

# A Systematic Literature Review on Teacher Commitment: Methodological and Contextual Trends and its Conceptualization (2018-2022)

Reyett Paunan<sup>1</sup>, Mei Kin Tai<sup>2</sup>, Jasmine Jain<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences & Leisure Management,  
Taylor's University, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia, <sup>2 & 3</sup> Education for All  
Impact Lab Taylor's University, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.  
Corresponding Author Email: reyetsantos.paunan@sd.taylors.edu.my

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## Abstract

Teacher commitment is a key factor for an effective and successful school as it can significantly impact educational outcomes. With increasing demands and new challenges schools are facing during these times, what it means by teacher commitment is also changing. To gain more insights about teacher commitment, this systematic literature review explores the methodological trends, contextual patterns, and conceptualizations of teacher commitment from 2018 to 2022. A total of 60 articles are identified following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach using Scopus and Science Direct databases. Results indicate that there is a growing interest in examining the concept of teacher commitment particularly in Asia with studies predominantly conducted at basic education levels using quantitative method. Many of the studies have examined teacher commitment as either a unidimensional or multidimensional construct, depending on teachers' object of attachment and loyalty, i.e., towards the school, students, and teaching profession. The findings imply that teacher commitment is a complex and dynamic concept as it comes in different forms in various contexts. This review may be used as a reference by educational leaders and practitioners and other researchers inclined to explore teacher commitment as schools continue to adapt to changing educational landscapes.

**Keywords:** Teacher Commitment, Methodological Trends, Contextual Trends, Systematic Literature Review.

## Introduction

Understanding teacher commitment is pivotal for enhancing educational outcomes, as it directly influences student achievement and school effectiveness (Price, 2021; Suyatno et al., 2022; Vidic et al., 2022). Committed teachers display dedication, active participation in school goals, and a higher likelihood of long-term retention in the profession (Vidic et al., 2022). However, without a comprehensive understanding of teacher commitment, crucial aspects

affecting teacher motivation, retention, and performance might be overlooked, potentially leading to a decline in educational quality and student achievement. Numerous studies have delved into teacher commitment, linking it to teacher attrition (Da'as et al., 2020; Price, 2021), retention (Eginli, 2021; Vidic et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021), organizational commitment (Khan et al., 2020), and burnout (Suyatno et al., 2022) amidst escalating educational demands. Review articles have explored various factors influencing teacher commitment, such as teacher identity (Lee & Lee, 2022), efficacy (Ulas & Senel, 2020), and various leadership styles (e.g., Kasa et al., 2020; Karakus, 2018; Sutiayatno et al., 2022). Although there is a wealth of literature, ongoing changes in the educational landscape necessitate a timely update to synthesize these findings and identify emerging trends. Moreover, by understanding teacher commitment, educational leaders can make informed decisions in promoting dedicated and high-performing teachers (Da'as et al., 2020; Price, 2021), maintaining high retention rate among teachers (Eginli, 2021; Vidic et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021), and supporting positive work environment preventing burnout (Suyatno et al., 2022).

This systematic literature review addresses this need by scrutinizing existing research on teacher commitment to synthesize insights and identify research gaps. A comprehensive approach was employed, reviewing studies from multiple databases. The analysis encompassed methodological patterns, contextual settings, and conceptual frameworks utilized in prior research.

This review was driven by two critical research questions:

- i) What are the methodological and contextual patterns of teacher commitment in existing research?
- ii) How is teacher commitment conceptualized in the existing studies?

By addressing these questions, the review provides a holistic understanding of current trends and uncovers areas requiring further investigation, thereby contributing valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on teacher commitment.

## Methodology

A systematic literature review summarizes existing studies on specific topic comprehensively, identifies research gaps, and suggests areas for future research by following pre-defined criteria in selecting related research for analysis (Mengist et al., 2020; Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). The process starts by identifying the topic and search criteria, selecting the relevant research, and synthesizing the findings, then, reporting the results in a given format, ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and objectivity (Okoli & Schabram, 2015; Pollock & Berge, 2018; PRISMA-P Group et al., 2015). This approach provides the readers with a reliable and structured synthesis of existing studies, offering avenues for possible research (Mengist et al., 2020, Petticrew & Roberts, 2008; Pollock & Berge, 2018).

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) is used as a protocol to conduct this systematic literature review. It consists of three stages, i.e., identification, screening, and eligibility (Mengist et al., 2020; Pollock & Berge, 2018) as shown in Figure 1. The identification stage requires using databases to search and gather an extensive number of pertinent studies which could be included in the review. The screening stage involves predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to narrow down the number of studies

most relevant to the topic. The eligibility stage entails evaluating the remaining studies by assessing the titles and abstracts for relevance, then, excluding all irrelevant studies by examining the full texts of the articles. After this, remaining studies are included in the final systematic review (Mengist et al., 2020, Petticrew & Robers, 2008; Pollock & Berge, 2018).

#### *Stage One: Identification*

To identify related studies, this review used two digital databases: Scopus and ScienceDirect which are considered to contain high quality academic, well-referenced, and peer-reviewed journals in education (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2019; Al Amiri, Rahima, Ahmed, 2020). Using “teacher commitment” OR “teachers’ commitment” as keywords resulted to 1,062 papers in which 494 were from Scopus and 568 were from ScienceDirect (Figure 1).

#### *Stage Two: Screening*

The identified papers from two databases were screened following the available filters. The time range for the search was set from 2018-2022 to focus the review on the most recent findings about teacher commitment. This eliminated 722 papers, 317 from Scopus and 405 from ScienceDirect. A total of 340 paper were left with Scopus (n=177) and ScienceDirect (n=163). The next step in the screening process was to exclude the papers from other subject or discipline except those under social science. From the remaining papers of 340, 55 papers were excluded, leaving 285 papers with Scopus (n=142) and ScienceDirect (n=143). From this, all those which were not research articles and on the final stage were removed from the list (n=39). All 246 papers are research articles and on the final stage of publication with Scopus (n=115) and ScienceDirect (n=131). Last screening criterion was including all those articles written in English. Five articles were excluded, four from Scopus and one from ScienceDirect. The total remaining articles to be included for the next phase was 241 in which 111 were from Scopus and 130 were from ScienceDirect (Figure 1).

#### *Stage Three: Eligibility*

The titles and abstracts of 241 papers were scanned through and subjected to a review based on the focus of the study, i.e., studies on pre-service and student teachers were excluded and those which did not have teacher commitment as a variable to ensure substantial data will be used to conceptualize teacher commitment with respect to the current study. With this, 46 articles from Scopus and 110 papers from ScienceDirect were excluded. A total of 85 articles (Scopus, n=65 and ScienceDirect, n=20) were included to be examined thoroughly by identifying whether it is (i) an empirical study and (ii) relevant. Four papers were eliminated as they were not empirical study (Scopus, n=3; ScienceDirect, n=1). With 81 papers remaining, 10 more articles were further excluded from Scopus and 10 from ScienceDirect upon the final content review of the full paper. One paper was also a duplicate article. In the end, a total of 60 articles were identified (Scopus, n=51; ScienceDirect, n=9) and used for this review (Figure 1).

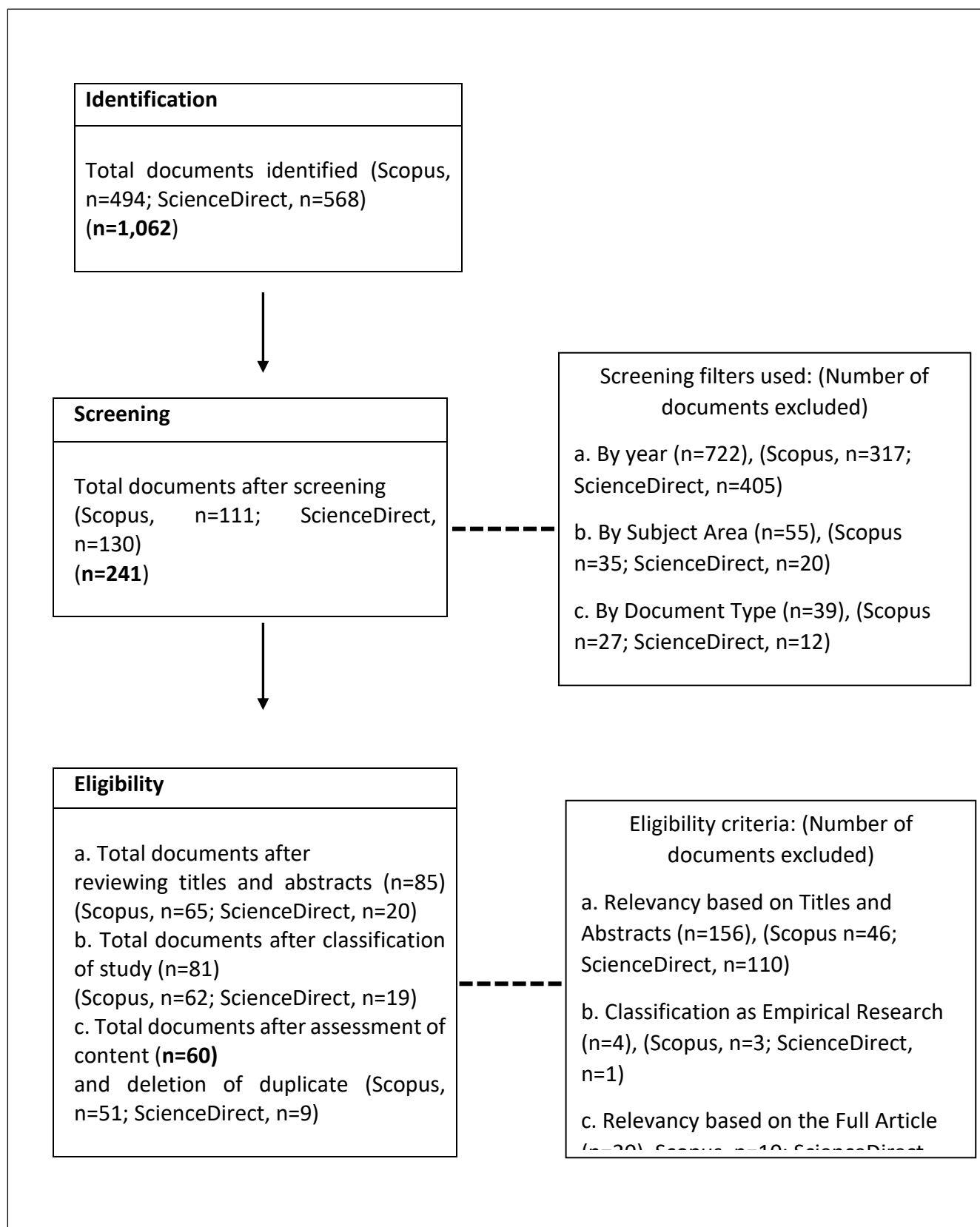


Figure 1 Selection Process of the Studies of Teacher Commitment for Analysis

## Results

At the initial stage of the review process, a total of 1,062 papers on teacher commitment were identified for analysis. After excluding irrelevant studies by reviewing the title, abstract, and full text, the number of articles for inclusion is 60 as shown in Figure 1. These studies are further examined and classified according to the year of publication, research methods, geographical distribution, and school context. Firstly, the distribution of the articles by year of publication is shown in Figure 2. The review period was set to 2018-2022. Beginning 2018, 11 articles were published (Scopus, n=10; ScienceDirect, n=2). Nine articles were published in 2019 (Scopus, n=6; ScienceDirect, n=3). The year that followed, there were 11 articles recorded in this review (Scopus, n=10; ScienceDirect, n=1). The total number of articles seemed to continue to rise after this, as there have been 13 articles published in 2021 (Scopus, n=11; ScienceDirect, n=2) and 16 in 2022 (Scopus, n=14; ScienceDirect, n=2).

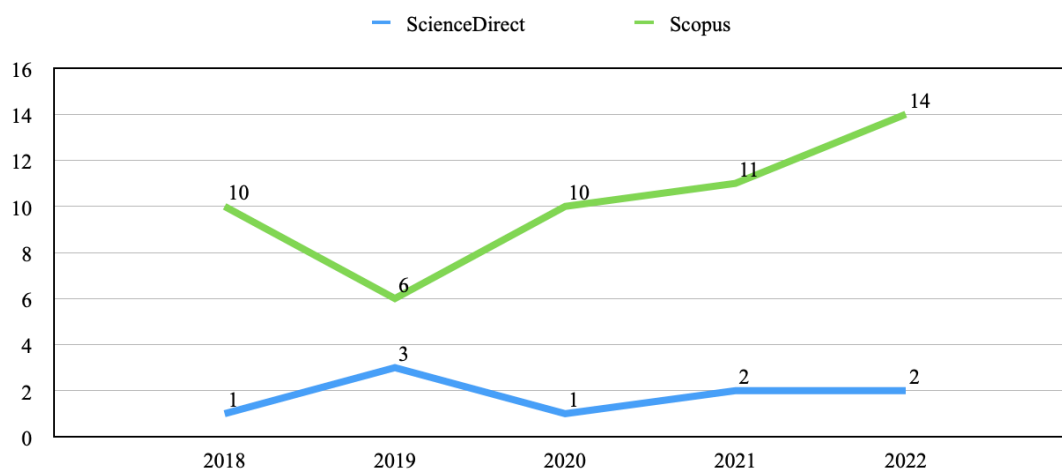


Figure 2 Distribution of Studies by Year of Publication

The data shows that from 2019, it seems that there was a gradual increase in number of publications on teacher commitment specifically in the Scopus database. However, limited number of articles have been published in ScienceDirect, with the highest number of three articles in 2019. Nevertheless, as indicated above, there is a slight upward trend in the total published articles from 2020-2022. This suggests that there might be growing interests among researchers about teacher commitment specifically during and after the period of pandemic.

Secondly, Figure 3 illustrates the research methods that the articles employed. It can be noted that almost 82% (n=49) utilized quantitative methods (Scopus, n=43; ScienceDirect, n=6). Studies in qualitative method composed 13% (n=18) (Scopus, n=6; ScienceDirect, n=12). The remaining 5% (n=3) (Scopus, n=2; ScienceDirect, n=1) were mixed methods studies.

Many of the articles were quantitative in nature which proved to be the research method of choice among the researchers. It can be implied that there is a plethora of studies that conceptualized and enriched the knowledge base on teacher commitment. However, there were only a few studies which adopted qualitative and mixed methods. This may suggest that more qualitative and mixed methods studies should be conducted to considerably contribute to the literature about teacher commitment.

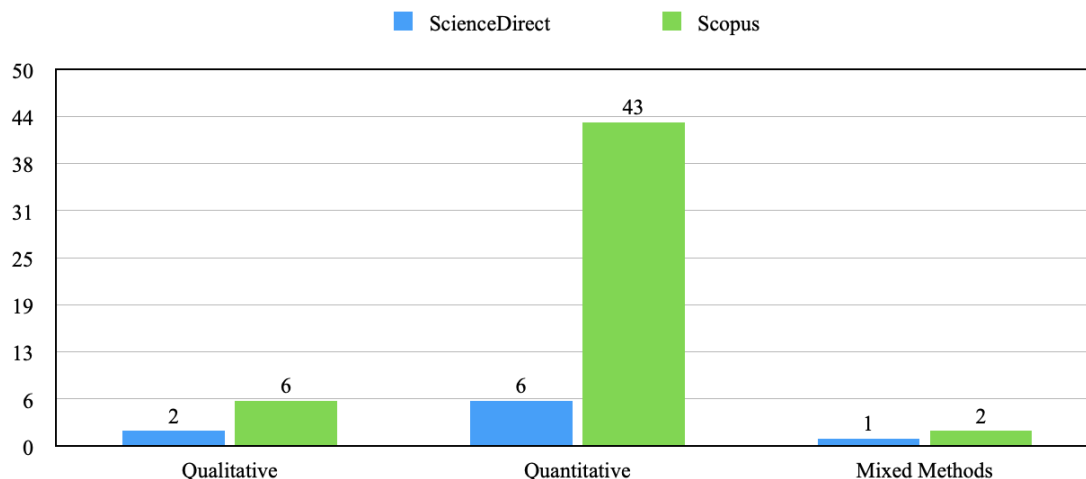


Figure 3 Distribution of Studies by Research Methods

Thirdly, Figure 4 shows the geographical location or setting of the reviewed articles. The greatest number of articles published was concentrated on Asia with 43 in total (Scopus, n=39; ScienceDirect, n=4). This is followed by North America with 9 articles (Scopus, n=6; ScienceDirect, n=3). South America and Africa had one article each, both from Scopus only while Australia had two articles, one from each of the database. One article from ScienceDirect used data gathered across 32 countries. Apart from Antarctica, it can be deduced that the studies were spread out around the globe and sparse in South America, Africa, and Australia so there may be a need to carry out more research from these areas to provide more substantial contexts on the concept of teacher commitment.

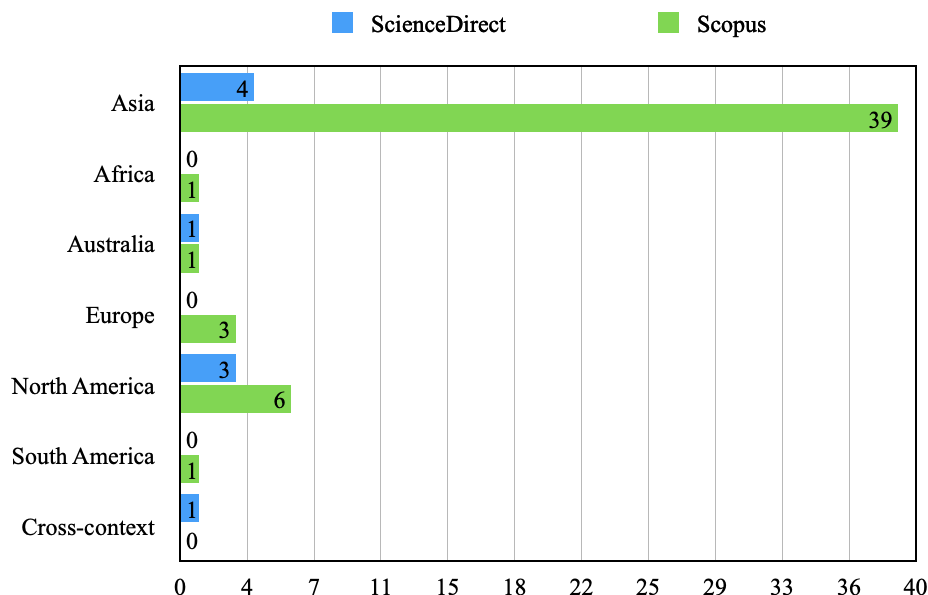
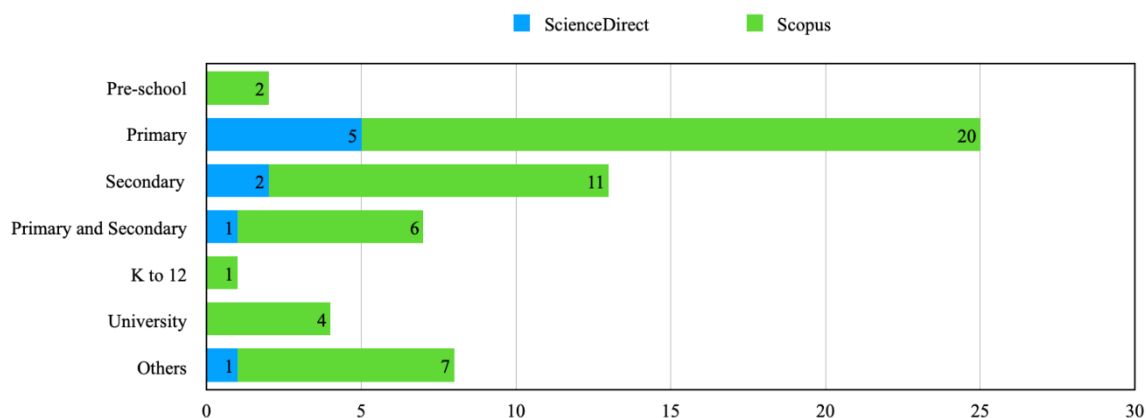


Figure 4 Distribution of Studies by Study Location

Lastly, as for the school level contexts shown in Figure 5, most of the articles were conducted in primary levels with a total of 25 articles (Scopus, n=20; ScienceDirect, n=5). There were 13 articles in the secondary level (Scopus, n=11; ScienceDirect, n=2); seven articles were done in both primary and secondary level (Scopus, n=6; ScienceDirect, n=1), one article in K-12 level from Scopus only; two in pre-school levels, both from Scopus; four in University level, all from

Scopus; and eight in Others which were combination of articles from a vocational institute or did not explicitly indicate the school level context in the article (Scopus,  $n=7$ ; ScienceDirect,  $n=1$ ). With this, it implies that research on teacher commitment was frequently conducted among teachers in the basic education particularly in primary and secondary levels.



### Definition of Teacher Commitment

Many of the current studies recognize that teacher commitment is one of the most crucial factors in the attainment of school's educational goals (Awang et al., 2022). In these studies, teacher commitment has been viewed as a context-based construct that takes on different forms such as Commitment to School, Commitment to Students, and Commitment to Teaching Profession (Eginli, 2021). Researchers seem to agree with the general idea of commitment being the strong psychological, emotional, or cognitive attachment or bond that teachers demonstrate towards the object of their devotion such as the students, school or organization, or the teaching profession (Lee & Lee, 2022).

Out of the 60 identified articles, there are 29 articles in this review which explicitly provided the definition of teacher commitment based on the above. From these articles, 24 considered teacher commitment as unidimensional which refers to teachers' being committed to a specific dimension or form of commitment such as Commitment to School/Organization (Akin, 2021; Al-Mahdy et al., 2018; Al-Mahdy & Hassan, 2022; Awang et al., 2022; Cansoy et al., 2022; Da'as et al., 2020; Guhao, 2019; Hallinger et al., 2018; Hassan et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2022; Kasa et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Komariah et al., 2019; Peretomode & Bello, 2018; Sokal et al., 2021; Sutiyo et al., 2022; Suyatno et al., 2022), Commitment to Students (Lin et al., 2020; Magana-Medina et al., 2021), and Commitment to Teaching Profession (Eginli, 2022; Jones, 2018; Ulas & Senel, 2020; Setyaningsih & Sunaryo, 2021; Thien & Lee, 2022). Table 1 shows the specific dimension of teacher commitment discussed by the researchers in the respective articles.



Table 1

*Unidimensional Definition of Teacher Commitment*

Articles	TC as Defined in the Study
Akin (2021), Al-Mahdy et al. (2018), Al-Mahdy and Hassan, (2022) Awang et al. (2022), Cansoy et al. (2022), Da'as et al. (2020), Guhao (2019), Hallinger et al. (2018), Hassan et al. (2019), Ismail et al. (2022), Kasa et al. (2020), Khan et al. (2020), Komariah et al. (2019), Peretomode and Bello (2018), Sokal et al. (2021), Sutiyaatno et al. (2022), Suyatno et al. (2022)	Commitment to School/Organization
Lin et al. (2020), Magana-Medina et al. (2021)	Commitment to Students
Eginli (2021), Jones (2018), Setyaningsih and Sunaryo (2021), Thien and Lee (2022), Ulas and Senel (2020)	Commitment to the Teaching Profession

Specifically, Commitment to School/Organization refers to teachers' voluntary involvement and engagement in school activities and their desire to stay in the organization (Al-Mahdy et al., 2018; Komariah et al., 2019; Sutiyaatno et al., 2022; Suyatno et al., 2022). It is regarded as an important element in sustained changed and school improvement (Komariah et al., 2019). Teacher commitment has been explained in many of the studies based on the model of organizational commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991, 2004) as this model has been validated in school settings (Al-Mahdy & Hassan, 2022). From these articles, commitment of teachers to school or organization is considered as "a result of their emotional attachment, feelings of obligation, and acknowledgment of the high costs of leaving" the school (Sokal et al., 2020, p. 3).

Commitment to Students is the extent of teachers' willingness and interest in the students and the students' learning process (Lin et al., 2020; Magana-Medina et al., 2021). Magana-Medina et al. (2021) adapted the instrument assessing teacher commitment to the students from Nir (2002) as the study investigated the relationships between principals' transformational leadership, school climate, teacher commitment to learners, and learner-centred teaching practices. Similarly, in the study of Lin et al. (2020), the Teacher Commitment to Students Questionnaire by Lee et al. (2011) was adapted to measure the level of commitment to students. According to this study:

*"Teacher commitment to students emphasizes students as "unique whole individuals" rather than as "empty vessels to be filled." Teachers who are committed to students consider the students' previous learning experiences. They teach students in accordance with their aptitude and aspirations, and they are more sensitive to the students' future developments. Committed teachers spend more time on extracurricular activities and family-school*



*collaborations that help improve the students' learning motivations, and they provide more supports for their students (Elliott 2004).” (p.584).*

In both articles, teacher commitment is expressed and measured based on the importance accorded to the students and the role of teacher commitment in teaching and learning process.

Commitment to the Teaching Profession is about teachers' level of devotion and attachment to their job or occupation (Eginli, 2021; Jones, 2018; Setyaningsih & Sunaryo, 2021; Thien & Lee, 2022; Ulas & Senel, 2020). Jones (2018) translates it as the teachers' retention or teachers' staying in the profession. It deals with the time teachers have been faithful to the job and to their succeeding plans. Teacher attrition is identified as a significant indicator of commitment to teaching profession (Thien & Lee, 2022). Further, according to Ulas and Senel (2020) “the effort to continue teaching is an indicator of a professional commitment” (p. 1440). While Setyaningsih and Sunaryo (2021) believe that commitment to the profession is demonstrated by teachers who exhibit loyalty and professional values, however, in the study of Eginli (2021), commitment to teaching profession is highlighted in understanding teacher retention.

Evidently, teacher commitment is defined as a unidimensional construct in the above articles as these studies anchored on the conceptualization of teacher commitment in terms of a specific object of teachers' loyalty, relationship, and attachment, i.e., towards the school, students, or the teaching profession. These can be considered as main indicators of teacher commitment where level of involvement and engagement of teachers may vary hence, researchers choosing to study one specific form. In other words, Commitment to School/Organization may indicate teacher commitment when the study focuses on understanding teacher commitment in relation to school climate, organizational management, and leadership, whereas Commitment to Students may suggest teacher commitment in terms of its association with students' learning outcomes, student engagement, or classroom management. Commitment to Teaching Profession may imply teacher commitment in relation to the professional growth and development, instructional strategies, and teacher attrition and retention as discussed in the above studies.

Meanwhile, five articles described teacher commitment as a multidimensional construct which means that teacher commitment is described using all or a combination of these dimensions: Commitment to School or Organization, Commitment to Students, Commitment to Teaching, Commitment to the Community, and Commitment to Profession (e.g., Alsoud et al., 2021; Kan et al., 2022; Lee & Lee, 2022; Ostad et al., 2019; Pinos-Arcos & Pasmanik, 2021; Yang et al., 2019). Table 2 presents the list of articles with respect to the different dimensions of teacher commitment in each article. Based on this table, Lee and Lee (2022) identified two dimensions of TC: Commitment to School and Commitment to Students. In this study, teacher commitment is defined as:

*“The degree of involvement in the recognition of the cognitive value of a teacher to a class, student, or school organization, identification of the affective aspect, and the behavioural involvement of the teacher. In other words, the object of teacher commitment is class, student, and school organization, and the*

*conceptual attributes of teacher commitment are value recognition, identification, and involvement. Value recognition is the degree to which an individual perceives the object of commitment as important, and identification indicates the degree to which an individual feels emotionally united with the object of commitment. Involvement refers to an individual's willingness to actively strive for the realization of the value of the object of commitment. In this context, there is no significant difference in understanding that the object of teacher dedication is the student or student learning, class or teaching activity, and school organization (Hong, 2005). In this study, students and organizations are viewed as objects of teacher dedication, and psychological attachments and value perceptions are applied to them as attitudes and behaviour.” (Lee & Lee, 2022, p. 434).*

Table 2

*Forms/Dimensions of Teacher Commitment in Each Study*

Article	Commitment to School	Commitment to Students	Commitment to Teaching	Commitment to the Community	Commitment to Profession
Lee and Lee (2022)	●	●			
Alsoud et al. (2021)	●	●	●		
Ostad et al. (2019)	●	●	●		
Yang et al. (2019)	●	●	●	●	
Kan et al. (2022)	●	●	●		●

These dimensions were measured using the tool developed by Chang-nam Hong (2006) with three aspects mentioned in the definition: value recognition, identification, and involvement and later modified by Choi (2021) which then consisted of only two dimensions: Commitment to School/Organization and Commitment to Students.

Additionally, it can be observed that three dimensions of teacher commitment: Commitment to School, Commitment to Students, and Commitment to Teaching are common to the studies of Alsoud et al (2021), and Ostad et al (2019). The former measured teacher commitment based on the work of Pietsch et al (2019), and the latter adopted the work of Mowday et al (1979), identifying the three dimensions as stated. In the context of educational disruption during the pandemic, Alsoud et al (2021), examined the effects of teachers' innovativeness and commitment in the face of disruption in the educational system. In this

study, teacher commitment is conceptualized in terms of its impact in addressing the disruptions during a pandemic. It refers to the emotional attachment of the teachers to the organization or school in times of difficulties and adapting to the required changes in the delivery of instruction; addressing individual learning and emotional needs of students; and displaying their devotion to their vocation by choosing to continue teaching despite of the challenges.

Meanwhile in the study of Ostad et al (2019), teacher commitment is conceptualized based on three dimensions: (i) organizational aspect of emotional or normative commitment as teachers' work is set in a school system or within school organization; this means that teachers may have emotional attachment to the school organization and identify with its goals, visions, values, or ideologies; (ii) Commitment to Students as an affective attachment with students demonstrated by teachers' sense of duty to students' learning; and (iii) Commitment to the Teaching Profession as a psychological positive attachment to the profession as indicated by teachers' involvement in school work and classroom activities, and of the importance attributed to the profession.

At the same time, Yang et al (2019), defined teacher commitment using four dimensions, i.e., Commitment to School, Commitment to Students, Commitment to Teaching, and Commitment to Community. Notably, in this study, Commitment to School is explained based on the concept of affective and normative aspects of organizational commitment by Mowday et al. (1979) and Meyer and Allen (1991) reflecting the emotional attachment and sense of obligation of teachers to the school. Commitment to Students is taken as the teachers' dedication to students' learning and academic achievement while Commitment to Teaching is defined as teachers' attachment or personal bond with the teaching profession. Alternatively, Commitment to Community refers to the teachers' engagement with the school community by being vigilant about relevant issues within the community and initiating collaborations among community members. This study was hoped to enhance the understanding of teacher commitment as a multidimensional construct and emphasized the relationship of the teachers to the community where they belong.

Kan et al (2022), on the other hand, generally defined teacher commitment as the emotional attachment of the teachers to the school and the role of the teacher as a professional who works directly with students. In this study, it is recognized that teacher's involvement in improving quality of education is reflected by teacher commitment to school, students, teaching work, and profession.

Based on different conceptualizations or definitions of teacher commitment in the given studies, teacher commitment impacts school or organizational performance, student learning, teachers' professional development, quality of teaching learning process, teacher retention, and sense of belongingness in the community. Teacher commitment is an indication of loyalty to school (Komariah et al., 2019; Price, 2021; Suyatno, 2020; Thien & Lee, 2022), school effectiveness (Awang et al., 2022), job satisfaction (Suyatno et al., 2022), improved student learning outcomes (Al-Mahdy & Hassan, 2022), increased productivity, efficiency, and performance (Shamma & Al-Zu'bi, 2020), and increased engagement with school community (Yang et al., 2019).

From these, it can be gathered that teacher commitment as a multidimensional construct can be conceptualized using the different contexts discussed above, dependent on the combination of the different forms of commitment. In addition, it can be presumed that teacher commitment is a complex and dynamic concept where different forms or dimensions of commitment can be purposely established. This in turn provides a more comprehensive understanding of teacher commitment as it delves into the different aspects of teachers' role and responsibility.

### **Conclusion**

This systematic literature review seeks to provide the methodological, contextual trends, and definition of teacher commitment from current literature. There has been a noticeable upward trend in the number of studies conducted at least from 2019, indicating an increasing interest on teacher commitment among researchers. Most of the studies are quantitative in nature. In addition, a notable portion of the studies on teacher commitment have been conducted in Asia focusing mostly on basic education levels.

In most studies in this review, teacher commitment is regarded as the strong psychological, emotional, or cognitive attachment of teachers towards students, school or organization, or the teaching profession itself. It is a context-based construct that can be manifested in different forms such as commitment to the school, commitment to students or commitment to the teaching profession. Additionally, teacher commitment may be considered as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct in terms of focus, scope, and forms or dimensions. As the former provides a single and general measure of teacher commitment, the latter involves different or combination of aspects or forms of teacher commitment. This recognizes the complex nature of teacher commitment and offers an alternative perspective in understanding the concept of teacher commitment at present time.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

While this systematic review offers additional insights on the concept of teacher commitment, some limitations need to be recognized. Firstly, the searched articles are limited to two databases, Scopus and ScienceDirect, hence, the studies published in other databases are excluded and may require further investigation. Secondly, the time frame of the literature search is restricted to only five years. There may be pertinent studies prior and after the identified time frame (i.e., 2018-2022) in this review which are unaccounted for.

Nonetheless, addressing the limitations above may lead to opportunities for future research. In addition, as the studies predominantly employ quantitative methods, exploring teacher commitment using diverse methods including a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods may provide deeper insights and enrich understanding of teacher commitment. Moreover, most of the studies are concentrated in Asia using basic education context. Therefore, it is necessary to broaden the scope of the studies and include a diverse range of cultural and educational settings to generate more information on how teacher commitment vary across different context.

Further, as the definition of teacher commitment in this review revolves around different forms or dimensions of commitment, future research may probe other forms or dimensions that may be relevant to the changing demands in education. All in all, these future research

directions can certainly contribute to the development of more extensive understanding of teacher commitment and provide practical insights to foster commitment among teachers, influencing school outcomes in general.

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