

Correlates of Chinese Police Job Satisfaction

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The authors thank the Editor, Editorial Staff, and Reviewers for the review of the paper. Their comments improved the paper.

ABSTRACT

Very little research has been conducted on how workplace variables are associated with Chinese police job satisfaction. The present study fills this gap. Using responses from 589 Chinese police officers, the association of job satisfaction with workplace job demands (i.e. role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of the job) and workplace job resources (training, job variety, job autonomy, and quality supervision) were tested. Ordinary least squares regression analysis indicated that role conflict, role overload, and dangerousness of the job all had non-significant associations with job satisfaction. Role ambiguity was a significant negative predictor, while training, job variety, job autonomy, and quality supervision all had significant positive relationships with job satisfaction. The results indicate that Chinese police administrators need to reduce role ambiguity and to improve training views, job variety, job autonomy, and quality supervision, which, in turn, should increase the level of satisfaction gained from the job by officers.

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction refers to an affective (i.e. emotional) outcome consisting of 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences' (Locke, 1976, p. 1300), and it is an important dimension of work. When a job meets a person's wants and needs, the person is more likely to experience job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has been observed to be related to important outcomes. For example, job satisfaction resulted in higher organization commitment for US officers (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2005). Studies on South Korean officers found that job satisfaction was associated with increased support for civilian oversight and reduced cynicism (Kang and Nalla, 2011; Lee and Moon, 2011). Studies on Canadian officers found that those who reported higher levels of job satisfaction also indicated greater levels of self-esteem (Kohan and O'Connor, 2002). Studies have also found that higher levels of job satisfaction were linked with reduced turnover intent among Canadian, US, British, and New Zealand officers (Allisey *et al.*, 2014; Brough and Frame, 2004; Kohan and O'Connor, 2002). Job satisfaction has also been associated with lower at-risk alcohol consumption among Australian law enforcement officers and lower burnout among Norwegian and Swiss police officers (Davey *et al.*, 2000; Manzoni and Eisner, 2006; Martinussen *et al.*, 2007). In light of the importance of job satisfaction for police officers, research has been conducted on the factors linked to job satisfaction, including workplace ones.

Studies have found various workplace variables that are linked to Western, particularly USA, police job satisfaction. For example, the workplace variables of role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness have been reported to be related to lower job satisfaction among British officers, Canadian officers, Indian officers, and US officers (Burke, 1994; Frank *et al.*, 2022; Johnson, 2012; Paoline and Gau, 2020; Redman and Snape, 2006; Rhodes, 2015). Further, the workplace variables of training, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision have been observed to be linked to higher satisfaction with the job among British officers, Indian officers, and US officers (Allisey *et al.*, 2014; Brough and Frame, 2004; Eliason, 2006; Johnson, 2012; Lambert *et al.*, 2015; Miller *et al.*, 2009; Paoline and Gau, 2020; Reiner and Zhao, 1999; Zhao *et al.*, 1999). Little published research has examined how different workplace variables are associated with job satisfaction among Chinese police officers. The current study used the job demands and resources model to examine why and how workplace variables were associated with the job satisfaction of Chinese police officers. This model divides workplace variables into two general categories of job demands and job resources, where job demands make the job more difficult and cause psychological strain for a person while job resources make the job more enjoyable and successful for a person. This model holds that job demands reduce positive outcomes like job satisfaction and job resources increase positive outcomes such as job satisfaction (Demerouti and Bakker,

2011; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). The current study examined the association of the job demand variables of role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of the job, and the job resources variables of training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision with the job satisfaction of Chinese police officers.

There are several reasons that the current study is important for both practical and theoretical reasons. In terms of practical significance, this study can provide police administrators with information concerning how job demand and job resource variables of role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, perceived dangerousness of the job, training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision related to job satisfaction among Chinese police officers. Administrators can use the findings of the current study to raise the job satisfaction of officers, which benefits both officers and the police organization. Additionally, exploring the link between workplace variables and officers' job satisfaction across nations is important for theoretical reasons as well. Without this research, it is unclear if associations are universal (i.e. cut across countries and cultures) and are contextual and situational (i.e. vary across nations and cultures). International research can help narrow the gap between countries and build bridges so that findings and information flow more freely (Cao and Cullen, 2001). Further, as Jowell (1998) pointed out, 'the importance and utility to the social science of rigorous cross-national measures is incontestable. They help to reveal not only intriguing differences between countries and cultures but also aspects of one's own country and culture that would be difficult or impossible to detect from domestic data alone' (p. 168).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job demands–resources model

The current study was guided by the job demands–resources model, a widely used theoretical model for examining why workplace variables affect employees (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). The model was developed to improve employee wellbeing by explaining work strain and work motivation at work, which, in turn, influence other salient work outcomes such as job satisfaction (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). This model divides workplace variables into two categories of job demands and job resources. Demerouti *et al.* (2001) defined job demands as 'those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained effort and are therefore associated with physiological or psychological costs' (p. 501). Demerouti and Bakker (2011) further indicated that job demands are 'work circumstances that involve excessive or undesirable constraints that interfere with or inhibit an individual's ability to achieve valued goals' (p. 4). As job demands result in psychological strain on workers, which in turn often results in negative outcomes (e.g. job stress and job burnout) and lower levels of positive outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction and organizational commitment) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti and Bakker, 2011). Job resources tend to make work more pleasant and allow a person to be more successful at work (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Demerouti *et al.* (2001) noted that job resources were 'those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce demands and

the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development' (p. 501). Further, job resources can buffer the negative effects of job demands (Bakker *et al.*, 2005). In sum, job demands tend to result in psychological strain and job resources typically lead to greater positive psychological state of mind (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014).

There is no one set of specific job demands or resources across all occupations. As noted by Schaufeli and Taris (2014), 'the job demands–resources model does not restrict itself to specific job demands or job resources. It assumes any demand and any resource may affect employee health and well-being' (p. 44). Moreover, the association of job demands and resources with work outcomes can vary by occupation, outcome, and by nation. What the model does indicate is that job demands are likely to cause negative work outcomes (e.g. burnout) and decrease positive outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction) and job resources are likely to reduce negative work outcomes and increase positive outcomes. The job demands–resources model allows scholars to divide workplace variables into demand variables and resources variables. The current study used the role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, perceived dangerousness of the job, training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision variables which had been studied in other police officer research in other nations to explore how they were related to the job satisfaction of Chinese police officers, a group which has not been studied much in past research on how workplace variables impact officer satisfaction. For the current study, the job demand variables were role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, perceived dangerousness of the job because, as shown in past research, they make the job more difficult for police officers, raising the likelihood of lower satisfaction from the job. For the current study, the job resource variables were views of training, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision and the dependent variable was job satisfaction. As shown by research with officers in other nations, these variables make the job more enjoyable and raise the level of job satisfaction. Again, what is not known is how these demand and resource variables are associated with Chinese police officer job satisfaction. The next section provides a definition of the variables and the predicted association with each variable with the job satisfaction of Chinese police officers.

Focus of the current study

The job demands–resources model is broad and allows for researchers to focus on potential job demands, which make the job more difficult, resulting in strain, ultimately increasing negative work outcomes (e.g., job burnout) and decreasing positive work outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction). In addition, the model indicates researchers need to identify and test job resource variables, which should reduce negative work outcomes and increase positive work outcomes (Demerouti and Bakker, 2011). There is no set of job demand and resource variables that cut across all occupations because the work experiences differ between different outcomes. For example, dangerousness of the job is likely a more of a job demand for police officers than for accountants. The job demands–resources model indicates that studies need to be conducted to identify job demands and job resources across different occupations. In addition, the associations of workplace variables with outcomes can differ across different settings, such

as nations. The current study examined how role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, perceived dangerousness of the job, training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision were related to satisfaction from the job for Chinese police officers. These variables have not been studied among Chinese police job satisfaction. We did not use the job demands–resources model to select the variables for the current study. Rather, this model was used to group previous studied variables with police in other nations as either job demands or job resources to explain the predicted relationship with Chinese officer job satisfaction. What follows is a definition of each variable, why it is viewed as a job demand or job resource, and the predicted relationship among Chinese officers.

Role ambiguity refers to a lack of clarity about job expectations or how the work is to be done (Triplett *et al.*, 1996). Role ambiguity lies at the opposite end of the continuum from role clarity (Keena *et al.*, 2020). Officers deal with a wide range of situations and need direction on how to respond (Qureshi *et al.*, 2019). The lack of understanding how to do job tasks can result in ambiguity for an officer. This ambiguity is a job demand because it makes the officer's job more difficult. The resulting psychological strain can detract from the level of satisfaction gained from the job. Role ambiguity was negatively linked to job satisfaction for British officers (Redman and Snape, 2006), Ghanaian officers (Gyamfi, 2014), Indian officers (Frank *et al.*, 2022), South Korean officers (Lee *et al.*, 2015), and US officers (Rhodes, 2015). Role ambiguity was hypothesized to have a negative association with Chinese police job satisfaction (*Hypothesis 1*).

Role conflict occurs when job duties and directions are inconsistent, such as receiving conflicting orders from different supervisors (Qureshi *et al.*, 2019). Role conflict is a job demand because being given conflicting directions and orders can result in aggravation and frustration. This strain is likely to decrease the enjoyment gained from the job. Role conflict was observed to be related to lower officer job satisfaction among Canadian officers (Burke, 1994), British officers (Redman and Snape, 2006), US officers (Johnson, 2012; Rhodes, 2015), Indian officers (Kumar, 2017), and Nigerian officers (Adebayo and Ogunsina, 2011). Role conflict was postulated to have a negative relationship with Chinese police job satisfaction (*Hypothesis 2*).

Role overload refers to when a person is required to do too many work tasks or not given sufficient time to do the tasks (Qureshi *et al.*, 2019). Role overload can result in being overwhelmed and tense. Role overload is a job demand. The psychological strain from role overload is likely to detract from the job, making it less pleasant. Role overload was reported to be linked to lower job satisfaction among Ghanaian officers (Gyamfi, 2014), Indian officers (Frank *et al.*, 2022), and South Korean officers (Lee *et al.*, 2015). Role overload was predicted to have a negative association with Chinese police job satisfaction (*Hypothesis 3*).

Perceived dangerousness of the job refers to feeling at risk of being hurt or injured on the job (Frank *et al.*, 2022). Being a police officer carries risks. It involves dealing with uncooperative suspects and, at times, using force to gain control of a situation. Feeling at risk is a job demand because it can result in apprehension, raising the level of psychological strain for an officer. In the end, the amount of satisfaction from the job is likely to be reduced due to feeling at risk. Dangerousness of the job was found to be associated with lower job satisfaction among the

USA jail staff (Paoline and Gau, 2020). For the current study, perceived dangerousness of the job was hypothesized to have a negative link to Chinese police job satisfaction (*Hypothesis 4*).

Training views refers to the perception that the organization provides quality training to do the job (Lambert *et al.*, 2015). Training can provide officers with the skills to be more successful at their jobs, as well as giving them greater confidence (Lambert *et al.*, 2016). Training is a job resource. Being successful at the job can result in a sense of pride, which, in turn, can result in a more positive psychological state of mind, resulting in greater job satisfaction. While not frequently studied among officers, training views were observed to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction among Indian police officers (Lambert *et al.*, 2015). Perceptions of training were predicted to be positively related to the job satisfaction of Chinese officers (*Hypotheses 5*).

Job variety deals with the amount of variety in the job/position (Curry *et al.*, 1986). Some positions are monotonous and tedious, requiring similar activities and little mental creativity. Other positions require a wide range of activities and require mental thought (Keena *et al.*, 2020). Jobs/positions with job variety are a job resource. Job variety provides an enjoyable and stimulating work experience (Lambert *et al.*, 2015). Job variety can result in greater job enrichment, resulting in raised satisfaction from the job. Among Chinese officers, Indian, Nigerian, and US officers, a positive relationship between job variety and job satisfaction has been reported (Chen, 2018; Eliason, 2006; Kumar, 2017; Lambert *et al.*, 2015; Miller *et al.*, 2009; Obodo *et al.*, 2019; Reiner and Zhao, 1999). Job variety was postulated to be positively associated with the job satisfaction of the Chinese officers in the current study (*Hypotheses 6*).

Job autonomy is the perceived degree of control of job tasks and the order of these tasks (Buker and Dolu, 2010; Lambert *et al.*, 2006). Job autonomy is the degree of perceived input in the job. Some jobs/positions, allow officers a greater say than other ones (Kumar, 2017). Job autonomy is a job resource, as it allows officers to structure their duties in a manner to allow them to be more successful. Job autonomy sends a message that the officer is trusted and valued by the organization (Lambert *et al.*, 2022). Job autonomy allows for psychological positive feelings concerning the job and allows greater enjoyment from the job, which, in turn, likely raises the level of satisfaction gained from the job. Past studies have observed that job autonomy is linked to greater job satisfaction among British officers (Allisey *et al.*, 2014), Indian officers (Kumar, 2017; Lambert *et al.*, 2015), Nigerian (Obodo *et al.*, 2019), Turkish officers (Buker and Dolu, 2010), and US officers (Johnson, 2012; Miller *et al.*, 2009; Reiner and Zhao, 1999; Zhao *et al.*, 1999). For the current study, job autonomy was hypothesized to have a positive association with job satisfaction among the studied Chinese officers (*Hypothesis 7*).

Quality supervision is a job resource. Quality supervisors provide direction, guidance, and support for officers to do their jobs (Brough and Frame, 2004). Supervisors can aid officers in making the job more enjoyable and for the performance of officers to be more successful (Lambert *et al.*, 2015). In the end, quality supervision can result in the job being more pleasant and productive for officers, raising the level of positive state of mind from the job (Lambert *et al.*, 2015). Supervision has been reported to be related to the job satisfaction of Indian officers (Kumar, 2017;

Lambert et al. 2015), South Korean officers (Lee et al., 2015), Turkish officers (Kula, 2017; Kula and Guler, 2014), and US officers (Brough and Frame, 2004; Carlan, 2007; Johnson, 2012; Miller et al., 2009; Paoline and Gau, 2020; Reiner and Zhao, 1999; Zhao et al., 1999). Supervision was predicted to have a positive relationship with the Chinese officers in the current study (*Hypothesis 8*).

The overall effects of the job demand and job resource variables as groups were tested to determine whether the job demands–resources model postulation that job demands as a group decrease the positive work outcome of job satisfaction, and job resources as a group increase positive work outcome of job satisfaction. Specifically, job demands as a group were postulated to be associated with lower Chinese police officer job satisfaction (*Hypothesis 9*), and job resources as a group were hypothesized to be related to higher Chinese police officer job satisfaction (*Hypothesis 10*). In sum, the current study used currently studied variables of officer job satisfaction in other nations to see how these variables were associated with satisfaction from the job among Chinese police officers, an area which has little published research. Using the job demands–resources model as a guide, the current study divided the selected variables into either job demands or job resources and the model was used to explain why demand variables would reduce Chinese officer job satisfaction and job resources would increase Chinese officer job satisfaction. As previously noted, job demands make the job more difficult, resulting in strain, which, in the end, lowers the level of job satisfaction. Conversely, job resources make the job more pleasant and successful, resulting in positive psychological feelings, which should increase the level of satisfaction gained from the job. As the effects of variables can vary across nations, it is important to examine how workplace job demand and resource variables are associated with a given outcome across different nations. The current study was, therefore, undertaken.

Brief overview of policing in China

In order to place the current study and the results, a brief overview of policing in China is provided. China has a centralized police force (Jiao, 2001). Broadly speaking, policing in China consists of public security police, state security police, prison police (i.e., prison guard), judicial police for people's courts, and judicial police for people's procuratorates. Narrowly speaking, 'police' in China refers to public security police, which are similar to typical Western police. All the public security police are under the Ministry of Public Security in China. There are provincial, prefectural, county, township, and paichusuo (police station) levels for the police. Each lower level of police organization reports to the higher level. The current study studied officers assigned to the public security police.

The major functions of the public security police include, but are not limited to, enforcement of laws and policies of the central government, keeping public safety and order, preventing crime, investigating law-violating activities, household registration (*hukou*, which is to ensure the residence of a person), and serving citizens in need. Compared to their Western counterparts, Chinese public security police have greater power and discretion in performing their duties (Jiang et al., 2012). For example, Chinese police have the authority to hand out various administrative

sanctions, ranging from fines to detention without any judicial approval. Chinese police only need the police chief's permission to conduct any kind of searches and seizures (Ma, 2003). Different positions in the public security police vary in their work schedules. For instance, patrol officers usually have three shifts of 8 am to 4 pm, 4 pm to 12 am, and 12 am to 8 am. These are similar shifts for many Western police officers. Officers for household registration typically work from 8:30 am to 6 pm including lunch break. There is a need for more public security officers. Due to understaffing and many job duties, Chinese police officers are arguably more overworked than other civil servants in China (Jiao, 2001; Wang et al., 2014). Improving the job satisfaction of Chinese police officers is, therefore, important.

METHOD

Participants

This study had human subject's approval and the approval of the Chinese governmental agency. Additionally, the data collection followed ethical research standards. No person was required to participate in the study. Data were collected from officers during training programs in three major Chinese cities, selected to represent the different regions of China, located in southern, central, and western China. A total of 666 questionnaires were distributed in roughly equal proportions in the three programs in each different city (i.e. one-third in each city in each regional program). Participants were told that the participation in the study was voluntary. As the survey was anonymous, participants were also informed not to place any identifying marks on the survey. Participants were further informed that they could stop answering survey questions at any time or skip any question. A total of 589 completed surveys were returned, which was a response rate of 88%. Approximately 32% of the returned surveys were from the southern area, 34% from the central area, and 34% from the western area. Only the research team had access to the returned surveys.

Variables

Dependent variable Job satisfaction was the dependent variable in the current study. Job satisfaction was measured using the following four items adapted from Brayfield and Rothe (1951): 1. Most days I am happy about my job; 2. I find real satisfaction in my job; 3. I feel satisfied with my job; and 4. Most days I am enthusiastic about my job. The response option was 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha for these items was .92. The responses were added to form an index for job satisfaction.

Independent variables The job demands were role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of the job. The items for role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload were adapted from Triplett et al. (1996), and the items used to measure perceived dangerousness of the job were from Cullen et al. (1985). Job ambiguity was measured using two items: 1. I do not always understand what is expected of me at work and 2. My job expectations are unclear. The role conflict items were: 1. I regularly receive conflicting requests at work from two or

more people; 2. Sometimes I am criticized by one supervisor for doing something ordered by another supervisor; and 3. I often feel caught in the middle between trying to appease different supervisors and administrators. The following two items were used for role overload: 1. I am responsible for almost an unmanageable number of assignments and job duties and 2. I consider myself overworked on my job. Four perceived dangerousness of the job were used: 1. I work at a dangerous job; 2. My job is a lot more dangerous than most jobs in the community; 3. At my job, there is a real risk of being hurt or injured; and 4. My job carries a real risk of being hurt or injured. The response options for the job demand items were the same as job satisfaction. The Cronbach alpha values for role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of the job were .76, .80, .68, and .95, respectively. Indexes for the four job demand variables were created by summing the responses.

The four job resource variables were training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision. The response option for the job response items was 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree. The training views items were adapted from Lambert *et al.* (2009) and were: 1. My organization offers meaningful, practical training; 2. I have been provided enough training to do my job well; and 3. The training I have received has helped me. The Cronbach alpha was .81. Job variety and job autonomy items were adapted from Curry *et al.* (1986). The job variety items, which had a Cronbach alpha of .85, were: 1. My job requires that I must constantly learn new things; 2. My job requires that I be very creative; and 3. My job has a lot of variety in it. The four job autonomy items, which had a Cronbach alpha

of .87, were: 1. I have flexibility in how and when to do my job duties; 2. I have a great deal of say in how my job is done; 3. My job does not allow me much opportunity to make my own decisions; and 4. I have a great deal of freedom as to how I do my job. Views of quality and supportive supervision were measured by five items adapted from Griffin *et al.* (2012): 1. My supervisor tends not to talk down to employees; 2. My supervisor gives me advance notice of changes; 3. My supervisor is good at his/her job; 4. When decisions are made by my supervisor, persons affected are asked for their ideas; and 5. My supervisor is friendly and approachable. The supervision items had a Cronbach alpha of .89. Indexes for the job resource variables were created by summing responses to the respective items.

Finally, the personal characteristics of gender, age, tenure in the current position, and educational level were included more as control than explanatory variables. Gender was coded as men = 1 and women = 0. Age was measured in years. Tenure in the position was measured in years. Educational level was coded as a dichotomous variable representing whether the participant had earned a bachelor's degree or higher (1) or not (0).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. There was significant variation in the variables (i.e. none were constants). The data conformed approximately to a normal distribution based on the skewness and kurtosis statistics. Likewise, the median and mean values for the variables are similar to one another, also suggesting a normal distribution. Except for role overload, all the variables measuring latent concepts (e.g. job

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for study

| Variable | Description | Min | Max | Md | Mn | SD |
|------------------|--|-----|-----|----|-------|------|
| Dependent var | | | | | | |
| Job satisfaction | 4-item additive index, $\alpha = .92$ | 4 | 24 | 17 | 16.33 | 4.31 |
| Job demands | | | | | | |
| Role ambiguity | 2-item additive index, $\alpha = .76$ | 2 | 12 | 7 | 6.77 | 2.28 |
| Role conflict | 3-item additive index, $\alpha = .80$ | 3 | 18 | 11 | 10.95 | 3.24 |
| Role overload | 2-item additive index, $\alpha = .68$ | 2 | 12 | 6 | 6.37 | 2.21 |
| Dangerousness | 4-item additive index, $\alpha = .95$ | 4 | 24 | 20 | 18.88 | 4.21 |
| Job resources | | | | | | |
| Training views | 3-item additive index, $\alpha = .81$ | 3 | 18 | 12 | 11.96 | 3.00 |
| Job variety | 3-item additive index, $\alpha = .85$ | 3 | 18 | 14 | 13.53 | 2.83 |
| Job autonomy | 3-item additive index, $\alpha = .87$ | 3 | 18 | 12 | 11.22 | 3.34 |
| Supervision | 5-item additive index, $\alpha = .89$ | 5 | 30 | 20 | 19.91 | 5.48 |
| Personal chars | | | | | | |
| Gender | 16% female (coded 0) 84% male (coded 1) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0.84 | 0.36 |
| Age | Age in continuous years | 21 | 57 | 35 | 36.37 | 7.35 |
| Tenure | Years in current position | .1 | 40 | 5 | 6.21 | 5.48 |
| Educ level | 21% less than bachelor (coded 0) 79% bachelor or higher (coded 1) | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.79 | 0.40 |

Note. Min stands for minimum value, Max for maximum value, Md for median value, Mn for mean value, SD for standard deviation value, Dependent var for dependent variable, Dangerousness for perceived dangerousness of the job, Personal chars for personal characteristics, Educ level for educational level, and α for Cronbach's alpha value, a measure of internal reliability. The number of participants was 586.

satisfaction) had Cronbach alpha values of .76 or higher, which is viewed as good. Role overload was .68. While low, it is above the cut-off level of .60.

Table 2 presents a correlation matrix of the study variables. All four personal characteristic variables had non-significant correlations. Role overload and perceived dangerousness of the job also had non-significant correlations. Role ambiguity and role conflict both had statistically significant negative correlations, which means increases in either of these job demands were associated with lower satisfaction. All job resource variables had significant positive correlations, implying that an increase in any of them was related to higher job satisfaction.

Four ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were run to examine the impact of the three groups of independent variables (i.e. personal characteristics, job demands, and job resources) on job satisfaction and to test hypotheses 1–10. For all four OLS regression models, job satisfaction was the dependent variable. Model 1 only has the personal characteristics as the independent variables. Model 2 only has the job demands as the independent variables, and Model 3 only has the job resources as the independent variables. Model 4 is the full regression equation the personal characteristics, the job demands, and the job resources as the independent variables. Multicollinearity (i.e. when two or more predictor variables share too much of an overlap) was not an issue. Multicollinearity is seen as a problem when variance inflation factor (VIF) scores exceed 5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). None of the VIF scores was higher than 2.81; as such, multicollinearity was judged not to be a problem. The issues of outliers, influential cases, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and independence of errors (all of which can affect the regression results) were tested (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). The regression analysis results are presented in Table 3.

The R^2 for personal characteristics as the only independent variables was .005 and was not significant ($P = .62$). Further,

none of the four personal characteristics of gender, age, tenure, and educational level were significant predictors. The R^2 for Model 2 with only the job demand variables was .03 and was significant ($P = .01$). Role conflict and perceived dangerousness of the job were not significant predictors. Both role ambiguity and role overload had significant negative associations with Chinese officer job satisfaction. As such, Hypothesis 9 was only partially supported. For Model 3 (only the job resource variables, R^2 was .37 ($P \leq .01$)). All four job resource measures of training, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision were significant predictors of job satisfaction; therefore, Hypothesis 10 was supported. The R^2 for Model 4 with the personal characteristics, job demands, and job resources was .38, which meant the independent variables as a group explained about 38% of the observed variance in the job satisfaction measure. Among the personal characteristics, only educational level had a significant association with the dependent variable. Officers with a bachelor's or higher degree reported lower-than-average satisfaction. Role ambiguity was the only job demand to have a significant relationship with job satisfaction. Increases in role ambiguity were associated with reductions in reported satisfaction. This means Hypothesis 1 was supported but Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were not. All four job resource variables had significant positive relationships with the dependent variable, indicating that increases in each of these job resource measures were related to greater satisfaction from the job. Hypotheses 5, 6, 7, and 8 were supported. The absolute values of the significant standardized regression coefficients (i.e. values in the β column in Table 3) can be ranked to indicate the size of the relationship. Supervision had the largest sized effect, followed training views, and then job autonomy. Job variety had the fourth largest sized effect, followed by the job demand of job ambiguity. Educational level had the smallest sized effect.

Table 2: Correlation matrix for study variables

| Variable | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. | 10. | 11. | 12. |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Job Sat | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Ambiguity | -.13** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Conflict | -.08* | .72** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Overload | .03 | .44** | .62** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Danger | .03 | .21** | .28** | .35** | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| 6. Training | .54** | -.03 | .01 | .03 | .08 | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 7. Job variety | .42** | .01 | .09* | .15** | .24** | .57** | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 8. Autonomy | .44** | -.02 | -.03 | .04 | .03 | .51** | .28** | 1.00 | | | | |
| 9. Supervision | .52** | -.11** | -.14** | -.04 | .02 | .61** | .45** | .52** | 1.00 | | | |
| 10. Gender | -.02 | -.10* | .14** | .14** | .13** | -.02 | .05 | -.04 | -.03 | 1.00 | | |
| 11. Age | .06 | -.02 | -.02 | -.04 | -.20** | .07 | -.02 | .11** | .05 | .10* | 1.00 | |
| 12. Tenure | .01 | -.01 | .01 | .01 | -.11** | .04 | -.02 | .06 | .01 | -.01 | .39** | 1.00 |
| 13. Educ level | -.02 | .04 | -.01 | .01 | .04 | .10* | .06 | .05 | .08 | -.17** | -.15** | -.17** |

Note. Educ level stands for educational level, Ambiguity for role ambiguity, Conflict for role conflict, Overload for role overload, Danger for perceived dangerousness of the job, Training for training views, Autonomy for job autonomy, and Job Sat for job satisfaction. See Table 1 for a description of the variables and how they were measured. The number of participants was 586. With pairwise deletion, the number of cases ranged from 586 to 545.

* $P \leq .05$, ** $P \leq .01$.

Table 3: OLS regression results with Chinese police job satisfaction as the dependent variable

| Independent variables | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | |
|--------------------------|---------|------------|---------|---------|--------------|---------|---------|---------------|---------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | B | SE | β | B | SE | β | B | SE | β | B | SE | β |
| Job demands | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Role ambiguity | | | | -.25 | .11 | -.13* | | | | -.19 | .09 | -.10* |
| Role conflict | | | | -.10 | .09 | -.07 | | | | .01 | .08 | .01 |
| Role overload | | | | -.17 | .08 | .12** | | | | -.06 | .09 | -.03 |
| Dangerousness of the job | | | | .04 | .04 | .04 | | | | -.03 | .04 | -.03 |
| Job resources | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Training views | | | | | | | .34 | .07 | .24** | .28 | .07 | .20** |
| Job variety | | | | | | | .20 | .06 | .13** | .22 | .07 | .15** |
| Job autonomy | | | | | | | .21 | .05 | .16** | .24 | .06 | .18** |
| Supervision | | | | | | | .18 | .04 | .23** | .19 | .04 | .24** |
| Personal characteristics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | -.26 | .54 | -.02 | | | | | | | -.08 | .43 | -.01 |
| Age | .03 | .03 | .06 | | | | | | | .01 | .02 | .01 |
| Tenure | .002 | .04 | .002 | | | | | | | -.02 | .03 | -.03 |
| Educational level | -.31 | .48 | -.03 | | | | | | | -.84 | .39 | -.08* |
| F value (df) | | 0.66 (544) | | | 4.09 (584)** | | | 86.42 (585)** | | | 26.77 (543)** | |
| R ² | | .005 | | | .03 | | | .37 | | | .38 | |

Note. B represents the unstandardized regression coefficient, SE for the standard error of the coefficient, β for the standardized regression coefficient, VIF for the variance inflation factor, a measure of multicollinearity, and df for degrees of freedom. Dangerousness of the job stands for perceived dangerous of the job. See Table 1 for a description of the variables, how they were measured and their descriptive statistics.

* $P \leq .05$. ** $P \leq .01$.

DISCUSSION

The current study examined how role ambiguity, role conflict, role conflict, dangerousness of the job, training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision with job satisfaction of Chinese police officers. While these variables have been studied with police in other nations, they have not in published research among Chinese police officers. As the effects of workplace variables may vary in their effects across different nations, it is important to conduct research on how these variables are associated with job satisfaction. These variables were studied among Chinese police officers. The job demands–resources model was used to group the above variables into the categories of either job demands or job resources and to hypothesize their relationship with Chinese job satisfaction. Job demands were predicted to lower Chinese officer satisfaction and job resources were postulated to raise Chinese officer satisfaction. Specifically, role ambiguity, role conflict, role conflict, dangerousness of the job were hypothesized as job demands to have negative associations and training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision as job resources would have positive relationships with the job satisfaction of the studied Chinese police officers. The results partially supported the hypotheses.

There are two major conclusions for the current study. The first major finding is that job resource variables had significant positive associations with job satisfaction and only a single job demand variable, role ambiguity, had a significant negative association. In fact, based on R^2 values for OLS regression Models 2, 3, and 4, as a group the four job resource variables had a far greater effect on job satisfaction than did the job demand variables as a group. Further, the four job resource variables accounted for far more variance in the job satisfaction index than did personal

characteristics. The job resource variables explained more than 95% of the observed variance in the job satisfaction measure. This suggests the need to focus on training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision to raise the level of job satisfaction. It also suggests that the job resource variables may have a greater effect on positive outcomes like job satisfaction than do the four job demand variables. It could be that job demands play a greater role in shaping negative work outcomes among officers, such as job stress or job burnout. This is an untested postulation that needs to be examined in future research. What is known is that the four job resource variables of training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision were all linked to higher satisfaction among surveyed Chinese officers.

Perceptions of quality training likely give both the skills and the confidence to do the job. This probably results in not only an officer putting forth effort to address challenging situations but allow them to be more successful. In turn, this effort and the greater likelihood of being successful probably increases the level of positive psychological feelings, in the end resulting in higher satisfaction from the job. While not capable with the current cross-sectional data, future research using longitudinal data should examine if training reduces role ambiguity officers. It is said that ‘variety is the spice of life’. The current results indicate that variety on the job can result in greater satisfaction of officers. Job variety likely stimulates and rewards officers, which in return is reflected in enjoying the job more. Likewise, job autonomy allows officers to have a more stimulating and rewarding job. Job autonomy also sends a message that the police organization trusts and values officers. The results indicate that higher job satisfaction is a likely outcome of job autonomy for officers, at least those in the current study. Finally, quality supervision is associated with higher job satisfaction. Supervisors are a critical

element of a police organization to aid officers in doing not only their job correctly but also to be more productive and successful (Brough and Frame, 2004; Lambert *et al.*, 2015). Supervisors can either make the job pleasant, enjoyable, and more successful or they can make the job difficult and dreary. In the end, the current results indicate that supervisors play a role in shaping the job satisfaction of the studied Chinese officers. Role ambiguity had a direct significant negative association with job satisfaction in the regression analysis. Role ambiguity likely makes the job more difficult and less effective, which in turn, decreases a sense of accomplishment and increases psychological strain. One possible explanation is that although China has different political, cultural, and ideological contexts from those in the USA, an individual's level of job satisfaction is largely affected by factors within employing organizations.

The second major conclusion is that the current study has both similarities and differences compared to past studies among officers in other nations in how the eight studied variables were related to job satisfaction. In other words, some of the associations appear consistent across officers in different nations and other associations are contextual, possibly varying across nations. Specifically, the job resources of training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision may be universal in their positive association with officer job satisfaction. training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision has been reported to be positively related to job satisfaction among officers in England, India, Nigeria, South Korea, Turkey, and the USA (Allisey *et al.*, 2014; Brough and Frame, 2004; Buker and Dolu, 2010; Carlan, 2007; Eliason, 2006; Johnson, 2012; Kula, 2017; Kula and Guler, 2014; Kumar, 2017; Lambert *et al.*, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2015; Miller *et al.*, 2009; Obodo *et al.*, 2019; Paoline and Gau, 2020; Reiner and Zhao, 1999; Zhao *et al.*, 1999). Similarly, the job demand of role ambiguity also appears to be negatively related to job satisfaction among the Chinese officers in the current study and among British, Ghanaian, Indian, South Korean, and US officers in past studies (Frank *et al.*, 2022; Gyamfi, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2015; Redman and Snape, 2006; Rhodes, 2015). Based on the past and current results, it appears that role ambiguity may reduce the level of satisfaction among officers in different nations. On the other hand, the job demands of role conflict, role overload, and dangerousness of the job are not universal in their effects, at least among the Chinese officers in the current study. Role conflict, role overload, and dangerousness of the job did not have significant relationships with job satisfaction. Role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of the job were observed to have negative association with job satisfaction among British, Canadian, Ghanaian, Indian, Nigerian, and US officers (Adebayo and Ogunsina, 2011; Burke, 1994; Frank *et al.*, 2022; Gyamfi, 2014; Johnson, 2012; Kumar, 2017; Lee *et al.*, 2015; Paoline and Gau, 2020; Redman and Snape, 2006; Rhodes, 2015). It appears that the effects of the job demands of role conflict, role overload, and dangerousness on job satisfaction may be contextual, varying among officers across nations. More research involving officers across different nations will provide more information to help answer the question which workplace variables are universal in their effects on police officer job satisfaction and which are contextual. It is important to point out there was only one study that found perceived dangerousness of the job had a negative

association with job satisfaction, and this study was among US police officers (Paoline and Gau, 2020). This supports the need for more studies.

Gender, age, and tenure in the position had no significant relationship with satisfaction in the multivariate regression analysis. Educational level had a significant negative association. In other words, officers with a college bachelor's degree or higher reported on average lower satisfaction from the job. This could be the result of status inconsistency. Officers with a bachelor's degree or higher may expect greater work challenges, opportunities, and pay than is possible being a police officer. The current participants were basically line officers. More importantly, the personal characteristics as a group only accounted for less than 1% of the job satisfaction variance. This indicates that personal characteristics do not play an important role in the job satisfaction of Chinese officers. This is good news for police administrators. It is not possible or ethical to change personal characteristics, such as age or gender, in order to increase job satisfaction. On the other hand, administrators can often improve the job demand and especially the job resources variables.

Assuming replication in future studies, the current findings have implications. Being a police officer can be demanding. Police administrators should undertake efforts to reduce role ambiguity and to increase training views, job variety, job autonomy, and quality supervision. Increasing the job satisfaction of officers should not only benefit the individual officers, but should benefit family of officers, co-workers, the police organization, and the community. Obtaining feedback from officers about the role ambiguity they face and how to reduce it should be done. Officers should be made aware of the issue of role ambiguity and instructed to seek assistance from supervisors for assistance to reduce role ambiguity. Further, supervisors need to be made aware of the issue of role ambiguity and how it can be reduced. Similarly, administrators should obtain feedback from officers concerning why they feel the training is or is not worthwhile and how to improve training. Officers should be allowed input on helping shape the training that is provided (Lambert *et al.*, 2017). Administrators should explore the different positions held by officers in the agency and examine how job variety can be increased. For example, administrators can encourage police officers to learn more skills that may be interesting and challenging for most employees and increases their likelihood of viewing the organization in a more favourable light. Also, feeling capable of performing different jobs may increase officer's face or reputation (Jiang *et al.*, 2018). In turn, this may result in enhanced job satisfaction (Jiang *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, administrators should try to improve perceptions of job autonomy. Supervisors need to be made of the importance of job autonomy and aid officers in having a greater voice in their jobs. Supervisors should honestly explain if some proposed changes to increase job autonomy are impossible to implement. Finally, efforts need to be made to improve the quality of supervision. Supervisors need to be made of the importance of quality supervision, and additional training should be provided to supervisors on enhancing the quality of supervision. Supervisors should be evaluated and rewarded for their successful efforts.

This single exploratory study had several limitations. Additional research is needed to confirm or not the current results, not only among Chinese officers, but officers in other nations.

Moreover, there are other job demand and resource variables, such as work–family conflict, organizational justice, organizational support, and instrumental communication, which need to be examined than those used in the current study. The latent concepts, particularly those with two items, should be measured with more items. Research is needed on the outcomes of job satisfaction among Chinese officers, such as performance, organizational citizenship behaviours, life satisfaction, and turnover. The R^2 value in the multivariate regression analysis in the current study was .38, which means that other variables are related to the job satisfaction of Chinese officers. Future studies need to explore and identify these other variables. While grounded in theory, the current study used a cross-sectional design. Without longitudinal data, the causal relationships cannot be empirically demonstrated. In the end, there is a need to far more research.

In closing, the police provide critical public services in a myriad of nations, and, therefore, investing in officers is important. One way to invest in them is to focus on improving their job satisfaction. The current study examined the association of role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, perceived dangerousness of the job, training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision with the job satisfaction of Chinese officers. These variables were used in past research involving officers in different nations but they may differ in the effects on Chinese police officer job satisfaction. The current study used the job demands–resource model to group these variables into the groups of job demands (role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of the job) and job resources (training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision). This model postulates that job demands lower positive work outcomes, such as job satisfaction, and job resources raise positive work outcomes like job satisfaction. In the current study, role ambiguity, training, variety, autonomy, and supervision were significant predictors. Role conflict, role overload, and dangerousness of the job, however, were not significant predictors of the job satisfaction among the studied Chinese police officers. Two major conclusions were reached. First, the job resource variables had a stronger relationship with job satisfaction than did the job demand variables, including role ambiguity. Second, some workplace variables appear to be universal in their association with satisfaction from the job among officers based on the current and past studies and other variables appear to have a contextual relationship, varying between nations. Specifically, all four job resource variables of training views, job variety, job autonomy, and supervision and the single job demand of role ambiguity appear to be significant predictors of job satisfaction among officers in different nations, with the job resource variables having positive associations and the job demand variable having a negative relationship. Conversely, based on the current and past research, the job demand variables of role conflict, role overload, and perceived dangerousness of the job may vary in their association on officer job satisfaction. Not only is there a need for more research on Chinese officer satisfaction, but there is also a need for such research among officers in a wide array of nations. This research should clarify how various job demand and job resource workplace variables affect satisfaction and whether their associations are universal or contextual, varying by nation. Officers are too valuable and important not to raise their job satisfaction. At the very least, it is hoped that this

current research will spark interest in studying the factors that affect the job satisfaction of police officers in nations across the globe.

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