Administrative Burden and Place Attachment of Overseas Professionals in Wenzhou: A Survey of 104 Overseas Professionals

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Abstract: The competitiveness and innovation of cities is also affected by the international professionals. But the interaction between their experiences in daily life and work as administrators and their attachment to the place has been scarcely examined. The research paper will focus on 104 professionals who have worked and lived in Wenzhou at least six months based on the theory of administrative burden and two-factor theory of Herzberg, which are applied to determine the responses of these professionals. There are correlation analyses and hierarchical regressions of learning costs, psychological costs, compliance costs, bilingual support, motivational factors and local attachment. This result indicates that the most reliable positive determinant across all models is motivational (β= 0.527; p = less than 0.001). In a bivariate analysis, the variables of learning and psychology cost are negatively related to location but they are not independent predictors once other variables are included. Compliance costs have a positive correlation in the final model (β = 0.233; p = 0.030), contrary to the original hypothesis. Bilingual support correlates positively with locality (r = 0.296; p = 0.002), but its independent effect disappears after adjustment. Overall, the place attachment in this sample appears to be more associated with professional perspectives and the socio-cultural environment than with the independent explanatory contribution of the administrative burden.

Keywords: Administrative Burden; Place Attachment; Overseas Professionals; Bilingual Support; Wenzhou

1. Introduction

International professionals are an important resource for technological innovation and regional development. Zhejiang Province is striving to improve the services dedicated to them, while Wenzhou its talent classification instruments, work permits, It has expanded support for innovation and start-ups as well as services for everyday life [1,2]. Wenzhou, a city with a well-known diaspora, has extensive international networks and a dynamic private economy. The recruitment, mobilisation and retention of international professionals is therefore a lasting task [3]. However, an expansion of public support does not guarantee its permanence. Beyond salary and career prospects, everyday experiences – difficulties in accessing information, complexity of formalities, cognitive effort to understand rules and language barriers – influence their assessment of local public services. When applying for a work permit, extending their residence permit, applying for recognition of their qualifications or setting up a business. These professionals interact regularly with local institutions. These management experiences can affect their institutional confidence and their willingness to stay in the city. Existing work also indicates ongoing difficulties for Wenzhou to retain international talent; The embedding perspective, in turn, emphasises the impact of the institutional environment, sector structures and social relations on the return and retention of talent [4,5]. Therefore, it makes sense to examine the relationships between administrative burden and locality based on everyday governance experiences.

Existing research explains mobility and talent retention mainly through attractiveness policies, innovation environment, social inclusion and urban attractiveness. The administrative burden as a governance variable at the individual level remains relatively neglected. Her studies mainly concern social security, organisational compliance and civil services at the front; its application to international talent governance remains limited [6–8]. At the same time, research on locality emphasises identity and functional dependence, but rarely links these with

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institutional frictions in public services [9–13]. This study therefore combines the theory of administrative burden and Herzberg's two-factor theory to examine international professionals in Wenzhou. Learning costs, psychological costs and compliance costs are the most important explanatory variables. Career prospects and perception of the local socio-cultural environment are conceptualized as motivating factors; bilingual support is added as an explanatory variable. Three questions guide the analysis: (a) Are the three dimensions of administrative burden associated with local connectivity? (b) Does bilingual support have independent explanatory power? (c) What are the variables that explain the variance in locality best when administrative burden and development-related incentives are considered? The study does not presuppose that administrative burden is necessarily negative; instead, it assesses its empirical explanatory strength in the context of international talent governance. Compared to most regular users of public services, these professionals can take advantage of improved information search skills and increased professional mobility. Your attachment to a territory may be established together.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Administrative Burden Theory and Its Application

The theory of administrative burden can be applied to analyze the frictions between individuals and public authorities in their interactions. It distinguishes three types of costs related to access to public services or compliance with obligations: learning costs, psychological costs and compliance costs. The former refer to the time and cognitive resources required to find information, understand rules, and identify procedural requirements; the latter relate in particular to anxiety, frustration and stress; third include the time, effort and financial resources spent to comply with institutional requirements [7,14]. The recent studies emphasize that the administrative burden cannot be simplified to the complexity of procedures: it is a product of interactions between institutional design, organizational processes and individual perceptions [6,8]. In the case of overseas professionals, information channels, wording of rules, documentation requirements, language services can all contribute to administrative experiences. Administrative burden is thus not only an expense incurred in performing an administrative task but can also give an indication through which people can assess the local governance environment. Such experiences can also be affected by language proficiency, cross-cultural adjustment, and familiarity with institutional arrangements among the overseas professionals. That implies that the impact of various dimensions of burdens can differ on different individuals and situations.

2.2 Place Attachment Theory and Its Relationship to Talent Mobility

Place attachment is normally composed of place identity and the place dependence. The sense of belonging to a place and the feeling of identification with a place are known as place identity, and the functional dependency on a place in terms of work, living and development opportunities is termed place dependence [12]. The latest literature has also contributed to the topic of place attachment by considering the mobility of people, embeddedness at the local level, and competitiveness of cities [9]. Researching the settlement patterns of highly skilled migrants reveals that the perception of a city, the feelings about the city and the actual situations like language, housing, social interaction, and convenience can be all factors affecting the decision of staying in the city for long-term periods of time [10-11,13]. Place attachment is not merely an attitude but rather a multidimensional attachment that develops during work, life in general and institutional activities. In the case of international professionals it might indicate the presence of the ongoing reliance on employment, state services and community ties. The idea of emotional belonging and functional embedding can be considered as one concept when applied to the professionals working overseas.

2.3 Theoretical Positioning of Bilingual Support and Motivating Factors

Foreign workers employed and residing in a foreign nation constantly process information between languages. Bilingual assistance may help to gain access to policy data, enhance the comprehension of administrative regulations, and aid the utilization of public services. In terms of administrative-burden, it can thus lower learning costs and psychological pressure. Herzberg Two-Factor Theory, however, makes a distinction

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between factors that lead to dissatisfaction and those that lead to positive experiences and intrinsic identification [15]. Administrative burden is considered as a hygiene condition related to governance in the current study and career development opportunities and perceptions of the local socio-cultural environment are conceptualized as motivating factors. This difference allows us to explore whether lessening institutional friction and forming positive developmental conditions have varying relationships with place attachment. A service environment can minimize basic institutional friction but offer too few career opportunities or social integration chances.

It can make professionals content with services, but not deeply embedded in the locality. On the other hand, administrative inconvenience can be more tolerable due to stronger development-related incentives. The theoretical framework thus treats administrative burden and motivating factors as complementary rather than mutually exclusive influences on place attachment.

2.4 Research Hypotheses

Research hypotheses based on these theoretical considerations, the following hypotheses are formulated. H1: The cost of learning is higher in case of less place attachment among international professionals. H2: Higher psychological costs are associated with lower levels of place attachment. H3: Higher compliance costs are associated with lower levels of place attachment among overseas professionals.

3. Method

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

A questionnaire survey was conducted among international professionals who have lived and worked in Wenzhou for at least six months. The data was collected anonymously between April and June 2026 on the Wenjuanxing platform using purposeful sampling. Recruitment relied mainly on social and professional networks, especially local contacts working with international professionals, University staff and relevant practitioners. In accordance with the selection criteria established in the pilot phase, questionnaires were excluded, completed in less than three minutes or with more than 30 % missing data in the main scales. Of the 132 questionnaires received, 104 were taken into account, corresponding to a validity rate of 78.8%. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained and the interview was anonymous. The bilingual questionnaire has been translated and re-translated. Age and length of stay in Wenzhou were not included in the later models because the corresponding fields in the original record were empty.

3.2 Measures

The administrative burden was operationalized across three dimensions: learning costs, psychological costs and compliance costs, each measured with three items: adapted mainly from the work of Moynihan and Herd [14] and related studies on services for international talent [7,14]. Place attachment includes place identity and place dependence, each measured by three items adapted to Wenzhou from the instrument shown in [12]. Bilingual support is measured with five items that assess the clarity and availability of bilingual information in public services, the workplace and the community. Two items measure the motivating factors, namely career prospects and the perception of the local socio-cultural environment. Gender and English proficiency were considered as control variables. All constructs except demographic characteristics are measured on seven-point Likert scales.

3.3 Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics, reliability analyses using Cronbach alpha, Pearson correlations, and hierarchical regressions. The latter were assessed in three steps: Model 1 includes gender, English proficiency, and motivation factors; Model 2 adds learning costs, psychological costs, and compliance costs; Model 3 adds bilingual support. Standardized coefficients (β), R^2, adjusted R^2 and R^2 changes (ΔR^2) are shown. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All analyses were performed using SPSS, version 26.0.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

The final sample comprises 104 international professionals whose main characteristics are listed in Table 1. Men make up 63.5% of the respondents, women 29.8% and those who do not want to state their gender 6.7%. In terms of education level, 53.8% have a doctorate, 22.1%

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have a master's degree, 21.2% have a bachelor's degree and 2.9% with a secondary degree or lower. In terms of the position held, 44.2% are employees, 1.0% are founders or executives, 2.9% are managers, 3.8% are self-employed and 48.1% indicate other status. Mean self-rated English proficiency was 6.80 (SD = 0.53), whereas mean self-rated Chinese proficiency was 2.47 (SD = 1.62), indicating relatively high English proficiency in the sample. As shown in Table 1, the mean learning-cost score was 5.15 (SD = 1.34), the mean psychological-cost score was 4.77 (SD = 1.29), and the mean compliance-cost score was 5.00 (SD = 1.33). Bilingual support had a mean of 3.58 (SD = 1.26), place attachment 4.50 (SD = 1.37), and motivating factors 4.43 (SD = 1.54).

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N = 104)

Variable	Category / Range	Value
Gender	Men / Women / Prefer not to disclose	63.5% / 29.8% / 6.7%
Highest educational attainment	High school or below / Bachelor's / Master's / Doctoral	2.9% / 21.2% / 22.1% / 53.8%
Current position level	Founder/C-level / Manager / Employee / Self-employed / Other	1.0% / 2.9% / 44.2% / 3.8% / 48.1%
Self-rated English proficiency	1–7; 7 = native-level proficiency	M = 6.80, SD = 0.53
Self-rated Chinese proficiency	1–7; 7 = native-level proficiency	M = 2.47, SD = 1.62

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the study measures are reported in Table 2. The coefficients were .850 for learning costs, .732 for psychological costs, .812 for compliance costs, .808 for bilingual support, .836 for the overall place-attachment scale, .873 for place identity, .631 for place dependence, and .740 for motivating factors. With the exception of the place-dependence subscale, which fell into a marginally acceptable range, the measures demonstrated acceptable or good internal consistency. Accordingly, the overall place-attachment score was used in the subsequent regression analyses.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis of the Study Measures

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Learning costs	3	.850
Psychological costs	3	.732
Compliance costs	3	.812
Bilingual support	5	.808
Place attachment (overall scale)	6	.836
Place identity (subscale)	3	.873
Place dependence (subscale)	3	.631
Motivating factors	2	.740

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the major variables are presented in Table 3. Learning costs were weakly and negatively correlated with place attachment ($r = -.247$, $p = .012$), as were psychological costs ($r = -.194$, $p = .048$). The correlation between compliance costs and place attachment was not significant ($r = -.024$, $p = .810$). Bilingual support was positively correlated with place attachment ($r = .296$, $p = .002$), and motivating factors showed the strongest correlation with place attachment ($r = .568$, $p < .001$). The three administrative-burden dimensions were positively intercorrelated and were generally negatively correlated with bilingual support.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Study Variables (N = 104)

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Learning costs	5.15 (1.34)	1					
2. Psychological costs	4.77 (1.29)	.558***	1				
3. Compliance costs	5.00 (1.33)	.487***	.600***	1			
4. Bilingual support	3.58 (1.26)	−.405***	−.323***	−.336***	1		
5. Motivating factors	4.43 (1.54)	−.388***	−.323***	−.259**	.442***	1	
6. Place attachment	4.50 (1.37)	−.247*	−.194*	−.024	.296**	.568***	1

Note: $p < .05$. $p < .01$. $p < .001$.

4.4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

To identify the independent explanatory power of the predictors, three hierarchical regression models were estimated; the results are shown in Table 4. All VIF values were below 1.86, indicating no serious multicollinearity problem.

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Predicting Place Attachment

Predictor	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β
Gender	−.018	−.015	−.018
English proficiency	.066	.060	.083
Motivating factors	.565***	.561***	.527***
Learning costs		−.070	−.046
Psychological costs		−.106	−.105
Compliance costs		.219*	.233*
Bilingual support			.103
R^2	.327	.357	.364
ΔR^2		.030	.007
Adjusted R^2	.307	.317	.318

Note: $p < .05$. $p < .01$. $p < .001$.

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In Model 1, gender, English proficiency, and motivating factors explained 32.7% of the variance in place attachment ($R^2 = .327$; adjusted $R^2 = .307$), and motivating factors positively predicted place attachment ($\beta = .565$, $p < .001$). After the three administrative-burden dimensions were added in Model 2, R^2 increased to .357, with $\Delta R^2 = .030$; the increase was not significant ($p = .224$). Motivating factors remained significant ($\beta = .561$, $p < .001$), and compliance costs showed a positive association with place attachment ($\beta = .219$, $p = .039$), whereas learning costs and psychological costs were not significant. In Model 3, bilingual support was added, increasing R^2 to .364 and adjusted R^2 to .318; $\Delta R^2 = .007$ and was not significant ($p = .302$). In the final model, motivating factors remained the strongest predictor ($\beta = .527$, $p < .001$), compliance costs remained positively associated with place attachment ($\beta = .233$, $p = .030$), and bilingual support was not significant ($\beta = .103$, $p = .302$). Learning costs and psychological costs also remained nonsignificant. Thus, H1, H2, and H3 were not supported.

5. Discussion

5.1 Motivating Factors and Place Attachment

The most consistent finding in this study is that motivating factors remained the strongest predictor of place attachment across all three models. Their standardized coefficients were .565, .561, and .527, and the bivariate correlation with place attachment was .568 ($p < .001$). This result is broadly in line with Herzberg's distinction between hygiene and motivating factors [15]. In this sample, however, the difference showed up mainly in the strength of the associations. Career-related and socio-cultural conditions were much more closely connected with place attachment than administrative convenience. For overseas professionals in Wenzhou, access to suitable professional platforms, industry opportunities, and conditions for social integration may therefore matter more for long-term attachment than whether administrative procedures are smooth. This does not mean that procedural convenience is unimportant. It does mean that talent-retention efforts probably need to do more than reduce inconvenience. They also need to create developmental opportunities that make continued investment in the locality worthwhile. Two governance logics seem to be at work here: one prevents negative experiences through service facilitation, the other creates positive experiences through developmental platforms and urban attractiveness. These logics are complementary rather than interchangeable. In the example of Wenzhou, tighter ties between overseas professionals, major industries, research platforms and enterprise projects can contribute to transforming initial attraction into more long-term local embeddedness.

5.2 Limited Independent Effects of Learning Costs and Psychological Costs

In bivariate analyses, learning and psychological costs are weakly negatively associated with locality, but none of them have a significant independent effect in the hierarchical regressions. This does not mean that the administrative burden is negligible. Their explanatory power may depend on motivating factors and individual characteristics. The relatively high level of education and English proficiency in the sample could allow some professionals to access information through different channels, Ask for help and handle formalities more efficiently. This could weaken the direct relationship between perceived load and location. Future studies could distinguish occupational categories, administrative steps, and residency phases to identify the conditions under which these costs have stronger effects.

5.3 The Positive Association of Compliance Costs: Possible Explanations

It is surprising that the coefficient of compliance costs in the last model was found to be positive and significant. The bivariate correlation between them with local bond is near zero ($r = -0.024$; $p = 0.810$) but the standardized value of the coefficients is a positive one after controlling the other variables and increases to 0.233 ($p = 0.030$) in Model 3. One of the possible explanations can be the presence of both high exposure towards institutions and the anchoring locally. The more serious people are employed, entrepreneurs, researchers, educators or social workers in Wenzhou, the more they may have to formalize, however, it is also true that they will be closer to the resources of the city and less dependent on it as compared to those who are not so active. It could also be said that there is no necessity to see such clear, stable and predictable processes as an obstacle because of the work needed. These are only the assumptions based on the findings of

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these relationships, but not mechanisms.

Since the data are cross-sectional, there is no causal explanation. The given explanations must be studied in more details and interviews or a longitudinal study. It could also mean that there was some common variance or suppression effect in the model due to the almost zero correlation of the bivariate and positive coefficient of adjustment. This pattern cannot be explained by any specific mechanism with the available data. Local embeddedness and institutional contact should not be considered as the research direction but instead they can be used as an indicator that the cost of compliance leads to retention.

5.4 Bivariate and Independent Effects of Bilingual Support

The place attachment was positively associated with bilingual support ($r = .296$, $p = .002$), however, the independent regression coefficient of this variable was not significant when controlling motivating factors and three administrative-burden dimensions ($\beta = .103$, $p = .302$). Bilingual support was also positively correlated with motivating factors ($r = .442$, $p < .001$). This suggests that bilingual services may co-occur with a more supportive development environment, so part of their bivariate explanatory power may overlap with motivating factors. This finding does not negate the practical value of bilingual support. In particular, bilingual support can be a prerequisite for reducing information barriers and improving access to public services. However, a lasting sense of territorial belonging requires additional support in terms of career, sectoral platforms and social integration. In practice, the quality of bilingual services should not be assessed on the basis of a single performance indicator. You can first facilitate access to information and then local experience by accessing professional resources, influence social interactions and everyday pleasures. The assessment of internationalised public services should therefore take into account both their accessibility and the development opportunities experienced by their users.

6. Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Conclusions

Based on a survey of 104 international professionals in Wenzhou, this study examines the relationships between administrative burden, bilingual support, Motivational factors and place attachment. Four findings stand out. First, motivating factors were the strongest and most stable positive predictor of place attachment. Second, learning costs and psychological costs were weakly and negatively correlated with place attachment at the bivariate level but were not significant after other variables were controlled. Third, the place attachment was positively related to compliance costs in the regression models, which is not hypothesized. Fourth, bilingual support had a positive correlation with place attachment but lacked independent explanatory power at the final model. On the whole, place attachment was more strongly linked with development-related motivating factors among the sampled overseas professionals, and the independent explanatory role of administrative burden was comparatively small.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The research paper is a continuation of the application of the theory of administrative burden to the case of the professional talent in foreign countries and place attachment. The findings reveal that the three dimensions of the administrative-burden were not found to be statistically significant in terms of their contribution towards the model explanatory power, which means that the results are context based. The introduction of the two concepts of administrative burden and motivation factors into the same space also suggests that it is possible to minimize the friction within the institution but this does not automatically result in positive experiences or even the development of the place attachment. The compliance costs coefficient has been found to be positive as well meaning that there was no negative linear relationship between the administrative burden and the place attachment; however, this could have been influenced by the frequency of institutional interactions, the background of the professionals and the predictability of processes. The theoretical contribution, therefore, does not consist in refuting the basic principles of the theory of administrative burden, but in showing that: that their manifestations with international professionals can vary depending on the context. People with relatively high human capital, good English skills and high professional mobility may react differently to administrative frictions than ordinary residents.

6.3 Practical Implications

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First, talent retention policies should be based on career and development perspectives. Wenzhou could strengthen connections between international professionals, priority sectors, research platforms and enterprise projects while clearing career paths. Secondly, administrative procedures through information integration, harmonisation of document lists, inter-institutional coordination and monitoring systems should reduce uncertainty. Become more transparent and predictable. Third, the bilingual services must be enhanced, but it is not an independent tool of constraint to the professionals who are internationally mobile. The international service centres and immigration offices can have more emphasis on the use of bilingual guidance and counselling in the international centres and the special talents centres and residential areas. Fourthly, the activities of the international community, professional associations and the multiculturalism should encourage the integration of socio-cultural aspects and the interaction with the Wenzhou on a daily basis. It is also necessary that policies consider the distinction between occupational groups. The policy consultation, project implementation, business registration and other similar services would benefit the entrepreneurial practitioners more than the university and research workers; the university and research workers would need more support on the provision of resources to conduct their research work, career development, and the identification of talent as well as the long-term residents of the country would appreciate the socialization process and provision of everyday services like healthcare and children education.

6.4 Limitations

There are several limits that should be identified. To begin with, the sample of 104 individuals is a result of an intentional selection and may overrepresent those who have high education and good English skills; thus, any generalization should be done with care. Second, the cross-sectional design enables to identify statistical associations, but not to establish strong causal relations. Third, bilingual support and motivation factors can be measured rather easily; the latter is based on two items only. The internal consistency of the subscale location dependence is also relatively low (a = 0.631), which necessitates methodical improvements. Fourth, the fact that there was a positive relationship between compliance costs and place attachment was unexpected and the proposed explanations about institutional contact and procedural predictability do not have direct evidence in the data available at present. The future studies might increase the sample and apply longitudinal monitoring, interviews or comparison across cities to explore the interrelationships between administrative burden, development-related motivating factors and place attachment.

Also, the age and the time of living in Wenzhou were not a variable that could be used as control variables in the original data set to compare the differences between stages of life. The next research must gather full demographic data and make a comparison between the administrative practices and attachment to place of more recent migrants and those who have been around longer.

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