Influence of Interpersonal Relationships and Organizational Commitment on Work Performance: An Analysis of Post-1990s Educators in Private Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: Starting from social identity theory, this article explores the importance of interpersonal relationships to the work performance of teachers in private colleges and universities born in the 1990s, and examines the relationship among interpersonal relationship, organizational commitment and work performance. After conducting a questionnaire survey and analysis of 951 teachers from 19 private Colleges and Universities, the results show that aspects of interpersonal relationships, specifically caring for others and self-image, exert a significant positive impact on organizational commitment and work performance; and these factors can enhance the work performance of post-1990s teachers in these institutions through the partial mediating role of organizational commitment. Research shows that the interpersonal relationships established and maintained from public goals or private goals can promote the organizational commitment and work performance of post-1990s teachers in private colleges and universities. Higher level of interpersonal relationship can improve teachers' identification and sense of belonging to the organization, and then improve their work performance.

Keywords: Interpersonal relationship; Organizational commitment; Work performance; Social identity

1. Introduction

Interpersonal relationship is an important concept in psychology, sociology, and management. It generally refers to the interactions and contacts between individuals with different features of psychological behavior in work, study, and life (Stoetzer et al., 2009). Interpersonal relationship takes different forms in different scenarios, such as family interpersonal relationship, workplace interpersonal relationship, formal interpersonal relationship, and informal interpersonal relationship (Nwinyokpugi & Omunakwe, 2019). Workplace interpersonal relationship exists in every organization. The interactions between an employee with his/her colleagues and leaders are often seen as a part of the work atmosphere, and an important source of the pleasant or tension feelings for individuals at work. They are very meaningful to the individuals, teams, and organizations involved in interpersonal relationship (Adiele & Omunakwe, 2018). Studies have shown that workplace interpersonal relationship not only affects the job satisfaction, turnover intention, health, well-being and burnout of employees (Bardach et al., 2022; Jing & Yang, 2013; Muñoz-Doyague & Nieto, 2012) but also directly or indirectly impacts organizational performance, team performance, consumer satisfaction, etc. (Nguyen, 2020; Velmurugan, 2016; Zhang et al., 2022).

At present, workplace interpersonal relationship has not been studied extensively. Some scholars used to explore the formation paths and action mechanisms of the interpersonal relationship for various groups, e.g., teenagers, elderlies, soldiers, students, or patients, under learning conditions and living environment (Dang et al., 2016; Ramadhan & Ritonga, 2023; Tsai & Yao, 2023; Yoo & Choi, 2019) Little attention has been paid to the job attitudes and behaviors of private college teachers affected by interpersonal relationship (Stoetzer et al., 2009). Relatively speaking, the job of private college teachers is unique in several respects. Firstly, the interpersonal

relationship of college teachers faces the pressure from diverse players, ranging from leaders, colleagues, to students. Secondly, compared with their peers in public colleges, private college teachers need to participate in school management and administrative affairs, which complicates their interpersonal relationship environment (Cheng & Chen, 2023).

As the main force of private colleges and universities, the post-90s teacher group has always attracted much attention. Growing up in the information era, post-90s teachers advocates contract spirit, freedom, equality, and respect, and commits personalized, autonomous, and flexible job behaviors (Li & Chen, 2022), creating a stark contrast with the traditional interpersonal relationship environment. Studies have shown that, post-90s employees are more likely to be emotionally incentivized at work, enjoy stronger emotional commitment and sense of belonging to preferred leadership style and group atmosphere, and thus display greater creativity and enthusiasm at work (Huiwu & Hongmei, 2022). Therefore, the interpersonal relationship model established and maintained by post-90s private college teachers could shape their job attitudes and behaviors. In fact, this model has become one of the focus of college managers.

Taking post-90s private college teachers as objects, this paper explores the relationship and paths between workplace interpersonal relationship and work performance, providing a reference for researchers engaged in workplace interpersonal relationship and private college teachers.

2. Theoretical Hypotheses

2.1 Interpersonal Relationship and Work Performance

The social identity theory believes that, when an individual generates group identity, he/she will assign the typical features of his/her group, and identify himself/herself with the identity of group members (Van Knippenberg, 2000). Interpersonal relationship stands for the interactions and correlations between individuals with different behavior features at work (Adiele & Omunakwe, 2018). In essence, the establishment and maintenance of the relationship is the formation of supportive relationship between individuals, following the norm of reciprocity. According to the attachment theory, when a person establishes a close tie with others and perceives their response and support, he/she will be willing to offer support to others, making the tie more stable (Crocker & Canevello, 2008).

Interpersonal relationship can be broken down into two dimensions: self-image and caring for others. Self-image refers to the willingness of an individual to display his/her strengths and features in interpersonal communication. More resources or supports will be solicited by maintaining and defending self-image. Lots of studies have shown that an individual with a strong sense of self-image has distinctive individual features and self-belief, which differentiate him/her from others; such an individual often focuses more on self-demand and desire, without a strong trust or contact of groups (Canevello & Crocker, 2010).

From the angle of social representation, post-90s employees have obvious generational features, such as the pursuit of uniqueness, optimism, straightforwardness, advocation of democracy, and perplexity (Li & Chen, 2022). If post-90s employees have a high self-image goal, these generational features will be more prominent in interpersonal communication. They could be more independent and self-centered, and frequently conflict with others (Crocker & Canevello, 2008).

Studies have shown that an individual with a high self-image goal tends to have a strong psychological power. By building an ideal image, he/she is capable of winning recognition from others, and realize his/her goal of interpersonal communication. However, the individual is more concerned with how much interests can others give to him/her, ignoring their needs and expectations. Therefore, an individual with a high self-image goal often ignites conflicts and evokes a sense of alienation, as he/she interacts with others (Canevello & Crocker, 2011). These negative perceptions are very likely to suppress the recognition of post-90s private college teachers for their organization or group, and reduce their participation and enthusiasm of organizational work or group cooperation. Therefore, this paper believes that a higher level of self-image suppresses employees' work performance, and proposes Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1: Self-image has a negative effect on the work performance of post-90s private college teachers.

During interpersonal communication, every individual always affects his/her relationship with others by various means: he/she can establish a high-quality self-image to win respect and support; he/she can also meet the others' expectations pleasing them, thereby winning recognition, and establishing a stable contact (Canevello & Crocker, 2011). This model of interpersonal communication, which stresses the needs and feelings of others, is called caring for others (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). An individual that cares much for others usually wants to build an intimate and mutual assistance relationship with others. During interpersonal communication, he/she prioritizes the response to others' needs, and believes that his/her efforts will be paid off, creating a better group environment of mutual help (Canevello & Crocker, 2011). Studies have shown that those caring much for others are easier to build a stable relationship with others, and eager to create an environment that satisfies their needs, thereby promoting mutual growth and learning (Al-Ziadat & Al-Shraifin, 2023).

For post-90s employees at work, they are more concerned with self-growth and development, and more likely to be stimulated spiritually and incentivized by emotional commitment, albeit their pursuit of freedom and democracy (Huiwu & Hongmei, 2022). When a post-90s employee, after careful comparison and identification, chooses to integrate into an organization and build interpersonal relationship with others, he/she must agree with the goals and direction of the group. To adapt to the psychology of the group, he/she will take the group goals and interests as his/her own code of conduct, and become more active and creative at work (Adiele & Omunakwe, 2018).

In recent years, more and more scholars have researched how interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationship are correlated with individual performance and organization performance. Their results have shown that positive interpersonal relationship at work can improve the job attitude and organizational commitment of employees, and affect the job outcome via employee behaviors (Nwinyokpugi & Omunakwe, 2019). For example, Muñoz-Doyague & Nieto (2012) discovered that the high-quality communication with team members and moderate communication with leaders can promote the team commitment and cooperation willingness of employees, which in turn improve the individual performance in decision-making, task execution, and work creativity. Jing & Yang (2013) studied the intricate relationship between teachers' interpersonal relationship and job outcome, and drew two important conclusions: interpersonal communication ability positively affects teachers' work performance; the objects and contents of interpersonal communication drag down their work performance, due to the intervention of work environment and information. Studies have shown that spontaneous empathy among employees contributes to job performance (Chu, 2017).

Therefore, this paper believes it is the sense of identity that motivates the individual efforts to represent the group. For post-90s private college teachers, a high caring for others will make them more active and creative in daily work and teaching. Hence, Hypothesis 2 was put forward:

Hypothesis 2: caring for others promotes the work performance of post-90s private college teachers.

2.2 Interpersonal Relationship and Organizational Commitment

Relationship is a state that two or more people remain in the same background because of an affair. This affaire could be a common interest, or a responsibility that must be fulfilled (Nwinyokpugi & Omunakwe, 2019). The interpersonal relationship in an organization is a social contact formulated at work. It is an active or a passive group identity. According to the social identity theory, social identity refers to the consciousness for an individual to join a collective through interaction with external environment. Social identity differs clearly with individual identity. The latter is the crystallization of individual features and concepts. A high interpersonal relationship will be generated, if an individual perceives highly matching individual features in interpersonal communication or if he/she is willing to sacrifice for group features. Hence, the stability of interpersonal relationship depends on how an individual balances individual features with group features in group communication (Van Knippenberg, 2000).

The above analysis suggests that the group with a high self-image (a dimension of interpersonal relationship) usually highlights self-interest in interpersonal communication, judges others' values in interpersonal relationship by its own needs, and even pursues its own needs at the expense of others' interests (Canevello & Crocker, 2011). Meanwhile, organizational commitment measures the individual recognition of an organization, reflecting how much an individual is emotionally dependent on and bonded with the organization (Afshari et al., 2020). Thus, an individual with high self-image is very likely to have a low organizational commitment.

Post-90s employees do not like to be constrained. Their job attitudes and behaviors are constantly affected by generational features like advocation of freedom and democracy, and defiance to authority. During the work, post-90s employees are generally open and bold, focusing on self-growth and development (Li & Chen, 2022). During group communication, these generational features are particularly prominent among the post-90s employees with high self-image. The prominent individual features clearly differentiate post-90s private college teachers from others. Studies have shown that alienation and conflict bring more work pressure to employees, weakening their sense of belonging to and recognition of the group. For instance, Leiter & Maslach (1988) pointed out that unpleasant interpersonal interaction at work will cause mental fatigue and burnout to individuals, thereby lowering the organizational commitment of employees. Therefore, this paper comes up with the Hypothesis 3:

Hypothesis 3: Self-image suppresses the organizational commitment of post-90s private college teachers.

Social identity theory holds that an individual constructs specific self-concepts by classifying, comparing, and distinguishing between heterogeneous collectives (Van Knippenberg, 2000). Organizational commitment, i.e., the psychological state of individual-organization connection, reflects how much an individual recognizes and how willing he/she is to invest in an organization. It is an important index for predicting job input and work performance of individuals (Muñoz-Doyague & Nieto, 2012). caring for others (a dimension of interpersonal relationship) generally describes an individual that sets goals or behavioral model to meet the expectations of others or the group, because he/she is very sensitive to other's needs in interpersonal communication. An individual that cares much about others win more recognition by giving others a helping hand. Thus, he/she is very likely to build a long-term stable relationship (Canevello & Crocker, 2011).

Researchers believe that post-90s employees exhibit complex generational features at work. They both long for participation and equality, and aspire for spiritual incentives. They attach equal importance to self-development and emotional commitment (Huiwu & Hongmei, 2022). Post-90s private college teachers tend to caring much for others. They are more willing to contribute to the progress and development of others and the group, when they make positive evaluation or perception of the effective interactions with colleagues, leaders, or subordinates. In this case, they prefer to display interests and features that are consistent with the group, and produce stronger emotional ties and organizational commitment for the team or organization. On this basis, the Hypothesis 4 was presented:

Hypothesis 4: caring for others promotes the organizational commitment of post-90s private college teachers.

2.3 Mediating Effect of Organizational Commitment

People are connected to each other in various scenarios. These interaction-based connections influence individual emotions and behaviors. When an employee positively perceives the interaction with others in the organization, he/she will better identify himself/herself with the organization, and have a higher recognition of the collective values (e.g., organization, role, and caringer) and emotional significance. His/her organizational commitment will be improved accordingly. On the contrary, conflicts in interpersonal communication add work pressure to employees, which weakens their recognition of and sense of belonging to the organization (Afshari et al., 2020). Organizational commitment can be understood as a state that employees recognize a specific organization and its goals, and wish to maintain their identities as group members. With a high organizational commitment, employees will devote more time and energy to work, in pursuit of the common goals of the organization or group. High organizational commitment will improve work performance (Ausat et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022). Low organizational commitment will harm the health, sense of happiness, and work performance of employees (Tolentino, 2013).

Judging by the two dimensions of interpersonal relationship, self-image and caring for others have opposite effects on the stability of the interpersonal relationship established by individuals. Self-image usually brings a low social identity and a high individual recognition, while caring for others usually brings a high social identity and a low individual recognition. From the angle of social identity, employees with high self-image are not highly sensitive to others' needs or group expectations at work. In the group or organization, they often commit self-centered behaviors, and have a weak recognition of and sense of belonging to the group or organization. In particular, the generational features of post-90s employees will be amplified by the rising self-image level. In the case of high self-image, post-90s private college teachers might neglect collective interests and regulations, show a weak recognition of and sense of belonging to the organization, and lack participation and cooperation willingness at work (Tolentino, 2013). Therefore, the Hypothesis 5 was put forward as follows:

Hypothesis 5: Organizational commitment plays a mediation role between self-image and work performance.

In contrast, employees caring much for others behave exactly the opposite. During interpersonal communication, these employees consider and support others' needs and interests. Even if they do not exhibit too many self-needs, the employees caring much for others are confident enough to win sufficient responses and supports from others and the group. The mutually assistive group relationship can easily develop into an atmosphere of co-development and learning, under which the employees highly recognize the group or organization. Social identity theory reports that, an individual who identifies himself/herself with his/her organization often display attitudes and behaviors as expected by the group (Ilies et al., 2018). For post-90s employees, their emphasis on emotions and spiritual incentives will boost the recognition of and sense of belonging to organization, which stem from caring for others. After they perceive the positive interpersonal relationship at work, post-90s employees will easily sense the resource supports from the environment, maintain a high self-efficacy facing work challenges and difficulties, and work very actively and creatively. Therefore, the Hypothesis 6 was presented below:

Hypothesis 6: Organizational commitment plays a mediation role between caring for others and work performance.

3. Methodology

3.1 Subjects and Data Sources

Our research targets the post-90s teachers in private colleges of Central China's Henan Province. Based on the online survey platform www.wjx.cn, a questionnaire survey was carried out on the post-90s teachers in 19 private colleges. The news of the survey was forwarded by friends online and reported by media. A total of 1,142 copies of the questionnaire were returned. Among them, 951 (83.3%) were valid ones without many repetitive or blank contents. Males and females take up 50.1% and 49.9% of the respondents, respectively. 80.9% of the respondents have won master's degrees or above, and 19.1% have won bachelor's degrees or below. 56.8% are married, and 43.2% are unmarried. 85.6% have been working for 5 years or below. 20.8% hold intermediate professional titles

or above, and 79.2% hold junior titles or below.

3.2 Instruments

(1) Interpersonal relationship scale

This scale was prepared by Crocker & Canevello (2008) and translated/modified by Zhang et al. (2010). There are a total of 18 items in the scale, which are evenly divided into two dimensions: self-image and caring for others, and 9 items in each dimension.

(2) Organizational commitment scale

This scale was compiled by Ling et al. (2000), which is in line with the organizational commitment behaviors of Chinese enterprises. The 25 items are evenly divided into five dimensions: emotional commitment, normative commitment, ideal commitment, opportunity commitment, and economic commitment.

(3) Work performance scale

This scale was prepared by Motowidlo and Van Scotter and translated/modified by Ma (2005). The 14 items are divided into three dimensions: 4 in interpersonal facilitation, 5 in task performance, and 5 in work dedication, and 5 items in each dimension.

(4) Control variables

Drawing on the previous studies on work performance and interpersonal relationship of teachers, five control variables were selected: gender, education, marital status, working experience, and professional title. Specifically, education was divided into three levels: bachelor's degree or below, master's degree, and PhD or above; working experience was divided into three levels: 2 years or below, 3-5 years, and 6 years or above; professional title was divided into three levels: junior title or below, intermediate title, and senior title or others.

4. Research Results

4.1 Test for Homogeneity of Variances

Homogenous variances refer to the variances of system errors shared by variables, which are measured by the same method or from the same source. Our questionnaire survey was designed in the form of self-report, which is prone to co-variation. The respondents are college teachers, who have relatively strong knowledge and experience, and their answers were kept anonymous. This, to a certain extent, lowers the social desirability of the respondents. In addition, Harman's single factor test was performed to analyze the 75 items in the three scales. The unrotated principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to extract the ten factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic was 0.909. The ten factors cumulatively explained 70.976% of the total variance. Among them, the first common factor explained 21.305%, less than 50%. Hence, the homogenous variances are controlled within the reasonable range.

4.2 Testing of Validity and Reliability

(1) Interpersonal relationship

The Cronbach's alpha (α) of interpersonal relationship scale was 0.906, and that of self-image and caring for others was 0.936, and 0.935, respectively, a sign of good validity of the scale. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on interpersonal relationship scale shows that the KMO statistic was 0.954, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was 12,095.397 ($p < 0.001$). Through PCA, two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, which together explained 66.052% of the total variance. The communality was greater than 0.5 for all 18 items. The factor loadings fell between 0.776 and 0.938. The results of second-order two-factor model test were: chi-squared/degree of freedom χ^2/df=1.337 (<3); goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.980, non-normal fit index (NFI)=0.985, Tucker Lewis index (TLI)=0.996, comparative fit index (CFI)=0.996, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.019 (<0.05). For self-image, the composite reliability (CR) was 0.945, and average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.658. For caring for others, the CR was 0.944, and the AVE was 0.653. Therefore, the interpersonal relationship scale has a reasonable structure, a high validity, and a good reliability.

(2) Organizational commitment

The Cronbach's α of organizational commitment scale was 0.900, and that of emotional commitment, normative commitment, ideal commitment, opportunity commitment, and economic commitment was 0.899, 0.900, 0.898, 0.899, and 0.904, respectively, a sign of good validity of the scale. EFA on organizational commitment scale shows that the KMO statistic was 0.881, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was 16,061.722 ($p < 0.001$). Through PCA, five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, which together explained 72.268% of the total variance. The communality was greater than 0.6 for all 25 items. The factor loadings fell between 0.779 and 0.935. The results of second-order two-factor model test were: χ^2/df=2.887 (<3); GFI=0.947, NFI=0.955, TLI=0.964,

CFI=0.970, and RMSEA=0.045 (<0.05). For emotional commitment, the CR and AVE were 0.912 and 0.678, respectively; Fornormative commitment, the CR and AVE were 0.909 and 0.668, respectively; For ideal commitment, the CR and AVE were 0.909 and 0.667, respectively; For economic commitment, the CR and AVE were 0.914 and 0.681, respectively; For opportunity commitment, the CR and AVE were 0.917 and 0.691, respectively. Therefore, the organizational commitment scale has a reasonable structure, a high validity, and a good reliability.

(3) Work performance

The Cronbach's α of work performance scale was 0.839, and that of interpersonal facilitation, task performance, and work dedication was 0.890, 0.901, and 0.902, respectively, a sign of good validity of the scale. EFA on organizational commitment scale shows that the KMO statistic was 0.858, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was 8,540.370 (p < 0.001). Through PCA, two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, which together explained 73.167% of the total variance. The communality was greater than 0.6 for all 14 items. The factor loadings fell between 0.796 and 0.935. The results of second-order two-factor model test were: χ^2/df=2.136 (<3), GFI=0.978, NFI=0.982, TLI=0.988, CFI=0.990, and RMSEA=0.035 (<0.05). For emotional commitment, the CR and AVE were 0.912 and 0.678, respectively; For work dedication, the CR and AVE were 0.918 and 0.738, respectively; For task performance, the CR and AVE were 0.922 and 0.704, respectively; For interpersonal facilitation, the CR and AVE were 0.927 and 0.717, respectively. Therefore, the work performance scale has a reasonable structure, a high validity, and a good reliability.

Our four-factor model was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on Amos 24.0. The main fitness indices of the four-factor model were χ^2/df=2.770 (<3), GFI=0.945, NFI=0.941, TLI=0.957, CFI=0.962, and RMSEA=0.043 (<0.05), an evidence to the overall good fitness of the model.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 1 shows the correlations, means, and standard deviations of the variables. Interpersonal relationship has a significant positive correlation with organizational commitment and work performance; organizational commitment has a significant positive correlation with work performance. The only insignificance correlation lied between caring for others (a dimension of interpersonal relationship) and work dedication (a dimension of work performance). All the other correlations between self-image, caring for others, organizational commitment, work dedication, task performance, and interpersonal facilitation were significant.

Table 1. Correlations, means (M), and standard deviations (SD) of variables

	Gender	Education	Working Years	Professional Title	Marriage	IR	OC	JP	IRa	IRb	JPc
gender	1										
education	-0.013	1									
working years	-0.002	-0.147**	1								
professional title	0.010	-0.008	0.509**	1							
marriage	0.016	-0.006	0.421**	0.329**	1						
IR	0.033	0.027	0.032	0.024	-0.038	1					
OC	0.006	-0.043	0.003	0.040	-0.005	0.414**	1				
JP	-0.005	-0.018	0.007	0.035	-0.029	0.360**	0.442**	1			
IRa	-0.006	0.042	0.025	0.043	-0.018	0.765**	0.453**	0.322**	1		
IRb	0.056	-0.002	0.023	-0.006	-0.039	0.762**	0.179**	0.228**	0.166**	1	
M	1.500	1.820	1.630	1.250	1.430	3.195	3.158	3.155	3.219	3.170	3.158
SD	0.500	0.413	0.723	0.529	0.496	0.698	0.624	0.668	0.917	0.912	0.998

Note: *, **, and *** are p<0.05, p<0.01, and p<0.001, respectively (the same below); IR, OC, JP, IRa, and IRb are interpersonal relationship, organizational commitment, work performance, self-image, and caring for others, respectively (the same below)

4.4 Hypothesis Verification

The mediation effect was tested with model 4 of PROCESS v3.0 for SPSS. Based on the Bootstrap method (Hayes, 2017), gender, education, work experience, professional title, and marital status were controlled, and the samples were extracted for 5,000 times. Then, the mediation effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between the two dimensions of interpersonal relationship and work performance. The results are shown in Table 2, Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5.

As shown in Table 2 and Table 3, self-image has a significant positive effect on work performance (B=0.234, t=8.268, p<0.001). After organizational commitment is introduced as a mediating variable, self-image still has a

significant effect on work performance (B=0.111, t=4.712, p<0.001). This reversely verifies Hypothesis 1. Besides, self-image has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment (B=0.310, t=10.6471, p<0.001), and organizational commitment has a significant positive effect on work performance (B=0.398, t=10.8503, p<0.001). This reversely verifies Hypothesis 3. It can be inferred from Table 3 that the mediation effect of organizational commitment was 0.123 (lower limit of the confidence interval, LLCI=0.088; upper limit of the confidence interval, ULCI=0.1641; no zero is included in the test interval). After the mediating variable is introduced, the effect of self-image on work performance dropped from 0.234 to 0.111, indicating that self-image can positively predict work performance via the partial mediation effect of organizational commitment. As a result, Hypothesis 5 is verified. The direct effect and mediating effect took up 47.40% and 52.65% of the total effect, respectively.

Table 2. Mediation effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between self-image and work performance

	Work Performance			Work Performance			Organizational Commitment		
	t	p	B	t	p	B	t	p	B
gender	-0.2161	0.829	-0.0084	-0.1227	0.9024	-0.0051	0.2286	0.8193	0.0083
education	-0.2848	0.7758	-0.0127	-1.1128	0.2661	-0.0534	-2.3776	0.0176	-0.1022
working years	0.0956	0.9238	0.0031	-0.3352	0.7375	-0.0112	-1.1304	0.2586	-0.0359
professional title	0.6575	0.511	0.0286	1.0828	0.2792	0.0468	1.1748	0.2404	0.0457
marriage	-1.0533	0.2925	-0.0445	-0.9207	0.3575	-0.0408	0.229	0.8189	0.0094
organizational commitment	10.8503	0	0.3981						
self-image	4.712	0	0.1111	8.268	0	0.2344	10.6471	0	0.3099
R^2	0.2154			0.1062			0.2103		
F	28.2413***			12.0058***			19.5473***		

Table 3. Total effect, direct effect, and mediation effect (self-image)

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Relative Effect Size
Total effect	0.2344	0.0284	0.1788	0.2901	
Direct effect	0.1111	0.0236	0.0648	0.1573	47.40%
Mediation effect	0.1234	0.0193	0.0880	0.1641	52.65%

Table 4. Mediation effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between caring for others and work performance

	Work Performance			Work Performance			Organizational Commitment		
	t	p	B	t	p	B	t	p	B
gender	-0.5488	0.5833	-0.0213	-0.5773	0.5639	-0.0245	-0.1827	0.8551	-0.0073
education	0.0031	0.9976	0.0001	-0.6438	0.5199	-0.0318	-1.5115	0.131	-0.0721
working years	0.0018	0.9986	0.0001	-0.4238	0.6718	-0.0148	-0.9891	0.3229	-0.0336
professional title	0.8395	0.4014	0.0368	1.5299	0.1264	0.0687	1.6678	0.0957	0.072
marriage	-0.9492	0.3428	-0.0405	-0.901	0.3678	-0.0415	-0.0502	0.96	-0.0022
organizational commitment	13.8573	0	0.4426						
self-image	5.3307	0	0.1126	5.8331	0	0.1673	4.0804	0	0.1235
R^2	0.2198			0.0552			0.0367		
F	29.5261***			6.2518***			3.7963**		

As shown in Table 4 and Table 5, caring for others has a significant positive effect on work performance (B=0.167, t=5.8331, p<0.001). After organizational commitment is introduced as a mediating variable, caring for others still has a significant effect on work performance (B=0.113, t=5.3307, p<0.001). This verifies Hypothesis 2. Besides, caring for others has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment (B=0.124, t=4.0804, p<0.001), and organizational commitment has a significant positive effect on work performance (B=0.443, t=13.8573, p<0.001). This verifies Hypothesis 4. It can be inferred from Table 5 that the mediation effect of

organizational commitment was 0.055 (LLCI=0.0269; ULCI=0.0879; no zero is included in the test interval). After the mediating variable is introduced, the effect of self-image on work performance dropped from 0.167 to 0.113, indicating that caring for others can positively predict work performance via the partial mediation effect of organizational commitment. As a result, Hypothesis 6 is verified. The direct effect and mediating effect took up 67.30% and 32.70% of the total effect, respectively.

The test results on mediation effect show that every dimension of interpersonal relationship promotes the work performance of post-90s private college teachers via the partial mediation effect of organizational commitment. Table 6 summarizes the results of Hypothesis verification.

Table 5. Total effect, direct effect, and mediation effect (caring for others)

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Relative Effect Size
Total effect	0.1673	0.0287	0.111	0.2236	
Direct effect	0.1126	0.0211	0.0712	0.1541	67.30%
Mediation effect	0.0547	0.0157	0.0269	0.0879	32.70%

Table 6. Results of hypothesis verification

Hypothesis	Content	Test Result
Hypothesis 1	Self-image has a negative effect on the work performance of post-90s private college teachers	Reverse verification
Hypothesis 2	caring for others promotes the work performance of post-90s private college teachers	verification
Hypothesis 3	Self-image suppresses the organizational commitment of post-90s private college teachers.	Reverse verification
Hypothesis 4	caring for others promotes the organizational commitment of post-90s private college teachers	verification
Hypothesis 5	Organizational commitment plays a mediation role between self-image and work performance	Reverse verification
Hypothesis 6	Organizational commitment plays a mediation role between caring for others and work performance	verification

5. Conclusions

Based on the theory of social identity, this paper discusses the relationship between interpersonal relationship, organizational commitment, and work performance among post-90s private college teachers. The results show that, the caring for others (a dimension of interpersonal relationship) among the subjects significantly promotes work performance, and organizational commitment, and influences work performance via the partial mediation effect of organizational commitment. This conclusion echoes with most previous researchers (Jing & Yang, 2013; Muñoz-Doyague & Nieto, 2012). According to the theory of relationships in the ecosystem, an individual believes that the satisfaction of his/her needs depends on the growth and development of others and the group. Those caring much for others often have highly interdependent self-construals, and exhibit relatively high pro-social attributes and interpersonal ecosystem motives (Al-Ziadat & Al-Shraifin, 2023). Under the influence of China's collectivism culture, post-90s private college teachers that caring much for others are likely to coordinate between individual features and social features (Cross et al., 2000). Regarding themselves as part of the whole, they put the interests and needs of others and the group as the first in interpersonal communication of the organization, speak highly of the professional ethics and group identity of teachers, and guide their behaviors and performance by student interests and teacher identity. It should be noted that caring for others does not mean sacrificing oneself. During interpersonal communication, an individual caring much for others try to build close, comfortable, and grateful relationships (Al-Ziadat & Al-Shraifin, 2023), and remain confidence in gaining supports from his/her peers. This positive cognition of interpersonal relationship could easily lead to a relationship model of mutual support and growth (Crocker & Canevello, 2008), which further enhance employees' recognition of the organization. For post-90s private college teachers, who highlight emotional and spiritual incentives, the relationship model can further increase their activeness and creativity in work, and improve their job quality and teaching level.

Note that the Hypothesis "self-image, as a dimension of interpersonal relationship, suppresses organizational commitment and work performance" was not verified. The research results show that self-image positively predicts organizational commitment and work performance, and promotes work performance via the partial mediation effect of organizational commitment. According to the interpersonal communication goals proposed by Crocker and Canevello (Crocker & Canevello, 2008), high self-image individuals try to solicit positive evaluations from others by displaying their strengths and specialties, thereby acquiring more recognition and supports. They treat interaction as a zero-sum game. In interpersonal communication, others are regarded as competitors for resources

and supports. Therefore, high self-image individuals have a low trust in others, and stage conflicts and competition against them. Under the passive and unstable interpersonal relationship, employees will exhibit more individual features, and get alienated from the group. Then, their work efficiency could be suppressed by the atmosphere lacking cooperation and interaction. From the theory of relationships in the ecosystem and social identity theory, however, individuals always connect themselves with a specific organization through comparison and analysis. Any employee entering an organization or group will relate to others in the same interpersonal ecosystem. Sometimes, an individual can be indirectly benefited, as he/she benefits the group by satisfying others' needs (Niiya & Crocker, 2019). Therefore, it is impossible to treat interpersonal interaction as a zero-sum game, and fulfil one's own needs without considering the interests of the group and others.

According to the self-affirmation theory, when an individual perceives any threat to his/her self-image, he/she will strive for other resources or adopt more coping strategies to maintain the image, such as moral expression and ability improvement (Easterbrook et al., 2021; Spencer et al., 2001). Even high self-image individuals will not consider strategies that blindly highlight their own negative effects in the choice of relationship processing strategies (Moeller et al., 2009; Montani et al., 2021). These individuals may also care about others to maintain group harmony or improve self-image, and then provide necessary supports for the development and needs of others and the group. Sometimes, they might reflect on themselves and improve their capability to reduce the threat to their self-images. All these could to a certain extent change others' perceptions of high self-image individuals. Our results further demonstrate that, for post-90s private college teachers, despite their prominent generational features at work, self-image employees will balance their recognition of the organization, and maintain good interpersonal communication with others in the organization, aiming to promote self-development and satisfy their own needs. In the face of interpersonal conflicts and image threats, they could defend self-image through self-reflection and self-promotion. In some degree, these actions motivate employees to think about and agree with the overall value, and to pay more efforts at work to safeguard self-image. Therefore, high self-image individuals can enhance the organizational commitment of employees, and further improve their work performance.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

(1) Enriching the research evidences to workplace interpersonal relationship

The existing studies on interpersonal relationship primarily focus on of psychology and sociology. The hotspot is the influence of interpersonal relationship over individual psychology, learning, and life under learning environment and living conditions (Dang et al., 2016). There is little report on how interpersonal relationship affects the attitudes or behaviors of employees at work. Interpersonal relationship is an association between individuals interacting with others in the same context. It often takes basis on common interests, goals, needs, and identities. Workplace interpersonal relationship refers to the interactive relationship established by an individual with leaders and colleagues in the organization at work. It is the most common social relationship to be handled by an individual, upon entering the society. Studies have shown that a good interpersonal relationship facilitates employees to quickly integrate into the organization and cultivate a sense of belonging (Yoo & Choi, 2019). The social identity theory implies that, during the handling of interpersonal relationship, an individual can better acquire the group identity, and adapt his/her behaviors and attitudes to the goals or directions of the group or organization, if he/she well coordinate and fuse individual features with group features. Our research not only verifies the positive effect of caring for others (a dimension of interpersonal relationship) on employees' attitudes and behaviors, but also discovers the promoting effect of self-image on individuals in workplace. The research results provide a reference for further discussion on how the two dimensions of interpersonal relationship influence individuals at work.

(2) Expanding the influencing factors of work performance

The previous research on the action mechanism of work performance has yielded fruitful results. The researchers generally agree that the job behaviors and attitudes of individuals are affected by personal variables (e.g., personality, and cognitive ability) and situational variables (e.g., organizational support, and organizational climate) (Jing & Yang, 2013; Muñoz-Doyague & Nieto, 2012). The establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationship are essentially the coordination and integration between individual features and group features. During this process, an individual must display both individual features and situational features, and pay attention to others' goals and needs. Thus, interpersonal relationship is a comprehensive infestation of individual features and situational features. The level of interpersonal relationship, on the one hand, reflects how much an individual loves the organization, and, on the other hand, mirrors how much the organization supports the individual. This paper verifies that both dimensions of interpersonal relationship promote work performance. As an indicator of group features, caring for others has a greater impact on work performance than self-image, which characterizes individual features (B=0.234 vs. B=0.167). To a certain extent, this proves the previous results on the factors affecting work performance, and demonstrates that prominent individual features could also promote work performance.

(3) Verifying the mediation effect of organizational commitment between interpersonal relationship and work

performance

Organizational commitment, as the psychological state of employees in organizational identity and participation, has long been considered a branch of social identity, which is a process in which an individual gives up his/her own uniqueness and accepts collective features (Tolentino, 2013). Our research results fully demonstrate that the establishment and maintenance of good interpersonal relationship are a process of individual identity construction and self-affirmation. A positive interpersonal relationship can increase the employees' dependence on or integration into the group or organization (Afshari et al., 2020), and thus enhance their organizational commitment. Employees with high organizational commitment caring more about the requirements and development goals raised by the organization, are more willing to participate and cooperate, and tend to perform well at work (Afshari et al., 2020; Tolentino, 2013). By contrast, a high self-image means an individual focuses on his/her own interests in interpersonal communication, but it creates the motives for the individual to support others and group development, for the purpose of ensuring resource supply and self-growth.

(4) Deepening the research on college teachers

Many have studied the work performance of college teachers, but few have explained the action mechanism of work performance from the angle of interpersonal relationship. Unlike their peers in public colleges, private college teachers need to undertake many administrative and management affairs. To a certain extent, the interactions are intense between employees, and between employees and leaders in private colleges. During the work, the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationship have a great impact on the perception of work environment. As the mainstay of private college faculty, post-90s teachers carry several individual features: the pursuit of freedom, the emphasis on contractual spirit, and the yearn for happiness. In the environment of private colleges, whether these individual features could change the outcome of interpersonal communication, and how their perception of interpersonal relationship affects job behaviors and performance need further attention. This paper explores the influence of interpersonal relationship on the work performance of post-90s teachers, and improves the future understanding of post-90s private college teachers.

5.2 Practical Significance

(1) Laying a foundation for further understanding of the features of post-90s private college teachers

Some studies have analyzed the personalities and human resource features of post-90s employees. But the post-90s teachers in private colleges have not attracted sufficient attention from the academia. Teachers are often labeled as serious, amiable, cautious, and selfless, a far cry from the personalities of the post-90s, such as freedom, happiness, flexibility, and boldness. In the new era, the new generation of teachers are considered more creative. This paper evaluates the interpersonal relationship level of post-90s college teachers, and the influence path of the relationship on their work performance. To a certain extent, the research results help to understand the interactive model between post-90s private college teachers and others at work, making it possible for the organization and managers to better perceive their group features and implement pertinent management.

(2) Improving employees' work performance from the angle of interpersonal relationship

Despite being a connection between people, interpersonal relationship reflects both the individual willingness for integrating into the organization, and the degree of organizational supports to individuals. The employees good at perceiving interpersonal relationship are more associated with the organization and others, and agree well with the organization and its goals. As a result, they are more motivated and active at work. In the meantime, such employees could obtain more supports, emotional or material, from the outside to cope with difficulties and challenges at work. These supports can enhance their self-efficacy. The paths between the two dimensions of interpersonal relationship (self-image, and caring for others) and the three dimensions of work performance (work dedication, task performance, and interpersonal facilitation) are discovered in this research, facilitating managers and employees to effectively improve the interpersonal communication model, and to optimize the employees' work performance.

5.3 Limitations and Future Work

Limited by time and energy, this research could be improved in several aspects. First, the 951 samples from 19 colleges were collected in the same period, and concentrated on post-90s teachers in private colleges of Henan Province. In future, the sample scope could be expanded and the survey period could be lengthened. Second, our research confirms that organizational commitment partly mediates the relationship between self-image / caring for others, and work performance. However, the influence paths of interpersonal relationship on work performance could be affected by many more situational or individual variables, owing to the variation in individual and job features. The future work could introduce more mediating and regulating variables to the research framework of interpersonal relationship, so as to further understand the influence paths and boundary conditions between interpersonal relationship and work performance.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are included within the article.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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