

Exploring Teacher Organizational Commitment for Promoting Sustainable Development in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review and Analysis of Theories and Methodologies in Chinese Studies

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Abstract

Teacher organisational commitment (TOC) is a key factor influencing teachers' professional stability and teaching quality, and it is important for achieving sustainable development in higher education. However, systematic analyses in this area are insufficient. Therefore, this study adopted the PRISMA framework to conduct a systematic literature review, focusing on empirical studies on the COVID-19 pandemic and its post-epidemic period. Relevant literature was screened from Scopus, Web of Science, Wiley, and ScienceDirect, resulting in 11 peer-reviewed studies from the context of higher education in China, this study aims to explore the mainstream research theories and methodologies on TOC from a Chinese perspective and discuss the different roles TOC has played in various research. Exploring the current state in China, this study enhances the theoretical and practical understanding of TOC and delivers actionable insights for school administrations and policymakers to promote sustainable development in higher education. The study also offers recommendations for future research to investigate TOC in various cultural contexts further, thereby supporting international perspectives.

Keywords: *Teacher Organisational Commitment; Sustainable Development; Higher Education.*

Introduction

Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 4) emphasizes inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, with teachers playing a pivotal role in achieving this goal. Among various factors influencing education quality, teacher organizational commitment (TOC) is particularly significant. TOC directly impacts teachers' dedication to enhancing teaching quality, aligning closely with SDG 4's emphasis on "quality education" (Sunarsi et al., 2020). Teachers who identify strongly with their organization's mission are more likely to commit to improving education outcomes.

Over the past decades, TOC has garnered global attention for its critical role in education. Studies indicate that TOC influences teaching performance, student achievement, and institutional effectiveness (Zhou et al., 2020) (Filimonau et al., 2020). High TOC is associated with increased job satisfaction, lower turnover, and greater resilience, making it essential for sustaining education quality. Conversely, low TOC can lead to teacher burnout, disengagement, and diminished teaching effectiveness, presenting challenges for educators and policymakers alike (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

In China, the growing emphasis on educational reform has brought TOC into sharper focus. Research highlights the significant role of leadership and supportive school environments in enhancing TOC, which in turn improves teaching quality and student outcomes (C. H. Wang et al., 2020) (Cheng & Gan, 2020). This relationship extends across all education levels, with university teachers facing unique challenges such as heavy workloads, high expectations, and policy pressures. These demands, compounded by China's "Double First-Class" initiative aimed at fostering world-class universities and disciplines, underscore the importance of robust TOC to achieve educational excellence (Pan & Arguelles, 2024) (Yin et al., 2020).

The "Double First-Class" initiative has heightened pressures on Chinese universities to balance internationalization, research excellence, and teacher development. However, limited resources, high work

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stress, and insufficient incentives hinder progress (Zhong & Zhang, 2024). Strengthening TOC is therefore critical not only for achieving institutional goals but also for enhancing global competitiveness and sustainability in higher education (Yao, 2024). Amid these transformations, TOC emerges as a key variable influencing education reform, teacher retention, and institutional success.

Despite its significance, systematic research on TOC in Chinese higher education remains limited, particularly regarding its theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and influencing factors. Given China's unique cultural and institutional context, examining TOC provides valuable insights into global education practices and governance (Huang et al., 2020; P. Wang et al., 2020; Zheng & Kapoor, 2021).

This study addresses this gap by systematically reviewing empirical research on TOC in Chinese higher education from 2020 onward. It analyzes theories, methodologies, and factors influencing TOC, highlighting its relevance to educational sustainability. By doing so, the study not only contributes to understanding TOC within the Chinese context but also offers insights for global educational practices (Zeng et al., 2022). A high level of TOC can reduce teacher turnover, enhance teaching and research quality, and support the achievement of sustainable development goals (P. Wang et al., 2020) (Park & Johnson, 2019). Moreover, fostering TOC through inclusive cultures and supportive environments can promote equity and stability in education systems worldwide.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 outlines the research methods and theoretical foundations, Section 3 presents and discusses the findings, Section 4 explores implications and future directions, and Section 5 concludes the study.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) model to guide literature search, screening, and analysis to ensure a systematic and transparent review process. The PRISMA guidelines help maintain method consistency and assess potential biases, thereby improving the reliability and validity of review results. The guidelines are the most innovative method for this type of analysis.

Research Questions

To fill the research gap and explore the organisational commitment of teachers in the context of Chinese universities, this systematic literature review focuses on the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the research methods used in the empirical study of teacher organisational commitment in the context of Chinese higher education?

RQ2: What are the theoretical applications in the empirical study of teacher organisational commitment in the context of Chinese higher education?

RQ3: What is the role of teacher organisational commitment in higher education?

RQ4: How does teacher organisational commitment affect the sustainable development of higher education through long-term and sustainable mechanisms?

Sources and Search Methods of Data

Four academic databases were used in this study: Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, Science Direct, and Wiley Online Library. These four databases were selected because they cover a wide range of peer-reviewed education and psychology literature, providing a solid foundation for exploring the organisational commitment of Chinese higher education teachers.

Table 1 summarises the keyword search settings for each database, and the keyword settings for each database were adjusted based on the advanced search requirements of different databases.

Table 1. Keyword Search Settings

Database	Keyword search settings
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (teacher) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (commitment) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Higher Education" OR institution OR university OR college) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (China OR Chinese)
WoS	TS= ("Teachers" OR "Teacher" OR "Teachers") AND "Commitment" AND ("Higher Education" OR "Institutions" OR "University" OR "College") AND ("China" OR "Chinese"))
WILEY Online Library	TS= ("Teachers" OR "Teacher" OR "Teachers") AND "Commitment" AND ("Higher Education" OR "Institutions" OR "University" OR "College") AND ("China" OR "Chinese"))
Science Direct	((("Teacher Commitment" AND ("Higher Education" OR "Institutions" OR "University" OR "College") AND ("China" OR "Chinese"))

The researchers carefully designed the search strategy to cover a wide range of literature and selected keywords across all databases to maximise the number of relevant articles and ensure comprehensive capture of both broad and specific studies relevant to our research topic. The keyword searches yielded a total of 1,175 articles from a variety of disciplines, including education, demonstrating the important role these databases play in covering topics relevant to our research objectives. Table 2 summarises the details of the initially retrieved records and the studies that were ultimately selected, which illustrates the rigour of our literature selection process and highlights the key role these databases played in supporting our review.

Table 2. Summary of Database Searches and Selected Records

Database	Initial Records Retrieved
Scopus	100
WOS	105
WILEY Online Library	970
Science Direct	168
Total	1175

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The study only obtained articles published in English in the past 5 years, leaving 280 articles. The study must be a peer-reviewed empirical study (excluding conference minutes and academic papers), leaving 253 articles. Endnote21 software was used to remove duplicates, leaving 143 articles. The title, abstract, and keywords were read, and the articles with weak relevance to the topic were removed, leaving 34 articles. After strict full-text evaluation, only 11 studies met the inclusion criteria. See Table 3 for details of the criteria.

Table 3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication Period	Studies published between 2020 and 2024	Studies published before 2020 or after 2024

Language Proficiency	Scholarly articles written in English	Scholarly articles written in English
Document Genre	Articles indexed as “article”	Documents indexed as conference abstracts, book reviews, editorial commentaries, etc.
Research Focus	Studies explicitly discussing both Higher Education in China and teacher organisational commitment	Studies not explicitly discussing Higher Education in China and teacher organisational commitment
Accessibility	Studies where the full text is accessible	Studies where the full text is not accessible
Peer Review	Studies that have undergone peer review	Articles that have not undergone peer review or lack research quality

Screening and Selection Process

As shown in the PRISMA flow chart, the screening process was rigorously structured to ensure a fair and systematic selection of studies for inclusion in the review.

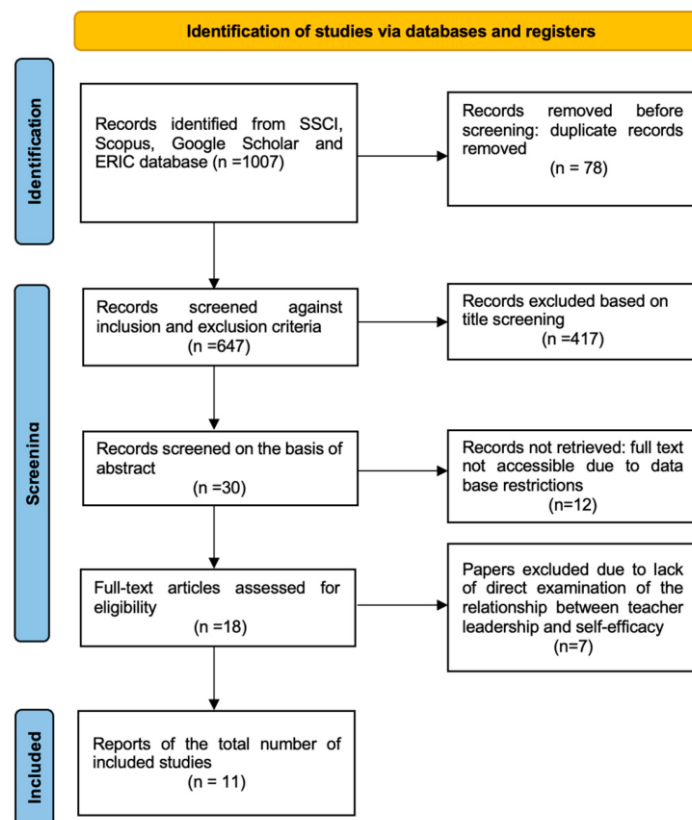


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Chart

Evaluation Criteria

First, the researchers discussed each evaluation criterion together, using a detailed checklist to evaluate from eight aspects. Table 4. clarified how to apply the criteria to different research designs and used Excel tables to record the results. Secondly, the researchers independently evaluated all included studies to reduce

subjective bias. Each criterion was judged according to the changed checklist, and the reasons were recorded. Finally, all the results were summarised in the same table for comparison. For the criteria with large differences in scoring, we held a collective discussion to find out the reasons. After discussion, we reached a consensus and finally decided to include 11 articles in the analysis.

Table 4. Qualitative Checklist

Evaluation Criteria	Specific Requirements	Criteria
Relevance of Research Objectives	Does the research clearly explore teacher organisational commitment in the context of Chinese higher education?	Yes/No/Partial
Clarity and Appropriateness of Research Design	Are the research design and methods clearly described and easy to understand, including data collection and analysis methods?	Yes/No/Partial
Use of Theoretical Framework	Is the research supported by a clear theoretical framework and connected to the broader body of knowledge?	Yes/No/Partial
Sample Selection and Characteristics	Are the sample selection methods clearly described and are the sample characteristics sufficiently detailed?	Yes/No/Partial
Detail of Data Collection and Analysis Methods	Are the data collection and analysis methods clearly described and systematic?	Yes/No/Partial
Support for Conclusions	Are the conclusions well-supported by the results?	Yes/No/Partial
Credibility of the Research	Are verification procedures or methods used to ensure the credibility of the results?	Yes/No/Partial
Researcher Reflexivity	Does the researcher reflect on the research process and results, discussing limitations and directions for future research?	Yes/No/Partial

Results and Discussion

Research Methods

In studying teacher organizational commitment, quantitative methods, especially structured questionnaires and statistical analyses—dominate due to their systematic design. All 11 articles in this review employed standardized surveys to measure teachers' organizational commitment and used cross-sectional designs to examine variable relationships in specific contexts. These approaches yield objective, broadly applicable findings grounded in large-sample data, providing evidence for policy decisions (Boeren, 2019).

Table 5 details the data analysis methods and sample characteristics across these Chinese university studies. Most investigations utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) (Du, 2023; Huang et al., 2020; Li, 2018; Qi & Derakhshan, 2023; P. Wang et al., 2020; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024) or partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM) (Lu et al., 2023; Zhong & Zhang, 2024), while a few employed hierarchical linear models (Lv et al., 2022) or basic statistical analyses (Wu & Fu, 2024; Zeng et al., 2022). These methods effectively test theoretical frameworks and clarify mediating or moderating effects, illustrating the varied roles of teacher organizational commitment. Study samples included university lecturers, vocational educators, music teachers, and international Chinese instructors, spanning national and regional contexts. Large sample sizes ensure robust statistical power and strengthen the applicability of findings, providing a solid empirical basis for understanding organizational commitment in diverse educational settings.

Table 5. Summary of Methods and Populations

Study	Data Analysis Method	Research Sample(n) and Population
(Zhong & Zhang, 2024)	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)	n=161, counsellors in the universities in Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province
(Wu & Fu, 2024)	Statistical Analysis	n=200, International Chinese language teachers in Guizhou universities
(Lu et al., 2023)	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)	n=289, respondents are university lecturers from various universities in China
(Du, 2023)	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) , Regression analysis	n=340, music teachers from four universities in Henan Province
(Li, 2018)	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	n=426, teachers from 5 universities of China
(Lv et al., 2022)	Hierarchical Linear Modelling (HLM)	n=406, teachers from 69 Chinese vocational colleges and universities
(Huang et al., 2020)	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	n=1278, university faculty from 25 research-intensive Chinese universities
(Qi & Derakhshan, 2023)	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	n=357, EFL teachers was recruited from different colleges and universities in China
(P. Wang et al., 2020)	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	n=1,906, university teachers in China
(Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024)	Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	n=270, Chinese English teachers
(Zeng et al., 2022)	Statistical Analysis	n=215, young teachers at 20 universities in China

Theories of Teacher Organisational Commitment

The importance of teacher organisational commitment in promoting teacher team development and student achievement has also been widely recognised in various educational contexts (P. Wang et al., 2020; Wu & Fu, 2024; Zeng et al., 2022). However, teacher organisational commitment is a complex and multidimensional concept, and different scholars have provided different perspectives (Huang et al., 2020; Wu & Fu, 2024). Table 6 summarises the main theoretical frameworks used in the study of teacher organisational commitment and their corresponding research literature. Among them, the Three-Component Model of organisational Commitment is the most widely used theoretical framework, emphasising the importance of the three dimensions of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Li, 2018; Lu et al., 2023; Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (Du, 2023; Lv et al., 2022; Qi & Derakhshan, 2023; Wu & Fu, 2024; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024). In addition, the organisational Commitment Theory based on the Social Exchange Theory further enriches the research in this field by revealing the exchange relationship and commitment formation mechanism between employees and organisations (Huang et al., 2020; Li, 2018; Lu et al., 2023; P. Wang et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2022; Zhong & Zhang, 2024). In addition to these two main theoretical supports, these studies also use the Job Embeddedness Theory (P. Wang et al., 2020; Zhong & Zhang, 2024), Social Identity Theory (Wu & Fu, 2024), and Social Cognitive Theory (Du, 2023) to provide a unique perspective for understanding teacher professional identity and psychological motivation.

Table 6. Theory of Teacher Organisational Commitment

Theory	References
Three-Component Model of organisational Commitment	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (Lu et al., 2023) (Li, 2018) (Lv et al., 2022) (Qi & Derakhshan, 2023) (Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024) (Wu & Fu, 2024) (Du, 2023)

Social Exchange Theory	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (Lu et al., 2023) (Li, 2018) (Zeng et al., 2022)
organisational Commitment Theory	(Huang et al., 2020) (P. Wang et al., 2020)
Job Embeddedness Theory	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (P. Wang et al., 2020)
Social identity theory	(Wu & Fu, 2024)
Social cognitive theory	(Du, 2023)

Teacher organizational commitment (TOC) research has been greatly shaped by Meyer and Allen's three-dimensional model, which remains the most widely adopted framework (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This model comprises affective commitment—teachers' emotional and psychological bond with the institution; continuance commitment—driven by ethical considerations; and normative commitment—anchored in a sense of obligation to colleagues and subject areas (Aboramadan et al., 2019; Estrada & Mamani, 2020; Heidari et al., 2022; Sarikaya & Erdogan, 2016). Sometimes labeled “teacher occupational commitment” (P. Wang et al., 2020; Wu & Fu, 2024; Zeng et al., 2022), its core concepts remain the same. Nine articles in this study relied on this framework, underlining its relevance in examining teacher stability, job satisfaction, and teaching quality.

Another influential framework is Porter's Organizational Commitment Theory (Mowday et al., 1979; Porter et al., 1974), grounded in social exchange theory and the notion of a psychological contract. This perspective highlights identification, participation, and loyalty as central to commitment. Teachers who internalize institutional values, actively pursue organizational goals, and envision a long-term association exemplify strong TOC (Bading, 2022; Volkova et al., 2021). Two articles in this study employed this framework, shedding light on motivational and relational dimensions of TOC.

Job Embeddedness Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) contributes by focusing on how teachers' connections, alignment with school culture and objectives, and potential personal or professional sacrifices encourage commitment. Likewise, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2003) emphasizes teachers' organizational identification and cultural alignment, while Social Cognitive Theory (Lent et al., 1994) underscores the impact of observing and emulating colleagues' positive behaviors on shared norms, job satisfaction, and stronger commitment.

In summary, although Meyer and Allen's model remains foundational for TOC research, additional frameworks, Porter's Organizational Commitment Theory, Job Embeddedness Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory, offer complementary perspectives. These intersections highlight TOC's complexity and underscore the importance of continued exploration in diverse educational settings.

The Role of Teacher Organisational Commitment

In the 11 articles selected in this paper, teacher organisational commitment is studied as a variety of roles, which is not only affected by many factors but also has an impact on teacher resignation intention or career development behaviour, work performance or job satisfaction, and the sustainable development of higher education (P. Wang et al., 2020; Wu & Fu, 2024; Zeng et al., 2022). Therefore, two perspectives on its role in higher education are explored as follows: Factors affecting teacher organisational commitment and the impact of teacher organisational commitment.

Factors that Influence Teacher Organisational Commitment

Table 7 summarizes the main factors influencing teacher organizational commitment, drawing from a range of studies that illustrate its complexity and multiple levels of impact. Among these factors, job satisfaction and organizational justice stand out as key drivers, frequently linked to enhanced emotional commitment and lower turnover intentions. Meanwhile, variables such as psychological empowerment, occupational commitment, and teacher professional identity underscore the importance of teachers' intrinsic motivation. Organizational factors, including leadership style and culture, also play a significant role in shaping teacher commitment. In addition, emerging factors like workplace adaptability and emotion regulation highlight

new perspectives for future research. Overall, this comprehensive set of personal, professional, and organizational influences reflects the multifaceted nature of teacher organizational commitment and offers a roadmap for continued exploration.

Table 7. Factors that Influence Teacher Organisational Commitment

Factors that influence teacher organisational commitment	References
Job Satisfaction	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (Wu & Fu, 2024) (P. Wang et al., 2020) (Qi & Derakhshan, 2023) (Wu & Fu, 2024) (Zhong & Zhang, 2024)
Psychological empowerment	(Lu et al., 2023) (Huang et al., 2020)
occupational commitment	(Zeng et al., 2022) (Lv et al., 2022)
Leadership	(Huang et al., 2020) (Zeng et al., 2022)
organisational Justice	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (Li, 2018)
organisational cultural	(Lv et al., 2022)
Teacher professional identity	(Wu & Fu, 2024)
Turnover intention	(Wu & Fu, 2024)
Work Engagement	(Lu et al., 2023)
Professional development opportunities	(Qi & Derakhshan, 2023)
Perceived supervisor support	(Li, 2018)
Job burnout	(P. Wang et al., 2020)
Workplace buoyancy	(Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024)
Emotion regulation	(Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024)

Teacher organizational commitment (TOC) is shaped by a combination of internal and external factors that interact dynamically to influence teachers' emotional attachment, professional loyalty, and sustained commitment (P. Wang et al., 2020). Among internal factors, job satisfaction plays a pivotal role as it reflects teachers' evaluations of their work environment, sense of accomplishment, and professional value. This enhances emotional attachment and mitigates burnout, leading to stronger loyalty and a heightened sense of professional identity (Ennida & Allouani, 2023; Sulistyowati & Mulyaningtyas, 2024). Teachers who experience high job satisfaction are better equipped to navigate workplace challenges, as psychological resilience and emotional regulation further support their ability to cope with stress and maintain professional dedication (Kalkan, 2020; P. Wang et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2022).

Building on this, emotional regulation and psychological resilience serve as key psychological capabilities that directly influence TOC. Teachers with strong emotional regulation skills are able to manage workplace stress effectively, thereby reducing burnout and maintaining their professional identity. Similarly, resilience enables them to recover quickly from challenges and persist in their roles, strengthening their loyalty to the organization (Huang et al., 2020; Supandi & Mahdi, 2024; P. Wang et al., 2020). These internal drivers are particularly critical in high-pressure environments, where the ability to adapt and thrive significantly impacts organizational commitment (Nufus et al., 2024).

In addition to internal factors, external elements provide the necessary environmental support to sustain TOC. For example, psychological empowerment enhances teachers' sense of autonomy and competence, reducing burnout while strengthening alignment with organizational goals (Huang et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2022). This empowerment, when coupled with a fair organizational environment, fosters a sense of

accomplishment that further reinforces commitment (Li, 2018). At the same time, perceived supervisor support plays a vital role in building trust between teachers and the organization. Such support is particularly impactful in high-stress situations, where it strengthens emotional attachment and enhances professional experiences (Lu et al., 2023; Zhong & Zhang, 2024).

Moreover, career development opportunities and organizational culture significantly shape TOC. Clear career paths and supportive policies provide the foundation for professional growth, improving satisfaction and fostering stronger professional identity (Zhong & Zhang, 2024). An inclusive and collaborative culture further deepens teachers' sense of belonging and professional achievement, particularly when organizational values align with their personal and professional ideals (Lv et al., 2022)(Du, 2023). These external factors work in tandem to enhance emotional attachment and professional loyalty.

Leadership style and organizational fairness also contribute meaningfully to TOC. Transformational leadership empowers and motivates teachers, while servant leadership fosters well-being through care and support, creating a positive and trustful environment (Huang et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2022). In addition, transparent decision-making and equitable resource allocation build trust and reduce turnover intentions, consolidating long-term organizational commitment (Wu & Fu, 2024). These leadership behaviors, combined with fairness mechanisms, provide teachers with the supportive conditions necessary to thrive in their roles.

Finally, internal and external factors do not operate in isolation but interact dynamically to shape TOC. For instance, psychological empowerment enhances job satisfaction, while a fair organizational culture helps alleviate stress, promoting stronger emotional regulation and continuous commitment (Badarneh et al., 2024; Montenegro et al., 2023).. These interactions highlight the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach rather than relying on isolated interventions. By integrating psychological support, professional development opportunities, and equitable organizational cultures, educational institutions can create a robust support system that maximizes teacher loyalty, emotional attachment, and professional commitment. This holistic strategy not only strengthens TOC but also contributes to improved educational outcomes (Qi & Derakhshan, 2023; Zeng et al., 2022).

Impacts of Teacher Organisational Commitment

As shown in Table 8, the importance of teacher organisational commitment and its impact on multiple factors demonstrates the key role of organisational commitment in education. As can be seen from the table, teacher organisational commitment affects both the individual and the organisational in various factors, such as job satisfaction, organisational justice, and psychological empowerment. It also plays an important role in promoting teacher occupational commitment and teaching motivation. In addition, the multidimensional impact of teacher organisational commitment on educational outcomes has also received widespread attention. Studies have shown that organisational commitment can enhance job performance, work engagement, and academic productivity while reducing turnover intention and promoting teacher professional development and teaching innovation. It is worth noting that teacher organisational commitment is also closely related to psychological factors such as well-being and teacher self-efficacy.

Table8. The Impact of Teacher Organisational Commitment

The Importance of Teacher organisational commitment	References
Job satisfaction	(Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024) (P. Wang et al., 2020) (Qi & Derakhshan, 2023) (Wu & Fu, 2024)
Turnover intention	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (P. Wang et al., 2020) (Li, 2018) (Lu et al., 2023) (Wu & Fu, 2024)
Job performance	(P. Wang et al., 2020) (Zeng et al., 2022) (Lu et al., 2023)

well-being	(Zeng et al., 2022) (P. Wang et al., 2020) (Lu et al., 2023)
Professional development	(Qi & Derakhshan, 2023) (Wu & Fu, 2024)
teaching quality	(Qi & Derakhshan, 2023) (Wu & Fu, 2024)
organisational Justice	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (Li, 2018)
Psychological Empowerment	(Lu et al., 2023) (Huang et al., 2020)
Occupational Commitment	(Zeng et al., 2022) (Lv et al., 2022)
organisational citizenship behaviour	(Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024)
teaching motivation	(Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024)
Work Engagement	(Lu et al., 2023)
teaching innovation	(Zeng et al., 2022)
academic productivity	(Huang et al., 2020)
Psychological empowerment	(Huang et al., 2020)
Teacher self-efficacy	(Du, 2023)
Industry-university cooperative behaviour	(Lv et al., 2022)

Teacher organizational commitment (TOC) significantly enhances job satisfaction by improving teachers' recognition of their work environment and professional values (Nufus et al., 2024). This positive emotional state reduces professional burnout while fostering a stronger sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the profession (P. Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, organizational justice, characterized by fair resource allocation, transparent decision-making, and supportive leadership, strengthens teachers' trust in their institutions, thereby enhancing emotional commitment and professional loyalty (Zhong & Zhang, 2024). Psychological empowerment also plays a key role by providing teachers with greater autonomy and competence, which boosts their enthusiasm, happiness, and work quality (Lei et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2023). Together, these factors ensure that teachers with high TOC demonstrate greater professional commitment, sustained loyalty, and a strong sense of honor and responsibility (Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024).

High TOC also positively influences behaviors beyond routine job duties. Teachers with strong commitment are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, such as supporting colleagues and participating in school initiatives, thereby contributing to overall institutional performance (Liu et al., 2023). Organizational commitment also enhances teaching motivation, leading teachers to focus more on improving instructional quality and fostering student development, which in turn elevates teaching effectiveness (Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024). Additionally, committed teachers exhibit higher work performance, particularly in education quality and student outcomes, as they willingly invest time and energy into their roles (Manalo et al., 2020). This commitment reduces turnover intentions, as teachers with a heightened sense of trust and belonging are more inclined to remain with their organizations long-term. Career development opportunities further strengthen TOC by meeting teachers' professional growth needs and fostering a deeper connection to their profession and institution (Kawiana et al., 2021). Moreover, organizational commitment drives improvements in teaching methods and content, stimulates innovation in classroom practices, and enhances student engagement (Baluyos et al., 2019; Sunarsi et al., 2020).

TOC also contributes to academic productivity. Teachers with strong commitment are more likely to produce high-quality research, actively participate in academic activities, and collaborate with external partners, such as industries and enterprises, thereby supporting vocational education and industry-university cooperation (Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024). Furthermore, this commitment enhances teachers' self-confidence in their ability to fulfill educational responsibilities and fosters a sense of professional happiness. Teachers with high TOC derive greater satisfaction and fulfillment from their work, which benefits both their personal well-being and the development of their institutions.

In summary, TOC has a profound positive impact on teaching effectiveness, research productivity, career development, and personal well-being. These effects not only improve school performance but also provide a foundation for educational organizations to develop supportive policies and foster a fair and empowering environment (Burmansah et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2019).

Mutually Reinforcing Factors in Teacher Organisational Commitment

As shown in Table 9, this table summarises the key factors with a two-way relationship in the study of teacher organisational commitment; that is, these factors not only affect teacher organisational commitment but are also affected by organisational commitment. This "mutually reinforcing relationship" highlights the dynamic mechanism of teacher organisational commitment in educational research and practice. First, job satisfaction and organisational justice are the core variables that have a two-way influence. On the one hand, these factors can enhance teacher organisational commitment; on the other hand, improving organisational commitment will further strengthen teacher satisfaction and a sense of fairness. Similarly, psychological empowerment and occupational commitment reflect the internal motivation of teachers in their career development. The improvement of organisational commitment can strengthen these factors, and the improvement of these factors will, in turn, promote the stability of organisational commitment. In addition, behavioural variables such as turnover intention and work engagement also show this two-way relationship. A decrease in turnover intention helps to enhance teacher organisational commitment, while a higher level of organisational commitment helps to reduce the risk of turnover. Similarly, job engagement is not only driven by organisational commitment but also feeds back to organisational commitment by improving teacher teaching enthusiasm.

Table 9. Mutually Reinforcing Factors in Teacher Organisational Commitment

Mutually Reinforcing Factors in Teacher organisational commitment	References
Job satisfaction	(P. Wang et al., 2020) (Qi & Derakhshan, 2023) (Wu & Fu, 2024)
organisational Justice	(Zhong & Zhang, 2024) (Li, 2018)
Psychological Empowerment	(Lu et al., 2023) (Huang et al., 2020)
Occupational Commitment	(Zeng et al., 2022) (Lv et al., 2022)
Turnover intention	(Wu & Fu, 2024)
Work Engagement	(Lu et al., 2023)

Job satisfaction plays a central role in teacher organizational commitment (TOC) because higher levels of satisfaction strengthen teachers' emotional attachment and professional loyalty by aligning them more closely with institutional values and goals (Richter et al., 2022; Shabir & Gani, 2020). Conversely, teachers with strong TOC often experience greater job satisfaction due to the psychological support and enhanced professional identity that stem from their commitment (Ennida & Allouani, 2023; Sulistyowati & Mulyaningtyas, 2024). A similar two-way relationship exists between organizational fairness and TOC: equitable resource allocation and transparent decision-making foster teacher trust and loyalty, while committed teachers tend to perceive their institutions as fair, thereby reinforcing their emotional attachment (Zhong & Zhang, 2024).

Psychological empowerment also operates in both directions. By granting teachers greater autonomy and competence, it increases their professional happiness and identification with the institution (Lu et al., 2023). In turn, higher TOC encourages teachers to participate more actively in school management and decision-making, further enhancing their sense of empowerment (Lu et al., 2023; Wu & Fu, 2024). Professional commitment similarly complements TOC, as teachers' sense of responsibility and alignment with

educational goals bolster their organizational commitment. This heightened commitment is then reinforced by supportive policies and incentives, which further solidify professional loyalty.

Resignation intention carries particular significance as a two-way factor. Low resignation intention typically arises when teachers have strong organizational commitment, rooted in higher trust and belonging, whereas high commitment itself reduces resignation intention by strengthening these bonds (Zhong & Zhang, 2024). Likewise, work engagement and TOC exert mutual influence: organizational commitment enhances teacher engagement, and engaged teachers often exhibit deeper loyalty to the institution thanks to the professional achievement and psychological satisfaction they derive (Adli et al., 2024; Supandi & Mahdi, 2024).

Overall, these two-way relationships show not only how multiple internal and external factors shape TOC but also how TOC amplifies their positive effects. This dynamic interplay is crucial to advancing teachers' professional development and improving the performance of educational organizations.

The Impact of Teacher Organisational Commitment on The Sustainable Development of Higher Education

Teacher Organizational Commitment (TOC) is a critical driver of quality teaching in higher education (Richter et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2022). Teachers with high TOC typically exhibit greater motivation and engagement, devoting more time and effort to course design, pedagogical innovation, and student support. This investment directly enhances student learning outcomes and bolsters the institution's reputation (C. H. Wang et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2022).

In addition to improving instructional quality, TOC also advances teachers' career development and scholarly productivity. Highly committed teachers are more inclined to participate in professional development programs and research activities, raising both individual expertise and the institution's overall research capacity and innovation potential. Meanwhile, TOC lowers teachers' turnover intentions, helping to maintain stable, high-quality teaching and research teams (Bogler & Berkovich, 2022). Furthermore, teachers with strong TOC often engage actively in community service and university–industry collaborations, thereby strengthening the institution's societal impact (Zheng et al., 2020).

Overall, TOC lays a solid foundation for sustainable development in higher education by enhancing teaching quality, supporting professional growth, ensuring organizational stability, and extending social influence. Nevertheless, existing research on TOC remains limited, and further exploration is needed to understand how it contributes to long-term sustainability in higher education. The following sections address existing gaps and propose directions for future study and practical implementation.

Methodologically, quantitative approaches (e.g., surveys, structural equation modeling, multilevel modeling) currently dominate empirical investigations of TOC, revealing its underlying mechanisms and influencing factors. However, these methods lack the complementary depth offered by qualitative research (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). In-depth interviews and case studies can capture nuanced individual experiences and the influence of cultural contexts, thus clarifying variations in TOC across different career stages and social settings (Lu et al., 2023; Zhong & Zhang, 2024). Future studies could adopt mixed methods, combining the breadth of quantitative data with the depth of qualitative insights, to better illuminate TOC's complexity (Buchholtz & Vollstedt, 2024; Lu et al., 2023; Ren, 2023; Zhong & Zhang, 2024) and employ longitudinal or cross-cultural designs to understand its evolution and adaptability over time.

Theoretically, Meyer and Allen's three-dimensional model (affective, continuance, and normative commitment) provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing TOC (Meyer et al., 2019). However, its applicability to China—where collectivism and high power distance may exert a strong influence—requires further examination. Future research could integrate localized theories or perspectives from positive psychology to better explain the unique characteristics of TOC in Chinese higher education.

Practically, China's higher education sector faces both internal pressures from the “Double First-Class” initiative and external pressures from global competition (Ruan et al., 2020; Yao, 2024). Policymakers and

administrators should therefore enhance support for teacher professional development, resource allocation, and campus infrastructure (Wang et al., 2023; Zhong & Zhang, 2024). Specific measures include targeted career development plans and training programs (Van Waeyenberg et al., 2022), international exchange opportunities, and specialized skill-building workshops (Zepeda, 2019). Additionally, streamlining administrative tasks—through digital tools or dedicated support staff—helps reduce teachers' workload and improve work–life balance. Providing incentives and adequate resources for teaching and research innovation can further boost teachers' sense of achievement and strengthen their identification with the institution (Sunarsi et al., 2020)

While these strategies hold promise, they require rigorous empirical validation. Future research could employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs to test the effectiveness of various interventions on TOC, thereby offering stronger evidence to guide institutional policies. Such efforts would not only refine existing theoretical models but also generate more effective, targeted initiatives for promoting the sustainable development of higher education.

Conclusion

This study systematically reviewed the literature on teacher organizational commitment (TOC) in Chinese higher education and examined its multifaceted contributions to sustainable development. The findings highlight TOC's vital role in improving education quality, promoting organizational stability, and supporting teacher professional growth. High TOC significantly boosts job satisfaction, reduces turnover intentions, and fosters teaching innovation, thereby enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of educational institutions. In addition, factors such as organizational fairness, psychological empowerment, and career development opportunities also profoundly influence TOC. The two-way relationships between TOC and factors like job satisfaction, work engagement, and career commitment reveal a dynamic interaction between individual teachers and organizations. This mutual influence not only strengthens outcomes for both parties but also offers valuable insights for future educational policies and practices.

However, research gaps remain. The shortage of longitudinal and qualitative studies constrains our understanding of TOC's evolution over time and its interplay with cultural factors. Future research should employ mixed methods and cross-cultural comparisons to address these limitations. From a practical standpoint, educational institutions should prioritize personalized career development plans, effective workload management, and supportive leadership to strengthen TOC. Verifying the impact of these strategies through experimental designs would yield robust evidence to guide institutional policy and practice. Ultimately, enhancing TOC offers a pathway to excellence in higher education, advancing equity and global competitiveness. A high level of TOC also provides a strong foundation for sustainable higher education development, with wide-ranging implications for global education governance.

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