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SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW • BIBLIOMETRIC MAPPING

UNPACKING THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT–ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT NEXUS



Directionality, mechanisms, and conceptual structure

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ROADMAP

OUR RESEARCH JOURNEY

1

BACKGROUND & GAP

Why the direction of EE–OC is unresolved

2

METHOD

Scopus search, PRISMA 2020, VOSviewer, full-text coding

3

LANDSCAPE

Publication patterns and conceptual structure

4

DIRECTIONALITY & MECHANISMS

17 : 17 split, mediators, moderators

5

AGENDA & CONCLUSION

Research priorities and takeaways



Why engagement and commitment?



Employee Engagement

Psychological investment in work, operationalized as employee, work, or job engagement.



Organizational Commitment

Attachment to the employer: affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

A correlation does not give a direction

EE → OC	Engagement precedes commitment
OC → EE	Commitment precedes engagement
EE ← Z → OC	Both follow from common conditions



Gap and Contribution

Prior Reviews

- **Kim et al. (2017)** identified competing models in empirical research.
- **Saini (2025)** mapped the joint literature bibliometrically.

This Review

Integrates macro-level knowledge structures with full-text evidence on:

- **Directionality**
- **Mediators and Moderators**
- **Contextual Conditions**

A path modeled with cross-sectional data must not be read as evidence of temporal or causal precedence.



Six research questions

RQ1
Publication patterns

Growth, geography, institutions

RQ2
Intellectual foundations

What the field draws on

RQ3
Conceptual themes

How the topic clusters

RQ4
Modeled directionality

EE → OC, OC → EE, or both

EE

OC

RQ5
Mechanisms, boundaries

Mediators, moderators, context

RQ6
Gaps and priorities

Where future research should go



Design and Search Strategy

Search Strategy

Database

Scopus, searched on 2 October 2026, no year limit.

Query Logic

Engagement or commitment terms in the title; engagement–commitment within five words in the abstract.

Filters

English-language journal articles, final stage, Publisher Full Gold Open Access.

Reporting

PRISMA 2020 with adapted PICO eligibility criteria.



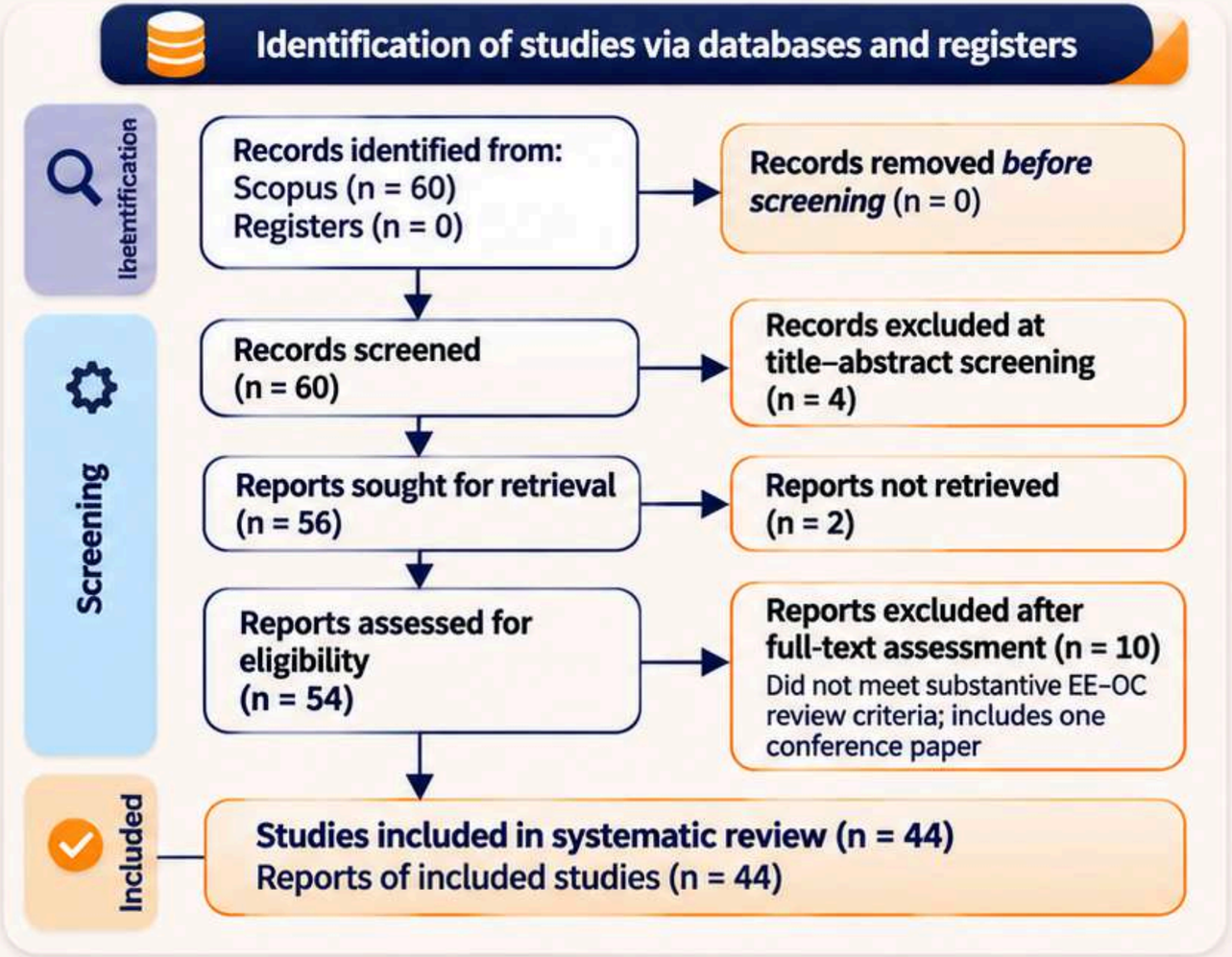
Eligibility (adapted PICO)



- **P** — Employees and other organizational members
- **I** — Employee, work, or job engagement
- **C** — Optional comparison
- **O** — Organizational commitment or its dimensions

Only primary empirical studies on the EE–OC relationship were eligible.

Screening: 60 Records to 44 Studies



60 | records screened

4 | excluded at title–abstract

2 | reports not retrieved in full

10 | excluded after full-text review

44 studies in the synthesis; all 60 records support the bibliometrics.

Two Analytical Lenses

Bibliometric Mapping (n = 60)

Scopus analytics + VOSviewer 1.6.21

278 / 278	Keyword co-occurrence
111 / 3,497	Co-citation (≥ 2 citations)
60 / 60	Bibliographic coupling

Full-text Coding (n = 44)

Primary direction codes

D1	Engagement → commitment
D2	Commitment → engagement
D3	Explicit reciprocal
D4	Correlational / non-directional
D5	Primarily indirect / mechanism-based



Statistical model direction is **kept distinct from temporal or causal inference.** Mediation and moderation were coded **separately from direction.**



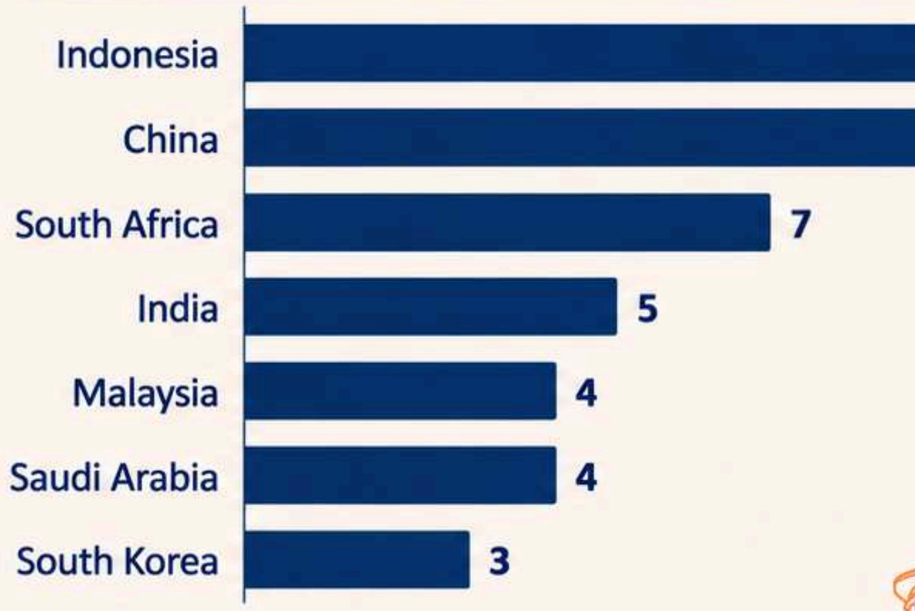
Publication Landscape (RQ1)

60 Scopus records, 2011–2026

88.3% published from 2019 onward (53 records)

19.4% in Business, Management and Accounting, the largest subject area

Publications by Country



Counts show publication distribution, not citation influence. 2026 is an incomplete year (5 records).

Conceptual Structure (RQ2–RQ3)

Leading Focal Keywords

Term	Occurrences	TLS
Organizational commitment	35	308
Work engagement	31	359
Employee engagement	18	106

TLS = total link strength. It measures network connectedness, not effect strength or causal importance.

Four Recurring Explanatory Logics

- Resources and motivation
- Social exchange and relational processes
- Organizational attachment
- Broader affective–attitudinal systems

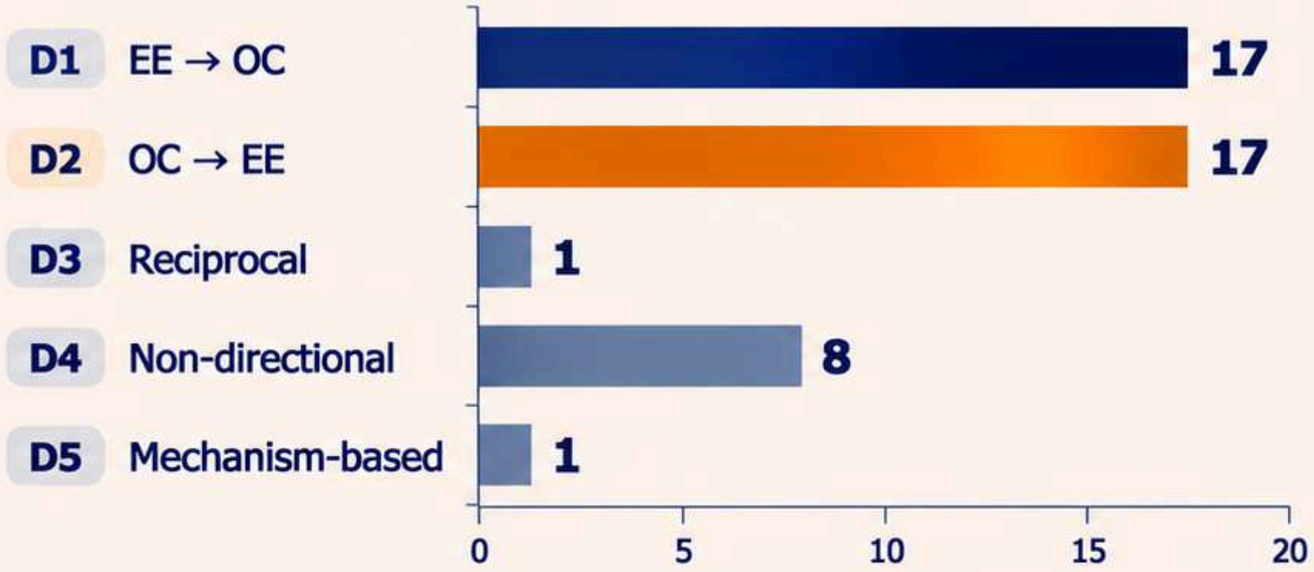
Coexistence of these logics does not imply consensus on EE–OC direction.

All 278 keywords retained, including generic indexing terms; clusters are exploratory themes.

Directionality: a 17 : 17 Split

Primary Modeled Direction in 44 Studies

(Number of Studies)



17 studies (38.6%) model engagement upstream of commitment

17 studies (38.6%) model the reverse direction

Plus 8 non-directional, 1 reciprocal, 1 mechanism-based

The evidence shows a **balanced split**: EE → OC (17 studies) and OC → EE (17 studies), with additional non-directional (8), reciprocal (1), and mechanism-based (1) models.

What the Counts Do Not Show

What the Split Reflects

- Competing theoretical specifications of the EE–OC link
- Primary modeled direction in each study
- Some longitudinal evidence (Yalabik et al., 2013), but cross-sectional path models remain prominent

What it Does Not Establish

- Temporal precedence
- Causal effects or equal effect sizes
- Reciprocity: D3 required both directions to be modeled explicitly

Example: Tang et al. (2022), cross-sectional data from Chinese clinical nurses, informs the association but not the ordering.

Mechanisms and Boundary Conditions

Study	Empirical Pathway	Role in Model
Nagalingam et al. (2019)	Emotional intelligence → WE → OC	WE mediates toward OC
Cao et al. (2019)	Calling → OC → WE	OC mediates toward WE
Zhang et al. (2024)	Leadership → calling → affective OC → WE	Sequential mediation
Duong et al. (2025)	WE → OC, conditioned by support	Direct EE–OC moderation
Mohaimen et al. (2025)	WE → turnover intention, conditioned by OC	Downstream moderation only

WE = work engagement; OC = organizational commitment. Selected examples, illustrative not exhaustive.

Engagement and commitment take different roles in different pathways: no single hierarchy fits.

Formal moderation tests are scarce. Group differences alone are not moderation.

Research Agenda and Limits

Research Agenda

1. Compare EE → OC and OC → EE within the same longitudinal model
2. Test reciprocal dynamics explicitly (cross-lagged designs, diary studies)
3. Compare competing mediators
4. Test boundary conditions: interaction, multigroup, multilevel, cross-cultural
5. Keep engagement and commitment operationalizations distinct

Limitations

- Single database (Scopus)
- Restrictive title/abstract proximity criterion
- English-language and Gold OA filters
- AI-assisted screening, no human double-screening
- Heterogeneity precluded meta-analytic pooling

Key Takeaways

1. A Plural Literature

60 Scopus records mapped, 44 studies synthesized. The field is expanding and draws on several intellectual traditions.

2. Two Equal Directions

17 studies model EE → OC and 17 model OC → EE. Temporal and causal ordering remain unestablished.

3. What Comes Next

Compare directions longitudinally, test reciprocity and moderation explicitly, keep constructs distinct.

Treat directionality as an empirical question, not a fixed assumption.

For practice: do not assume that raising engagement automatically raises commitment, or the reverse.