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Implications of multiple commitment targets for turnover intentions and actual turnover: a systematic literature review

Maximilian Kellerer¹ · Stefan Süß¹

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Abstract

Organizational commitment is widely recognized as a reliable indicator of employees' intentions to remain with their organization and their actual turnover behavior. However, employees have commitments to multiple targets, including organizational commitments, interpersonal commitments, and action commitments. The presence of multiple commitments in the workplace requires a scientific overview on which targets of commitment are predictive of employee turnover and how their effects combine. By conducting a systematic literature review, this study aims to examine the implications of multiple commitment targets for employee turnover and suggest avenues for future research. Leveraging a search across three databases, 86 relevant articles were identified and synthesized to provide insights into our research questions. The findings of this study not only shed light on the importance of various commitment targets for turnover but also reveal potential directions for future research in this domain.

Keywords Multiple commitment targets · Organizational commitment · Employee turnover · Employee retention · Systematic literature review

JEL Classification J6 · M5

1 Introduction

Decades of research show that organizational commitment is a reliable predictor of employee turnover (Porter et al. 1974; Tett and Meyer 1993; Meyer et al. 2002; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran 2005; Güzeller and Celiker 2020). However,

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commitment in the workplace is not limited to the organization, as employees can be committed to multiple *targets* (Becker 2016; Klein et al. 2022). For example, employees may exhibit commitment to their occupations, unions, clients or customers, workgroups, and supervisors (Stinglhamber et al. 2002; Morin et al. 2011; Meyer et al. 2021). Research increasingly emphasizes that considering multiple commitments provides a more accurate reflection of contemporary workplace realities and predicts relevant outcome variables more precisely (Reichers 1985; Becker 1992; Klein et al. 2012). This includes the most prominent outcome in commitment research, namely employee turnover (Mowday et al. 1982; Riketta 2002; Vandenberghe 2009).

The concept of multiple commitments has a long academic history (Reichers 1985; Becker 2016), with notable growth in scholarly interest in recent years (van Rossenberg et al. 2018; Meyer 2021; Klein et al. 2022), resulting in an accumulation of substantial evidence on multiple commitments' impact on turnover intentions and actual turnover (e.g., Stinglhamber et al. 2002; Vandenberghe and Bentein 2009; Askew et al. 2013; Yalabik et al. 2017). However, the field remains narrowly concentrated, as the dominant focus on organizational commitment means that the exploration of other commitment targets has been limited, leading to an incomplete and compartmentalized understanding of the broader construct (Becker 2016; van Rossenberg et al. 2022). Much of the existing research has focused on the nature of commitment, rather than its targets. This can be attributed in part to Meyer and Allen's (1991) influential three-component model, which differentiates between affective (want to), continuance (need to), and normative (ought to) commitment. Although this model has been pivotal in shaping the study of commitment, it complicates studying multiple commitments, as each commitment needs to be examined through the lens of these three dimensions. To address this challenge, Klein et al. (2012) reintroduced a unidimensional conceptualization, emphasizing target-neutrality to simplify the study of multiple commitments. Despite these advancements, research on multiple commitments remains scattered within the broader commitment literature. The increasing scholarly interest in this topic, combined with the heightened sensitivity of more recent conceptualizations of commitment to its applicability to multiple targets (e.g., Meyer and Herscovitch 2001; Klein et al. 2012) call for systematic aggregation and synthesis of the accumulated evidence.

Prior literature reviews studying the relationship between commitment and turnover have focused on organizational commitment only (e.g., Steel and Ovalle 1984; Wagner 2007; Chemolli 2010; Gellatly and Hedberg 2016; Güzeller and Celiker 2020), thereby overlooking other potential targets of commitment. This narrow focus results in an incomplete understanding, since organizational commitment is not generalizable to other targets (Klein et al. 2012) and since other targets may be more salient or even more influential depending on the work context (Becker et al. 1996; van Rossenberg et al. 2022). Furthermore, the majority of existing literature reviews on commitment and employee turnover focus either on turnover intentions (e.g., Güzeller and Celiker 2020), or actual turnover (e.g., Wagner 2007), or they fail to differentiate between the two (e.g., Gellatly and Hedberg 2016). Examining both constructs provides a broader understanding of the turnover process, spanning cognitive deliberation and behavioral execution, and addresses a limitation in prior research, where one construct is often studied in isolation (Griffeth et al. 2000; Rubenstein et al. 2015).

Against this background, this systematic literature review aims to analyze the implications of multiple commitment targets for turnover intentions and actual turnover and to disclose future research avenues. By considering both turnover intentions as well as actual turnover, we broaden insights into the turnover process (Mobley 1977; Steers and Mowday 1981) and assess how the effects may differ when distinguishing between intent and behavior (Sheeran and Webb 2016). This review also contributes to the ongoing discourse on the phenomenon of multiple commitments (e.g., Becker 2016; van Rossenberg et al. 2018; Klein et al. 2022) by synthesizing existing research on their relationship with turnover outcomes. It provides a comprehensive overview of current knowledge on how multiple commitments influence the turnover process, particularly by elucidating how these commitments interact—addressing a key gap in understanding whether and when they produce synergistic or conflicting effects (Klein et al. 2022). Furthermore, it provides practical guidance for organizations on how various combinations of commitments can support workforce retention while also outlining avenues for future research in this field.

2 Conceptual foundations

2.1 Targets of commitment

Although various definitions exist, commitment is commonly understood as “a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to a target” (Meyer and Herscovitch 2001, p. 299) or “a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target” (Klein et al. 2012, p. 137). These definitions underscore the notion that commitment is directed toward *targets*, also known as foci (Meyer and Allen 1997) or units (Mueller and Lawler 1999), indicating a specific focal point to which an individual’s commitment is directed. The concept of commitment to multiple targets is attributed to Reichers (1985), who built upon the foundational work of Gouldner (1958) and Mowday et al. (1982). Over time, the notion of multiple commitments emerged as a central theme in commitment research (Becker 2009, 2016; Becker et al. 2018). In contemporary work contexts, a variety of targets that encompass diverse entities (e.g., organizations or unions), social contacts inside or outside the organization (e.g., coworkers or customers), goals (e.g., career), and even abstract conceptions (e.g., organizational change) are possible.

To classify the employees’ multifaceted targets of commitment, Klein et al. (2009) propose three primary categories: (1) Organizational commitments, (2) interpersonal commitments, and (3) action commitments.

(1) *Organizational commitments* are those that extend across all macro-level organizations, including the employing organization, its subsidiaries (Presbitero et al. 2019), unions, agencies and client organizations for temporary agency workers (Cicellin et al. 2022; Menatta et al. 2022). Besides, organizational commitments also include commitments that are linked to professional dimensions, such as commitment to one’s occupation or career (Vandenberghe 2009; Meyer and Espinoza 2016).

(2) *Interpersonal Commitments*, which are also referred to as social commitments (Vandenberghe 2016), are the commitments individuals have to various stakeholders in the workplace, including commitments to workgroups, supervisors, and customers (Becker 2009; Vandenberghe 2016). Commitment to customers can be subsumed under the broader category of beneficiary commitment (e.g., Valéau et al. 2013; Alfes et al. 2015), which encompasses not just customers, but anyone who benefits from one's work. This inclusive approach ensures coverage of commitments beyond traditional customer relationships. Some scholars have implicitly applied this logic. For instance, Meyer et al. (2021) operationalize commitment to police employees' customers by considering citizens who are the beneficiaries of police work as customers. Another example is from Courcy et al. (2019), who measure university employees' commitment to students as customers.

(3) Finally, *action commitments* pertain to practical objectives, such as projects, goals, and organizational change initiatives (Neubert and Wu 2009; Meyer and Anderson 2016). While organizational and interpersonal commitments may influence the development of action commitments, action commitments can exist independent of organizational or interpersonal targets. Action commitments can also be conceptualized and measured at a collective level (e.g., team goal commitment; Aubé and Rousseau 2005).

Table 1 provides an overview of the targets that fall within the outlined categories, along with a column that lists closely related targets. The latter is because some targets are labeled varyingly, despite high contentual overlap.

2.2 Turnover intentions and actual turnover

Employee turnover, defined as the voluntary separation initiated by an employee (Hom and Griffeth 1995), has been a cornerstone of organizational behavior research over the last decades (Hom et al. 2017). It excludes other forms of exit, such as layoffs, dismissals, or retirements (Hom and Griffeth 1995). This concept has garnered extensive attention due to its profound implications for

Table 1 Categorization of commitment targets

Categories	Targets	Closely related targets
Organizational commitments	Organization	Employer, firm, parent company, local company (Nguyen et al. 2015)
	Occupation	Profession, job, work, career (Lee et al. 2000)
	Union	–
Interpersonal commitments	Workgroup	Coworkers, team, department (Wombacher and Felfe 2017)
	Supervisor	–
	Beneficiaries	Customers, clients (Valeáu et al. 2013)
Action commitments	Tasks	Projects, objectives (Schaffer and Manegold 2018)
	Goals	Organizational change, change initiatives (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002)

organizations, encompassing financial costs, operational disruptions, and workforce morale (Oh and Chhinzar 2021; George 2022). In examining turnover, scholars have highlighted two key constructs: (1) turnover intentions and (2) actual turnover. Together, these constructs provide complementary insights into the turnover process, spanning the psychological decision-making phase and the behavioral act of leaving.

(1) Turnover intentions refer to an employee's conscious decision to leave their current organization within a defined period (Mobley et al. 1979). As the most proximal predictor of actual turnover, turnover intentions reflect the culmination of cognitive and affective evaluations, including dissatisfaction, perceived alternatives, and the costs of quitting (Steers and Mowday 1981). Mobley's (1977) process model of turnover, one of the most influential contributions in this domain (Hom et al. 2017; Lee et al. 2017), positioned turnover intentions as a pivotal intermediary between distal factors—such as job dissatisfaction—and actual turnover. The model outlines a linear sequence in which dissatisfaction prompts thoughts of quitting, followed by job search behaviors, the evaluation of alternatives, and ultimately, the formation of turnover intentions, which then leads to actual turnover.

Steers and Mowday (1981) emphasized that turnover intentions encapsulate the final stage of the decision-making process, making them the most reliable predictor of turnover. Meta-analytic evidence supports this view, demonstrating that turnover intentions exhibit stronger correlations with actual turnover than any other antecedent, including job satisfaction or alternative evaluations (Steel and Ovalle 1984; Griffeth et al. 2000). Consequently, turnover intentions often serve as a proxy for actual turnover in studies where quit behavior data are unavailable (Jiang et al. 2012). Despite their predictive power, turnover intentions are inherently distinct from actual turnover, as numerous contextual and personal factors—such as economic conditions or family obligations—can prevent employees from translating intentions into behavior (Hom et al. 2012; Ramesh and Gelfand 2010; Rubenstein et al. 2015).

(2) Actual turnover represents the definitive act of an employee leaving his/her organization. Unlike turnover intentions, which reflect the decision-making phase, actual turnover captures the final behavioral outcome. Theoretical models, including Mobley's (1977) process model and later extensions (e.g., Lee and Mitchell 1994; Steel 2002), underscore the importance of studying both constructs to understand the full spectrum of employee withdrawal. While turnover intentions provide insight into employees' motivations and cognitive processes, actual turnover offers a concrete measure of organizational exit.

In this systematic literature review, turnover intentions and actual turnover are examined as distinct but interrelated outcomes of commitment. Turnover intentions capture the psychological antecedents of withdrawal, while actual turnover reflects the definitive act of employee departure (Mobley 1977; Steers and Mowday 1981).

This dual focus also allows exploration of how antecedents of turnover, such as multiple commitments, influence the psychological and behavioral phases of turnover. By integrating these constructs, this review provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing employee retention.

3 Research questions

Given the coexistence of multiple commitments, the question arises how they jointly affect turnover outcomes. Specific combinations could create synergistic effects that amplify their impact or compensatory effects where stronger commitments offset weaker ones (Johnson et al. 2009; Tsoumbri and Xenikou 2010; Klein et al. 2022). Other commitments may be in conflict with each other because they might place incompatible demands on employees due to limited resources like time and attention (Reichers 1986; Kinnie and Swart 2012; van Rossenberg et al. 2018).

One attempt to explain how specific commitments relate to outcome variables is the matching hypothesis, which is grounded in Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) principle of compatibility. Drawing on the matching hypothesis, scholars reason that organizational commitment should be the primary predictor of employee turnover (Vandenberghe et al. 2004; Van Steenbergen and Ellemers 2009; Schoemmel and Jønsson 2014). This is because leaving the organization is a behavior that is directed to the organization, which makes commitment to the organization the best aligned predictor, thus creating a compatible match between the attitudinal and behavioral target (Becker 1992; Lavelle et al. 2007). However, turnover could be seen as a behavior that is not only directed to the organization per se, as it might also have broader implications for other targets within or outside the organization (Paillé et al. 2011; Sahoo et al. 2024). For example, an employee may be conscious of the fact that departure from the organisation may result in a shortage of personnel within the workgroup, necessitating a redistribution of responsibilities by the supervisor and potentially requiring customers to adapt to a new representative or business partner. Conversely, employees might consider leaving the organization, if they feel disconnected from their occupation, even if they are committed to the organization. Hence, while the act of turnover is organizational in nature, strong commitment to other targets may be just as relevant for turnover intentions and actual turnover, especially if the targets of commitment are perceived as being impacted by the decision to leave the organization (Paillé et al. 2011).

This reasoning aligns with Lewin's (1943) field theory, which emphasizes psychological proximity—the idea that the most immediate and salient elements in an employee's environment are likely to have the strongest impact on their behavior. For instance, commitments to supervisors or workgroups may be more proximal to employees, influencing their day-to-day experiences more directly than their overall organizational commitment (Becker et al. 1996). Therefore, while the organization as a whole might be perceived as more distant or abstract, more immediate commitments could exert stronger influences on turnover decisions.

Considering the interplay between broader organizational commitment and more psychologically proximal targets, it is essential to investigate how various commitments—beyond organizational commitment alone—influence turnover intentions and actual turnover (Wasti and Can 2008). Specifically, it is important to analyze how the effects of commitments, such as organizational commitment,

may shift when other commitments are considered simultaneously. This approach allows for a more nuanced examination of the mediating and moderating effects of commitments on turnover outcomes, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the extent to which turnover intentions and actual turnover are influenced by specific combinations of commitments. In light of this, we propose the following research question:

RQ1 To what degree are turnover intentions and actual turnover affected by the interplay between multiple commitments?

Identifying concrete gaps within the expansive research on commitment and turnover outcomes presents a considerable challenge (Becker 2016). This is particularly true for studies on multiple commitments, as they remain scattered in the large body of research, due to the heavy focus on organizational commitment (Becker 2016; van Rossenberg et al. 2018). Pinpointing areas for essential new research requires a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the field's current status (McKinley et al. 1999; Grant and Booth 2009). By synthesizing the existing body of work, researchers can gain a clearer understanding of the limitations within the literature and uncover unexplored areas that warrant further investigation.

This review takes on the vital task of inspecting, analyzing, and synthesizing the recommendations for future research provided by the studies in our sample. By systematically aggregating insights and suggestions from these works, we bridge existing knowledge with untapped opportunities for advancement (Grant and Booth 2009; Munn et al. 2018). This approach not only highlights specific, actionable research avenues but also reveals overarching patterns and thematic priorities within the commitment literature. These findings provide the foundation for advancing theoretical and empirical exploration, contributing meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on multiple commitments (van Rossenberg et al. 2018; Klein et al. 2022) and their implications for turnover outcomes (Yalabik et al. 2017).

Furthermore, this review goes beyond identifying individual research gaps by offering an integrated perspective on the future directions that the field might take. For instance, it examines the need for comparative studies that explore the interaction and relative importance of different commitment targets, the development of target-neutral frameworks, and the investigation of contextual factors that moderate the effects of multiple commitments. In doing so, this review provides a roadmap for scholars to deepen our understanding of how multiple commitments influence employee behavior in increasingly complex organizational settings.

By systematically synthesizing these insights, this review not only enriches our understanding of multiple commitments and their implications but also equips researchers with a targeted agenda for future inquiry. These efforts underscore the broader value of this review in its potential to shape future research, particularly within the context of turnover—a critical outcome for organizations (Holtom et al. 2008; Cloutier et al. 2015).

Accordingly, our second research question is designed to synthesize these insights into actionable contributions:

RQ2 What are avenues for future research?

4 Methods

4.1 Identification of articles

To identify relevant articles for our review, we conducted a database-driven approach. This was decided to provide a wider coverage than a search strategy that is restricted to a selected list of journals (Hiebl 2021). To ensure a comprehensive search, we chose three academic databases (Green et al. 2006; Vassar et al. 2017), based on their respective size and relevance to management- and psychology-related research (Hiebl 2021; Kunisch et al. 2023): Web of Science, Scopus, PsycINFO. We filtered for articles written in English in databases that had options for filtering for language and otherwise excluded articles written in foreign languages during the primary screening. English is widely considered as the *lingua franca* of global science (Drubin and Kellogg 2012), and the majority of publications in leading international journals are in English (Flowerdew and Habibie 2021).

Both authors collaboratively and iteratively developed a search string aimed at identifying articles focused on multiple commitments and their relationship with turnover intentions or actual turnover. The search string was structured in two parts: The first part included the terms (1) *multiple commitments*, (2) *workplace commitments*, (3) *commitment foci*, and (4) *commitment target** to capture studies addressing multiple commitments. These terms were separated by the operator *OR*, so that any single term could yield relevant articles. The selection of terms aimed to maximize the chances of identifying studies on multiple commitments, incorporating terms like foci and targets, which are often used interchangeably in the literature (van Dick et al. 2006; Klein et al. 2014).

The second part of the search string focused on terms related to turnover, including (1) *turnover*, (2) *retention*, (3) *attrition*, (4) *intention to leave*, (5) *intention to stay*, (6) *job search*, (7) *quit**, (8) *resign**, and (9) *withdraw**. These terms were chosen to reflect the various ways turnover-related constructs are labeled in the literature (Thin et al. 2022; Tolksdorf et al. 2022). The wildcard symbol (*) was applied to capture all possible word endings, including suffixes or plural forms. The complete search string is provided in Table 3 of the Appendix.

The search was set to apply to article titles, abstracts, and keywords. In Web of Science, this corresponded to the *Topic* field, which includes the title, abstract, keyword plus, and author keywords. For Scopus, the search was applied to *article title*, *abstract*, *keywords*, while for PsycINFO, the search fields included *title*, *abstract*, *heading word*, and *key concepts*.

Conducted comprehensively across the selected databases through the end of December 2024, the search yielded a total of 1,923 articles. The removal of duplicates was facilitated by using Rayyan, an artificial-intelligence-based tool tailored for use in systematic reviews (Ouzzani et al. 2016; Olofsson et al. 2017). After

duplicate removal, a refined set of 1,891 articles remained eligible for the subsequent screening process.

4.2 Screening process

During the primary and secondary screening of articles, any uncertainties or cases of doubt were openly discussed in the author team. The full screening process is visualized in a PRISMA flow diagram in Fig. 1.

Primary screening was conducted by reading the articles' abstracts. To qualify for secondary screening, articles had to satisfy certain inclusion criteria (Snyder 2019; Hiebl 2021): First, they had to have been published in a peer-reviewed journal. We relied on Beall's (2021) list of predatory publishers to exclude articles that were published in open-access journals with problematic peer-review processes. Second, articles had to address employee-related commitments, as other scientific disciplines explore relationships between commitment and turnover beyond the scope of employment, such as the relationship between therapy commitment and drop-out rates (Ong et al. 2018). Third, as our study examines

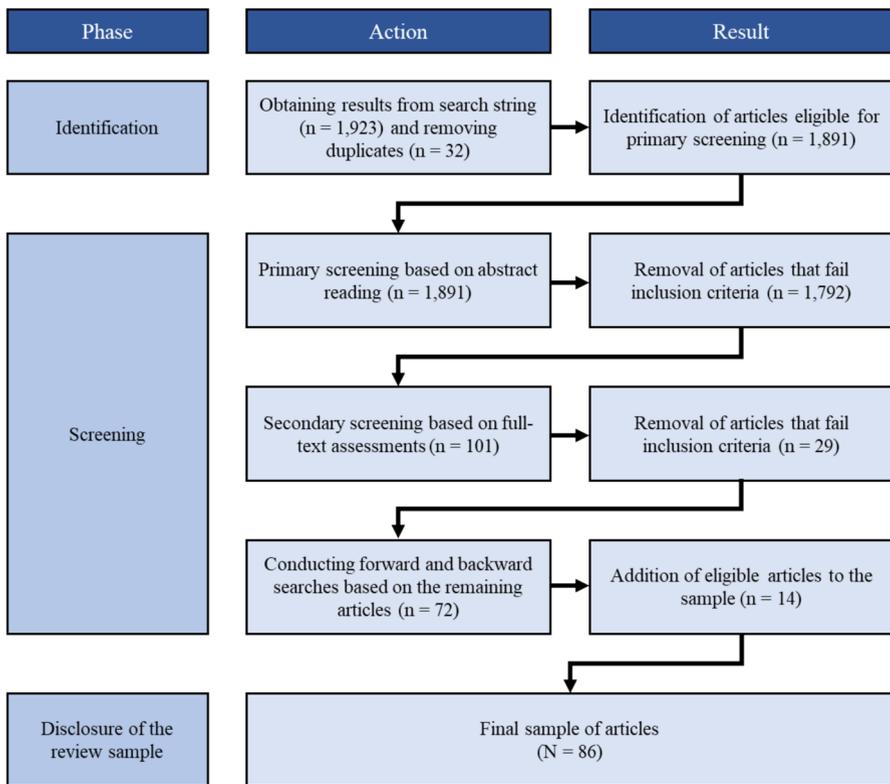


Fig. 1 PRISMA flow diagram

multiple commitments, articles had to address at least two commitment targets. Most of the articles failed this inclusion criterion, because they focus only on organizational commitment. In sum, 1792 articles did not meet the inclusion criteria and were removed as a result of primary screening, leaving 101 articles for secondary screening.

The secondary screening phase involved full-text assessments to ensure that the remaining articles aligned with the inclusion criteria and would contribute to the purpose of our literature review. This process uncovered instances of articles that did not directly address relationships between commitments and turnover (e.g., Demir et al. 2009). In other cases, the context of work or employment was not sufficient (e.g., Kunnen 2009), mostly because articles did not capture employee commitments. For instance, a study by Ashill et al. (2008) was excluded because it measures how employees perceive their management's commitment and not their own commitment. Twenty-nine articles were excluded as a result of the secondary screening process, leaving 72 articles.

As a final step, we applied forward and backward searches of the 72 articles that remained after primary and secondary screening to identify additional articles and minimize the chances of bias tied to our search string (Adams et al. 2017; Hiebl 2021). These searches yielded an addition of 14 articles—6 gained from forward searches and 8 from backward searches—leaving a final sample of 86 articles for our literature review.

To extract and synthesize relevant information from the research articles, we followed Webster and Watson's (2002) concept-centric approach. This process involved creating a concept matrix to systematically organize the data from each article. For every article in the sample, we recorded key details such as the title, authors, year of publication, journal, number and types of commitment targets addressed, commitment definitions, and methodological information (including study design, measurement scales, and sample characteristics). We also collected information on key variables, main findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research (Snyder 2019). Once all relevant information was extracted, we categorized the findings according to each research question (Booth et al. 2016). We then analyzed the aggregated findings, identifying recurring themes and concepts within the literature to construct our answers to the research questions (Kunisch et al. 2023). Throughout the synthesis process, open discussions among the author team ensured a thorough and consistent interpretation of the data.

4.3 Disclosure of the review sample

The final sample consisted of 86 articles that were published across 54 journals. The *Journal of Vocational Behavior* was the most frequent publisher (11 articles), followed by *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* (8 articles). The remaining articles were spread among other journals, with several journals appearing only once. The full list of journals is shown in Table 4 in the Appendix.

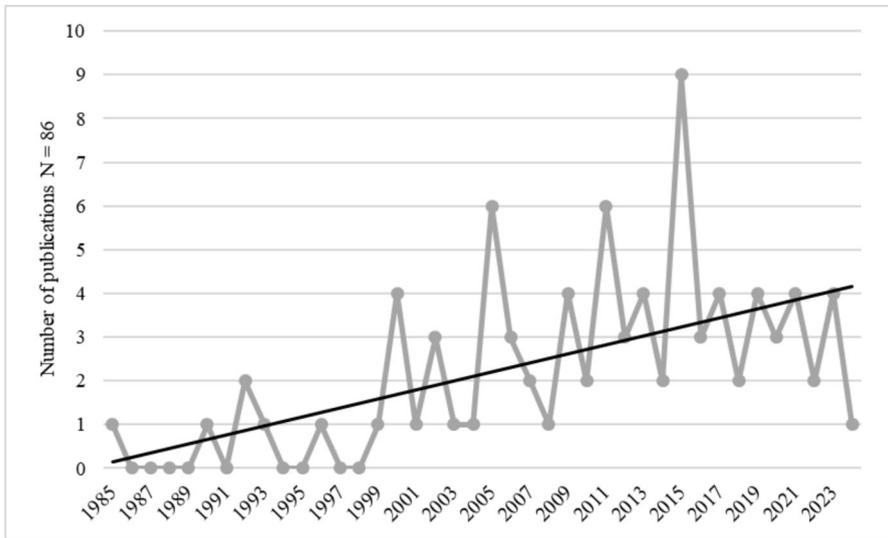


Fig. 2 Publication development

The identified articles span a 39-year period, starting with Reichers (1985). As shown in Fig. 2, the publication trend fluctuates over the years but demonstrates an overall linear increase, reaching its peak in 2015 with nine publications. This growth may reflect varying levels of scholarly interest, potentially influenced by events such as the Ohio State Conference on Commitment, which received a record number of submissions in November 2014 (Klein 2016), likely contributing to the peak number of publications in the following year.

The articles explore a variety of combinations of commitment targets, as summarized in Table 2. The most frequently studied combination is commitment to the organization paired with commitment to the occupation, reflecting the strong theoretical and practical interest in understanding how these two commitments jointly influence employee behavior.

The articles showcase a wide geographical distribution of samples, featuring countries from North America (35%), Europe (31%), Asia (25%), Africa (3%), and six articles with a global focus (8%). Frequent samples are employees from healthcare (e.g., Mueller et al. 1992; Cohen 2000, 2005; Du et al. 2019), educational institutes (e.g., Yousaf et al. 2015; Cooper et al. 2016) and corporate organizations (e.g., Ingram and Lee 1990; Tetteh et al. 2020).

With regard to methodology, 70 articles use cross-sectional research designs, while 11 articles employ longitudinal designs and 5 articles are of conceptual nature. The articles' data collections processes rely primarily on questionnaires (75 articles) and interviews (6 articles). Twelve articles conduct latent profile analyses and 3 articles use psychometric approaches.

The full list of articles is presented in Table 4 in the Appendix.

Table 2 Identified combinations of commitment targets

Commitment targets	Frequency
Organization and occupation	36
Organization and supervisor	9
Organization, supervisor, workgroup	7
Organization, occupation, beneficiaries, supervisor, workgroup	5
Organization and beneficiaries	4
Organization and union	4
Organization and workgroup	4
Organization, occupation, beneficiaries, workgroup	3
Organization, occupation, workgroup	3
Organization, top management, supervisor, workgroup	3
Organization, occupation, supervisor, workgroup	2
Organization, beneficiaries, supervisor, workgroup	1
Organization, occupation, beneficiaries	1
Organization, occupation, supervisor	1
Organization, union, work ethic	1
Parent company and local operation	1
<i>Total</i>	85*

*In one article the targets could not be categorized due to their methodological nature with a rather exploratory focus on commitment targets

5 How are turnover intentions and actual turnover affected by the interplay between multiple commitments? (Results RQ1)

5.1 The interplay between occupational commitment and organizational commitment

Within our literature review, the most frequently studied combination of commitments is occupational commitment and organizational commitment (Table 2). Historically, these two commitments were seen as inherently incompatible (Gouldner 1958). For a long time, it was believed that individuals could psychologically attach themselves either to their occupation or their organization, with increased attachment in one area leading to decreased attachment in the other. However, this view has evolved, as recent studies demonstrate a positive relationship between occupational and organizational commitment (Ingram and Lee 1990; Desrochers and Dahir 2000; Schoemmel et al. 2015; Yousaf et al. 2015). Person-centered research further supports this, showing that employees can be strongly committed to both their occupation and organization simultaneously (Morin et al. 2015; Cooper et al. 2016; Meyer et al. 2019). The extent to which employees dually commit to their occupation and organization is contingent upon contextual factors, including the type of profession, labor market dynamics, the hierarchical status within the organizational structure, and the form of employment (Cohen 2007; Kim and Mueller 2011; Cooper et al. 2016).

Several studies reveal that both occupational and organizational commitment are directly negatively related to turnover intentions (Vandenberghe et al. 2001; Chang et al. 2006; Yousaf et al. 2015; Paillé et al. 2016; Desselle et al. 2022), suggesting that occupational commitment explains variance in turnover intentions beyond what organizational commitment alone can account for (Tsoumbris and Xenikou 2010). In fact, Yousaf et al. (2015) found the effect of occupational commitment on turnover intentions to be stronger than that of organizational commitment. Conversely, some studies found significant negative correlations between organizational commitment and turnover intentions, but non-significant ones for occupational commitment (Veurink and Fischer 2011; Schoemmel et al. 2015; Rošková et al. 2024). In two articles, the authors obtained even positive correlations (Kim and Chang 2014; Yalabik et al. 2017). Some of these studies report that occupational commitment predicts the intention to change the occupation, but not the intention to change the organization (Ingram and Lee 1990; Turner and Chelladurai 2005; Chang et al. 2006; Somers et al. 2020). As a result, examining direct effects leads to conflicting conclusions.

In light of these contradictory findings, exploring the interactive effects between occupational and organizational commitment may offer valuable insights by understanding their combined impact. Person-centered studies consistently show that employees who are highly committed to both their occupation and organization exhibit the lowest turnover intentions (Morin et al. 2015; Cooper et al. 2016; Meyer et al. 2019). Similarly, variable-centered studies find that the negative relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intentions is stronger when occupational commitment is high (Kim and Chang 2014; Yousaf et al. 2015). This suggests that when occupational commitment is high, turnover intentions fluctuate more based on changes in organizational commitment, whereas when occupational commitment is low, this fluctuation is less pronounced. Yalabik et al. (2017) explain this by stating that employees strongly committed to their occupation are often actively enhancing their skills to meet professional standards and engage in networking activities, which boosts their employability and increases their career options, especially when their skills are transferable across organizations or industries. As a result, these employees tend to be less dependent on their current employer and may develop turnover intentions more quickly unless they also feel committed to the organization.

To cultivate organizational commitment among highly occupationally committed employees, organizations need to create an environment that allows them to apply and further develop their professional skills. This involves recognizing the professional goals and expectations of these employees (Jørgensen and Becker 2015), providing stimulating assignments and projects (Allen et al. 1999; Olsen et al. 2016), and implementing HR practices that enhance commitment (Yousaf et al. 2018; Valéau et al. 2021b), such as offering opportunities for skill development, internal promotions, and financial support for further education (Yalabik et al. 2017; Yousaf et al. 2018; Du et al. 2019). By fostering an environment that supports the professional growth of highly occupationally committed employees, organizations are more likely to cultivate a workforce that is dually committed—both to their occupation as well as to their organization (Yousaf et al. 2018). While this dual commitment reduces the likelihood of turnover intentions, it remains relatively ambiguous

how both commitments jointly affect actual turnover, with the study of Van Steenberghe and Ellemers (2009) being an exception. Their results indicate that only continuance organizational commitment predicts actual turnover.

5.2 The interplay between workgroup commitment and/or supervisor commitment and organizational commitment

While organizational commitment has traditionally been considered the primary predictor of turnover intentions and actual turnover, several studies in our sample of articles highlight the importance of employees' commitment to their supervisors and workgroups in explaining turnover outcomes. For instance, Vandenberghe and Bentein (2009) found that commitment to supervisors significantly predicted both turnover intentions and actual turnover, independent of organizational commitment. Commitment to the workgroup can play an equally significant role in predicting turnover outcomes, as studies demonstrate that workgroup commitment can explain variance in turnover intentions beyond what could be accounted for by organizational commitment alone (Meyer et al. 2015; Saboe et al. 2015; Wombacher and Felfe 2017). In the study of Schoemmel and Jønsson (2014), which sampled healthcare employees, commitment to the workgroup even emerged as the strongest predictor of quitting intentions, compared to occupational and organizational commitment.

A cross-national comparison by Felfe and Yan (2009) found that the correlation between workgroup commitment and turnover intentions in China to be significantly more negative than in an individualistic national context, suggesting that workgroup commitment are particularly potent in a collectivistic context. However, Vance et al. (2020) found in an US sample that employees who felt a strong sense of attachment to their workgroup were less likely to leave the organization, regardless of their overall commitment to the organization. These findings align with Lewin's field theory and the salience hypothesis, which posit that immediate and proximal relationships exert greater influence on employees' decision to stay or leave (Mathieu 1991; Becker et al. 1996). Accordingly, the effects of workgroup commitment and supervisor commitment on turnover outcomes are often attributed to the proximity and direct impact on day-to-day work experiences of these targets (Askew et al. 2013; Schoemmel and Jønsson 2014).

Moreover, commitment to the workgroup or supervisor can provide a buffer against turnover, even when organizational commitment is low. This means that when organizational commitment falters, commitment to the workgroup (Huyghebaert et al. 2019) or the supervisor (Lapointe et al. 2013; Huyghebaert et al. 2019) can compensate by reducing the likelihood of turnover intentions. This suggests that employees with strong ties to their workgroups or supervisors are less likely to leave, particularly in cases where organizational commitment is weak.

Further analysis on interactive effects by person-centered studies show that employees with dual commitments to both their team and the organization exhibited the lowest turnover intentions (Wombacher and Felfe 2017). This suggests that the combination of strong interpersonal bonds with colleagues and a sense of loyalty

to the organization can significantly reduce the intention to leave. Similarly, Meyer et al. (2015) showed that employees with high levels of commitment to both their supervisors and the organization have the lowest rates of actual turnover, as these dual commitments reinforced their attachment to the workplace. This is confirmed by variable-centered studies where commitment to the organization, workgroup, and supervisor had incremental synergistic effects, where the combination of commitments reduced turnover intentions more effectively than any single commitment target alone (Askew et al. 2013; Holzwarth et al. 2021). This highlights the importance of viewing turnover outcomes through the lens of multiple commitments and understanding how they interact to shape employee retention.

5.3 The interplay between union commitment and organizational commitment

Early theories, such as those by Gouldner (1958), proposed that union and organizational commitment were inherently incompatible. This “zero-sum” view suggested that employees could not maintain strong commitments to both entities—commitment to one would weaken commitment to the other. However, contemporary research has largely refuted this assumption, showing that employees can indeed be committed to the union and the organization simultaneously. Studies suggest that the relationship between these commitments can be positive, particularly in environments where the industrial relations climate is cooperative (Kim and Rowley 2006; Robinson et al. 2012). In such contexts, employees are able to view their union and organization as complementary, fostering a mutually supportive environment where dual commitments can coexist. Redman and Snape (2016) found that in workplaces with positive union-management relations, employees were more likely to be strongly committed to both their union and employer. Thus, while adversarial climates may provoke tension between the two commitments, cooperative industrial relations environments can encourage a harmonious balance, allowing both commitments to thrive without conflict.

Union commitment adds complexity to the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover outcomes. Employees who are committed to both the union and the organization generally exhibit lower turnover intentions compared to those committed to just one entity (Robinson et al. 2012). This suggests that strong union support, when aligned with organizational goals, can buffer against turnover intentions by reinforcing an employee’s overall attachment to their workplace (Xu and Hu 2018). However, studies indicate that combining high union commitment with low organizational commitment results in increased turnover intentions (Kim and Chang 2014; Redman and Snape 2016). This could occur when employees feel more aligned with union objectives, particularly in conflictual industrial relations environments, which might prompt them to leave the organization if they perceive it to be working against union goals (Snape et al. 2000). Thus, the interaction between union and organizational commitment can either reduce or heighten turnover intentions depending on the broader context in which these commitments are situated.

When considering actual turnover, dual commitment to the union and the organization tends to be associated with lower rates of departure. Employees

who maintain strong ties to both their union and their organization are generally less likely to quit, as they benefit from the support of both entities (Fullagar and Barling 1991). However, when union and organizational commitments are misaligned, high union commitment may fail to deter actual turnover, particularly if employees feel that the union cannot protect their interests within the organization.

5.4 The interplay between commitment to beneficiaries and organizational commitment

Beneficiaries, such as customers or clients, are a highly salient target of commitment (Valéau et al. 2021a). However, commitment to beneficiaries does not generally predict turnover intentions when considered alongside organizational commitment, as observed across various contexts, including auditors' commitment to clients (Valéau et al. 2021a), voluntary workers' commitment to people in need (Alfes et al. 2015), and hospital employees' commitment to patients (Stinglhamber et al. 2002). Interestingly, Yalabik et al. (2017) even hypothesized a positive relationship between beneficiary commitment and turnover intentions, which contrasts the common view that any workplace commitment is negatively related to turnover outcomes (Klein and Park 2020). They suggest that employees in professional service roles may extend their social networks through collaborations with external clients, potentially blurring organizational boundaries and thus facilitating turnover (Swart et al. 2014). However, their findings do not support this hypothesis, as they find no significant relationship between beneficiary commitment and turnover intentions.

Research on the interaction between organizational commitment and beneficiary commitment reveals both complementary and conflicting dynamics. For instance, Meyer et al. (2021) found that employees who feel moderately to highly committed to both their organization and clients have lower turnover intentions and higher job satisfaction. This suggests that a dual commitment to the organization and beneficiaries can yield synergistic effects, thereby reducing turnover when both commitments are aligned (Houle et al. 2023). Valéau et al. (2013; 2021a) add that—with the direct effect of commitment to beneficiaries on turnover intentions being insignificant—its interaction with organizational commitment shows that the influence of commitment to beneficiaries on turnover intentions intensifies when organizational commitment is low (Valéau et al. 2013; Valéau et al. 2021a, b). It needs to be noted though that in the sample of these studies the relationship with the beneficiaries was nested within the organization, which means that the beneficiaries were embedded in the organization, which may facilitate alignment between organizational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries. However, organizational demands can conflict with client-focused values, which can increase the likelihood of turnover due to role conflict (Naik and Srinivasan 2016). Meyer et al. (2021) illustrate this using a person-centered approach with a study on police officers, showing that some officers were committed to citizens but not the organization and those were the ones exhibiting the highest turnover intentions among their six identified commitment profiles.

5.5 Insights from combining five or more commitments

The results presented so far lead to the assumption that combining organizational commitment with other workplace commitments invariably leads to improved employee retention. This raises the critical question of whether an increasing number of commitments within an organization inherently increases employees' intention of staying. Empirical evidence from the reviewed studies with five or more commitments provides insights into this multifaceted issue.

For instance, Morin et al. (2011) suggest that employees who demonstrate multiple strong commitments, such as to their organization, customers, supervisor, and workgroup, tend to exhibit lower turnover intentions due to the synergistic effects of these alignments. This aligns with the notion that a broader sense of attachment might increase psychological investment in the organization, reducing turnover intentions.

However, the findings are not uniformly straightforward. Perreira et al. (2018) caution that the cumulative effect of multiple commitments is not always additive. When commitments conflict, as is sometimes the case with high commitment to specific targets like supervisors or workgroups (Cohen 2003), employees may experience role conflict or competing loyalties. These dynamics can potentially negate the positive effects of multiple commitments and even increase the likelihood of turnover. Similarly, Courcy et al. (2019) observed that workplace stressors could diminish the protective effect of high commitment levels to multiple targets, suggesting that contextual factors play a moderating role.

Furthermore, Stinglhamber et al. (2002) provide evidence that affective commitment to various workplace targets, including the occupation, organization, workgroup, customers and supervisors, contributes significantly to predicting turnover intentions. Yet, this predictive power diminishes when the commitment to one target, such as the organization, is disproportionately weak. This observation underscores the importance of balanced commitments; an overemphasis on one target might lead to imbalances that exacerbate turnover intentions.

Synthesizing these perspectives, the evidence suggests that while multiple commitments can enhance retention, the relationship is complex and influenced by the nature of the commitments, their alignment, and the surrounding work environment. An increasing number of commitments does not automatically decrease turnover; instead, the quality, compatibility, and context of these commitments determine their effectiveness in fostering employee retention (Houle et al. 2023).

6 What are avenues for future research? (Results RQ3)

6.1 Considering individuality among employees

Studying the intricate relationships among multiple commitments and their impact on turnover outcomes is a complex yet imperative endeavor that necessitates an approach that can capture the dynamic interactions and conflicts among commitment targets (Johnson et al. 2009; Wombacher and Felfe 2017). In response to this,

articles from our sample frequently call to intensify person-centered approaches to study multiple commitments (e.g., Becker 1992; Morin et al. 2015; Meyer et al. 2019). The goal of person-centered research is to identify subpopulations of individuals based on within-group similarities (Woo et al. 2024), which can be classified as commitment profiles (e.g., Becker and Billings 1993; Tsoumbri and Xenikou 2010; Caliskan et al. 2024). The approach relaxes the assumption of homogeneity in the sampled population by acknowledging the potential for heterogeneity in how targets (but also mindsets; Meyer et al. 2013) of commitment combine across subpopulations (Meyer and Morin 2016). This approach accommodates the possibility that competing theoretical propositions regarding how commitments combine and relate to other variables may hold true for different subpopulations. By embracing this approach, researchers may be able to unravel the heterogeneous nature of configurations of commitments and their implications for employee turnover. Person-centered approaches require a paradigmatic shift in how research questions are framed, moving away from a correlational approach that centers on variables to a configurational approach that centers on persons (Delbridge and Fiss 2013; Morin 2016).

In addition to person-centered approaches, qualitative research offers a promising way to study multiple commitments. So far, few studies such as those by Bennett et al. (2009) and Jørgensen and Becker (2015) delve into the qualitative aspects of multiple commitments, how employees experience them and how these experiences are connected to turnover intentions. Exploring employees' experiences through interviews can unveil nuanced commitment targets that current research may overlook. Investigating how employees subjectively define and conceptualize their organizations could provide deeper insights into organizational commitment from a subjective standpoint (Maertz et al. 2002). Such qualitative approaches can enrich our understanding of the intricate interplay between commitments and turnover, offering valuable perspectives on this complex relationship.

6.2 Bridging the gap between intentions and behavior

Measuring actual turnover is challenging for several reasons. First, organizations may hesitate to share turnover data due to confidentiality concerns or fear of reputational damage (Hom and Griffeth 1995). Unlike self-reported turnover intentions, actual turnover data often require formal collaboration with companies, making it less accessible. Second, the measure of actual turnover usually requires longitudinal research designs. Panaccio and Vandenberghe (2011) recommend long time lags between measurements to facilitate examinations of the long-term effects of commitment on turnover and how commitments interact over time (Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe 2003; Vance et al. 2020). However, such studies are resource-intensive, requiring significant time, funding, and logistical support to monitor whether employees leave their organization after initial data collection (Mitchell and Lee 2001). Third, once employees leave, either the employees are hard to find or their response rates to surveys are usually low (Johnsrud and Rosser 2002; Tsaousoglou et al. 2022).

Given these obstacles, it is understandable that nearly 80% of articles in our sample investigate only turnover intentions. Despite considerable acknowledgment in the literature that turnover intentions are the best immediate predictor of actual turnover (Mobley 1977), intentions remain fundamentally different from behavior. Employee turnover is best understood as a dynamic process that is susceptible to various intervening factors (Mobley 1977). For instance, lack of recognition for good performance, conflicts with supervisors, and rumors regarding organizational changes like mergers or plans to downsize may result in the intention to leave an organization (Kirschenbaum and Weisberg 1990). Yet, the translation from intention into action is often dependent on other factors, such as macroeconomic conditions (Selden and Moynihan 2000), health status (Price 2004), family responsibilities (Porter and Steers 1973), and limited alternative job opportunities (Hom et al. 1992).

Although measuring turnover intentions is a pragmatic approach, it is only the measure of actual turnover that can yield objective insights. Consequently, the operationalisation of turnover intentions as the primary outcome measure of turnover in the study design is constrained by limitations, as frequently reported by articles in our sample (e.g., Cohen 2000; Tsoumbris and Xenikou 2010; Meyer et al. 2021). In instances where the collection of data on actual turnover is unfeasible due to the presence of associated challenges, it is recommended to consider the incorporation of alternative indicators of turnover in conjunction with turnover intentions. For example, Somers et al. (2000, 2020) measure job search behaviour as a behavioural indicator of turnover.

6.3 Diversifying research contexts

Our sample of articles encompasses employees across diverse occupations, industries, and countries, underscoring that the relationship between commitment and turnover is highly context-dependent. The predictive power of specific commitment targets varies depending on the occupational and cultural setting. For instance, workgroup commitment has been found to be a stronger predictor of turnover than organizational commitment among nurses (Stinglhamber et al. 2002; Schoemmel and Jønsson 2014; Somers et al. 2020). This finding likely stems from the central role of teamwork in nursing, where strong collaboration among team members is crucial to daily operations and professional success. In such contexts, workgroup dynamics may have a more immediate and tangible influence on retention decisions than organizational loyalty.

However, the ways in which the effects of commitment differ across cultural settings remain less clear. For example, studies examining individualist and collectivist cultures suggest that the role of specific commitment targets might vary significantly based on broader cultural values (Felfe and Yan 2009; Wasti et al. 2016). While individualist cultures might prioritize personal achievements and autonomy, collectivist cultures often emphasize group harmony and shared goals, potentially altering the relative influence of workgroup or organizational commitment. Despite these

theoretical propositions, empirical evidence on these cultural differences is limited and warrants further exploration.

A significant number of studies in our sample emphasize the need to broaden research contexts to address these gaps and advance the understanding of commitment and turnover (Cohen 2000; Stinglhamber et al. 2002; Ciftcioglu et al. 2011; Paillé et al. 2016; Meyer et al. 2019; Somers et al. 2020; Holzwarth et al. 2021). Expanding research contexts can uncover patterns or dynamics that are currently overlooked. For example, our review entails many studies that sample white-collar workers, but an absence of studies examining blue-collar workers, a population that represents a substantial segment of the workforce. Studying their experiences could offer unique insights into the interplay between commitment and turnover, as their working conditions, career paths, and organizational relationships often differ markedly from those of white-collar employees.

Furthermore, Askew et al. (2013) argue that contextual exploration should not be limited to broad categorizations such as occupations, industries, or countries. Instead, it should include more precise contextual measurements that can illuminate underlying dynamics. For example, researchers investigating workgroup commitment should consider variables such as group cohesion or interdependence among team members, which can significantly shape the strength and impact of workgroup commitment. Similarly, organizational size may influence the salience of different commitment targets, as employees in smaller organizations might develop closer bonds with coworkers, whereas those in larger organizations may feel more aligned with departmental or organizational goals (Kim and Chang 2014).

6.4 Considering context-relevant commitment targets

Diversifying research contexts holds promise for revealing hidden targets of commitment (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran 2005; Askew et al. 2013; Jørgensen and Becker 2015; Meyer et al. 2021). Albeit, distinctions among commitment targets must be both conceptually meaningful and supported empirically. Early studies establish discriminant validity among targets of commitment (Becker et al. 1996; Bishop and Scott 2000), with subsequent research bolstering this evidence. Confirmatory factor analyses consistently support the parallel existence of distinct commitment targets and confirm that these targets often have divergent antecedents and consequences (Becker and Kernan 2003; Vandenberghe and Bentein 2009; Panaccio and Vandenberghe 2011).

Commitment targets external of organizational boundaries, such as those with a non-work focus, are promising for further exploration. For instance, commitment to family members or leisure activities are recognized in the social psychology domain but remain largely unexplored in management research (Robinson et al. 2012), despite their growing significance in the workplace (Borgmann et al. 2019). Bennett et al. (2009) is the only study in our sample that delves into personal commitments

by demonstrating their relevance to retirement intentions among nurses age 45 and above.

Thus, examining only organizational commitment often does not fully capture the rich contexts in which employees are embedded. In some cases, it is not even clear to whom organizational commitment refers to, given, for instance, temporary agency workers or expatriates, who are likely to commit to more than one organization at once (Felfe et al. 2008; Nguyen et al. 2015; Menatta et al. 2022).

7 Limitations

Our literature review is subject to several limitations, which may influence the robustness and generalizability of our findings. First, the selection and analysis of the literature relied on subjective judgments by the researchers. Although we sought to enhance reliability by employing explicit inclusion criteria and following a systematic and transparent approach, subjective interpretation inevitably introduces potential biases. These biases could affect the comprehensiveness of the sample and the conclusions drawn, particularly if key studies were inadvertently excluded or marginally relevant studies were overrepresented.

Second, the scope of our search was constrained by the subjective nature of our search string. Despite iterative refinement through consultations with experts in commitment research, the retrieval of an additional 14 articles through forward and backward searches indicates that the search string may be somewhat restrictive. This limitation raises the possibility that other relevant studies, which might have altered or enriched our findings, were missed. The incomplete retrieval of relevant articles could result in a narrower understanding of the relationship between multiple commitments and turnover outcomes.

Third, our review was restricted to articles published in English, which may have limited the inclusiveness of our findings. While we acknowledge that foreign-language studies often include English abstracts, this approach does not fully mitigate the exclusion of potentially valuable non-English studies. For example, one article in French (Vandenberghe 2015) was excluded despite meeting the inclusion criteria based on its abstract. The exclusion of non-English studies may skew findings by favoring research traditions and perspectives predominantly represented in English-language publications.

Fourth, our review focused exclusively on the concept of commitment and did not consider related constructs such as employee engagement (Albrecht and Dineen 2016), identification (van Dick 2016), attachments (Gagné and Howard 2016), or psychological contracts (Hansen and Griep 2016). While this decision ensured depth in our analysis of commitment, it may have overlooked important complementary constructs that also influence turnover outcomes. The exclusion of these constructs might have limited the breadth of our conclusions and omitted interactions that could refine our understanding of turnover processes (Fisch and Block 2018).

Fifth, there was considerable heterogeneity in how commitment and turnover were defined and measured across studies in our sample. Within our sampled articles, definitions included unidimensional (e.g., Porter et al. 1974; Klein et al. 2012) and multidimensional (e.g., Meyer and Allen 1991; Meyer and Herscovitch 2001) conceptions of commitment. Additionally, some studies applied different definitions depending on the target of commitment (e.g., Boshoff and Mels 2000; Shim and Rohrbaugh 2011; Koslowsky et al. 2012), while a few did not provide a clear definition at all (e.g., Wombacher and Felfe 2017; Desselle et al. 2022). Such variation has significant implications for our findings. For instance, multidimensional definitions inherently suggest behavioral consequences, implying that committed employees are less likely to leave their organizations (Desselle et al. 2022). The diverse definitions also resulted in the use of at least ten different scales to measure organizational commitment, with some studies focusing solely on the affective component while neglecting the normative and continuance dimensions (e.g., Saboe et al. 2015; Courcy et al. 2019; Tetteh et al. 2020). Similarly, variability in how turnover was measured, specifically the intention to leave the organization, introduces the risk of measurement bias. This poses a risk to the synthesis and interpretation of our results, as it could obscure the true relationships between multiple commitments and turnover outcomes or lead to inconsistent findings (Pettigrew and Roberts 2006). Consequently, while our review provides valuable insights, its conclusions must be interpreted with caution, as they are contingent on the diverse methodologies and definitions employed in the reviewed studies.

8 Conclusion

This systematic review offers a comprehensive exploration of how multiple commitments influence turnover outcomes, particularly turnover intentions and actual turnover. The findings challenge the traditional focus on organizational commitment as the sole determinant of turnover, demonstrating that other workplace commitments contribute uniquely to understanding employee retention (Becker and Kernan 2003; Vandenberghe and Bentein 2009). These commitments, whether of professional, relational, or task-oriented nature, collectively shape employees' decisions to stay or leave, highlighting the necessity of adopting a multifocal approach in commitment research (Klein et al. 2012; Morin et al. 2015).

The interplay between different commitment targets emerges as a crucial area of investigation. Synergistic effects are observed when employees exhibit strong commitment to multiple targets (Askew et al. 2013). The findings of this review suggest that employees with a broad and robust network of commitments across their workplace are more inclined to remain with their organization. Particularly, because research indicates that strong commitments to certain targets can offset lower levels of commitment to other targets (e.g., Lapointe et al. 2013; Huyghebaert et al. 2019).

However, commitments can come into conflict, depending on the context and individual (Meyer et al. 2021). When commitments are misaligned, the likelihood of turnover increases (Houle et al. 2023). Overall, these findings highlight the benefits of organizations fostering environments that support the integration and compatibility of various commitments.

The review also highlights gaps in the current research landscape. A predominant focus on turnover intentions rather than actual turnover limits the generalizability of findings (Griffeth et al. 2000; Rubenstein et al. 2015). While turnover intentions provide valuable insights into the psychological aspects of withdrawal, they do not capture the complexities of actual employee departures, which are influenced by external and situational factors. Future research should prioritize examining actual turnover using longitudinal designs and innovative methodologies to address the inherent challenges of measuring this outcome (Hom and Griffeth 1995; Panaccio and Vandenberghe 2011; Vandenberghe et al. 2017).

There is also a need to explore commitments and their effects across diverse workplace contexts, as the dynamics of multiple commitments and their turnover implications can vary between them (Felfe and Yan 2009; Askew et al. 2013). Broadening research contexts can uncover patterns that enhance theoretical understanding and inform practical strategies for employee retention. Studies that address varying organizational sizes, industries, and cultural settings are crucial for capturing the full spectrum of commitment and turnover dynamics (Wasti et al. 2016; Meyer et al. 2019). This may also help to identify underexplored commitment targets and to integrate them into future studies. Commitments to family, leisure, or other personal interests, while recognized in social psychology (Cohen 2003), have been largely absent from turnover research in organizational settings (Robinson et al. 2012). As remote work and flexible arrangements blur traditional boundaries between work and personal life, investigating these targets becomes increasingly relevant for understanding modern employee behavior.

From a practical standpoint, organizations stand to benefit greatly from insights into the interplay of multiple commitments. In particular, by cultivating commitment to multiple targets within their workforce, organizations can enhance their probability of retaining valued employees (Yalabik et al. 2017). Therefore, initiatives such as targeted HR strategies and leadership development programs that harmonize organizational objectives with employees' broader commitments can play a crucial role in reducing turnover risks (Olsen et al. 2016; Valéau et al. 2021a).

In conclusion, this review emphasizes the necessity of understanding turnover through the lens of multiple commitments, shedding light on their nuanced interplay and collective impact on intentions to leave the organization and the actual act of leaving. By synthesizing findings across 86 articles of diverse research contexts, this study contributes to the understanding of the commitment-turnover relationship and provides avenues for future research that can further enrich this field.

Appendix

See Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3 Search string

Searched concept	Search terms	Search fields
Commitment	“multiple commitments” OR “workplace commitments” OR commitment foci OR commitment target*	Title, abstract, and keywords
Turnover outcomes	turnover OR retention OR attrition OR intention to leave OR intention to stay OR job search OR quit* OR resign* OR withdraw*	Title, abstract, and keywords

Table 4 Bibliographic sources of articles

Journal name	n	Impact factor
Journal of Vocational Behavior	11	11.1
The International Journal of Human Resource Management	8	5.6
Asia Pacific Business Review	3	2.9
British Journal of Management	3	5.6
Human Performance	3	2.2
Academy of Management Review	2	16.4
Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science	2	2.5
International Journal of Manpower	2	3.3
Journal of Applied Psychology	2	9.9
Journal of Organizational Behavior	2	6.8
Personnel Review	2	3.2
Psychological Bulletin	2	22.4
Social Behavior and Personality	2	1.2
Academy of Management Journal	1	10.5
American Journal of Health System Pharmacy	1	2.7
Comptabilité-Contrôle-Audit	1	0.2
Educational and Psychological Measurement	1	2.1
Employee Relations	1	2.2
European Journal of Psychological Assessment	1	2.5
European Journal of Tourism Research	1	2.9
European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology	1	4.0
European Management Journal	1	7.5
Human Relations	1	5.7
Human Resource Management Journal	1	5.8
Human Resource Management Review	1	8.2
Industrial Marketing Management	1	8.9

Table 4 (continued)

Journal name	n	Impact factor
Industrial Relations	1	1.4
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	1	11.6
International Journal of Organizational Analysis	1	n.a
Journal of Advanced Nursing	1	3.1
Journal of Business and Psychology	1	3.7
Journal of Chinese Human Resource Management	1	2.3
Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology	1	2.4
Journal of Interpersonal Violence	1	2.6
Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies	1	5.0
Journal of Management	1	9.3
Journal of Managerial Psychology	1	3.6
Journal of Nursing Management	1	4.7
Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	1	6.2
Journal of Personnel Psychology	1	1.6
Journal of Psychology in Africa	1	1.2
Journal of Research in Nursing	1	3.1
Journal of Sport Management	1	3.5
New Zealand Journal of Psychology	1	0.6
Organizational Research Methods	1	9.5
Perceptual and Motor Skills	1	1.6
Public Personnel Management	1	3.0
Total	86	5.8 (average)

Table 5 Full list of articles in the review sample

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Definition/ measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments				
1	Alfes et al	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Beneficiaries	Meyer et al. (2006)	534 volunteers	United Kingdom	Turnover intentions
2	Allen et al	1999	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Mowday et al. (1982)	476 alumni women's liberal art college	USA	Actual turnover
3	Askew et al	2013	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Meyer and Allen (1997), Singhammer et al. (2002)	279 working students	USA	Turnover intentions
4	Baruch and Winkelmann-Gleed	2002	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Porter et al. (1974)	92 Community Health Service employees	United Kingdom	Turnover intentions
5	Becker	1992	Mixed methods, longitudinal	Top management, organization	Workgroup, supervisor	O'Reilly and Chatman (1986)	Time 1: 763 employees of military supply company Time 2: 440 employees of military supply company	USA	Turnover intentions
6	Becker and Billings	1993	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Top management, organization	Workgroup, supervisor	O'Reilly and Chatman (1986)	763 employees of military supply company (only time 1 data)	USA	Turnover intentions
7	Bennett et al	2009	Qualitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Morrow (1983) Baruch and Winkelmann-Gleed (2002)	37 nurses over age 45	United Kingdom	Turnover intentions
8	Boshoff and Mels	2000	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Mowday et al. (1979)	382 accountants/teachers/office administrative personnel	South Africa	Turnover intentions
9	Boswell et al	2012	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Dual organization		Meyer et al. (1993, affective only)	623 contract workers	USA	Turnover intentions
10	Carmeli and Gefen	2005	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Morrow (1983), Allen and Meyer (1990)	228 social workers from healthcare institutions	Israel	Turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Definition/ measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments				
11	Chan et al	2011	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Vandenberghe et al. (2004; affective)	252 employees from a joint venture company	China	Turnover intentions
12	Chang et al	2006	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Blau (1989), Meyer et al. (1993), Morrow (1983)	340 nurses	Taiwan	Turnover intentions
13	Cohen	1996	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Porter et al. (1974), Blau (1985), Allen and Meyer (1990)	238 nurses	Canada	Turnover intentions
14	Cohen	2000	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Workgroup	Porter et al. (1974), Blau (1986), Randall and Cole (1991)	283 nurses	Israel	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
15	Cohen	2005	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Union, organization		Gordon et al. (1980), Meyer and Allen (1991)	489 nurses	Israel	Turnover intentions
16	Cohen	2007	Review	Occupation, organization		Multiple definitions discussed	/	Global	Actual turnover
17	Cohen and Freund	2005	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Meyer and Allen (1984), Blau (1985)	327 community center managers	Israel	Turnover intentions
18	Cooper et al	2016	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Supervisor	Klein et al. (2012)	468 university employees (half of them with short-term contracts)	Finland	Turnover intentions
19	Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran	2005	Review	Union, occupation, organization		Porter et al. (1974)	997 articles	Global	Actual turnover and turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Definition/ measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments				
20	Courcy et al	2019	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor	Morin et al. (2009, 2013)	1228 university employees	Canada	Turnover intentions
21	Desrochers and Dahir	2000	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Morrow (1983)	210 employees	USA	Turnover intentions
22	Desselle et al	2022	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		None	384 pharmacy technicians	USA	Turnover intentions
23	Du et al	2019	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Meyer et al. (1993)	692 healthcare workers	Taiwan	Turnover intentions
24	Felle and Yan	2009	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup	Meyer et al. (1993), Singlhammer et al. (2002)	235 clerical workers	Germany & China	Turnover intentions
25	Freund	2017	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Blau (1989), Becker et al. (2009)	202 managers in community-based organizations	Israel	Turnover intentions
26	Holzwarth et al	2021	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Allen and Meyer (1990)	3317 employees from a multinational industrial company from the automotive sector	Global	Turnover intentions
27	Houle et al	2023	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor	Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Perreira et al. (2018)	443 newcomers (enure < 12 months)	Canada	Turnover intentions
28	Huang et al	2007	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Meyer and Allen (1993)	326 auditors	Taiwan	Turnover intentions
29	Huyghebaert et al	2019	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Supervisor	Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Bentein et al. (2005), Vandenberghe and Bentein (2009)	244 nurses	France	Turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Definition/measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments				
30	Ingram and Lee	1990	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Porter et al. (1974)	235 salespeople from industrial firms	USA	Turnover intentions
31	Johnson et al	2010	Review			Klein et al. (2012)	not applicable	Global	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
32	Jørgensen and Becker	2015	Qualitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		None	3 HR managers & 15 operational employees in professional service firms	Denmark	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
33	Ju	2020	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Mowday et al. (1979), Blau (1985), Meyer and Allen (1990)	475 safety professionals	China	Turnover intentions
34	Kim and Chang	2014	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Meyer and Allen (1991)	209 permanent sport centre employees	South Korea	Turnover intentions
35	Kim and Rowley	2006	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Union, organization		Sherer and Morishima (1989)	291 employees from a textile manufacturing company	South Korea	Turnover intentions
36	Koslowsky et al	2012	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Mowday et al. (1979, 1982), Blau (1989)	340 knowledge workers	Israel	Turnover intentions
37	Lapointe et al	2013	Quantitative, longitudinal	Organization	Supervisor	Singhambher et al. (2002), Bennein et al. (2005), van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006), Becker (2009)	224 newcomers	Canada	Turnover intentions
38	Loscher et al	2023	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Allen and Meyer (1990), Meyer et al. (1993)	303 military reservists	Germany	Turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Interpersonal commitments	Action commitments	Definition/measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments						
39	Maertz et al	2002	Quantitative, longitudinal	Top management, organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Workgroup, supervisor		Mowday et al. (1979)	388 employees of military supply company	USA	Turnover intentions
40	Meyer et al	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Supervisor	Supervisor		Meyer et al. (1993), Stinglhamber et al. (2002)	Study 1: 481 alumni Study 2: 264 engineering alumni	Belgium	Actual turnover
41	Meyer et al	2019	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization				Meyer et al. (1993)	336 teachers	Canada	Turnover intentions
42	Meyer et al	2021	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor		Meyer and Herescoivitch (2001), Morin et al. (2009), Perreira et al. (2018)	2090 police employees	Canada	Turnover intentions
43	Morin et al	2011	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor		Porter et al. (1974), Morin et al. (2009)	270 workers from 3 service organizations	Canada	Turnover intentions
44	Morin et al	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization				Meyer et al. (1993)	1096 teachers	Hong Kong	Turnover intentions
45	Mueller et al	1992	Quantitative, longitudinal	Occupation, organization				None	DS1: 327 health care veterans DS2: 478 hospital employees DS3: 320 female nurses	USA	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
46	Nguyen et al	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Dual organization				Meyer and Allen (1991), Felfel et al. (2006, 2008)	471 Western expatriates in Vietnamese subsidiaries	Vietnam	Actual turnover
47	Paillet et al	2011	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Workgroup, supervisor		Bentein et al. (2002), Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003)	294 truckers	Canada	Turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Definition/ measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments				
48	Pail�� et al	2016	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Blau (1985), Herscovitch and Meyer (2001), Bentein et al. (2002)	329 occupational therapists	Canada	Turnover intentions
49	Panaccio and Vandenbergh	2011	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Supervisor	Meyer and Allen (1991), Singler et al. (2002)	311 employees from different organizations	Canada & France	Turnover intentions
50	Park and Jung	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Porter et al. (1974), Blau (1985)	555 full-time employees from various industries	South Korea	Turnover intentions
51	Perreira et al	2018	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor	Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Klein et al. (2012)	1409 healthcare employees	Canada	Turnover intentions
52	Peyrat-Guillard et al	2023	Qualitative, cross-sectional			Klein et al. (2012)	12 flight attendants and 28 pilots	France & India	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
53	Redman and Snape	2016	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Union, organization		Gordon et al. (1980), Meyer and Allen (1997, affective)	707 hospital employees	United Kingdom	Turnover intentions
54	Reichers	1985	Review	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup	None	not applicable	Global	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
55	Rickett and Van Dick	2005	Review	Organization	Workgroup	None	40 articles	Global	Turnover intentions
56	Robinson et al	2012	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Union, organization		Porter et al. (1974), Gordon et al. (1980)	2568 unionized electronics employees	South Korea	Turnover intentions
57	Roskova et al	2024	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Klein et al. (2012)	478 professionals	Slovakia	Turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Public	Methodology	Commitment targets		Definition/ measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments				
58	Saboe et al	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Supervisor	Meyer and Allen (1997), Singlhamber et al. (2002)	107 matched employees, supervisors, and coworkers	USA	Turnover intentions
59	Schoemmel and Jönsson	2014	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Workgroup	Allen and Meyer (1990), Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997), Schoemmel et al. (2014)	496 healthcare employees	Denmark	Turnover intentions
60	Schoemmel et al	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Workgroup	None	496 healthcare employees	Denmark	Turnover intentions
61	Shim and Robe-baugh	2011	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Mowday et al. (1979)	385 government employees	USA	Turnover intentions
62	Shape et al	2006	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Vandenbergh et al. (2004, affective)	223 employees from manufacturing company	China	Turnover intentions
63	Somers and Birnbaum	2000	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Meyer and Allen (1990), Blau et al. (1993)	175 hospital employees	USA	Turnover intentions
64	Singlhamber and Vandenbergh	2003	Quantitative, longitudinal	Organization	Supervisor	Meyer et al. (1993), Singlhamber et al. (2002)	238 university alumni	Belgium	Actual turnover
65	Singlhamber et al	2002	Mixed methods, longitudinal	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup, supervisor	Meyer et al. (1993)	478 university alumni 186 hospital nurses	Belgium	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
66	Tetteh et al	2020	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization		Meyer and Allen (1991), Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Blau (2003)	407 employees from a mining company	Ghana	Turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Interpersonal commitments	Action commitments	Definition/measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Occupation, organization						
67	Tsousooglou et al	2022	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Occupation, organization			Meyer and Allen (1991), Meyer (2009)	665 hospitality workers	Greece	Turnover intentions
68	Tsoumbris and Xenikou	2010	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Occupation, organization			Meyer and Allen (1991), Meyer et al. (1993)	157 employees from various organizations	Greece	Turnover intentions
69	Turner and Chelidurai	2005	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Occupation, organization			Meyer et al. (1993)	328 head coaches	USA	Turnover intentions
70	Valéau et al	2013	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Organization	Beneficiaries		Singhambher et al. (2002), Bentein et al. (2005)	343 volunteers from various organizations	France	Turnover intentions
71	Valéau et al	2021	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries		Meyer et al. (1993), Klein et al. (2012)	281 auditors	France	Turnover intentions
72	Valéau et al	2021	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Occupation, organization			Meyer et al. (1993), Klein et al. (2012)	265 auditors in public accountancy firms	France	Turnover intentions
73	van Rossenberg et al	2023	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Organization	Beneficiaries		Gellatly et al. (2006)	591 ProClient employees	United Kingdom	Turnover intentions
74	Van Steenberghe and Ellemers	2009	Quantitative, longitudinal	Organization	Organization	Workgroup		Allen and Meyer (1990), Meyer et al. (1993), Klein et al. (2001)	Study 1: 16,389 employees from a financial service organization Study 2: 482 sales force employees	Netherlands	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
75	Vance et al	2020	Quantitative, longitudinal	Organization	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor		Becker (1992), Meyer et al. (1993), Klein et al. (2012, 2014)	Sample 1: 260 employees in assisted living company Sample 2: 314 working adults Sample 3: 479 employees from an energy industry company	USA	Actual turnover and turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets		Definition/measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments				
76	Vandenberghé and Benetin	2009	Quantitative, longitudinal	Organization	Supervisor	Meyer et al. (1993), Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Vandenberghé et al. (2004)	Sample 1: 172 pharmaceutical employees Sample 2: 186 nurses Sample 3: 1277 alumni students	Belgium	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
77	Vandenberghé et al.	2001	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup	Meyer and Allen (1990), Meyer et al. (1993)	580 employees of the European Commission	European countries	Turnover intentions
78	Vandenberghé et al.	2004	Quantitative, longitudinal	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Meyer et al. (1993), Meyer and Herscovitch (2001)	Study 1: 199 university alumni Study 2: 316 university alumni Study 3: 194 nurses	Belgium	Actual turnover and turnover intentions
79	Vandenberghé et al.	2017	Quantitative, longitudinal	Organization	Supervisor	Meyer et al. (1993)	T1: 578 university alumni T2: 483 university alumni T3: 439 university alumni	Belgium	Actual turnover
80	Veurink and Fischer	2011	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Porter et al. (1974)	145 volunteers	New Zealand	Turnover intentions
81	Wasti and Can	2008	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup, supervisor	Meyer and Allen (1991)	430 employees of an automotive retailer	Turkey	Turnover intentions
82	Wombacher and Felfe	2017	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Workgroup	Allen and Meyer (1990)	1362 military members	Germany	Turnover intentions
83	Wong and Wong	2013	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Organization	Supervisor	Mowday et al. (1982), Allen and Meyer (1990)	255 employees and their 86 direct supervisors in 2 international joint ventures	China	Turnover intentions

Table 5 (continued)

No	Author(s)	Year of Publication	Methodology	Commitment targets			Definition/ measurement of commitment	Sample	National context	Turnover outcomes
				Organizational commitments	Interpersonal commitments	Action commitments				
84	Yalabik et al	2017	Mixed methods, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization	Beneficiaries, workgroup		Meyer and Allen (1991)	282 employees in a professional service firm (+ 34 interviews)	United Kingdom	Turnover intentions
85	Yousaf et al	2015	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization			Allen and Meyer (1990), Meyer et al. (1993)	153 university employees	Netherlands	Turnover intentions
86	Yousaf et al	2018	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Occupation, organization			Meyer et al. (1993)	143 restaurant chefs	Indonesia	Turnover intentions

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Declarations

Competing interests The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interest to disclose.

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