proved effective in predicting actual departure behaviors within the organization(Windon et al., 2019). Human resources stood as a core asset for any organization, and in the face of heightened competition, organizations exerted considerable efforts to retain their workforce. The departure of well-trained and committed employees can result in significant organizational losses (Anees et al., 2021).

According to Merhar's perspective, the expenses related to hiring and training a replacement employee accounted for more than half of that individual's annual salary (Merhar et al., 2021). Furthermore, the overall cost of employee turnover generally ranged from 1 to 2.5 times the departing employee's yearly salary. Therefore, effective managers needed continually investigate the reasons for turnover and seeked solutions to retain their most outstanding employees. Employees' intention to leave represented the likelihood that an individual would voluntarily exit or switch

roles within a certain timeframe, potentially resulting in actual turnover. Therefore, intention to leave was often viewed as a strong predictor of employee departures (Windon et al., 2019). This aided in identifying potential risks associated with employee departures and underscored opportunities to mitigate overall employee turnover. Given the intimate link between employees' personal lives and work, organizations had to implement strategic measures to minimize employees' intention to leave (Leonilo M. Cruz et al., 2022).

As a vital component of China's higher education landscape, private universities represented key growth points in the country's educational development and played a significant role in propelling educational reforms (Yue, H., 2022). However, faced with a diminishing student population, private universities experienced heightened competition with public counterparts, necessitating elevated standards for human resources management in the private education sector. Promoting the growth and skill advancement of human resources within private universities played a crucial role in strengthening their core competitiveness (Yue, H., 2022).

1.2.1 International University Faculty Turnover Situation

Recently, the global labor market has experienced significant shifts due to the prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in widespread employee dissatisfaction and a growing interest in exploring other job opportunities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). This trend has not only impacted various industries but has also extended to the higher education sector, triggering a wave of massive employee resignations and career reassessments (Almhdawi et al., 2021).

Based on an April 2021 report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), over 4 million individuals in the United States left their jobs, with resignations occurring across various sectors, including the education services industry. The BLS

survey indicated a total resignation count of 54,000 people in the education services industry, with a steady upward trend throughout 2021 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). It had been reported that resignations in the education services sector reached 68,000, reflecting a rise of almost 26% over the prior year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). This surge in resignations had attracted widespread attention, prompting economists, including Anthony Klotz from University College London, to label it 'The Great Resignation'(COLIN LODEWICK, 2022).

Studies conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic had already highlighted several motivational factors influencing academic staff's intention to leave, such as the desire for work-life balance, job stability, and attractive compensation and benefits (Chambers Mack et al., 2019; Cidlinska et al., 2023; Lashuel, 2020; Mudrak et al., 2018). With the onset of COVID-19, researchers shifted focus to examine the pandemic's impact on resignation trends among academic staff. The limited support available to employees during the early phase of the pandemic, coupled with existing workplace dissatisfaction, likely intensified their desire to leave (Weyandt et al., 2020; Woolston, 2020; Gewin, 2022).

Recent literature indicated that scholars might choose to depart from universities at various stages of their career progression, raising concerns for the higher education sector. Human resource studies suggested that certain education systems, including the Australian model, could face the loss of nearly 50% of their academic workforce over the next five years (Crimmins et al., 2017).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of why employees chose to resign and to enhance retention rates, organizations needed to investigate the factors that motivated individuals to remain. Aside from job satisfaction, job embeddedness—factors that tied an employee closely to their position or

organization—was a crucial predictor of turnover (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, et al., 2001). Job embeddedness significantly impacted an employee's decision to leave, particularly when it was low; in such cases, social environment influences could play a larger role. This implied that the job embeddedness of colleagues could help predict the likelihood of focal employees resigning to some extent. For organizations emphasizing employee retention, job embeddedness was a critical consideration, as it not only affected individual employees' decisions to resign but might also impact the social environment within the workspace (Nugroho & Afifah, 2021).

Existing research had primarily examined factors influencing the intent to leave among personnel in primary and secondary education (Chambers Mack et al., 2019); a gap persisted in the literature regarding the factors affecting academic staff turnover intentions in higher education (Schmiedehaus et al., 2023).

1.2.2 Turnover Situation of Lecturers in Private Chinese Universities

The rapid development of private higher education in China has significantly reshaped the nation's tertiary education landscape. According to the 2022 National Education Development Statistics Bulletin published by China's Ministry of Education in July 2023, there were 764 private universities in China, accounting for 25.36% of all higher education institutions. Since the establishment of the first nationally recognized private university in 1984, this sector has expanded at an average annual growth rate of 11.81% over the past 38 years (Zhou, 2018). This remarkable growth highlights the increasing importance of private universities in complementing the public higher education system.

Despite such expansion, challenges remain—particularly regarding the mobility and stability of academic staff. National labor statistics reflect this trend. According to Zhaopin's 2023 survey on resignations and salary adjustments, the

overall employee turnover rate in 2022 was 17.9%. Within this context, the culture, sports, education, and media sectors reported a turnover rate of 21.1%, ranking second only to the catering/hotel/tourism industry (51job HR Research Center, 2024). Furthermore, Xinzhi's 2025 White Paper on the Education Industry indicated that the education sector recorded the highest average turnover rate across all industries at 20.8%, with particularly elevated figures in the private education segment (Smart salary, 2025).

While these national-level figures point to systemic issues, a closer examination of private higher education institutions reveals more alarming patterns. A 2019 national survey on private universities indicated considerable variance in academic staff turnover: 37.78% of institutions reported turnover rates below 10%, while 24.44% had rates between 10–20%, another 24.44% ranged between 20–30%, and 13.33% experienced rates exceeding 30% (Qifang Education, 2019). By comparison, human resource experts suggest that the ideal turnover rate for most organizations should remain below 10% to ensure operational efficiency and talent retention. In this regard, over 58.21% of private universities were found to exceed this recommended threshold (Applauz, 2024).

More recent and official data reaffirm the severity of this issue within the private university sector. According to the 2024 report released by China's Ministry of Education and the China Association for Non-Government Education, the voluntary turnover rate among university lecturers nationwide reached 18.7%. A stark contrast is evident between public and private institutions: the average turnover rate for lecturers at private universities rose to 21%, while tenured lecturers at public universities experienced a much lower rate of 9%. In some private universities, such as one institution in Guangdong, lecturer turnover exceeded 25%, primarily due to

insufficient student enrollment (Ministry of Education of China, 2025; Bosi Data Research Center, 2024; Xu & Sun, 2024; MyCOS Research, 2024).

Delving further into the structural implications, private university lecturers, despite constituting only 19.86% of the total faculty in Chinese higher education, accounted for 23.4% of all lecturer resignations. This imbalance is even more pronounced among early-career faculty: in 2024, lecturers under the age of 35 at private universities had a turnover rate of 28%, more than three times the rate among their peers in public institutions (Bosi Data Research Center, 2024; MyCOS Research, 2024).

As shown in Figure 1. 1, there were deficiencies and uneven distribution in research on the turnover intentions of faculty in China's private universities.

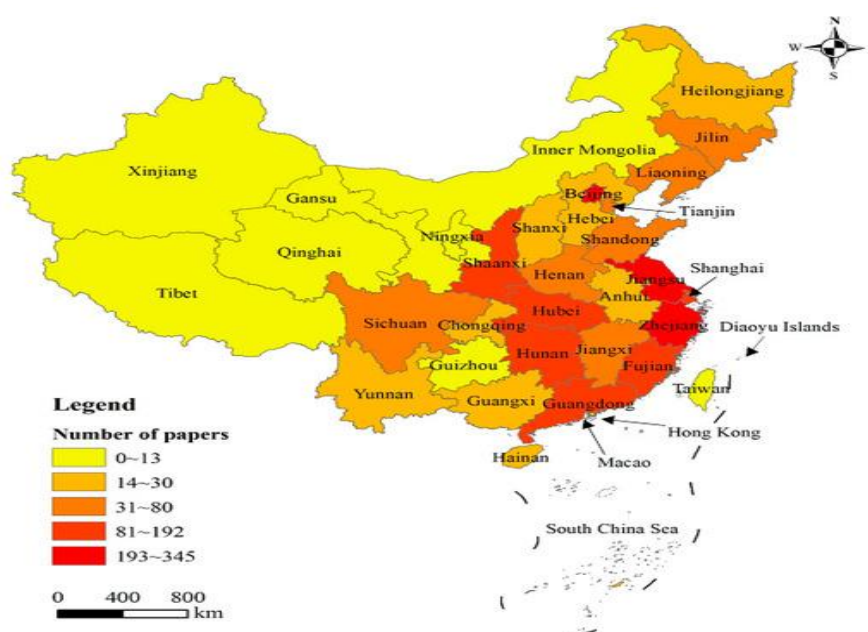


Figure 1.1 Geographical Distribution of Private University Research

Source:<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/1/646>

1.2.3 Overview of Yunnan and Kunming

Yunnan Province, often abbreviated as "Dian" or "Yun," constituted 4.1% of China's total land area, ranking eighth in the nation with a vast expanse of 394,000

square kilometers. Yunnan, encompassing 16 prefectures and 129 counties, was strategically positioned as a gateway to Southeast and South Asia, owing to its location at the intersection of China, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. As illustrated in Figure 1.2, Yunnan shares borders with Myanmar, Vietnam, and Laos, providing connections to Thailand and Cambodia via the Lancang-Mekong River, and lies close to countries like Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Bangladesh. This gave Yunnan the distinction of being one of the Chinese provinces with the most neighboring countries (2020 United Nations Biodiversity Conference, 2023).



Figure 1.2 Map showing Yunnan Province, China. A pentagon star indicates Kunming's location

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Geographic-location-of-Yunnan-Province-China-The-map-shows-the-location-of-Yunnan_fig1_350026647

With its varied landscape of towering mountains and broad rivers, the province was a popular destination for tourists and a region abundant in cultural diversity and natural resources. In 2022, Yunnan had a population of 46.93 million and a regional GDP of ¥2.895 trillion, representing a 4.3% increase from the previous year. This

substantial population and economic output provided essential support for higher education development in Yunnan (Yunnan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

The government was actively advancing the Western Development Strategy, establishing a new development pattern, and constructing the New Land-Sea Corridor in the Western regions of China. This initiative aimed to enhance infrastructure, stimulate economic prosperity, and elevate overall development. As a key node in the Western Development Strategy, Yunnan was entrusted with a critical strategic mission (C. Zhou, 2024).

Yunnan acted as a crucial hub within the Belt and Road Initiative, serving as a portal to South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region. The government intended to transform Yunnan into a pivotal center directed toward South and Southeast Asia, offering vital opportunities and resources to foster high-quality, rapid development (Qiushi & Yunnan Provincial Committee Joint Research Group, 2023).

Kunming, known as the "Spring City," served as the capital and the sole megacity in Yunnan Province (the location of Kunming was shown on the map below). It played a central role in the Dianzhong Urban Agglomeration. It held a significant position as a key city in the Western region of China, serving as a frontier point for China towards South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region (Y. Li, Wu, et al., 2023).

As one of the first nationally recognized historical and cultural cities, Kunming served as an open gateway to South Asia and Southeast Asia and was the only provincial capital in China with an "international border." Its unique geographical location enabled Kunming to have a locational advantage connecting coastal areas to the east, the central plains to the north, Indochina to the south, and the Indian subcontinent to the west. Located at the intersection of the ASEAN "10+1" Free Trade

Area, the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation, and the Pan-Pearl River Delta Regional Economic Cooperation, Kunming emerged as the most strategically positioned provincial capital for land-based connections to South Asia and Southeast Asia (F. Fan, 2024). Kunming's strategic significance not only propelled Yunnan's economic development but also played a unique strategic role nationally.

Within this grand development strategy, higher education served a vital supportive function. However, the quality of universities in Yunnan needed improvement, posing a constraint on achieving better leapfrog development. As the provincial capital of Yunnan, Kunming should have played a more critical role in this grand development strategy(Luo, 2023).

Thus, enhancing higher education in Yunnan, with a focus on expanding private universities, was crucial for advancing the Western Development strategy, promoting the Belt and Road Initiative, and facilitating Yunnan's rapid growth. Such efforts would have provided Yunnan with a more comprehensive higher education system, offered more equitable development opportunities across regions, and contributed to the realization of the ambitious goal of high-quality leapfrog development (Luo, 2023).

1.2.4 Overview and Existing Issues of Private Higher Education Institutions in Yunnan

Data from the Ministry of Education indicated that Yunnan Province had 88 higher education institutions, including 32 universities offering undergraduate programs (Yunnan Provincial Department of Education, 2024). However, the higher education landscape in Yunnan demonstrated a notable concentration in a single city. Among the nine private universities, eight were situated in Kunming, constituting a significant proportion of 88.89%. This distribution pattern suggested that Kunming

had centralized nearly all high-quality higher education resources (Yunnan Provincial Department of Education, 2024).

Based on recent data from the Yunnan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, student enrollment in higher education institutions in Yunnan Province showed a consistent upward trend from 2012 to 2022. After steadily increasing, the number of full-time academic staff experienced a notable drop in 2021, declining from 58.1 thousand in 2020 to 44.2 thousand in 2021. By 2022, the number of full-time academic staff had slightly recovered to 46.0 thousand (Yunnan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2023). As of 2022, eight private universities in Kunming posted a total of 582 academic staff recruitment positions. By 2023, this number rose to 965. As shown in Table 1.1, the enrollment numbers and full-time academic staff data for Higher Education Institutions in Yunnan from 2012 to 2023 were shown in the table below.

Table 1.1 Data on Yunnan Province Higher Education Institutions for the Years 2012-2023

Year	Enrollment in Higher Education Institutions (in 1,000 people)	Full-time Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions (in 1,000 people)
2012	146.3	31.3
2013	168.3	34.4
2014	175.9	35.4
2015	189.8	36.9
2016	201.7	38.9
2017	232.8	39.3
2018	255.8	40.1
2019	305.5	41.5
2020	304.57	58.1
2021	352.0	44.2
2022	393.9	46.0
2023	398.1	47.4

Source: https://stats.yn.gov.cn/Pages_22_3785.aspx

In the current study, data were collected through sending emails or messages to inquire about the human resources departments of various private universities in Yunnan. This partnership ensured accuracy and relevance to the topic of academic staff turnover rates. According to the results compiled in Table1. 2, the turnover rate of lecturers in these institutions was notably high. Following the requirements of the relevant institutions, the names of the universities were kept confidential in this paper, and these data were solely for academic research purposes.

Table 1.2 Academic Staff Turnover Data in Some Private Universities in Yunnan Province from 2022 to 2023 (Author, 2024)

Name	Total Academic Staff Turnover Rate	Full-time Lecturer Turnover Rate
University 1	23.57%	28.94%
University 2	28.94%	31.56%
University 3	25.71%	29.61%
University 4	29.68%	35.75%
University 5	22.51%	30.60%
University 6	26.42%	32.72%

As depicted in Table1. 1 and Table1. 2, these dynamics suggested that despite the ongoing growth in student numbers, private universities in Yunnan faced significant challenges in maintaining faculty stability, necessitating further efforts to enhance their staffing strategies.

1.3 Problem Statement

In 2021, China revised and enacted the Regulations on the Implementation of the Private Education Promotion Law, representing a notable advancement in addressing faculty-related issues within private higher education institutions. This

legislation sought to reinforce the stability of lecturers through formal legal provisions (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 1986). Specifically, it targeted the severe attrition and instability of lecturer teams in private universities, aiming to bolster both stability and quality of faculty in these institutions.

Despite such legal support, the Ministry of Education of China (2021) noted that private universities still face fundamental challenges in enhancing educational quality and developing unique campus characteristics, including irrational job title structures, high lecturer turnover, and difficulties in attracting high-level talents. These issues highlight a critical gap: while public universities generally maintain a lecturer turnover rate of 9% (Ministry of Education of China, 2025), private institutions struggle with a significantly higher rate of 21% (Bosi Data Research Center, 2024), reflecting the uneven effectiveness of talent retention strategies across sectors. This disparity underscores the urgency of addressing turnover in private universities, as it not only impedes educational quality but also hinders the formation of institutional distinctiveness, making continuous exploration of solutions crucial for advancing private higher education.

According to data released by the Yunnan Provincial Department of Education (2024), the province's higher education sector includes 47,400 full-time academic staff (31,100 in undergraduate institutions), with total enrolment reaching 1.67 million (up 53,700 year-on-year). However, enrolment in private ordinary and vocational universities declined by 2,770 to 312,100, the first drop in three years. This trend reveals the resource and policy constraints faced by private institutions, which limit their ability to utilize educational resources effectively and threaten their sustainable development. Such challenges directly impact the stability of teaching quality, the construction of faculty teams, and public confidence in the private education market.

Yu Jin's (2020) survey further illuminates this issue: between 2016 and 2019, 54% of faculty leaving private universities moved to public universities or corporations, indicating a talent drain toward more stable sectors. The intention to leave among full-time faculty in private institutions is notably high at 17%, with western regions like Yunnan being particularly affected—only 62% of local faculty report job satisfaction, and 12% explicitly express turnover intention (Yu Jin, 2020). Even amid a general slowdown in turnover rates (from 17.9% in 2022 to 16.6% in 2023), the culture, education, and media sectors still face a high resignation rate of 17.3% (51job HR Research Center, 2024), exceeding the national average and highlighting the persistence of challenges in educational institutions.

In Yunnan's private universities, the problem is acute. Data from local private higher education institutions (Bosi Data Research Center, 2024; MyCOS Research, 2024) shows exceptionally high resignation rates between 2022 and 2023, especially among junior lecturers. For instance, some universities recorded a 29.68% turnover rate in 2023, with 91.54% resignations involving lecturers and lower academic ranks. This instability, juxtaposed with a growing student population, poses a serious risk to educational quality and institutional progress. High turnover disrupts teaching continuity, weakens faculty capacity, and calls for a comprehensive overhaul of personnel management in private higher education (Noutchie, 2024; L. Zhang, 2024).

To address these persistent challenges, this study adopts a dual-theoretical approach by integrating the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Social Embeddedness Theory (SET). TRA explains lecturers' turnover intention as a rational decision influenced by perceived benefits and social norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In contrast, SET posits that individual behaviors are embedded within social networks, including organizational and community ties (Granovetter, 1985). By combining both

perspectives, this study incorporates overlooked community-level factors (e.g., local social connections, residential stability) and rational evaluations of job-related costs and benefits (e.g., organizational sacrifice, loss of links), with organizational commitment acting as a mediating mechanism. This integrated framework provides a comprehensive lens to explain why lecturers in private universities, particularly in under-resourced regions like Kunming, are more inclined to leave, and how enhancing job embeddedness can promote commitment and reduce turnover intention.

The proposed solution framework hinges on strengthening job embeddedness to enhance organizational commitment, thereby reducing turnover intention. Job embeddedness, encompassing organizational fit (alignment with institutional values), links (interpersonal connections), sacrifice (losses from leaving), and their community counterparts, directly correlates with lower turnover (Khan et al., 2021; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, et al., 2001). Studies show it also fosters organizational commitment (A. Ahmad et al., 2023; Nica, 2018), which in turn mediates the relationship between embeddedness and turnover intention (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2022). For resource-constrained private universities, this framework offers a practical path: enhancing embeddedness (e.g., fostering value alignment, strengthening community ties) can boost commitment and stabilize faculty teams.

Focusing on Kunming is justified by its status as Yunnan's private higher education hub; 8 out of 9 private universities in the province are located here (Yunnan Provincial Department of Education, 2024), concentrating both challenges and potential solutions. This regional focus allows analysis of how local dynamics (e.g., its role as a gateway to Southeast Asia, cultural diversity) shape lecturer embeddedness, ensuring findings are not only contextually relevant to Yunnan's private HEIs but also offer transferable insights for similar under-resourced educational contexts.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research aimed to unravel the dynamics of job embeddedness and its impact on employee retention and commitment within the educational sector of Kunming, China. By thoroughly examining key factors and their interconnections, this study sought to shed light on how these elements collectively impacted the decision-making process of faculty members at private universities. The specific objectives were outlined as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between job embeddedness(organizational fit, organizational link, organizational sacrifice, community fit, community link, and community sacrifice) and turnover intention among respondents in Kunming, China.
2. To investigate the relationship between job embeddedness(organizational fit, organizational link, organizational sacrifice, community fit, community link, and community sacrifice) and organizational commitment among respondents in Kunming, China.
3. To determine the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention among respondents in Kunming, China.
4. To evaluate the mediating role of organizational commitment on the relationship between job embeddedness(organizational fit, organizational link, organizational sacrifice, community fit, community link, and community sacrifice) and turnover intention among respondents in Kunming, China.

1.5 Research Questions

The research question guiding this study was addressed through a series of objectives designed to dissect the interplay between job embeddedness and

organizational commitment, and their collective impact on employee intentions to turnover in Kunming's educational sector. The detailed objectives were:

1. Does job embeddedness(organizational fit, organizational link, organizational sacrifice, community fit, community link, and community sacrifice) have a relationship with turnover intention among respondents in Kunming, China?

2. Does job embeddedness(organizational fit, organizational link, organizational sacrifice, community fit, community link, and community sacrifice) have a relationship with organizational commitment among respondents in Kunming of China?

3. Does organizational commitment have a relationship with turnover intention among respondents in Kunming, China?

4. Does organizational commitment mediate the relationship between job embeddedness(organizational fit, organizational link, organizational sacrifice, community fit, community link, and community sacrifice) and turnover intention among respondents in Kunming, China?

1.6 Scope of Study

The research explored how the elements of job embeddedness—organizational fit, links, sacrifice, community fit, links, and sacrifice—affected the intentions of lecturers at private universities in Kunming to leave their positions. Additionally, it examined the role of organizational commitment as an intermediary in this dynamic. Initially, the research identified the factors that shaped lecturers' turnover intentions. It then examined the different facets of job embeddedness to clarify their influence on these intentions. Finally, the study assessed how organizational commitment acted as a mediating factor between job embeddedness and lecturers' intentions to depart.

According to a 2021 announcement by the Yunnan Provincial Government, Yunnan's higher education faced significant disparities when compared to neighboring provinces and cities, encountering numerous difficulties and challenges. Higher education resources in Yunnan were predominantly concentrated in Kunming. However, the support provided by higher education for regional economic and social progress was insufficient, and its quality required enhancement. Reforms in personnel systems for higher education institutions' lecturers required deepening, emphasizing the stable development of the full-time lecturer workforce. Therefore, this research was conducted in Kunming, targeting lecturers from various private universities. The sample comprised faculty members with a heightened likelihood of leaving and was selected to thoroughly assess how job embeddedness influenced the turnover intentions of full-time faculty at various private universities in Kunming.

Given the limited research on stabilizing faculty teams (Kristanti et al., 2021), this study concentrated on private universities in Kunming with the goal of addressing existing gaps in the academic literature.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study made a substantial contribution to the literature on job embeddedness and its impact on employees' intentions to leave. By investigating the six dimensions of job embeddedness—organizational fit, links, sacrifice, community fit, links, and sacrifice—specifically among lecturers, this research offered both theoretical and practical insights into how these factors influenced lecturers' choices to stay at or depart from private higher education institutions in China.

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study lies in its integration and extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Social Embeddedness Theory (SET) to explain turnover intention among faculty in private universities in Kunming. While previous studies have often examined turnover intention using a single theoretical lens, this study bridged rational behavioral processes and social-contextual factors, providing a more holistic framework.

According to TRA, individual behaviors are shaped by behavioral intentions, which in turn are influenced by attitudes and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). By applying TRA, this study highlighted how job embeddedness, through organizational fit, links, and sacrifice, affects faculty members' attitudes toward staying, ultimately influencing their intention to leave. This offers theoretical clarity on the rational, intention-driven mechanisms underlying turnover behavior.

In contrast, SET emphasizes the influence of social relationships, community ties, and environmental factors on individual decision-making (Granovetter, 1985). This study extended SET by demonstrating how community fit and links, as components of job embeddedness, enhance a sense of belonging and strengthen organizational commitment, thereby reducing turnover intention.

By combining TRA and SET, this study not only validated the explanatory power of these theories in the Chinese private higher education context but also expanded their scope by revealing their complementary effects. This dual-theory approach provides a richer understanding of how both rational evaluation and social embeddedness collectively shape faculty turnover intentions.

1.7.2 Practical Significance

In the Chinese higher education system, lecturers held a mid-level position in the academic ranking hierarchy, situated between assistant professors and associate professors (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 1986). Lecturers served as a vital reserve within university faculties. Through the ongoing enhancement of their professional skills and overall quality, institutions were able to continuously improve and optimize their faculty structures (Ministry of Education of China, 2021). As education technology and economic integration evolved, professionals in various disciplines possessed unique skills and essential knowledge. Thus, the scarcity and irreplaceability of university faculty as professionals meant that their departure could cause significant, immeasurable losses to an institution (Mei, L., 2019).

Consequently, this study provided directions for reforming and improving systems to reduce the turnover intentions of lecturers at private colleges, thereby stabilizing the faculty, particularly for administrators at private institutions.

As integral components of the Chinese higher education system, private higher education institutions played pivotal roles amid intense market competition and ongoing transformations. Traditional academic staff management approaches and systems had become obsolete, failing to align with the evolving landscape. These approaches neglected the genuine psychological needs of lecturers functioning as professional knowledge workers, overlooked the adaptability of lecturers to organizational and environmental dynamics, and fell short of effectively harmonizing the overarching development goals of universities with the individual development goals of lecturers. Consequently, this disconnect led to diminishing cohesion between private universities and lecturers, contributing to the instability of the teaching staff. To retain lecturers, universities needed to comprehensively comprehend lecturers'

work attitudes, behavioral performances, and the factors underlying lecturers' dissatisfaction leading to the intention to leave. This understanding was crucial for implementing targeted measures (Zhaoyan, 2022).

This research went beyond analyzing the relationship between organizations and lecturers' turnover intentions by also exploring the impact of community ties on these intentions. Effectively reducing the turnover rate among lecturers stabilized the faculty at private colleges in Kunming. This initiative not only improved educational standards in Kunming but also made a significant contribution to the growth of private tertiary education across China.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Turnover Intention

Turnover intention, defined as an employee's conscious and deliberate desire to leave the current organization, is the strongest cognitive precursor of actual turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993). It serves as a key predictor of actual employee turnover, enabling employers and policymakers to implement interventions to prevent turnover (Lazzari et al., 2022). Moreover, it is a phenomenon that organizations aim to avoid, as high turnover intention can lead to instability and hinder the achievement of organizational goals (Santika et al., 2023).

Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness was characterized as a network that tied individuals to their professional roles, intricately integrating their activities with multiple aspects of their environment. This tightly knit network formed a background intimately connected to both the individual and their surrounding context. The stronger this network's

connections, the greater the embeddedness in one's work (Mitchell et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2004).

Organizational Fit

Organizational fit referred to employees' sense of compatibility and ease within their workplace. At the organizational level, fit involved aligning employees' individual goals, career ambitions, and professional abilities with the organization's objectives. It also included aligning employees' values and personality traits with the organization's culture and work environment (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, et al., 2001).

Organizational Link

Organizational links consisted of both official and casual associations between an employee and different individuals or teams within the organization. These ties connected the employee with other members, including team members, supervisors, and colleagues (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, et al., 2001).

Organizational Sacrifice

Organizational-related sacrifices included both material and psychological benefits lost upon resigning. Essentially, these represented the costs associated with leaving a job. At the organizational level, resigning meant forfeiting non-material benefits like relationships with colleagues, engagement in interesting projects, and job satisfaction. Additionally, it required giving up tangible benefits offered by the employer, including retirement incentives, advancement prospects, paid time off, equity options, social security, housing allowances, and seniority privileges (Shaw, 1998).

Community Fit

Community fit pertained to the compatibility and comfort employees experienced in their living environments. This fit reflected the degree to which

individuals acclimated to their surroundings, including aspects like personal ease, cultural norms, spiritual beliefs, leisure activities, and other community features. Consequently, departing from the community could significantly affect an individual's adaptation perceptions (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, et al., 2001).

Community Link

Community links described both formal and informal relationships established by individuals with entities and other residents within their locale (T. W. H. Ng & Feldman, 2012; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). Additionally, these connections involved stable, high-quality relationships with close family members, such as an employee's parents and their children's extended relatives, fostering the sharing of valuable resources through social interactions that cultivate enduring bonds (Gonzalez et al., 2018).

Community Sacrifice

At the point of resignation, community sacrifices may have involved leaving behind a stable living situation, a secure neighborhood, and established social standing. Even if the new role was within the same city and did not require relocation, the individual still faced adjustments to different work hours and commuting routes (Shaw, 1998).

Organizational Commitment

This referred to a psychological condition that embodied the connection between employees and their organization, influencing their choice to continue or terminate their membership (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It represented the attitude employees had toward their organization and explained their willingness to remain with a specific company, thereby acting as an indicator of employee loyalty (Ling, W., Zhang, Z., & Fang, L., 2001).

Lecturer

In a Chinese higher education context, a "Lecturer" was a fundamental teaching and research position within the academic ranking system of universities. Positioned between an Assistant and an Associate Professor, the role of a Lecturer involved primary responsibilities such as teaching, conducting scientific research, and guiding student research projects. Additionally, lecturers were required to engage in various academic support activities, including tutoring, answering student inquiries, and grading assignments. This role was integral to the educational and research framework of universities, ensuring academic rigor and support for the student body (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 1986).

1.9 Summary and Organization of all Chapters

This study conducted a thorough review of pertinent domestic and international literature and theoretical frameworks to investigate how job embeddedness influenced the resignation intentions of lecturers at private universities. It utilized organizational commitment as a mediating variable to analyze the aspects of job embeddedness that affected lecturers' decisions to leave and the extent of these effects. The objective was to comprehend the underlying mechanism and subsequently devise targeted and feasible strategies for optimizing human resource management. These strategies aimed to elevate the organizational commitment of lecturers in private universities and mitigate the turnover rate.

The first chapter of the research paper encompassed an overview and background, delivering essential information to aid researchers in grasping key facets of the study. This section outlined the study's context, focusing on lecturers in private universities in Kunming. Additionally, the authors posed several questions in this

section to augment the study's relevance. The chapter examined the primary factors influencing the resignation intentions of lecturers at private universities in Kunming, focusing on aspects of job embeddedness, such as organizational fit, link, sacrifice, community fit, link, and sacrifice. It further analyzed how these dimensions, along with organizational commitment, modulated the propensity of employees to resign.

The second chapter reviewed previous literature and relevant theories applied in this study, focusing also on research related to lecturers' intentions to resign. The theoretical framework was grounded in social embeddedness theory. This chapter also concentrated on dependent and independent variables derived from various previous studies.

The third chapter presented various research methods, advocating for the adoption of the most appropriate ones for the study. This chapter examined the research design, approaches to data collection, and analysis methods. Details concerning the questionnaire utilized in this study were comprehensively described within this section.

Chapter Four presented the study's findings, beginning with a comprehensive analysis of the data that addressed the research questions. It explored participant demographics, descriptive statistics, the validity and reliability of constructs, and hypothesis testing. It also outlined the measurement instruments and analytical models utilized. The chapter concluded by summarizing the findings, indicating whether the research hypotheses were supported or rejected.

Chapter Five summarized the study's results and discoveries. It revisited the research objectives and questions initially outlined in the dissertation. The discussion then shifted to how the findings correlated with the established hypotheses. The chapter closed by addressing the research implications, its limitations, and offering