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among Basic School Teachers: The Mediating Role of Career
Commitment**



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Human Resource Development Practices and Turnover Intentions among Basic School Teachers: The Mediating Role of Career Commitment

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Abstract

Purpose: The study sought to examine the influence of perceived support for participation in human resource development (HRD) practices on teacher turnover intentions in the Tolon District of the Northern Region of Ghana.

Methodology: Using a cross-sectional survey design, questionnaires were used to collect data from 120 teachers from the Tolon Senior High School. Data were analyzed using PROCESS macro ver. 4.2.

Findings: Results from regression analysis showed that perceived support for participation in HRD practices had a negative relationship with teacher turnover intentions. It was further found that teacher career commitment mediates the negative relationship between perceived support for participation in HRD practices and turnover intentions.

Unique contribution to theory, policy and practice: The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the application of social exchange theory (SET) in understanding workplace dynamic and highlights the importance of fostering a supportive work environment that encourages employee participation in HRD activities, such as training programs, mentorship initiatives, and career development opportunities

Keywords: *Human Resources Development Practices, Career Commitment, Turnover Intentions, Social Exchange Theory, Ghana*

INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover is a pervasive challenge faced by organizations globally, impacting productivity, morale, and overall organizational success. In the realm of education, teachers serve as the bedrock of a nation's intellectual capital, shaping the future through their dedication to fostering knowledge and skills. Teacher turnover, characterized by educators contemplating or actualizing their departure from their teaching positions, has far-reaching implications for the educational landscape, disrupting continuity, and impeding the quality of learning experiences for students. As a result, the persistent challenge of turnover intentions among teachers poses a critical concern globally and particularly, in the Tolon district of Ghana (GNAT, 2009)

In spite of all the interventions and efforts by government through the Tolon Education Directorate to ensure that teachers are well motivated to discharge their duties as assigned, high attrition, with respect to the number of voluntary requests received and approved in the district has been alarming. The data in Table 1 shows that the number of approved requests yearly by the Ghana Education Service to teachers in the district. It can be observed that, there have been a periodic astronomical increase of attrition rate from 43.2% in 2017/2018 academic year to 89.4% in 2021/2022 academic year.

Despite the evident repercussions of turnover intentions and actual turnover in the Tolon district, there is a noticeable gap in research that comprehensively examines the potential mitigating strategies within this specific context. The existing body of literature often offers a global or national perspective, neglecting the district's unique challenges and opportunities. Bridging this research gap is imperative for informed decision-making and the development of tailored interventions that resonate with the realities of teachers in the Tolon district. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining the mediating role of career commitment in the relationship between perceived support for participation in HRD practices and turnover intentions among teachers in the Tolon district of Ghana.

Table 1. Attrition Trends of Teachers from 2018 - 2022

Academic year	No. of Request	No. Approved	Percentage (%) approved
2017/2018	287	124	43.2
2018/2019	243	108	44.4
2019/2020	201	118	58.7
2020/2021	195	172	88.2
2021/2022	368	329	89.4

Source: District Education Office – Tolon, 2022

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Social Exchange Theory and Perceived Support for Participation in Human Resource Development Practices

The fundamental principles of the social exchange theory (SET) within a workplace setting propose that employees make decisions within a socio-economic system based on contextual value. In this system, a stimulus that rewards an employee with currencies of contextual value becomes part of an interdependent cycle of repetition (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kahn, 2010). Essentially, SET functions as a reciprocity-based value system. The foundational assumptions of SET suggest that (a) relationships with others and organizational systems are mutually dependent and (b) existing within a context involves a relational process (Emerson, 1976). Furthermore, SET argues that "obligations [in the context of work] arise through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence" (Saks, 2006, p. 603). Recently, SET has found fruitful application in other research related to Human Resource Development (HRD) (e.g. Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Shuck, Twyford, Reio Jr, and Shuck, 2014; Fulmore, Fulmore, Mull, and Cooper, 2023). with regards to the current study, it is expected that employees who believe they are supported in an organizational context, specifically, when they perceive support for participation in HRD practices would report higher levels of career commitment and subsequently reduced turnover intentions

Perceived Support for Participation in Human Resource Development Practices, Turnover Intentions and Career Commitment

As organizations strive to retain their talent, the role of Human Resource Development (HRD) practices becomes crucial. This essay explores the intricate relationship between HRD practices and turnover intentions, examining how strategic initiatives can positively influence employee retention. HRD practices encompass a spectrum of strategies aimed at enhancing employee skills, knowledge, and overall job satisfaction. These practices may involve training and development, continuous development opportunities, performance management and guidance and counselling. Training and development programs are fundamental components of HRD.

Organizations investing in continuous learning opportunities empower their employees with new skills and knowledge, directly impacting job satisfaction and commitment. A well-trained workforce is more likely to feel engaged and fulfilled, reducing the likelihood of turnover. (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Noe, 2016).

Effective performance management is a cornerstone of HRD practices. Providing constructive feedback, recognizing achievements, and aligning individual goals with organizational objectives contribute to a positive work environment. Employees who feel valued and acknowledged are more likely to exhibit commitment to their roles and are less inclined to entertain thoughts of leaving. (Aguinis, 2019).

Clear career paths and opportunities for advancement play a crucial role in shaping employee commitment. Organizations that actively promote internal promotions and provide avenues for career growth tend to witness lower turnover rates. Employees are more likely to stay when they perceive a future within the organization. (Ayee and Tan, 1992).

Mentorship and coaching programs contribute significantly to professional and personal development. Positive mentorship experiences are linked to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions. Guidance from experienced mentors fosters a sense of support and belonging, encouraging employees to invest in their long-term relationship with the organization. (Craig, Allen, Reid, Riemenschneider, and Armstrong, 2013; Kim and Hwang, 2015)

The mediating role of Career Commitment

Career commitment refers to the psychological attachment and dedication an individual feels towards their chosen career path and the organization (Lin, 2020; Rasheed et al., 2020). This study examines career commitment as a crucial mediator that influences the relationship between perceived support for HRD practices and turnover intentions. It seeks to unravel the mechanisms through which career commitment acts as a bridge between perceived support and employees' intentions to stay or leave. Empirical evidence suggests a positive correlation between perceived support for HRD practices and career commitment. Employees who feel supported in their professional development are more likely to demonstrate heightened levels of commitment to their careers and the organization. Career commitment serves as a protective factor against turnover intentions (Rasheed et al., 2020). Employees who are deeply committed to their careers and perceive strong support for their development needs are less likely to entertain thoughts of leaving the organization, contributing to higher retention rates (Kurniawaty et al., 2019). Understanding the mediating role of career commitment has profound implications for organizational practices. Organizations can strategically enhance career commitment by fostering a supportive HRD environment, thereby indirectly mitigating turnover intentions (Zhu et al., 2019). This study underscores the pivotal role of career commitment as a mediator in the relationship between perceived support for HRD practices and turnover intentions. Organizations that strategically cultivate career commitment through robust HRD support are likely to experience higher employee retention, highlighting the interconnectedness of these critical factors in the workplace.

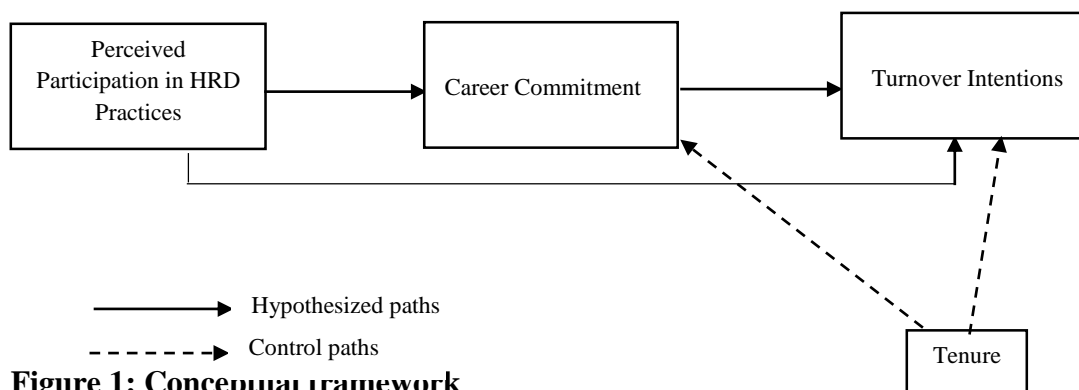


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

As earlier indicated in this study, the Tolon District has experienced an increasing trend in teacher attrition rate from 2018 (287 requested, 124 approved) to 2022 (368 requested, 329 approved). The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. Using the list of teachers obtained from the District Directorate of Education in the Tolon District, in the Northern region of Ghana. The list showed a total of 1160 teachers in the district. With an expected response rate of 25%, 300 teachers were randomly selected for the study. Questionnaires were hand delivered to the identified teachers and respondents were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 140 were returned. Out of the 140 returned questionnaires, 20 were deemed not usable as most of the items in the questionnaire were missing. Subsequently, 120 questionnaires were used for the final analysis, showing a 40% response rate.

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the respondents used the study. Majority of the respondents 76(63%) were males while 44(37%) of the respondents were females. In terms of age, most of the respondents, 42(35%) were between 21-30 years, while few, 18 (15%) between 31-40 years. The data further showed that most, 58(48%) of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree. Most, 38(32%) of the respondents had had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience.

Table 2: Demographic characteristic of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	76	63
Female	44	37
<i>Age</i>		
21-30	18	15
31-40	42	35
41-50	34	28
51 and above	26	22
<i>Academic Qualification</i>		
Diploma	36	30
Bachelor's Degree	58	48
Master's Degree	26	22
<i>Teaching Experience</i>		
1-5 years	29	24
6-10 years	38	32
11-15 years	31	26
16 years & above	22	18
Total	120	100

Since data were collected from respondents at one point in time, common method bias (CMB) was of concern for this study. Following the recommendations by (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), three competing models were tested to assess common method bias. Model 1 involved a method only, where all indicators were loaded on a single latent factor. The model obtained the following fit indices: χ^2 (df) = 941.490(170); NNFI = .567; CFI = .611; RMSEA = .195). In model 2, a trait-only CFA model, where indicators were loaded on their respective latent factor was estimated. This model obtained the following fit indices: χ^2 (df) = 205.940(167); NNFI = .905; CFI = .980; RMSEA = .044; SRMR = .044). Model 3 involved a method-and-trait model where model 1 and model 2 were estimated together. The model yielded the following fit indices: χ^2 (df) = 205.940(166); NNFI = .905; CFI = .980; RMSEA = .045; SRMR = .044). A comparison of the three models shows that model 2 and 3 were superior to model 1 and that model 3 is not better than model 2 (there were no significant differences between the χ^2 values), suggesting that, common method bias was not of maximum concern for this study.

Measurement

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual teacher and all constructs are measured at the individual level. A seven-point Likert-type scale was used to measure perceived support for participation in HRD practices, career commitment, and turnover intentions (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). *Perceived support for participation in HRD practices* was measured using the 9-item Perceived Investment in Employee Development (PIED) scale developed by Lee and Bruvold (2003). Sample items on the scale are: (1) 'My organization trains employees on skills that prepare them for future jobs and career development'; (2) 'My organization allows employees to have the time to learn new skills that prepare them for future jobs'; and (3) 'My organization provides a systematic program that regularly assesses employees' skills and interests'. The Cronbach alpha for this scale is .952

The 8-item measure developed by Blau (1989) was used for measuring *career commitment*. Sample items on the scale are (1) 'If I could get another job different from being a teacher and paying the same amount, I would probably take it'; (2) 'If I could do it all over again, I would not choose to work in the teaching profession; and (3) 'I am disappointed that I ever entered the teaching profession (reverse-scored)'. The alpha coefficient for this scale was .940.

The measure for *turnover intentions* was based on the three-item job withdrawal cognition scale developed by Mobley et al. (1979), but using the word 'profession' as a referent instead of 'job'. The three items include: (1) thinking about leaving the teaching profession; (2) intention to look for a different profession; and (3) intention to stay in the teaching profession for some time (reverse-scored). The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .887

Tenure which was measured with the number of years of teaching experience was used as a control variable. Tenure been found to influence both employee commitment and turnover intentions. Tenure was measured as one-item variable ranging from (1 = 1 – 5 years; 4 = 16 years and above)

Reliability and Construct Validity

The study used SPSS 27.0 and AMOS 23.0 to perform a confirmatory factor analysis to test the reliability and validity of the constructs. Following the recommendations by Wittmann (2005) and Hair et al. (2019) multiple indices were used to assess the fit of each model. The criteria for the model fit included the χ^2 -test assessing exact model fit, the normed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean residual (SRMR) were used in assessing approximate model fit because each provides information about specific aspects of model fit. When a model fully captures the data from a sample population, the CFI is expected to have a value of 1.0, NNFI is expected to be equal to .50, and the RMSEA and the SRMR a value of 0.0. Although it is difficult to establish standards for such indices, a value of .90 or higher for the CFI, an NNFI value of .90 or higher for, a value of .08 or lower for the RMSEA, and a value of .10 or lower for the SRMR are generally said to indicate adequate fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Weston & Gore, 2006). The values of the fit indices indicate an adequate fit for the measurement model χ^2 (df) = 205.940(167); χ^2 /df = 1.233, NNFI = .905; CFI = .980; RMSEA = .044; SRMR = .044).

Furthermore, composite reliability scores of the constructs ranged between .789 and .989 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), and average variance extracted (AVE) values of the constructs ranged between .667 and .743, thereby exceeding minimum requirements of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2011). Discriminant validity is good if the squared correlation between any two constructs is less than the AVE for each value. The study found that no squared correlation was higher than the AVE of each construct, providing support for discriminant validity. Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged between .887 and .952 showing acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Table 3 shows the summary for the item loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted and Cronbach alpha.

Table 3: Construct Validity and Reliability

Constructs, details of measures, and validity results (t-values)	Standardized factor loadings (t-values)
<i>Perceived participation in HRD practices, $\alpha = .952$; CR = .893; AVE = .690</i>	
My employers train employees on skills that prepare them for future jobs and career development.	.919 (13.553)
My employers provide career counselling and planning assistance to employees	.862 (12.082)
My employers allow employees to have the time to learn new skills that prepare them for future jobs	.879 (12.503)
My employers provide support when employees decide to obtain ongoing training	.830 (11.353)
My employers are receptive to employees' requests for transfers	.693 (8.671)
My employers ensures that employees can expect confidentiality when consulting staff	.835 (11.452)
My employers provide employees with information on the availability of job openings within the service	.801 (10.717)
My employers are fully supportive of a career-management program for the employees	.805 (10.803)
My employers provide a systematic program that regularly assesses employees' skills and interests.	.837 (fixed to 1)
<i>Career commitment, $\alpha = .940$; CR = .989; AVE = .667</i>	
If I could get another job different from being a teacher and paying the same amount	.914 (9.731)
I definitely want a career for myself in teaching	.907 (9.659)
If I could do it all over again, I would not choose to work in the teaching profession	.773 (8.236)
If I had all the money, I needed without working, I would probably still continue to work in the nursing profession	.853 (9.092)
I like this vocation too well to give it up	.849 (9.045)
This is the ideal vocation for a life work	.744 (7.935)
I am disappointed that I ever entered the teaching profession	.761 (8.105)
I spend a significant amount of personal time reading teaching-related journals or book	.709 (fixed to 1)
<i>Turnover intentions, $\alpha = .887$; CR = .789; AVE = .743</i>	
I think about leaving the teaching profession	.888 (12.247)
I have intentions to look for a different profession	.814 (10.984)
I have intentions to stay in the teaching profession for some time	.883 (fixed to 1)
Fit indices: $\chi^2 (df) = 205.940(167)$; $p < .05$; NNFI = .905; CFI = .980; RMSEA = .044; SRMR = .044	

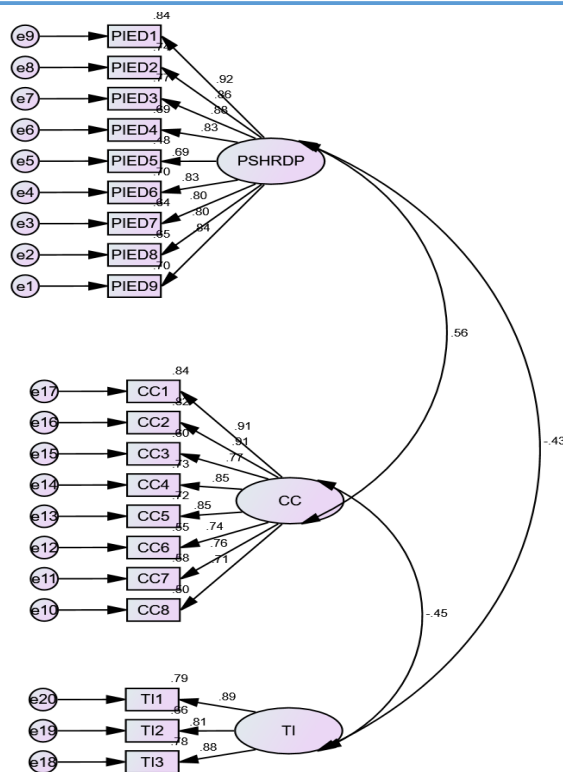


Figure 2: Measurement Model: χ^2 (df) = 205.940(167); χ^2/df = 1.233, NNFI = .905; CFI = .980; RMSEA = .044; SRMR = .044).

RESULTS

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables used in the study. Pearson's correlations revealed the correlation between all variables except for the relationship between tenure and career commitment to be significant

The hypothesis for the study was tested using Model 4 in Hayes PROCESS macro. As presented in Table 5, perceived support for participation in HRD practices is positively related with career commitment [Beta = .317, 95% CI: (.149,.484), $p < .001$]. On the other hand, career commitment related negatively with turnover intentions [Beta = -.223, 95% CI: (-.419, -.028), $p < .05$]. perceived support for participation in HRD practices also related negatively with turnover intentions [Beta = -.312, 95% CI: (-.501, -.124), $p < .05$]. Moreover, the findings demonstrated a significant indirect effect of perceived support for participation in HRD practices on turnover intentions through career commitment [Beta = -.071, 95% CI: (-.197, -.004)], providing support for the mediation hypothesis.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Tenure	-			
2. PSHRDP	.234*	-		
3. CC	.166	.353**	-	
4. TI	-.203*	-.391**	-.323**	-
Mean	2.300	3.960	3.988	3.922
SD	.692	.949	.904	1.001

N = 120

Note. PSHRDP = Perceived Support for Human Resource Development Practices, CC = Career Commitment, TI = Turnover Intentions, ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

Table 5: Regression Analysis (*N* = 120)

	Beta	SE	t	<i>p</i>	95% Bootstrap	
					LLCI	ULCI
Model 1: <i>M</i> on <i>IV</i>						
<i>Plus control variable:</i>						
Constant	2.580	.343	7.580	.000	1.901	3.258
Tenure	.067	.067	.998	.321	-.066	.200
PSHRDP	.317**	.084	3.751	.000	.149	.484
$R^2 = .132$, $MSE = .722$, $F(2,117) = 8.896$, $p = .000$						
Model 2: Model 1: <i>DV</i> on <i>M</i> and <i>IV</i>						
<i>Plus control variable</i>						
Constant	6.244	.445	14.019	.000	5.362	7.126
Tenure	-.084	.072	-1.170	.244	-.227	.058
PSHRDP	-.312*	.095	-3.278	.001	-.501	-.124
CC	-.223*	.099	-2.265	.025	-.419	-.028
$R^2 = .201$, $MSE = .821$, $F(3,116) = 9.744$, $p = .000$						
Indirect effect of PSHDRP on TI						
PSHRDP → CC → TI	-.071	.051			-.197	-.004
Total effect of PSHDRP on TI						
PSHRDP → TI	-.362	.092	-4.182	.000	-.565	-.202

Note. *N* = 120; Beta = Standardised Coefficients, SE = Standard Error; LLCI = Lower-Level Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper-Level Confidence Interval; ** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$ (two tailed); PSHRDP = Perceived Support for participation in Human Resource Development Practices, CC = Career Commitment, TI = Turnover Intentions, DV = Dependent Variable, IV = Independent Variable.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

This study developed a mediation model to test the underlying mechanism through which perceived support for participation in HRD influences teacher turnover intentions. The findings from this study suggests perceived support for participation in HRD practices and turnover intentions are negatively related (Hypothesis 1) and this negative relationship is mediated by career commitment (Hypothesis 2). Employees who reported feeling support for their career development, who received guidance on their career development, and who had access to learning and development opportunities were also less likely to report turnover intentions. The significant negative relationship between perceived support for participation in HRD practices and turnover intentions found in this study corroborates the findings by (Shuck et al., 2014; Fulmore et al. 2023). This empirical observation not only validates the importance of organizational support systems in nurturing employee retention but also highlights the pivotal role of career development initiatives in fostering a sense of commitment and loyalty among employees. Results further indicated significant relationships among perceived support for participation in HRD practices, career commitment and turnover intentions. The study's findings align with social exchange theory, emphasizing the reciprocity of positive workplace experiences and employee commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The mediating role of career commitment underscores the importance of personal investment and identification with one's career in influencing turnover intentions. This finding offers valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms shaping employee turnover intentions and the potential avenues for intervention and organizational improvement.

Aligning with the tenets of social exchange theory, the study emphasizes the reciprocal nature of positive workplace experiences and employee commitment. Drawing from the seminal work of Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), the findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive and conducive work environment that cultivates a sense of reciprocity and mutual benefit between employees and the organization. By investing in HRD practices and fostering a culture of support and development, organizations can not only enhance employee satisfaction and commitment but also mitigate turnover intentions and associated costs.

Furthermore, the mediating role of career commitment serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of personal investment and identification with one's career in influencing turnover intentions. As employees develop a strong sense of attachment and alignment with their career trajectories, they are less likely to entertain thoughts of seeking employment elsewhere. This underscores the intrinsic value of fostering a culture of career development and advancement within organizations, thereby nurturing a workforce that is not only skilled and competent but also deeply committed and engaged.

Managerial Implications

The findings from this analysis have noteworthy implications for organizations aiming to reduce turnover intentions. Investing in and enhancing perceived human resource development practices can serve as a strategic approach to not only elevate employee motivation and satisfaction (Noe, 2016) but also mitigate turnover intentions. Additionally, fostering career commitment among employees is identified as another avenue for reducing turnover intentions, as highlighted in the literature (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the findings from this study provide valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. The specific context, industry, and organizational culture can influence the generalizability of the results. Future research might explore these relationships in diverse organizational settings to enhance the external validity of the findings

CONCLUSION

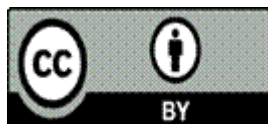
In conclusion, the regression analysis demonstrates the interplay between perceived human resource development practices, career commitment, and turnover intentions. The negative associations observed suggest that strategic investments in HRD practices and the cultivation of career commitment can serve as effective organizational strategies to mitigate turnover intentions.

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