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Research Article

A Quantitative Analysis of Retention Intention: A Repeated Cross-Sectional Study, 2023-2025

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Abstract

Objective: Long-term care (LTC) providers face a persistent employee turnover problem, with various sources citing turnover rates of 79-124% in 2024. This study aims to identify, measure, and manage the workplace and psychological drivers of employee retention, using the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment and the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) to give healthcare employers evidence-based tools for strengthening employee commitment, supporting behavior-change strategies, and improving retention among LTC employees.

Methods: This repeated cross-sectional study surveyed LTC and older-adult healthcare employees in Wisconsin in 2023 (n=327, 14 organizations) and again in 2025 (n=393, 35 organizations). Pearson correlations examined how workplace factors, including pay range, hours worked, tenure, and department consistency, related to employee commitment, and how commitment, in turn, related to employees' retention intention (intent to stay).

Results: Workplace factors and all three commitment types (affective, normative, continuance) were significantly correlated with retention intention in both waves. Affective commitment remained the strongest predictor of retention across both years (r=0.446 in 2023; r=0.462 in 2025). Normative commitment's correlation with retention intention increased from r=0.145 in 2023 to r=0.288 in 2025, suggesting employees are increasingly staying out of a sense of obligation rather than emotional attachment alone.

Conclusion: Employee commitment is a measurable, malleable mechanism linking workplace factors to retention intention, and the relative strength of its components shifted meaningfully between 2023 and 2025. These findings offer employers guidance for designing retention strategies that address both the emotional and obligation-based dimensions of commitment. Future research should examine the bidirectional effects of workplace factors and commitment to retention over time.

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Keywords: employee commitment, turnover intention, nursing, long-term care, workforce retention, Three-Component Model of Commitment, change theory

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1 INTRODUCTION

Employee retention in long-term care continues to grow in importance as a cornerstone of organizational success[1-6]. High turnover rates and declining job growth (BLS) in LTC healthcare sector jobs suggest staffing challenges will persist and continue to affect financial performance and service delivery[7-11]. Employee commitment describes the degree of psychological and emotional attachment an employee forms toward their employer, and it shapes how strongly that employee wants to remain in their current role. The Three-Component Model (TCM) conceptualizes this attachment along three distinct dimensions: an emotional bond to the organization (Affective Commitment), a calculation of the practical costs of leaving (Continuance Commitment), and a felt obligation to stay (Normative Commitment)[12].Turnover intention, by contrast, captures an employee's conscious plan or willingness to leave the organization[13,14].

Between 2023 and 2025, labor market indicators for the healthcare and long-term care sectors suggest a persistent staffing challenge. Overall unemployment rose from 3.7% in 2023 to 4.2% in 2025 and the number of unemployed long-term care workers also increased. Job gains in the healthcare sector remained strong with 62,000 jobs added in May 2025, up from 52,000 in May 2023. However, nursing and residential care facilities saw a decline in job growth, from 9,000 to 6,000 in the same period[10,11].

Using a still novel approach of focusing TCM through the lens of the transtheoretical model of change (TTM) this repeated cross-sectional study examines malleable workplace factors' influence on commitment and retention intention. Practically, the findings of this study offer insight into how employers can create and implement organizational strategies aimed at improving employee retention.

Although TTM was originally developed to describe stages of change in smoking cessation, subsequent research has extended the model well beyond individual addictive-behavior change. TTM has been applied to organizational- and system-level change, including efforts to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion into long-term care research[15] and to guide a multidisciplinary community-health workgroup through the design and execution of a health-policy research project[16]. In non-addiction workplace contexts, TTM-based educational interventions have produced measurable increases in employees' stage of health-related behavior change[17,18], and TTM stage classification has predicted objectively measured physiological stress in office workers more strongly than two established workplace instruments[19]. TTM has likewise been proposed as a stage-matched framework for organizational behavior change in medical settings unrelated to substance use, building on documented prior use in chronic-disease management and electronic-health-record adoption[20], and has been used to model non-health decision-making such as farmers' adoption of sustainable agricultural practices[21]. This literature supports pairing TTM with TCM as a stage-of-change framework in the present study; the specific application of TTM stage to employee retention intention, rather than to organizational change more broadly, remains novel and is addressed further in the limitations.

1.1 Research Objectives

The 2023 study had two aims: first, to determine whether employees' TCM commitment scores were associated with their retention intention, operationalized through their TTM stage; second, to evaluate whether specific workplace factors, including pay range, department consistency, hours worked, and tenure, were associated with the strength of employee commitment. Figures 1 and 2 depict the role and relationship between workplace factors, commitment and retention intention. This original study validated a method to measure and analyze what is driving an employee's decision to leave, or stay in, an organization. This second round of analysis in 2025 used a new, independent sample from the same population to replicate the original findings while also adding a time reference for comparison, resulting in a repeated cross-sectional design. While the results are very similar, they are not the same, and additional research on other factors/mediators of commitment is ongoing. The goal of helping employers slow down employee turnover in LTC organizations remains, and this study will continue to inform and guide the development of interventions to improve employee retention.

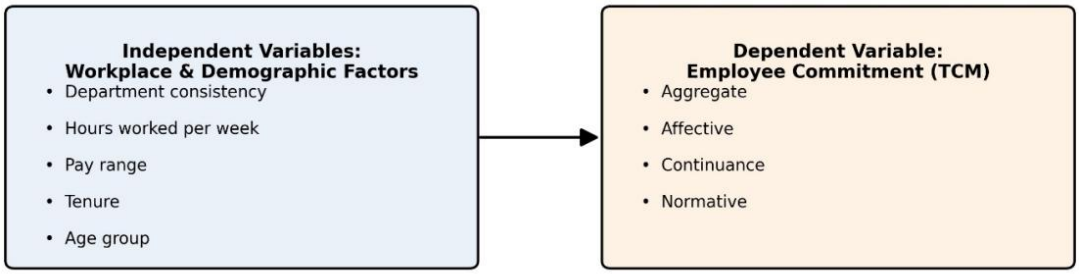
1.2 Hypotheses

We hypothesized that four workplace conditions, pay range, hours worked, tenure, and consistency of department assignment, would each be associated with employees' commitment scores across the affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. We further hypothesized that stronger overall commitment would be associated with greater retention intention (intent to stay).

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

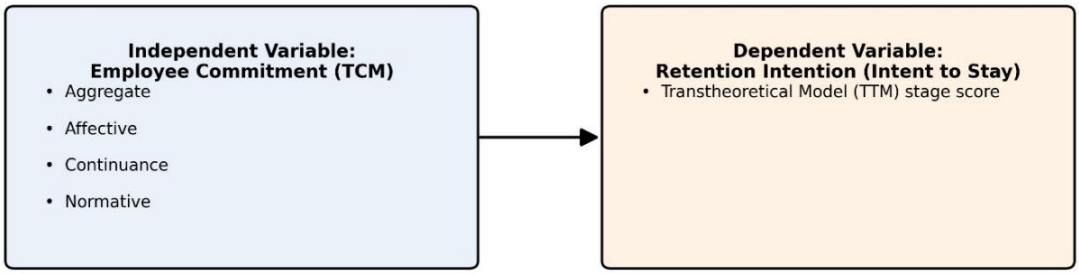
2.1 Design and Population

A correlational design was used to examine how



Note. TCM = Three-Component Model of Commitment. Arrow indicates the hypothesized direction of association tested via Pearson correlation and ANOVA (see Methods).

Figure 1. Workplace and Demographic Factors as Independent Variables of Employee Commitment (TCM).



Note. TTM = Transtheoretical Model of Change. Higher TTM stage scores reflect stronger retention intention (intent to stay). Arrow indicates the hypothesized direction of association.

Figure 2. Employee Commitment (TCM) as an Independent Variable of Retention Intention (TTM Stage Score).

employee commitment, retention intention, and workplace factors relate to one another. Commitment is captured using the TCM[8], and retention intention is captured through stage placement within the TTM[9]. The sample for this analysis is drawn from LTC employees across Wisconsin.

The TCM explains why people stay in organizations by highlighting three psychological drivers:

Affective Commitment – staying because of emotional attachment.

Continuance Commitment – staying due to the perceived cost of leaving.

Normative Commitment – staying out of a sense of obligation.

The TTM outlines how individuals progress through stages when considering behavior change. The stages are Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, Maintenance, and Termination. People in the Contemplation, Preparation, and Action stages are most open to interventions that support change[9].

Participating organizations were identified through a state professional association whose membership includes 145 long-term care providers. Fourteen of these member organizations agreed to participate in the 2023 wave, yielding 327 employee respondents; 18 of these surveys lacked complete pay information and were therefore omitted from pay-related analyses. The 2025 wave expanded recruitment to 35 member organizations, yielding 393 employee respondents. The University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study (Approval Number: 24.183).

2.2 Data Collection

The same collection and distribution protocol was followed for both the Spring 2023 and Spring 2025 cohorts. A survey link, either a QR code or a typed URL, was shared with participating organizations. Organizations were free to use whichever communication channel was most convenient to share this link with their employees, including in-person meetings, email, text messages, printed memos, and posted flyers. All responses were submitted anonymously with no identifying information.

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Organizational Commitment

Commitment was captured using the full 24-item long-form version of Meyer and Allen's TCM[8]. This instrument divides questions evenly across the three subscales, with eight questions each for Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree); higher scores reflect greater commitment. Prior validation work has established this instrument's internal consistency[12,22].

2.3.2 Retention Intention (Intent to Stay)

Retention intention was assessed using a multiple-choice question based on TTM[9,13]. Responses corresponded to four stages: Action (1), Contemplation (2), Precontemplation

Table 1. Participant Demographics Comparison (2023 vs. 2025)

Year	2023	2025
# of participants	327	393
% Female (self-identified)	88	86
% under the age of 25	11	13
% age greater than 25	32	35
% work 30 or more hours a week	77	77
% earn less than $22 per hour	44	29
% earn between $22 and $39 per hour	15	17
% worked at org less than 1 year	16	13
% worked at org less than 2 years	30	24
% worked at org between 2 and 10 years	40	32
% worked at org more than 10 years	29	23

Table 2. Workplace Factor Descriptions

Independent Variable	Variable Description
OrgDept	Department employee works in, i.e., Admin, Dining-Dietary, Skilled Nursing, Other Nursing, Facilities, Therapy, Other
HrsWkOrg	Groupings of hours worked per week, i.e., PRN/Pool, 0-9, 10-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40+
PayRange	Bureau of Labor Statistics standard hourly pay range groups, i.e., 0-$14, $14.01-$18, $18.01-$22, $22.01-27, $27.01-$39, $39.01-$70, $70+
YrsOrg	Years employee has worked at their current organization, i.e., 0-1, 1-2, 2-5, 5-10, 10-20, 20+ years
AgeGroup	Bureau of Labor Statistics standard age groups, i.e., 0-19yrs, 20-24yrs, 25-34yrs, 35-44yrs, 45-54yrs, 55+

(3), and Maintenance/Termination (4), with higher scores reflecting stronger retention intention (intent to stay) and lower scores reflecting a stronger intent to quit. This measure is labeled IntentQuit in the statistical tables, consistent with the original survey item name, but is conceptually and statistically scored as retention intention throughout this manuscript.

2.3.3 Workplace Moderating Factors

The survey also gathered demographic and workplace information, including age, type of organization, weekly hours, pay range, tenure, and department. Each item is coded numerically to support statistical analysis. Participant demographics appear in Table 1, and workplace factor definitions are detailed in Table 2.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in three phases:

Descriptive Statistics: Means were calculated for the TCM components (Affective, Continuance, Normative) and TTM stages. Frequencies were calculated for the demographic factors.

Correlation Analysis: Pearson correlation coefficients (r) and significance levels (*P*) were computed. Positive r-values indicated that higher commitment scores were associated with higher retention intention (i.e., a stronger intent to stay), while significant p-values (<0.01 or <0.05) confirmed the reliability of these relationships.

Variance and Reliability: Practical significance was evaluated using Eta Squared, and internal consistency of the commitment items was tested with Cronbach's alpha.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Repeated Cross-Sectional Summary of 2023 and 2025 Survey Participants

As shown in Table 1, the 2025 participant group grew to 393 respondents, up from 327 in 2023. The workforce remained predominantly female, with a slight decline from 88% to 86%. The age distribution indicates a gradual aging trend, with the proportion of employees over age 55 increasing from 32% to 35%, while those under 25 increased slightly from 11% to 13%, suggesting modest generational diversification. Notably, the percentage of employees earning less than $22 per hour dropped significantly from 44% to 29%, while the share of higher wage earners (those earning over $39 per hour) rose from 15% to 17%, indicating a positive shift in wage distribution. Despite the stability in full-time employment (77% of employees in both years worked 30 or more hours per week), employee tenure declined across all longer-term categories: those employed between 2 and 10 years fell from 40% to 32%, and those with over 10 years decreased from 29% to 23%. This pattern suggests a potential retention concern, particularly among mid- and long-tenured employees.

3.2 Updated Analysis of 2025 Data: Commitment, Workplace Factors, and Retention Intention

This follow-up study re-examined the same population

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Table 3. Summary of Pearson Coefficient Analysis, 2023 and 2025

2023	IntentQuit	Aggregate	Affective	Normative	Continuance	OrgDept	HrsWkOrg	PayRange	YrsOrg	Age
IntentQuit	1									
Aggregate	0.380**	1								
Affective	0.446**	0.764**	1							
Normative	0.145**	0.690**	0.382**	1						
Continuance	0.219**	0.742**	0.277**	0.272**	1					
OrgDept	-0.174**	-0.261**	0.264**	-0.138*	-0.163**	1				
HrsWkOrg	0.131*	0.139*	0.098	0.057	0.140*	-0.173**	1			
PayRange	0.109	0.114*	0.229**	0.002	0.000	-0.030	0.207**	1		
YrsOrg	-0.078	0.114*	0.065	0.131*	0.068	-0.007	0.104	0.223**	1	
Age	0.105	0.157**	0.202**	0.192**	-0.022	-0.125*	0.076	0.081	0.440*	1
2025	**IntentQuit**	**Aggregate**	**Affective**	**Normative**	**Continuance**	**OrgDept**	**HrsWkOrg**	**PayRange**	**YrsOrg**	**Age**
IntentQuit	1									
Aggregate	0.418**	1								
Affective	0.462**	0.796**	1							
Normative	0.288**	0.777**	0.571**	1						
Continuance	0.184**	0.676**	0.194**	0.262**	1					
HrsWkOrg	-0.084	0.090	0.109*	0.038	0.067	0.147**	1			
PayRange	-0.069	0.050	0.167**	0.041	-0.065	0.037	0.391**	1		
YrsOrg	-0.064	0.031	-0.001	0.091	-0.011	0.084	0.132*	0.237**	1	
Age	0.053	0.045	0.086	0.115*	-0.084	0.082	0.230**	0.240**	0.492**	1
Role	-0.075	-0.149**	-0.275**	-0.095	0.007	-0.023	-0.287**	-0.593**	-0.022	-0.012

Notes: *P<0.05; **P<0.01.

two years later and reaffirmed the original findings that employee commitment remains a strong, statistically significant predictor of retention intention. Table 3 shows a summary of Pearson coefficient analysis for 2023 and 2025. The 2025 results strengthen the view that workplace conditions influence commitment levels, which in turn shape turnover intentions. In 2025, commitment continues to act as a measurable and malleable moderator between organizational conditions and employee retention outcomes.

3.3 Commitment Scores and Retention Intention (2025)

3.3.1 Aggregate Commitment

Correlation with Retention Intention: r=0.418, P<0.01. Higher commitment is again associated with higher retention intention, reaffirming commitment's protective effect against turnover.

3.3.2 Affective Commitment

Correlation with Retention Intention: r=0.462, P<0.01. This remains the strongest predictor of intention to stay. Employees who feel emotionally connected to their organization continue to exhibit greater retention intentions.

3.3.3 Continuance Commitment

Correlation with Retention Intention: r =0.184, P<0.01. A modest but significant correlation. This supports the theory that employees who perceive higher costs associated with leaving are less likely to intend to quit.

3.3.4 Normative Commitment

Correlation with Retention Intention: r=0.288, P<0.01. Normative commitment increased in its predictive strength compared to 2023 (r=0.145→0.288). A stronger moral or obligation-based attachment to the organization may now play a larger role in retention.

3.4 Workplace Factors and Commitment Scores (2025)

3.4.1 Pay Range

Positively correlated with: Affective Commitment (r=0.167, P<0.01); Aggregate Commitment (r=0.050, not significant). Pay remains significantly related to emotional attachment, although its overall predictive strength is slightly reduced.

3.4.2 Hours Worked at Organization

Positively correlated with: Affective Commitment (r=0.109, P<0.05); Aggregate Commitment (r=0.090, not significant). Compared to 2023, the relationship is weaker, suggesting that working hours alone may not boost commitment reliably.

3.4.3 Tenure (Years at Organization)

Years worked at the organization are still positively associated with: Normative Commitment (r=0.091, ns);

Table 4. Subscale-Level Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha), 2023 and 2025

Commitment Subscale	2023 α	2025 α
Affective Commitment (8 items)	0.898 (N=327)	0.892 (N=353)
Normative Commitment (8 items)	0.753 (N=327)	0.813 (N=341)
Continuance Commitment (8 items)	0.879 (N=327)	0.872 (N=336)

Pay Range (r=0.237, P<0.01); Aggregate Commitment (r=0.031, ns). Unlike 2023, when tenure was significantly associated with Normative Commitment (r=0.131, P<0.05), this relationship was no longer significant in 2025; tenure showed no significant association with any commitment dimension in this wave.

3.4.4 Department Assignment (OrgDept)

This variable showed no significant correlation with commitment scores in 2025. In contrast to 2023, when department consistency was a significant predictor, its influence appears to have diminished, potentially due to organizational restructuring or cross-training efforts.

3.5 Demographic and Moderating Influences (2025)

3.5.1 Age

Age continues to positively correlate with: Aggregate Commitment (r=0.045, ns); Affective Commitment (r=0.086, ns); Normative Commitment (r=0.115, P<0.05). In contrast to 2023, where Age correlated significantly with Aggregate, Affective, and Normative Commitment, only the association with Normative Commitment remained significant in 2025; Age was not significantly related to Aggregate or Affective Commitment in this wave.

3.5.2 Moderating Effects

The data indicates a continued moderating role for pay range, although both tenure and department assignment lost their significant association with commitment in 2025 compared to the 2023 analysis. Commitment remains the bridge between workplace experience and turnover intention.

3.6 Reliability of Measures

Reliability was assessed separately for each Three-Component Model subscale, rather than as a single combined value across commitment and retention-intention items. Table 4 reports Cronbach's alpha for Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment in 2023 and 2025. All six coefficients meet or exceed the conventional 0.70 threshold for acceptable internal consistency, with most in the 0.85–0.90 range.

Reported 2025 N varies by subscale (353 for Affective, 341 for Normative, 336 for Continuance) because 33 of the 393 collected 2025 surveys were entirely unanswered and were excluded, and a further subset had partial item non-response within a given subscale; only respondents who answered all eight items in a subscale were included in that subscale's alpha and scale-score calculation.

Two items required reverse scoring prior to computing subscale means and reliability coefficients: Affective item A8 ("*I feel like I DO NOT have a strong sense of belonging to my organization*") and Normative item N14 ("*Jumping from organization to organization is ethical*") are worded in the opposite direction from the remaining items in their respective subscales and were reverse-scored accordingly, consistent with standard practice for negatively worded items in the TCM instrument.

3.7 Summary of Findings

The data from 2023 and 2025 confirmed several consistent hypotheses:

Employee commitment is correlated with their retention intention (intent to stay). Table 3 shows the statistical representation of that correlation.

Workplace factors such as pay range, hours worked per week, tenure at the organization, and consistency in department assignments showed statistically significant correlations with dimensions of employee commitment. Figure 1 illustrates these relationships.

All three commitment dimensions (Affective, Normative, and Continuance) were significantly correlated with retention intention, with Affective Commitment showing the strongest correlation (r=0.446 in 2023; r=0.462 in 2025).

The increased predictive strength of Normative commitment in 2025 compared to 2023 (r=0.145→0.288) indicates that stronger moral or obligation-based attachment to the organization may be playing a larger role in retention.

Positive correlations between commitment scores and retention intention were replicated across both years, reinforcing the finding that higher commitment is associated with a stronger intent to stay.

Certain demographic variables like age and years at the organization also correlated positively with commitment, particularly with the Affective and Continuance dimensions.

These findings emphasize the importance of fostering emotional attachment, providing consistent work environments, and addressing key workplace factors to reduce employee turnover.

4 DISCUSSION

This study strengthens the understanding that workplace factors can meaningfully influence different components of employee commitment and, in turn, predict retention intention. By comparing data from two different years

using consistent survey instruments and identical Pearson correlation analyses, this research isolates persistent patterns that can guide operational strategies in long-term care settings.

Table 3 illustrates the Pearson correlation coefficients between four types of employee commitment and their retention intention in the long-term care (LTC) sector, comparing data from 2023 and 2025. Affective Commitment remained the strongest buffer against employee turnover intention in both years and was essentially stable across waves, changing only marginally from 0.446 in 2023 to 0.462 in 2025[23-25]. Normative Commitment increased markedly in influence, rising from 0.145 to 0.288, suggesting a substantially growing role of obligation-based loyalty in employee retention. Continuance Commitment showed a modest decline, from 0.219 in 2023 to 0.184 in 2025, while Aggregate Commitment rose from 0.380 to 0.418—indicating that overall commitment's link to retention intention strengthened somewhat between waves even as its cost-based (continuance) component weakened slightly.

These shifts suggest that while emotional attachment (affective commitment) continues to be a key factor, moral obligation (normative commitment) is becoming increasingly important in shaping employees' decisions to stay or leave.

Several alternative explanations for the rise in Normative Commitment between 2023 and 2025 should be considered before attributing this shift solely to a change in employees' underlying attitudes. First, national labor-market conditions shifted over this period—overall unemployment rose from 3.7% to 4.2% and job growth in nursing and residential care facilities slowed relative to the broader healthcare sector[10,11], conditions that may have heightened employees' perceived cost or obligation of leaving independent of any true change in their underlying commitment. Second, participating organizations may have introduced new retention-focused policies or benefits between the two survey waves that this study's workplace-factor measures did not capture, and such changes could plausibly elevate Normative Commitment without reflecting a broader shift across the long-term care workforce. Third, the 2025 sample was not identical to the 2023 sample—it was larger (n=393 vs. n=327) and drawn from more organizations (35 vs. 14)—so compositional differences between the two independent cross-sections, rather than change within individuals, may account for some of the observed difference. Because this study relies on two independent cross-sectional samples rather than a true longitudinal panel (see Limitations), it cannot adjudicate between these explanations, and future research using panel data linking the same respondents over time would be needed to determine whether Normative Commitment is rising within employees or whether the shift instead reflects labor-market or sample-composition differences between waves.

The data suggests that fostering emotional attachment between employees and their organization has the most protective effect against quit intentions. Surprisingly, pay range correlated more strongly with Affective Commitment compared with Continuance Commitment, contradicting the conventional assumption that higher pay solely drives retention through calculative means.

The relationship between other workplace factors and commitment is depicted in Figure 1. Consistency in departmental assignments was negatively correlated with quit intentions, highlighting the stabilizing influence of predictable work environments. Unlike 2023, the 2025 data did not reaffirm a significant role for tenure in boosting commitment, and age showed only a weak, borderline association with Normative Commitment; longevity incentives and consistent role placements may therefore warrant closer evaluation of their actual impact on commitment in this workforce going forward.

Overall, the results position commitment not just as an outcome of workplace conditions, but as a modifiable mechanism that bridges operational decisions and retention outcomes.

4.1 Contribution

A central contribution of this study is the empirical link it draws between commitment, as measured by the TCM, and retention intention, as indexed through TTM stage, a pairing that has received little direct attention in the existing literature. The study also pinpoints specific, changeable workplace factors that correspond to each of the three commitment dimensions. Bringing these two models together gives organizations a framework for addressing retention challenges that also incorporates principles of behavior change, potentially making retention interventions more effective in practice because they are more acceptable to employees.

These workplace-factor correlations are consistent with, and extend, the existing commitment literature. Identifying which specific, validated factors moderate each commitment dimension gives future researchers a set of malleable variables around which to design and refine subsequent studies.

Day-to-day supervisory practice and formal policy design are both plausible levers for influencing commitment and, in turn, retention intention. Affective Commitment, for instance, correlates positively with pay range (r=0.229), age (r=0.202), and consistency of department assignment (r=-0.264). These associations point toward practical steps, consistent yet flexible scheduling, tenure-linked pay increases, work-life balance benefits, and other

economically meaningful incentives that supervisors and leaders can use to strengthen employees' emotional attachment to the organization. To translate the pay-range finding into a concrete operational example: in the 2023 sample, employees earning $18.01–$22 per hour reported the lowest mean Affective Commitment of any pay band (M=3.22, SD=0.95, n=73)—lower even than employees earning under $18 per hour—while employees earning $27.01–$39 per hour reported substantially higher Affective Commitment (M=3.75, SD=0.76, n=87), a statistically significant difference (Welch's t=3.87, $P<0.001$) with a medium-to-large effect size (Cohen's d=0.62). At current band midpoints, this span corresponds to a wage increase of approximately $13.00 per hour (roughly $20.00 to $33.00 per hour, or about $27,040 annually). This correlational finding cannot establish that a pay-band increase alone would produce this shift in commitment, but it gives leadership a concrete, data-grounded reference point for weighing the potential retention return on a compensation-band investment, rather than relying on a generic assumption that higher pay improves retention.

4.2 Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, this study uses two independent cross-sectional samples collected in 2023 and 2025 rather than a true longitudinal panel design; the same individuals were not tracked over time, so within-person change in commitment or retention intention cannot be confirmed, and the year-over-year comparisons reported here describe population-level trends rather than individual trajectories. Second, retention intention was assessed with a single multiple-choice item mapped onto stages of the Transtheoretical Model of Change[9,13] rather than with a turnover-intention scale that has been independently validated against actual turnover in this population; the theoretical rationale for using TTM stage to index retention intention is supported by a growing body of research applying TTM beyond its original addiction/smoking-cessation context to organizational, workplace, and other non-clinical behavior change[9,15-21,26], but this specific application, i.e., using TTM stage to index employee retention intention, has not itself been validated against actual employee turnover outcomes, and this represents a novel application that future research should test directly. Third, although the Three-Component Model of Commitment has demonstrated strong internal consistency in prior research[12,22], subscale-level Cronbach's alpha is reported separately for Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment in both waves (Table 4); all six coefficients meet or exceed the 0.70 threshold. Retention intention, assessed with a single item, does not yield a Cronbach's alpha. Fourth, all data were collected via self-report, which introduces the possibility of common-method bias and social desirability effects. Fifth, participating organizations were recruited through a single professional association representing long-term care providers in Wisconsin, and organizations volunteered to distribute the survey to their employees; this non-random, convenience-based recruitment limits the generalizability of findings to long-term care employees outside this network or in other states. Finally, because this is a correlational study, none of the reported relationships should be interpreted as causal; workplace factors, commitment, and retention intention likely influence one another reciprocally over time, and experimental or panel designs would be needed to establish directionality.

5 CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the value of creating employee retention strategies that integrate the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment with the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM). This approach deepens organizational understanding of the malleable factors driving retention in long-term care (LTC) settings. By conducting a repeated cross-sectional analysis from 2023 to 2025, this research validates commitment as a dynamic and actionable factor that mediates the relationship between workplace conditions and turnover intention. Notably, Affective Commitment remains the most influential factor in predicting intention to stay, but the rising importance of Normative Commitment suggests that feelings of moral obligation and organizational loyalty are gaining prominence. These findings underscore the need for tailored retention strategies that address both emotional and ethical bonds between employees and the organization. Practical applications include aligning work environments to support consistent departmental assignments, recognizing tenure with structured incentives, and enhancing perceived organizational support through the provision of specific job and life-enriching programs. Although this study focused on LTC, future research should explore the generalizability of these insights across other healthcare and service industries. Ultimately, organizations that treat commitment as a measurable and modifiable construct will be better positioned to mitigate turnover and promote workforce stability.

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Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and protocol was approved by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board (Approval Number 24.183).

Conflicts of Interest

All authors affirm that they have no conflicts of interest related to funding or influence over the research and that

the content of this manuscript reflects unbiased findings and interpretations.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Author Contribution

Frediani RF conceived and designed the research, collected the data, and performed the analysis. Luo J reviewed the data collection design and participated in the periodic review of data collection and analysis. Eells JT reviewed the data collection design and provided editorial support during publication preparation. Talsma AN reviewed the data collection design and provided editorial support during publication preparation. Kesaram RR revised the survey tools and assisted with the statistical analytic process. Fink JT reviewed the data collection design and provided editorial support during publication preparation.

Abbreviation List

BLS, Bureau of Labor Statistics
LTC, Long-term care
QR, Quick Response
TCM, Three Component Model
TTM, Transtheoretical Model of Change
URL, Uniform Resource Locator

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