
Transformational leadership and turnover intention: Mediating effect of commitment to the organization and commitment to the job

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✎ **ABSTRACT.** L'obiettivo del presente studio trasversale è stato quello di verificare la relazione tra le strategie di leadership trasformazionale, i due tipi di impegno (quello per il lavoro e quello per l'organizzazione) e l'intenzione di un dipendente di lasciare comunque il posto di lavoro e quindi l'organizzazione stessa. Il campione era composto da 478 intervistati che svolgevano diverse professioni sia nel settore privato che in quello pubblico (168 uomini, 310 donne). I risultati dello studio hanno dimostrato che l'impegno nel lavoro non mostra un impatto significativo sull'intenzione di licenziarsi mentre quello nei confronti dell'organizzazione funge sia da fattore diretto che di mediazione nel ridurre l'intenzione di lasciare il posto di lavoro.

✎ **SUMMARY.** *Considering diversity of commitments to multiple targets in the organization, this cross-sectional study investigates the strength and direction of the relationships between perceived strategies of transformational leadership, two types of commitments (commitment to the organization and commitment to the job), and the intention to quit. The sample consisted of 478 respondents working in different professions in both the private and public sectors (168 male, 310 female). The findings from the structural equation mediation model reveal that commitment to the organization serves as both a direct and mediating factor in reducing the intention to quit. Conversely, commitment to the job does not exhibit a significant impact on the intention to quit, either directly or as a mediator. Consequently, the association between transformational leadership and the intention to quit is only partially mediated by commitment to the organization, while commitment to the job shows no effect on the intention to quit. These results emphasize the significance of prioritizing the unidimensional commitment model and recognizing distinctions among various commitment targets when assessing the influence of transformational leadership strategies on the attitudes of followers.*

Keywords: *Transformational leadership, Intention to quit, Commitment to organization, Commitment to job*

INTRODUCTION

The intention to quit and transformational leadership

The intention to quit (ITQ), generally refers to an employee's intention to move from their present employment to other employment in the near future (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). It represents a deliberate thought process in which an individual employee evaluates their present job conditions in order to determine their continued membership in the organization they work for. Conceptual and empirical models of turnover intentions provide strong support for the proposition that behavioural intentions constitute the most immediate determinant of actual behaviour (withdrawal) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). A high rate of turnover thus has a potentially negative outcome for the level of organizational productivity, customer service delivery, and an organization's profitability (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018).

Studies suggest that job abandonment is most often associated with things such as job satisfaction, organizational justice, organizational commitment, group norms, job insecurity, lack of growth opportunities, low decision-making, lack of communication, and a lack of promotion opportunities. (e.g. Dechawatanapaisal, 2018; Thurston & Glendon, 2018). Recent studies have documented the important role of transformational leadership (TL) in relation to employees' intention to leave in different industries (El Badawy & Bassiouny, 2014). Mittal (2016) explored the impact of transformational leadership on employees' intention to leave. Additionally, Amankwaa and Anku-Tsede (2015) contended that the presence of transformational leaders within an organization lowers employees' inclination to resign. Consistent with this, Sun and Wang (2017) have also highlighted that the presence of transformational leadership serves to diminish employees' intentions to quit.

The connection between transformational leadership (TL) and the inclination to leave an organization has been implicitly established through meta-analytical research, which consistently highlights the beneficial impact of TL on employee satisfaction (Procházka & Vaculík, 2015) and employee performance (Wang et al., 2011). Various studies have found that TL has an indirect influence on ITQ through perceived organizational support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), organizational justice and trust (Engelbrecht & Chamberlain, 2005).

Widely known as full-range leadership (FRL), the transformational leadership theory places an emphasis on the moral values of the followers, provoking their sensitivity to ethical problems and mobilizing their energy for reforming institutions. Within TL, leaders emphasize a higher motive development and arouse followers' motivation and positive emotions by creating and representing an inspiring vision of the future. Transformational leadership pertains to the role modeling behaviors of a leader who seeks to transform her followers' attitudes and behaviors to perform beyond expectations. Bass and Avolio (1992) identified behaviour which represent four basic components ("I's") of transformational leadership:

- Idealized influence (charisma) arouses strong emotions from followers and identification with the leader when they act as strong role models for followers;
- Individualized consideration involves providing support, encouragement, coaching delegation, advice, and feedback for use in the personal development of followers;
- Intellectual stimulation increases the awareness of problems and influences followers to be creative and innovative, and it seeks to challenge their own beliefs and values and those of their leaders and organization;
- Inspirational motivation refers to developing and communicating an appealing vision using symbols and images to focus the efforts of subordinates and modelling behaviours that are deemed appropriate.

A transformational leader promotes trust, job satisfaction, job performance, altruistic behaviour, civic virtues, civility and fairness, engagement, and innovation (Lišková & Tomaščíková, 2019). TL significantly influences followers' job satisfaction, affective commitment, and levels of burnout (Xu et al., 2021), service quality, innovation in a team (Tipu, Ryan & Fantazy, 2012). Eisenberger and colleagues (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski & Rhoades, 2002) in their study found that employees' perception of supervisor support completely mediated a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and employee turnover.

Commitment and the intention to quit

Highly committed employees have a strong desire to stay in their current organization, which reduces their turnover intention. This relationship has been documented by a number of studies, most of which rely on the Three-Component

Model (TCM) of commitment formulated by Meyer and Allen (1991); here, commitment can express a desire, need, or obligation to remain a member of an organization, which is shown in three commitment dimensions: affective (desire), continuance (need), and normative (obligation).

In particular, studies point to the direct influence of affective commitment to the organization on the intention to leave (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Stallworth, 2003). Van Steenberghe and Ellemers (2009) noted that there was a difference between the intention to leave an organization, which was most closely related to affective commitment, and actually leaving, whose only predictor was continuous commitment. They explain this finding by the fact that the intention to leave is primarily related to one's emotions towards an organization, whereas an individual primarily takes into consideration real losses and available alternatives when they are actually leaving. Examining actual employee turnover, Griffeth et al. (2000) documented that organizational commitment was found to explain 20% of the variance in actual employee turnover. In their meta-analysis, Meyer and colleagues (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002) reported correlations of affective, normative, and continuance commitment with withdrawal cognitions and actual turnover. As expected, they reported the strongest correlations between withdrawal cognitions and affective commitment ($\rho = -.56$) followed by normative ($\rho = -.33$) and continuance ($\rho = -.18$) commitment. Commitment to the organization in the position of its affective component demonstrates a direct effect on the intention to leave one's job, and it also acts as a mediator of studied relationships with turnover (Renaud, Morin & Béchar, 2017). Three foci of affective commitment (organization, team, and supervisor) have been confirmed in a study by Holzwarth and colleagues (Holzwarth, Gunnesch-Luca, Soucek & Moser, 2021) as significant mediators between perceived organizational communication and turnover intention.

Studies based on TCM confirm, that affective commitment exhibits the strongest relationships and is the most significant predictor of work behaviours such as staying at work, intending to leave or quitting (Harris & Cameron, 2005; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009; Zhu, Wang & Jiang, 2022), absenteeism (Hausknecht, Hiller & Vance, 2008), performance (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007) and OCB (Cetin, Gürbüz & Sert, 2015); consequently, numerous authors suggest that it should be regarded as the primary and fundamental representative of the attitudinal concept

of commitment (Mercurio, 2015; Solinger, Van Olffen & Roe, 2008). Despite its dominant position in research, TCM has been subjected to critical evaluation due to the unclear distinction between affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects as well as due to the wording of TCM questionnaire items that directly contain behavioral readiness (e.g., intention to leave) (Jaros, 2007; Solinger et al., 2008). Klein, Molloy and Brinsfield (2012), however, came up with a more fundamental notion of commitment reconceptualization. They sought to conceptually purify commitment and do away with any overlap and confusion with other types of workplace bonds (e.g., acquiescence, instrumental, identification). They understand commitment to be a specific type of bond that is characterized by (1) volition, (2) dedication, and (3) responsibility. Commitment is a conscious state of mind that is socially constructed and that dynamically changes over time. In contrast to Meyer and Allen's TCM, Klein et al. (2012) see commitment as unidimensional, universal, and suitable for different entities; social entities (organizations or teams), people (co-workers or leaders), or goals (careers or roles). Klein and colleagues (Klein, Cooper, Molly & Swanson, 2014) pointed out that their unidimensional construct of commitment to an organization as measured by the KUT target-free scale in a validation study showed a negative relationship with the intention to leave ($r = -.43$).

Commitments to workplace entities other than the organization itself and the implications for employee behaviour have not been explored to the same extent. Snape and Redman (2003) found a negative association between affective occupational commitment and occupational withdrawal cognitions. Landry, Panaccio and Vandenberghe (2010) examined employees' commitment to supervisors from the point of view of Meyer and Allen's three-component commitment model; their regression analysis showed that affective commitment to the supervisor is a better predictor of the studied consequences than other forms of supervisory commitment (both normative and continuance). Vandenberghe and Bentein (2009) found stronger links between commitment to supervisor and turnover intention in the case of employees with a lower organizational commitment.

Podsakoff, Lepine and Lepine (2007) examined the mediating role of organizational commitment between two types of stressors and the intention to leave. They found that hindrance stressors have a negative relationship with organizational commitment, which acts as a mediator

between the stressor and the intention to leave. Conversely, challenge stressors are positively related to organizational commitment, which further mediates the impact on the intention to leave in a negative direction. The relationships between turnover intentions and the commitment to different entities are more elevated than with actual turnover (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Klein et al., 2014; Meyer et al., 2002; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009).

THE CURRENT STUDY

Organizations are increasingly taking an interest in how to retain their staff and optimize leadership and commitment practices to maximize organizational outcomes. This leads organizations to find ways to understand and manage the psychological mechanisms that keep their employees highly committed and engaged in their jobs and to prevent them from intending to leave the company. The present study intends to empirically explore the strength and direction of the relationships between perceived strategies of transformational leadership as independent variable, two types of commitment (commitment to the organization and commitment to job) as mediators, and the intention to quit as dependent variable.

Accumulating evidence suggests that transformational leadership is positively related to follower job attitudes and behaviour. Walumbwa et al. (2004) document positive connections between transformational leadership and organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and negative relations between job and work withdrawal. In their research on transformational leadership, Avolio and colleagues (Avolio, Zhu, Koh & Bhatia, 2004) found that inspirational leader behavior affects organizational commitment. Lim, Loo and Lee (2017) reveal an insignificant negative relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention, and indirect influence of transformational leadership on turnover intention through mediating role of job satisfaction. Negative effects of organizational commitment on intention to leave the company have been also very well documented (e.g., Sokmen & Ekmeckcioglu, 2016; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009; Zhu et al., 2022). Only a small number of studies reflect commitment to job and its connection with leadership style and work outcomes, intention to quit including. Relationships between leadership style and commitment to job we can partially support by results of Purba and colleagues

(Purba, Oostrom, Born & Van Der Molen, 2016) who examined the mediating effect of on-the-job embeddedness on the relationship between trust in a supervisor and turnover intention. Their results revealed that supervisor's trustworthiness (important facet of transformational leadership) positively affects job embeddedness, and job embeddedness negatively correlates with turnover intention. Testing predictive efficacy of commitment to different foci (Cooper, Stanley, Howard, Klein & Tenhiälä, 2016) showed that high commitment to profession, organization and job was associated with significantly higher positive work behaviours and work effort and lower turnover intention. Based on the above positions, our study is an attempt to analyse the relationship between transformational leadership and intention to quit with commitment to the organization and commitment to job as the mediators. The intention to explore the mediating role of commitments to both job and the organization stems from Furnham's (1990) perspective, which delineates two primary commitment categories. The first pertains to commitments influencing work attitudes, such as those tied to career, occupation, and work ethics, with a lesser association to the organization. The second category encompasses commitment to the organization. Both commitments to job and the organization are deemed significant, interrelated factors that exert influence on global attitudes like job satisfaction and intentions to stay or leave. Employees who derive satisfaction from their roles tend to exhibit heightened dedication and longevity with their employers compared to those who do not.

A lot of research focused on variables contributing to the intention to quit and turnover has been conducted in a frame of the Meyer and Allen's model of organization commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 2013), dual commitment to organization and to job (Morin, Meyer, McInerney, Marsh & Ganotice, 2015), and profiles of commitments to several targets from person-centred perspective (Cooper et al. 2016; Morin, Morizot, Boudrias & Madore, 2011). Our study is to our knowledge unique in combining two kinds of commitment (organization, job) aiming at the possibility to open new way of research regarding number and nature of different commitments combination explaining larger portion of effect of transformational leadership on intention to quit. In contrast to the previously mentioned studies, which were based on the TCM, our approach to studying commitment is grounded in Klein et al.'s (2012) unidimensional model. We expected that commitment

to organization and commitment to job would emerge as a significant mediator of transformational leadership and turnover intention, and that transformational leadership and the abovementioned commitments would attenuate behavioural intentions to leave a company. It is assumed that a better understanding of these interrelationships will enable researchers to explain the influence of these constructs on one another and present useful outcomes to help organizations in sustaining performance and competitiveness through effective retention. The verification of the mediating effect of two unidimensional commitments on the relationships between transformational leadership and the intention to quit would indicate the importance of developing more specific interventions aimed at turnover prevention.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of 478 respondents working in different professions, various organizations in both the private and public sectors. The inclusive criterion for including respondents in the research was working for the organization on a full-time basis, either on an indefinite or fixed-term contract. 168 (35.1%) of participants were male and 310 (64.9%) were female; 225 (47.2%) were single, 213 (44.5%) were married, and 40 (8.5%) indicated they were divorced or other. The age range was from 19 to 70 years, with the average age being 37.2 ($SD = 11.75$). One hundred and twenty-three people had their highest completed education level at high school (25.6%), 11.5% (55 people) had a bachelor's degree, and 62.3% (300 people) had a master's degree. The minimum tenure was .5 years, the maximum was 42 years, and the average tenure was 8.44 ($SD = 9.5$) years. Two hundred and forty respondents (50.2%) worked in private sector organizations and 238 (49.8%) worked in public sector organizations. 351 (73.4%) respondents had fixed-term employment contracts and 127 (26.6%) had employment contracts for an indefinite period.

A cross-sectional survey was conducted using an online platform ([doc.google.com/forms](https://docs.google.com/forms)) available from February to March 2022. We utilized our networks to share and disseminate the survey via social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. A standardized general description of the research was provided in emails and

messaging/social media posts. Participants were requested to read the instructions and provide informed consent. They were informed that their participation in this study is voluntary, not mandatory, and they could withdraw at any time and for any reason. Additionally, participants were assured that all collected data would remain anonymous and solely be used for research purposes.

Measures

All measures used in this study were translated into Slovak by at least one native speaker and one psychologist. The correctness of the scales for the Slovak versions was evaluated by using a back translation.

– *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Form 6-S*. The 12 items *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Form 6-S (MLQ-6S)* (Vinger & Cilliers, 2006) was used to measure four transformational strategies – idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Previous research (e.g. Mittal, 2016; Sun & Wang, 2017) has demonstrated that leadership style, particularly transformational leadership, serves as an effective predictor of outcomes such as employee intention to quit. This provides a robust basis for concentrating on these specific items in our study. Utilizing a focused set of items facilitates a clearer and more precise measurement, specifically addressing the factors most likely to influence employee attitudes, particularly the intention to quit, and makes it easier to draw meaningful conclusions about the relationship between transformational leadership and the intention to quit. Sample items include “My supervisor makes me proud by associating with me” (idealized influence); “My supervisor articulates a compelling vision of the future” (inspirational motivation); “My supervisor seeks differing perspectives when solving problems” (intellectual stimulation); and “My supervisor treats me as an individual rather than just a member of a group” (individual consideration). Respondents were asked to judge how frequently each statement matched their direct manager or supervisor using a five-point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = frequently, if not always). We modified the wording of the items so that the respondents were asked to report the extent to which they perceived their formal direct supervisor as transformational. Similar item adjustments have been used in other studies (e.g. Frieder, Wang & Oh,

2018). The reliability of the scale is reported in Table 1.

- *Klein et al.'s Unidimensional Target-free Measure.* The KUT scale was created by Klein et al. (2014). This tool originally consists of four questions that are answered using a five-point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely). The Czech adaptation provided evidence of the KUT scale's robustness regarding internal consistency as well as content, factor, convergent, discriminant, and incremental validity (Procházka, Židlická, Cígler, Vaculík & Klein, 2019). Based on the proximity of the Czech and Slovak cultural contexts, this validation study can be relied upon in the present research. For the purposes of the present research, the items were edited so that respondents could express their commitment to two targets: commitment to organization (CO), item example: "How committed are you to your organization?" and commitment to job (CJ), item example: "To what extent do you care about your job?" Depending on the commitment target, Klein et al. (2014) report a reliability of .86-.97 for their scales, we obtained similarly high values (see Table 1).
- *Intention to quit.* The ITQ measure was applied according to Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997). This tool originally

contains five items that express the intention to leave (e.g., "As soon as I will be able to find a better job, I will leave this organization") and they are measured on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree). The items were translated from English into Slovak and their accuracy was verified by a back translation. The value of the Cronbach's alpha of the original scale was .89; we report reliability measures of ITQ in our sample in the Table 1.

The statistical procedure

The data were analysed in Jamovi (2022) using the lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) R package. In the first step, we estimated the measurement model representing each questionnaire (commitment to organization; commitment to job; MLQ; ITQ) by confirmatory factor analyses, allowing for covariances among latent factors. We had no intention to explore differences among transformational leadership facets, therefore for the MLQ questionnaire, we utilized the overall MLQ transformational (one-factorial) model. Measurement model was evaluated by a goodness-of-fit test statistic (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index ($CFI \geq .90$), Tucker-Lewis

Table 1 – Summary statistics and reliability coefficients

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	MIN	MAX	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω
CO	14.70	3.31	4	20	.813	.832
CJ	16.66	3.24	4	20	.882	.890
MLQtransf	38.75	11.91	12	60	.946	.946
ITQ	11.60	6.98	4	28	.931	.934

Legenda. CO = commitment to organization; CJ = commitment to job; MLQtransf = transformational leadership; ITQ = intention to quit.

Note. The statistics were calculated from raw scores of respective questionnaires.

Index ($TLI \geq .90$), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ($RMSEA \leq .08$), and Standardized Root Mean Residuals ($SRMR \leq .08$) fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In the second step, the latent factors from the previous CFA were used to specify the structural equation model (SEM) of the hypothesized direct and indirect effects. All effects were estimated by percentile bootstrap with 1000 repetitions. For direct effects, we regressed the ITQ (dependent variable) onto MLQ transformational as well as onto CO and CJ respectively, allowing a covariance between the mediators. The CO and CJ variables were included as variables mediating the respective effects of overall MLQ on ITQ. The standard errors of the direct and indirect effects were approximated from 1000 bootstrapped samples.

RESULTS

Measurement models

We used an initial CFA model to examine relationships between latent variables and their measures and to estimate the validity and independence of CO, CJ, ITQ, and transformational leadership (MLQ), as the collection of these measured constructs derived exclusively from employees. The results of the analysis suggest that the constructs were independent, as the model specifying separate factors provides an adequate fit ($\chi^2_{(747)} = 246, p < .05$; CFI = .942; TLI = .935; RMSEA = .065; SRMR = .046). Moreover, Harman's test attributed only 33.764% of the variance to a single factor, and the estimated standard correlations between the latent measures assessed using Pearson correlations also supported the existence of independent factors (all $p < .001$, and all absolute values of $r < .55$). The estimated measurement model (see Figure 1) showed a good and reliable approximation of the data with all fit indices within recommended levels (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The only problem we had to address was the low standardized factor loadings of two items. Item KUT14 (from the CO scale), we decided to retain despite its $\beta = .51$. However, according to the criteria proposed by Cheung and colleagues (Cheung, Cooper-Thomas, Lau & Wang, 2023) or Hair and colleagues (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2009), it is on the border of acceptability. On the contrary, according to the same criteria, we had to unequivocally exclude item ITQ5 (from the ITQ scale), whose $\beta = .38$. This implies that

the latent factor does not explain even 15% of its variance, which is clearly less than the required 25%. The loadings of all other variables, as well as their internal consistencies (see Table 1), were satisfactory. In the case of MLQ, measurement model working with transformational leadership as a unidimensional construct resembled a very good fit with robust factor loadings (all $p < .001$ and all $\beta \geq .63$) and internal consistency (see Table 1), the MLQtransf overall score can be considered a reliable measure.

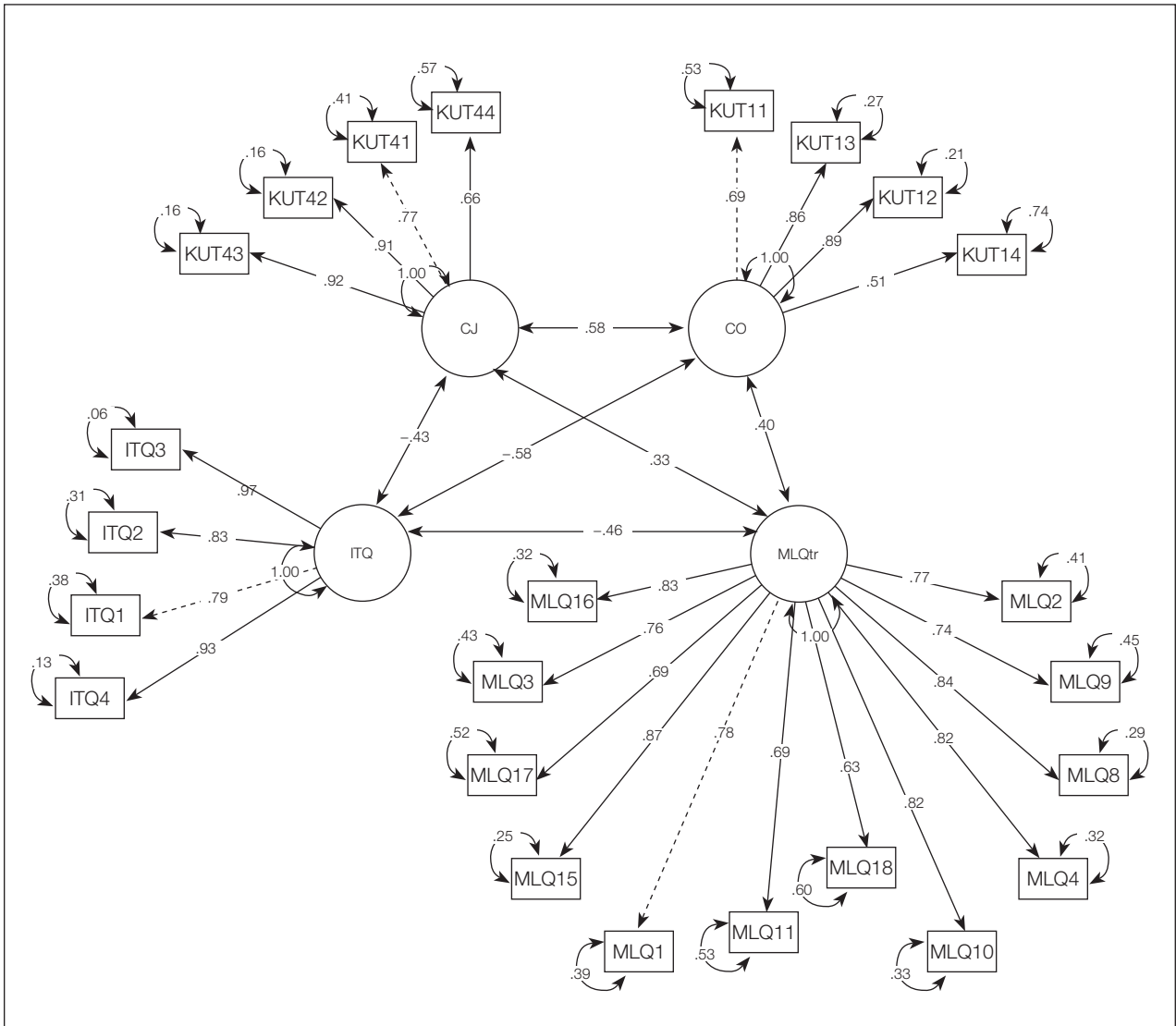
Structural equation mediation models

Table 1 provides summary statistics and reliability coefficients for the variables included in the mediation models. The prerequisite relationships between the latent measures were assessed using Pearson correlations (all $p < .001$, and all absolute values of $r < .55$).

In the model, we specified the direct effects from MLQ on the ITQ and the indirect effects as a product of the mediators CO and CJ with the overall MLQ in total sample (see Figure 2).

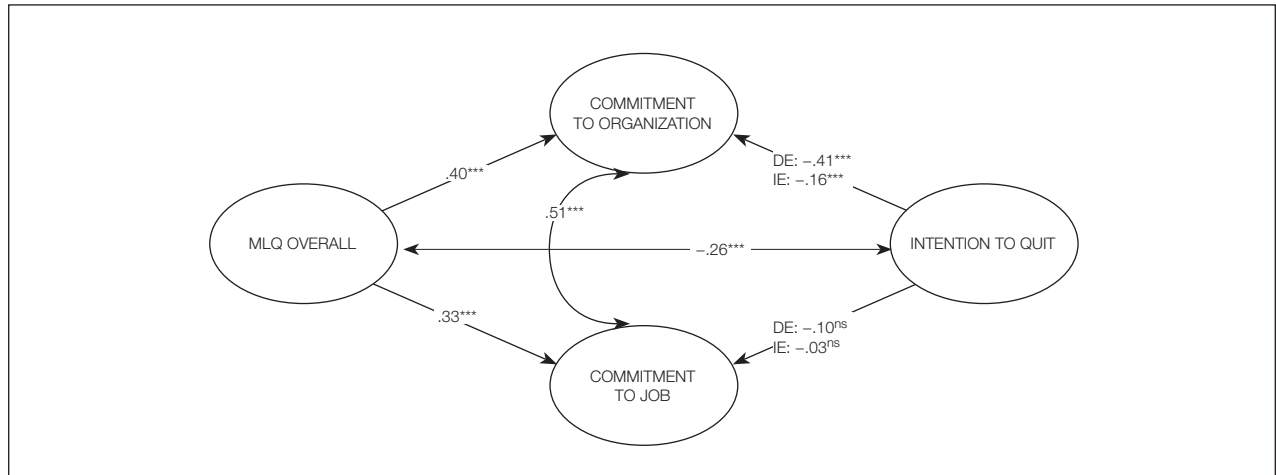
The model indicates that transformational leadership directly significantly enhances both organizational commitment ($\beta = .397; p < .001$, CI [.250, .421] and job commitment ($\beta = .335; p < .001$, CI [.180, .374] while also significantly decreasing the intention to leave the organization ($\beta = -.264; p < .001$, CI [-.537, -.262]. The direct effect of CO on ITQ is statistically significant as well ($\beta = -.413; p < .001$, CI [-.966, -.498], however the direct effect of CJ on ITQ does not reach statistical significance ($\beta = -.102; p = .060$, CI [-.391, -.8.63e-4]. The mediators shared a small portion of common variance. Importantly, however, only CO was found to mediate a significant negative indirect effect of transformational leadership on ITQ ($\beta = -.164; p < .001$, CI [-.342, -.151], whereas CJ did not show the any significant indirect effects ($\beta = -.034; p = .066$, CI [-.107, .00]. Thus, according to these results, ITQ is negatively affected by both MLQtransf and CO variables directly while the direct effect of CO on ITQ is clearly the strongest of all observed effects, and indirectly in the configuration in which MLQ acts as a predictor and CO as a mediator. The CJ variable has no significant effect on ITQ, either directly or indirectly. Direct effect of MLQ transformational on CO, CJ and ITQ and of CO and CJ on ITQ and indirect effects of MLQ transformational on ITQ mediated by CO and CJ respectively are displayed in Table 2.

Figure 1 – Factor loadings and residual variances



Note. Factor loadings and residual variances for commitment to organization (CO) and commitment to job (CJ) both as measured by KUT, intention to quit (ITQ), and transformational leadership (MLQtr) as measured by MLQ instrument items. Beta coefficients are displayed; all factor loadings and covariances were significant at $p < .001$.

Figure 2 – Path diagram of structural equation mediation model



Note. Direct effect (DE) and indirect (IE) (mediated) effect (IE) in total sample. Standardized estimates are shown. Exact values for DE and IE are presented in Table 2 and approximated from 1000 bootstrapped samples.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, ^{ns} non-significant

Table 2 – Summary of direct and indirect effects

Direct effects		95% Confidence intervals							
Dep	Pred	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	β	z	p	
CO	MLQtransf	.334	.0441	.250	.421	.397	7.58	<.001	
CJ	MLQtransf	.276	.0487	.180	.374	.335	5.67	<.001	
ITQ	MLQtransf	-.391	.0715	-.537	-.262	-.264	-5.47	<.001	
ITQ	CO	-.725	.1236	-.966	-.498	-.413	-5.87	<.001	
ITQ	CJ	-.183	.0977	-.391	-8.63e-4	-.102	-1.88	.060	
Indirect effects									
Dep	Pred \Rightarrow Med	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	β	z	p	
ITQ	MLQtransf \Rightarrow CO	-.242	.049	-.342	-.151	-.164	-4.951	<.001	
ITQ	MLQtransf \Rightarrow CJ	-.051	.028	-.107	-.000	-.034	-1.839	.066	

Legenda. Dep = dependent variable; Pred = predictor; SE = standard error; MLQtransf = transformational leadership; CO = commitment to organization; CJ = commitment to job; ITQ = intention to quit. p -values are approximated from 1000 bootstrapped sample

DISCUSSION

The voluntary departure of high-performing employees diminishes the effectiveness of organizations. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the processes that underlie such decisions to leave. Significant research within the field of organizational commitment or commitment to other entities has been rooted in Meyer and Allen's TCM model. This model emphasizes the pivotal role of the affective dimension of commitment in predicting work-related behaviors and attitudes, including thoughts about turnover (Allen, Evans & White, 2011; Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Meyer et al., 2002). Holzwarth et al. (2021) examined the effect of perceived organizational communication (both vertical and horizontal) via commitment to different foci on turnover intentions. These studies confirmed importance of the bond to organization when considering leaving it. Unlike the earlier studies, which relied on the Targeted Commitment Model (TCM), our approach to investigating commitment is rooted in Klein et al.'s (2012) unidimensional framework. In 2014, Klein and their colleagues introduced a novel survey called the KUT (Klein Unidimensional Target). Unlike conventional evaluations that encompass a wide range of workplace affiliations and connections, the KUT is specifically crafted to gauge commitment as a distinct, isolated concept, untouched by other closely related workplace attitudes such as identification and satisfaction. The goal of the present study was to verify how perceived leadership behaviours are associated with followers' commitment focusing on a discrete and novel form of unidimensional commitment (commitment to job and commitment to organization) and an employee's intention to leave an organization. The obtained results partially supported our expectations, providing evidence that the positive relationship between transformational leadership and commitment to organization contributes to respondents' decisions to leave an organization. Such a result is expected, given that transformational leaders are able to empower staff and provide a positive work climate, thus leading to higher levels of commitment and a lower degree of turnover intention (Labrague, Nwafor & Tsaras, 2020). Structured mentorship, support, feedback, the availability of professional advancement, positive relationships, and leaders as a role model for followers were all essential aspects of TL which impacted employees' decisions to remain committed, enhancing the direct role of TL in reducing followers' turnover intentions. Involving employees in decision-making within an

organization strengthens overall organizational effectiveness and the retention process as well (Boamah, Spence Laschinger, Wong & Clarke, 2018). TL has been found to be associated with turnover intention in a study by Dupré and Day (2007), who found that factors associated with the supportive management of personnel are indirectly related to turnover intention through the mediating influence of job satisfaction. Alexandrov, Babakus and Yavas (2007) demonstrated that employees' perceptions of management's concern for both employees and customers have a significant effect on turnover intention. Albrecht (2006) has argued that turnover intention is influenced by employees' trust of management. Similar results have been documented internationally, such as in a systematic review by Cummings et al. (2018) that linked relational leadership styles, including transformational leadership, to better nursing workforce outcomes and overall organizational effectiveness. Our findings are consistent with the authors mentioned earlier, who similarly found that commitment to the organization serves as a partial mediator in the association between transformational leadership and the intention to leave a company. In essence, this implies that when followers perceive their leader as transformational, inspirational, and supportive, it not only increases their commitment to the organization but also augments their likelihood of remaining with the company. Crucially, it's worth noting that only commitment to organization was identified as a mediator with a significant negative indirect impact on ITQ resulting from transformational leadership, while commitment to job did not exhibit the anticipated effects, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The finding of a greater strength of commitment to an organization as both a direct and indirect predictor of considering leaving supports Klein et al.'s (2014) idea that employees reliably distinguish between their commitment to different entities at work and assign different meanings to them. A relevant explanation for the differing patterns of commitment to organization (CO) and commitment to job (CJ) in predicting or moderating the intention to leave is provided in Cheng, Jiang and Riley's study (2003). The study highlights that commitment to the organization and intention to leave share the same object, whereas commitment to work may not be directly linked to the organization. "According to Ajzen (1989), the principle of compatibility suggests that the relationship between a given attitude and other attitudes or behaviors is based on them having the same targets" (Cheng et al., 2003, p. 314). Cheng

et al. (2003) argue that commitment to the organization is a global concept and is more suitable for predicting outcomes relevant to the organization, such as intention to leave (global hypothesis). A positive perception of the organization can significantly impact an employee's intention to stay. While job commitment is important, its impact on retention may not be as broad as that of organizational commitment.

Ultimately, the distinct impact of commitments to these two entities on withdrawal cognitions serves as the most compelling confirmation of this notion. Similar conclusions can be identified in a study by Lee, Carswell and Allen (2000), where the finding was that occupational commitment is less strongly related to organizational turnover variables than affective organizational commitment. Our results suggest that being less committed to an organization has a greater impact on turnover intention than binding with one's job. These results therefore contradict the conventional myth that employees who are committed to their job will be loyal to the company.

In line with Rossenberg et al. (2022), we argue that on one hand, we might anticipate that commitment, as measured by the KUT, may exhibit weaker associations with certain outcomes when compared to the TCM's measure of affective commitment due to the reduced conceptual overlap. On the other hand, the heightened conceptual clarity provided by the KUT allows us to attribute the effects observed to commitment with greater confidence, rather than other types of workplace bonds.

A key contribution of this study is that, in addition to replicating previous findings linking leadership with organizational commitment (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1997), it examined a new specific concept of commitment to job and commitment to organization in the framework of Klein's (2012, 2014) concept of unidimensional commitment. This extension strengthens the inferences about these modes of commitment and transformational leadership strategies and their effect on followers' attitudes; it also provides wider support for the ability to generalize the theoretical model presented in the current study.

Practical implications

Based on these presented findings, developing transformational leadership practices can be incorporated into organizational initiatives to promote employees'

commitment and retention. Education, training, and professional development are some of the key strategies to enhance TL. This study supports the formulation of evidence-based educational programmes, leadership training, and interventions to foster desirable leadership practices in managers. Search and selection committees tasked with recruiting qualified candidates for leading positions may consider using a leadership assessment tool to screen and detect unfit profiles and to attract leaders who can support organizational goals, strategies, and development.

New leaders may also benefit from mentoring and coaching from experienced leaders. Clear guidelines that outline behaviour expectation (including in leadership) for all employees should be the norm in every organization. Our findings suggest that commitment to organizations is still an important component of organizational policy and can influence turnover cognitions. On the other hand, it is important to distinguish between organizations and other possible targets in the work context by using the target-free model/scale. Rossenberg et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of the commitment concept in HRM research and practice. They also criticize the fact that only two out of 209 HRM articles (investigated up to July 2021) adopt the commitment concept in the sense of Klein's definition, which is a narrower and clearer understanding of the bonds to work objects, as opposed to the more commonly used TCM (Three-Component Model).

Limitations

Several limitations in this study should be noted. The dependent variable (the intention to quit) and the independent variables (commitment to organization, commitment to job, and transformational leadership) are self-reporting measures obtained from one source (employees). It can be argued that self-reporting measures have their strengths, because incumbents in a job have the best knowledge of that job and their supervisors. Additionally, a self-reporting measure can result in a restricted range of values on a variable which attenuates the estimated relationships among variables. Another criticism of self-reporting is that it may involve a social desirability problem, which is deemed to be a typical potential source of common-method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Neither Harman's test nor inspection of the correlation matrix for excessive values

of correlation coefficients detected common-method bias. Finally, most of these results are consistent with previous empirical and theoretical research. It therefore seems that common-method effects did not significantly influence study findings.

This study only focused on two potential targets of commitment. It would be useful in the future to include other objects of work commitment in such investigations (e.g. team, supervisor, and career) using the unidimensional commitment model. Another limitation of the study is the cross-sectional research design. The findings of Bentein and colleagues (Bentein, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg & Stinglhamber, 2005) highlighted the importance of detecting change in commitment degree across time; the decline in an individual's level in commitment across time was associated with an increase in that individual's intention to quit the organization. We acknowledge the limitations of cross-sectional studies in verifying mediation models. In the future, we deem it imperative to conduct longitudinal research to substantiate the impact of the independent variable (transformational leadership) and the mediators (commitments) on the dependent variable (intention to leave),

as recommended by numerous researchers (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West & Sheets, 2002). Maxwell, Cole and Mitchell (2011) emphasizes a related limitation of cross-sectional designs in the study of mediation: a specific pattern of cross-sectional correlations can result from various combinations of underlying longitudinal parameters. A key takeaway from their research is that the substantial bias frequently observed in cross-sectional mediation analyses can make p-values or confidence intervals calculated from such data lose their essential meaning. In the context of mediation, it's crucial to remember that they inherently address matters of causation. Additionally, cross-sectional correlations that appear to support full mediation may actually reflect a longitudinal process devoid of any mediation (Maxwell et al., 2011). A longitudinal study could bring a deeper understanding of the turnover context. Indeed, the importance of time in predicting the intention to stay through organizational affective commitment was recently stressed by Renaud et al. (2017).

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