Assessment and Practice in Educational Sciences

The Impact of Organizational Conscientiousness on the Tendency to Leave the Service among Iraqi Physical Education Teachers: The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of organizational conscientiousness on the tendency to leave the service among Iraqi physical education teachers, with the mediating role of organizational commitment. This research is applied in nature, and from the perspective of data collection, it is descriptive-correlational. The statistical population consisted of all physical education teachers across Iraq, totaling 25,642 individuals. Given the distribution of physical education teachers throughout the country, a sample of 384 teachers was selected through multi-stage cluster sampling. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires, including the Organizational Conscientiousness Questionnaire by Naeimi (2013), the Job Leaving Questionnaire by Moghimi (2010), and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire by Allen and Meyer (1990). The face and content validity of the questionnaires were confirmed by the academic supervisor, and their reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which were calculated as 0.93 for organizational conscientiousness, 0.91 for the tendency to leave the service, and 0.92 for organizational commitment. Data analysis was conducted using correlation coefficients, multiple regression analysis, and structural equation modeling. All computations were performed using PLS and SPSS software. The results indicated that organizational conscientiousness has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment, explaining 20.07% of its variance. Furthermore, organizational conscientiousness has a negative and significant effect on the tendency to leave the service, accounting for 33.40% of its variance. Organizational commitment also has a negative and significant effect on the tendency to leave the service, explaining 33.87% of its variance.

Keywords: Organizational Conscientiousness, Tendency to Leave the Service, Organizational Commitment, Iraqi Physical Education Teachers.

Introduction

Organizational conscientiousness, as a behavioral and attitudinal construct, encompasses traits such as responsibility, discipline, ethical behavior, and reliability in the workplace. Research suggests that this construct directly correlates with stronger work commitment and lower withdrawal behaviors among employees (1, 2). Employees exhibiting high conscientiousness tend to meet organizational expectations more consistently, adapt to regulations with greater ease, and resist external pressures to leave their roles (3, 4). This relationship is particularly pronounced in educational institutions where professional responsibility and ethical teaching are at the core of the organizational mission (5).

Organizational commitment—typically framed as affective, continuance, and normative commitment—has long been recognized as a foundational variable in predicting employee retention and satisfaction. The affective dimension reflects emotional attachment; the continuance component addresses the perceived cost of leaving; and the normative aspect deals with the sense of obligation to stay (6). Substantial evidence indicates that teachers with high organizational commitment show reduced turnover intention, greater job involvement, and improved student outcomes (7-9).

In contexts characterized by job insecurity, weak institutional governance, and limited support for educators—as is often the case in post-conflict nations like Iraq—organizational commitment may play an even more critical buffering role (10, 11). When employees feel emotionally and morally tied to their organization, they are less likely to contemplate exit strategies, even in the face of challenging circumstances (12). Conscientious employees, in particular, tend to internalize institutional values and align their personal goals with organizational missions, thereby developing deeper levels of commitment (13, 14).

The interaction between organizational conscientiousness and organizational commitment has garnered increasing attention, particularly concerning its mediating influence on turnover intention (15, 16). Conscientious individuals typically perceive their roles as meaningful, embrace responsibility, and commit to long-term goals—all of which foster affective and normative commitment. In turn, these commitment dimensions act as psychological anchors that reduce the likelihood of resignation or disengagement (17). For example, research conducted in service-based organizations and public institutions has consistently demonstrated that conscientiousness indirectly reduces turnover intention by increasing organizational embeddedness and satisfaction (18, 19).

Several studies have reinforced this connection in the education sector. In Iranian contexts, it has been shown that internal motivation and organizational culture mediate the relationship between personality traits like conscientiousness and the tendency to leave one's position (2, 20). In a similar vein, (21) reported that organizational commitment among Generation Z employees increases when there is a balance between self-discipline, work motivation, and a sense of purpose—hallmarks of conscientious behavior.

International findings support these regional trends. (22) demonstrated that organizational burnout and role stress lead to increased turnover intentions among nurses, but the effect was significantly buffered by organizational commitment. Similarly, (13) found that in Indian higher education institutions, talent management strategies that emphasize conscientiousness indirectly impact retention through enhanced commitment. These studies point to a robust mediating mechanism that is likely replicable in Iraq's educational institutions, particularly in physical education settings where teachers are often isolated in their work and lack professional recognition.

The role of organizational justice and ethical climate is also intertwined with conscientiousness and commitment. (23) argued that psychological contract violations—such as unmet expectations—erode organizational commitment and elevate turnover risk. Conversely, employees who perceive fairness and equity in their organizations report greater conscientiousness and engagement, thereby reinforcing a cycle of organizational loyalty and retention (4, 8).

Furthermore, conscientious employees frequently demonstrate a strong sense of moral and professional identity. This internal alignment not only reduces the cognitive dissonance associated with organizational mismanagement but also strengthens resilience and loyalty (16, 24). In education, this dynamic is particularly critical. Teachers with strong professional ethics and personal discipline contribute significantly to the institutional culture, influencing both their peers and students (5, 7).

Leadership quality and organizational support systems are crucial environmental factors that interact with conscientiousness and commitment. Employees who receive supervisor support and constructive feedback are more likely to engage in discretionary efforts and less likely to withdraw from their roles (17, 25). Conscientiousness enhances this dynamic by fostering receptiveness to mentorship, accountability, and goal alignment—all of which fuel stronger organizational commitment and lower turnover (14).

Moreover, in collectivist cultures such as Iraq, social and normative pressures further amplify the impact of conscientiousness on commitment. Norms around group loyalty, respect for authority, and ethical behavior in public service reinforce the internalized values of conscientious employees (9, 26). When such values are reciprocated by organizational practices—like transparent promotion pathways or recognition systems—employees are more likely to remain engaged and committed (3).

From a generational perspective, today's younger workforce, particularly those in education, often prioritize meaningfulness and psychological alignment over salary alone (14, 24). When these employees perceive a lack of support or misalignment between personal and organizational values, turnover intention rises sharply. However, conscientious individuals are more likely to bridge this gap through adaptive strategies and sustained engagement—provided the organization offers adequate support structures (21).

In summary, prior research across diverse cultural and institutional settings has consistently emphasized the dual role of organizational conscientiousness and organizational commitment in predicting turnover intention. While each construct independently contributes to employee retention, their interaction—especially the mediating effect of commitment—provides a more holistic explanation of why employees stay or leave. The current study builds on this theoretical foundation by applying the model to Iraqi physical education teachers, a demographic that has received limited empirical attention but remains vital to national educational reform.

This study aims to address three key research questions: (1) Does organizational conscientiousness directly predict organizational commitment among Iraqi physical education teachers? (2) Does organizational conscientiousness directly affect their turnover intention? (3) Does organizational commitment mediate the relationship between conscientiousness and turnover intention?

Methods and Materials

The present study is a descriptive-correlational research based on structural equation modeling and is categorized as applied research in terms of its objective. The statistical population included all physical education teachers across Iraq, totaling 25,642 individuals. Considering the wide distribution of physical education teachers throughout Iraq, a sample of 384 teachers was selected using a multi-stage cluster random sampling method. Specifically, the cities of Samarra in the north, Baghdad in the center, Basra in the south, Al-Anbar in the west, and Baqubah in the east of Iraq were chosen. From these five cities, 384 physical education teachers were selected through a multi-stage cluster approach. The participants completed the questionnaires in either printed or electronic form.

In this study, standardized questionnaires were used to assess organizational conscientiousness, the tendency to leave the service, and organizational commitment.

1. **Organizational Conscientiousness Questionnaire**: This questionnaire was developed and validated by Naeimi (2013). It consists of 20 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," scored from 1 to 5, respectively.

2. **Tendency to Leave the Service Questionnaire**: The Job Leaving Questionnaire was designed and validated by Moghimi (2010). It comprises 9 close-ended items, measured using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire includes two dimensions: the sense of functioning within the organization and the decision to leave the organization.

3. **Organizational Commitment Questionnaire**: To assess organizational commitment, the 24-item questionnaire developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was employed. This questionnaire also uses a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, multiple regression analysis, and structural equation modeling. All computations were performed using PLS and SPSS software.

Findings and Results

Initially, the demographic characteristics of the Iraqi physical education teachers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Physical Education Teachers in Iraq

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
20–30 years	78	20%
31–40 years	127	33%
41–50 years	92	24%
51–60 years	87	23%
Gender		
Female	168	44%
Male	216	56%
Educational Level		
Bachelor's Degree	165	42%
Master's Degree	192	50%
Doctorate	27	8%

As shown in Table 1, female teachers made up 44% of the sample. The age group with the lowest number of participants was the 20–30-year range, and those with doctoral degrees comprised the smallest group of respondents.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the main research variables.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Organizational Conscientiousness	72.19	7.28	45	92
Tendency to Leave the Service	29.13	3.62	17	39
Organizational Commitment	68.92	5.74	47	108

According to Table 2, the overall mean score for organizational conscientiousness was 72.19, for the tendency to leave the service was 29.13, and for organizational commitment was 68.92.

The relationships between the variables examined in each of the research hypotheses were tested using a causal structure via the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique. The relationships between the main research variables are presented below. The t statistic is reported to assess the significance of the relationships.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Organizational conscientiousness affects the organizational commitment of Iraqi physical education teachers.
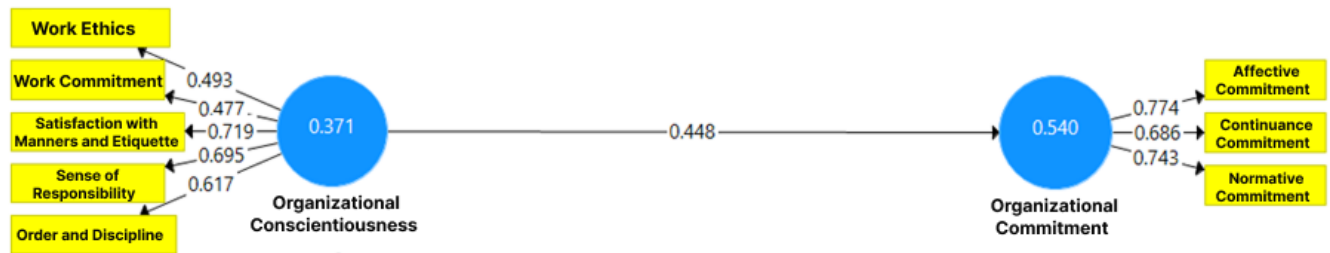

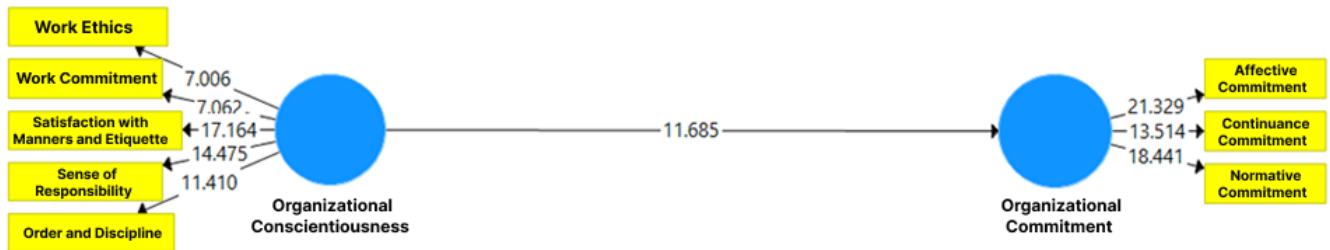**Figure 1. Standardized Coefficients for Hypothesis 1**

Figure 2. Significance Coefficients (z-values) and Explained Variance for Hypothesis 1

Table 3. Path Coefficients for Hypothesis 1

Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	Significance Level (p-value)
Organizational Commitment ← Organizational Conscientiousness	0.448	11.685	0.000

The path coefficient (β = 0.448) indicates that organizational conscientiousness has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment. The *t*-value of 11.685, which is greater than 1.96, confirms the significance of the relationship. The *p*-value of 0.000 (< 0.05) supports the confirmation of the hypothesis. Moreover, the R^2 value is 20.07%, meaning that 20.07% of the variance in organizational commitment is explained by organizational conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Organizational conscientiousness affects the tendency to leave the service among Iraqi physical education teachers.
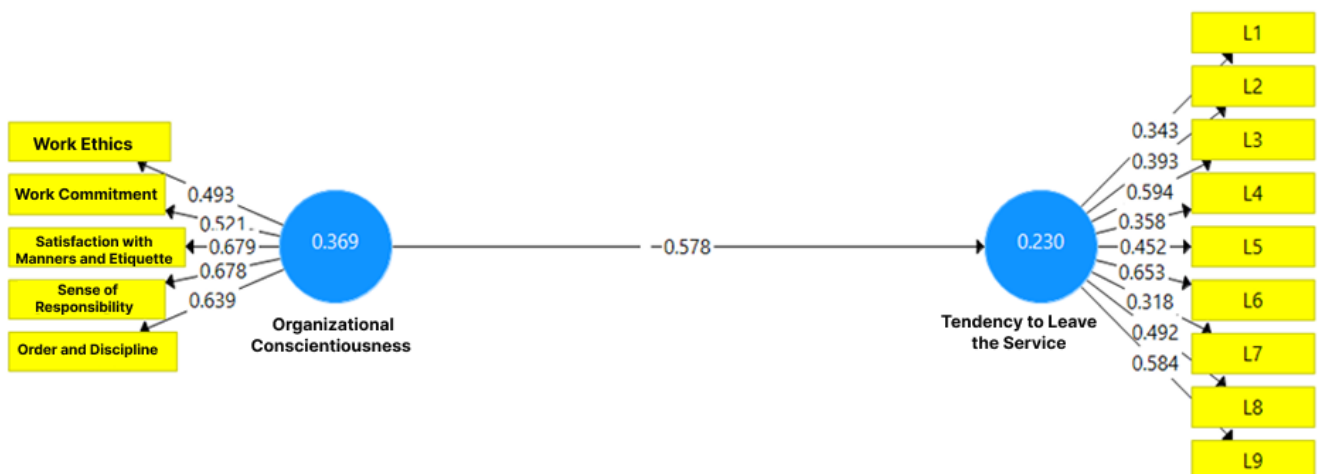

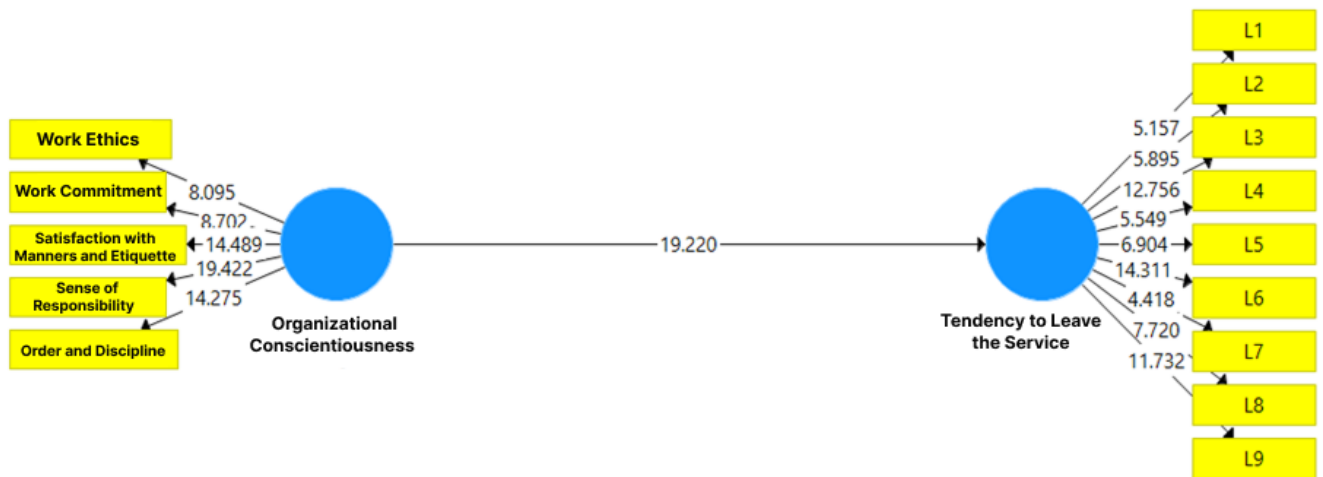**Figure 3. Standardized Coefficients for Hypothesis 2**

Figure 4. Significance Coefficients (z-values) and Explained Variance for Hypothesis 2

Table 4. Path Coefficients for Hypothesis 2

Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	Significance Level (p-value)
Tendency to Leave the Service ← Organizational Conscientiousness	-0.578	19.220	0.000

The path coefficient ($\beta = -0.578$) indicates that organizational conscientiousness has a negative and significant effect on the tendency to leave the service. The *t*-value of 19.220, which is greater than 1.96, confirms the significance of the relationship. The *p*-value of 0.000 (< 0.05) confirms the hypothesis. The R^2 value is 33.40%, meaning that 33.40% of the variance in the tendency to leave the service is explained by organizational conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Organizational commitment affects the tendency to leave the service among Iraqi physical education teachers.
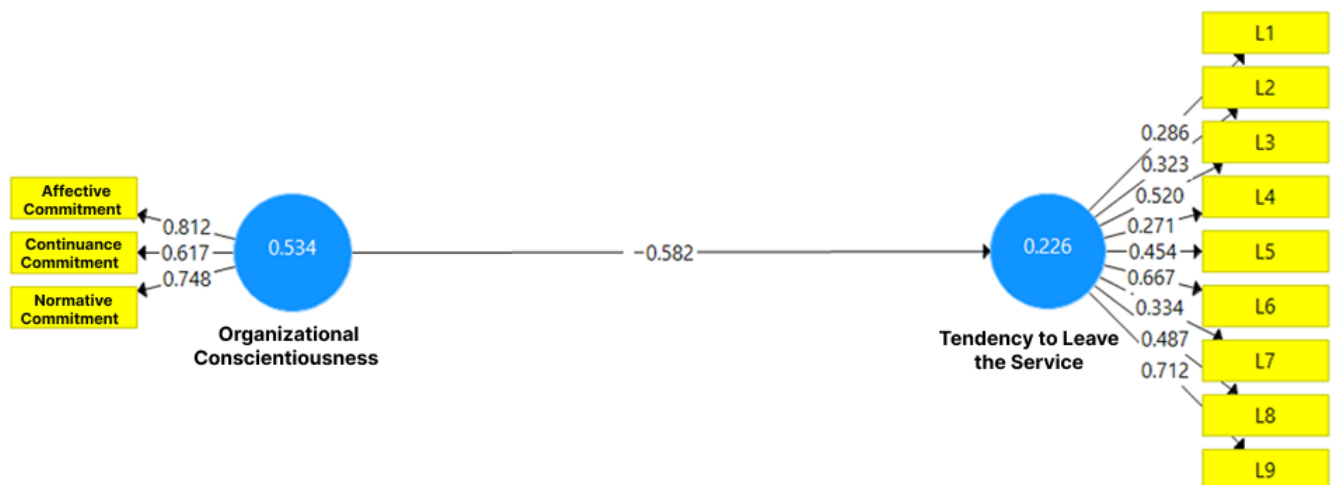

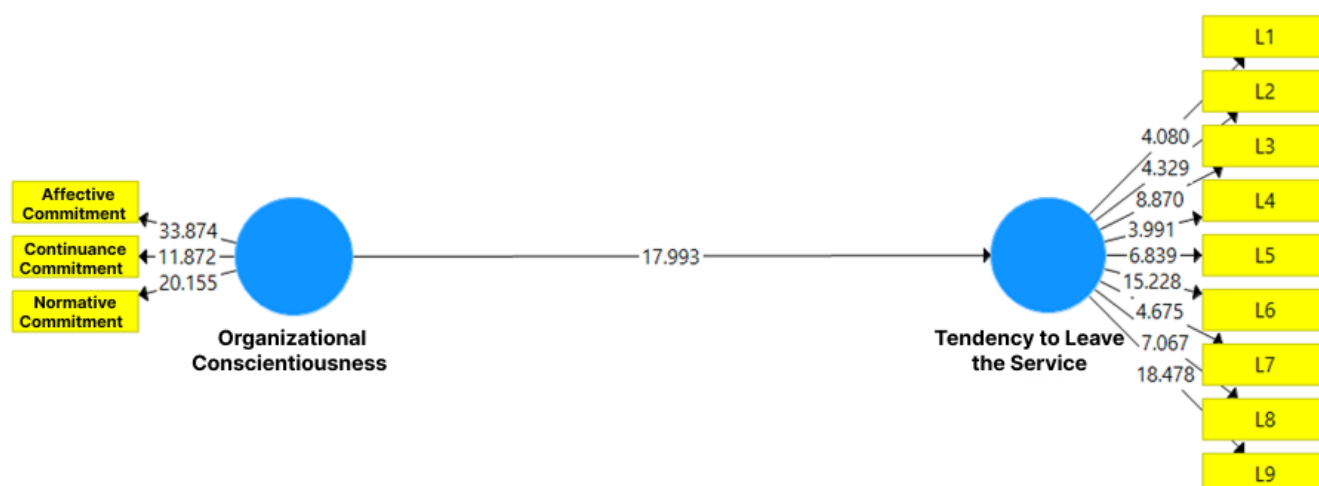**Figure 5. Standardized Coefficients for Hypothesis 3**

Figure 6. Significance Coefficients (z-values) and Explained Variance for Hypothesis 3

Table 5. Path Coefficients for Hypothesis 3

Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	Significance Level (p-value)
Tendency to Leave the Service ← Organizational Commitment	-0.582	17.993	0.000

The path coefficient (β = -0.582) indicates that organizational commitment has a negative and significant effect on the tendency to leave the service. The *t*-value of 17.993, which is greater than 1.96, confirms the significance of the relationship. The *p*-value of 0.000 (< 0.05) confirms the hypothesis. The R² value is 33.87%, meaning that 33.87% of the variance in the tendency to leave the service is explained by organizational commitment.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of organizational conscientiousness on turnover intention among Iraqi physical education teachers and to examine the mediating role of organizational commitment in this relationship. The structural equation modeling analysis revealed three key findings: first, that organizational conscientiousness positively and significantly predicts organizational commitment; second, that organizational conscientiousness negatively predicts turnover intention; and third, that organizational commitment negatively predicts turnover intention and mediates the relationship between conscientiousness and the intention to leave the profession.

The first hypothesis was confirmed, demonstrating a statistically significant positive relationship between organizational conscientiousness and organizational commitment among physical education teachers in Iraq. This finding is consistent with previous research that underscores the role of conscientiousness in fostering loyalty, emotional attachment, and normative responsibility toward the organization (1, 2). Individuals with high conscientiousness often exhibit characteristics such as self-discipline, persistence, and a sense of duty, which naturally align with the dimensions of organizational commitment—particularly affective and normative components (3). Conscientious teachers are more likely to internalize institutional values, establish goal congruence with their organizations, and perceive their roles as meaningful and integral to institutional success (14). This alignment between personal ethics and institutional expectations strengthens organizational commitment, as confirmed in other educational and public sector studies (15, 18).

The second finding indicated a negative and statistically significant relationship between organizational conscientiousness and turnover intention. Teachers with higher conscientiousness scores were less likely to express the desire to leave their

positions. This is in line with studies asserting that conscientious employees possess a proactive work orientation and long-term organizational vision that buffers against withdrawal behaviors (7, 13). Conscientiousness influences not only task performance but also job satisfaction and resilience in the face of organizational stress, thereby reducing the likelihood of disengagement or voluntary resignation (4, 19). In the context of Iraq, where systemic challenges such as resource shortages, administrative instability, and limited professional growth are prevalent, conscientious teachers may be more likely to remain committed due to their intrinsic motivation and sense of professional integrity (5, 9).

The third hypothesis was also supported, confirming that organizational commitment negatively predicts turnover intention and mediates the relationship between organizational conscientiousness and the desire to leave the job. This mediating effect suggests that conscientious teachers develop stronger emotional and normative bonds with their institutions, which in turn reduces their likelihood of exiting. This result corroborates earlier studies that have emphasized the mediating role of organizational commitment in employee retention frameworks (12, 17). For example, (10) found that organizational commitment significantly mediated the effects of internal organizational practices and staff competencies on turnover intention in regional government bodies. Similarly, (11) emphasized that employees who experience a strong sense of moral commitment—often rooted in conscientious tendencies—show increased organizational loyalty and decreased turnover intent.

From a psychological standpoint, organizational commitment provides a cognitive-emotional platform through which employees rationalize their continued association with an organization, even when external or contextual challenges persist (23, 27). This is especially important in collectivist and high-context cultures such as Iraq, where social loyalty and ethical duty are deeply embedded in professional identity. Conscientious individuals in such settings may be more susceptible to developing normative commitment, which reflects a moral obligation to remain employed due to a sense of duty or ethical alignment with organizational values (22, 24). These dynamics were visible in the current study's findings, where both direct and indirect paths from conscientiousness to turnover intention were significant.

Furthermore, the strength of the indirect path suggests that organizational interventions aimed at enhancing commitment—such as recognition, ethical climate building, and meaningful task allocation—may amplify the natural retention tendencies of conscientious employees (8, 16). This implication is supported by (25), who found that organizational support and perceived justice reinforce the relationship between emotional intelligence (a correlate of conscientiousness) and reduced turnover. This study's findings are therefore aligned with a growing body of literature that calls for integrated models of employee retention that account for both personality traits and organizational climate variables.

The demographic and contextual specificity of the study also deserves attention. Physical education teachers in Iraq face a unique array of challenges, including marginalization within school hierarchies, inconsistent funding, and low societal recognition. These contextual stressors make the retention of committed educators more critical. When these teachers possess high levels of conscientiousness, their commitment becomes a strategic asset for institutional resilience. This supports the proposition by (26) that organizational commitment contributes not only to individual well-being but also to collective productivity and institutional stability.

Moreover, generational perspectives offer further insight. A significant proportion of the participants in this study belong to the younger segments of the workforce—primarily Generation Z and Millennials—who value psychological alignment, ethical leadership, and purposeful engagement more than older cohorts (14, 21). Conscientiousness may thus serve as a key bridge between individual personality and institutional design for this cohort. When organizational systems nurture this trait through policies, mentorship, and empowerment structures, they can expect higher levels of commitment and lower turnover.

Collectively, these findings provide robust empirical support for the theoretical model tested in this study. They affirm the centrality of conscientiousness as a predictor of organizational commitment, as well as the mediating role of commitment in

buffering against turnover intentions. The evidence aligns with prior research in various sectors and cultural settings, reinforcing the model's external validity and theoretical robustness.

Despite the strength of its findings, the present study has several limitations. First, it relied on self-report questionnaires, which are susceptible to social desirability bias and may not fully capture the nuances of teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data prevents causal inferences from being drawn. While structural equation modeling provides insight into potential pathways, longitudinal studies would offer stronger evidence of causality. Third, the sample was drawn exclusively from physical education teachers in Iraq, which limits the generalizability of findings to other subject areas, professions, or cultural settings. Finally, the study did not explore potential moderating variables such as gender, tenure, school location (urban vs. rural), or leadership style, which could further illuminate the complex dynamics involved in turnover intention.

Future studies should consider longitudinal research designs to examine how organizational conscientiousness and commitment evolve over time and in response to institutional changes. Researchers could also explore comparative studies across different disciplines (e.g., science teachers, administrators) to determine whether the findings hold across various educational contexts. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups would help capture deeper insights into the lived experiences of conscientious teachers and their organizational challenges. Finally, future research could investigate the potential moderating roles of leadership style, perceived organizational support, or work-life balance in the conscientiousness–commitment–turnover relationship.

School administrators and policymakers in Iraq should prioritize cultivating a workplace environment that encourages and rewards conscientious behavior. This includes creating structured professional development programs that emphasize ethical responsibility, discipline, and goal alignment. Institutions should also implement systems of recognition and feedback that reinforce commitment and loyalty, especially among high-performing teachers. Additionally, fostering an ethical climate through transparent policies, fair treatment, and supportive leadership can further strengthen organizational attachment and reduce the risk of turnover. Finally, HR managers should incorporate conscientiousness assessments into recruitment and training processes to ensure the long-term alignment between individual attributes and institutional needs.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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