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Work commitment systems and gender identity

THE EXPERIENCE OF TRANSGENDER AND NON-BINARY EMPLOYEES

MASTER THESIS

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Abstract

Research on work commitment occupies an important portion of management literature but still lacks depth in many aspects, including how commitment systems work and are experienced by employees. Additionally, there is little knowledge on the perspectives of minority groups such as employees with diverse gender identities, especially those beyond cis male and female. Finally, there is little to no knowledge about the role of identity in commitment systems. In the frame of an exploratory, constructivist/interpretivist study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight TGNC (transgender non-conforming) employees to unpack their unique experiences to reveal how commitment systems are experienced in such a group. Results show insight into how participants place their gender identity at the centre of their commitment systems, or at the very least assigned it high importance within their systems. For many participants, acceptance of others of their gender identity, including the correct use of pronouns and names, is a prerequisite to feeling valued and included, and consequently, being committed to their workplace, with the supervisor playing a vital role in this, also communicating this to colleagues. Management is advised to be aware of their impact and the importance of gender identity and expression thereof to TGNC employees, offering learning opportunities for the company. This study contributes, (1) to the small body of research concerning commitment systems theory (CST) by examining the complexity of commitment systems in an exploratory manner, (2) introduces the concept of gender identity to commitment studies by examining a specific group with unique gender identities and how commitment systems can potentially differ, and (3) what role gender identity plays within a commitment system.

Contents

Abstract **1**

Introduction **3**

 Research question and objectives 5

 Societal relevance 6

 Scientific relevance 7

 General outline 7

Theoretical background **8**

 Commitment systems theory 8

 Gender identities outside the norm 9

Methodology **11**

 Research design 12

 Instrumentation and conceptual validity 12

 The interview process 14

 Informants 14

 Data analysis 16

 Ethical considerations 16

Results and analysis **17**

Discussion **24**

 Implications for management 26

 Limitations 28

 Future research 28

Conclusion **30**

Appendix **37**

 Coding Scheme 37

Introduction

Work commitment, the degree of commitment towards one's workplace, employer, colleagues or other individuals or groups within the workplace, is one of the most frequently used concepts in HRM literature (e.g., Kim & Wright, 2011; Chadwick et al., 2015; Wright & Kehoe, 2008), with about 9-15% of publications centring around this topic, exploring various aspects, such as its definition, dynamics or targets (van Rossenberg et al., 2018). However, despite this extensive coverage of commitment literature, there are still significant gaps, especially concerning the study of commitment as a system, including targets other than just 'the organisation'. Furthermore, there is little insight into how particular employee groups experience commitment systems in various contexts, and the influence personal characteristics have. The current study aims to address part of this gap by drawing on commitment systems theory (CST) to analyse the commitment systems of transgender and non-binary employees, examining the unique perspectives of a stigmatised minority group.

Commitment as a concept has been defined in many ways, of which the most recent definition is the one by Klein et al. (2012), defining commitment as 'a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target' (p. 131). Here, commitment takes its place amongst three other types of bonds, which, in its entirety and proper order, are acquiescence ('perceived absence of alternatives'), instrumental ('high cost or loss at stake'), commitment ('volition, dedication, and responsibility') and identification ('merging of oneself with the target') (p. 134). Klein et al. (2014) furthermore introduced the KUT model of commitment (Klein et al., unidimensional, target-free), which proposes the study of commitment as a target-free concept. This enabled to study variations in, amongst others, commitment targets as well as individual and contextual factors, as commitment in this form had previously been studied in a work context but with no means of studying commitment to other targets, as, for example, survey questions only referred to situations in the workplace (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

The development of a target-free model stems from the revelation that an individual is not only committed to their work. Recently, a new insight has taken root. People can be committed to their families and friends, and within the broad domain of the work context, to colleagues, supervisors and clients, making 'work' no longer a single commitment target. A very important, more recent contribution here is the perspective on commitment as an interconnected network of commitments, forming a so-called commitment system (Klein et al., 2020). These commitments can have various relationships with each other (e.g. neutral, conflicting or synergistic), influencing how individuals deal with other commitments.

Klein et al.'s (2012; 2014) work on redefining commitment also gives way to a more person-centred approach to commitment research, which focuses on the 'identification of homogeneous subgroups of individuals within a population' (Kam et al., 2016, p.2), as opposed to a variable-centred approach focused on comparing groups. However, since their approach, also regarding CST, is still quite novel, not

many studies build upon their model. Klein et al. (2012) calls for the identification of 'target- or context-specific differences' (p. 145), as there is limited insight into the different ways commitment systems can develop, with regard to different contexts but also over time. One of such relevant factors that may result in a particular commitment experience is gender identity.

Many studies on commitment have been conducted without much consideration of variations in demographics, and gender differences in general have not been studied to a great degree, with little empirical evidence (Peng et al., 2009). An Indian study by Ramadoss and Rajadhyaksha (2012) inspected gender differences with regard to various types of commitment, amongst which was work commitment and its conflict with private life. Here, they found significant differences between the two genders: women reported greater work-life conflict, lesser occupational commitment, as well as less job variety than men, who reported better organisational support. However, the state of the body of literature overall is scattered, studies are contradicting and disconnected, with samples drawn from different countries, types of companies, and from varying age groups (e.g., Suki & Suki, 2011; Khalili & Asmawi, 2012; El Badawy et al., 2018; Ramadoss & Rajadhyaksha, 2012), making it impossible to draw more general conclusions across studies. Additionally, most of these studies still make use of the three-component model by Meyer and Allen (1991), which has been repeatedly criticised. This limits research in three ways, (1) disregarding how individuals experience multiple targets, also outside the working context, (2) the complexity and how these multiple commitments are experienced together, as well as (3) how these commitments might develop over time and the dynamics that are inherent to commitment systems.

Furthermore, work on gender and commitment seems to, first of all, only see it as a demographic but seldomly as main aspect of the study. Additionally, it exclusively focuses on traditional and binary gender definitions. One reason is because research on other gender terms does not exist yet for this field or has not been sufficiently explored, and thus, there is no real theoretical framework for this group of the population yet (Löwik, 2019). Transgender and non-binary individuals, usually studied in the scope of diversity and identity studies, are barely represented in management studies, and have not been considered for commitment studies at all. This topic, however, does grow more significant, especially in an organisational context. Generalisation to what is regarded as normal excludes everyone who does not fit into this category, for example employees with a different sexual orientation or gender identity (Bell et al., 2011). For the literature that does exist with regard to this demographic, it often 'conflates gender identity with sexual orientation' (Fiani & Han, 2019, p. 181). Thus, for reasons of clarity, this paper will make use of the term transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) to refer exclusively to individuals with non-conforming gender identities, and not their sexual orientation (as opposed to the term LGBTQI+¹ which refers to a much broader group).

¹Standing for 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex', with the '+' suggesting further variety.

Gender identity can be defined as 'a person's internal sense of one's own gender, as it is privately experienced in one's self-awareness of being along/outside a gender continuum' (Matsuno & Budge, 2017, p. 117), and the work environment can be especially challenging for people with gender identities that deviate from the 'norm' (i.e., male men and female women), as opposed to so-called cis-gender individuals who identify with the gender they have been assigned at birth. Inclusion programmes, however, tend to focus more on 'visible' minorities, often disregarding sexual and gender minorities (Priola et al., 2014). Research on these groups of people aims to increase awareness, but even though studies exist for this group of individuals, and increasingly so in the last decade, 'the majority of these articles [concentrate] on binary gender identities' (Matsuno & Budge, 2017, p. 116).

In order to adapt and be accepted, members of said community often have to pretend to conform to at least some aspects of societal norms (Nölke, 2018). A study by Miller and Grollman (2015) shows that transgender people experience discrimination the strongest when they display non-gender conform behaviour, i.e., when they act in line with their desired instead of their assigned gender. Non-binary individuals can experience similar issues, and even worse, be accused of pretending to have this identity because their 'gender identities are not well understood' (Knutson et al., 2019, p. 2016). If transgender and non-binary people cannot follow the social norms, i.e., traditional gender role conformity, they will be socially 'punished' (Schiller et al., 2014). This does not necessarily have to happen intentionally. Transphobia can appear in more or less severe forms (Magalhães et al., 2020), and research has differentiated between intentional and unintentional discrimination, such as biases during the hiring process (Friedman et al., 2015) but also the use of language (Franco & Maass, 1996), e.g., deadnaming (using a trans or non-binary person's birth name even though they have chosen a new name they wish to be addressed by) or misgendering (not using the preferred pronoun, either in direct conversation or while talking about the person) (Knutson et al., 2019).

Research question and objectives

Despite these revelations, research concerning gender diversity with regard to the workplace is still sparse (Ward & Winstanley, 2003), and members of this group still remain largely misunderstood in various aspects of life, both private and professional, which can have severe consequences for their well-being (Winter et al., 2016). This study's goal is to gain insight into commitment systems and the unique experiences of employees, and furthermore reveal the role of gender identity in commitment systems. It thereby draws on CST, examining the commitment systems of transgender and non-binary employees, a stigmatised minority group, with regard to their gender identity. This will happen in an exploratory manner, providing first indications for future research to continue on this path. The aim is to connect people's individual experiences to theoretical explanations, and to give practical examples of a relatively

novel framework.

This study furthermore follows an interpretivist/constructivist perspective, which is based on the belief that individuals engage in sense-making based on their environments and consequently form 'structures in the mind' (Saunders, 1992, p. 136). Essentially, this means that undertaking research based on this perspective focuses on individuals' unique and complex experiences. Since research on gender identity in the context of work commitment is so sparse, and has essentially only examined the commitment experiences of cis men and women, the current exploratory study aims to focus on individual perspectives of transgender and non-binary employees to gain insight into their unique commitment systems, thereby establishing connections between the importance of people's gender identity in an attempt to understand part of the complexity that are commitment systems. Overall, this study strives to find an answer to the following research question:

How do transgender and non-binary employees experience the role of gender identity in shaping their commitment systems?

The study does this by means of semi-structured interviews with transgender and non-binary employees about their commitment systems, and the relationship between their commitment to their work and their gender identity. The aim is to emphasise the importance of commitment and especially the special case of a specific group.

Societal relevance

This article attempts to create more awareness about transgender and non-binary groups in the workplace, and give an idea of what they might be struggling with that is unique to their situation. This is especially important to management with regard to their consideration of employee well-being and motivation, but also of the corporate culture, in terms of integration and inclusion. Furthermore, including a broader range of employee groups would prove beneficial for management. Together with perceived supervisory support, work commitment has been identified as a significant predictor of employee turnover (e.g., Wong & Wong, 2017; Satardien et al., 2019; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019), and has equally shown to influence and predict organisational performance (e.g., Kawiana et al., 2018; Al Zefeiti & Mohamad, 2017; Sahertian et al., 2020). Additionally, Klein et al. (2012) show continuation and motivation of employees as outcomes of commitment. Understanding an individual's work commitment is essential in understanding how far they would go for the company, how willing they are to work, and how likely they are to leave the company and under what circumstances. Therefore, considering all those factors, work commitment can be considered highly relevant for organisational research.

Finally, gender diversity in organisations has been linked to 'increased sales revenue, more customers and greater relative profits' (p. 220), potentially due to different perspectives coming together to produce

innovation (Herring, 2009), thus offering firms more tangible evidence for the benefits of including and accommodating diversity. Providing management with more insight into the perspective of marginalised and under-represented groups is hoped to offer a better understanding on how to include diverse gender identities more mindfully into, for example, corporate strategy as well as everyday work.

Scientific relevance

In terms of scientific contribution, this paper aims to address several aspects with regard to the two overarching themes of research on commitment and on gender identity.

Commitment. This study is the first empirical assessment of commitment systems, which is a major contribution to the field of commitment studies. A person-centred approach has been chosen by focusing on the unique and particular experiences of a specific (minority) group of individuals, 'seeking to identify variation in workers [...] in order to adopt configurational HRM systems' (van Rossenberg et al., 2021, p. 27). This has also been addressed by Klein et al. (2012), calling for the identification of 'target- or context-specific differences' (p. 145). The interpretivist/constructivist approach provides the possibility of rich insights generated by participants' unique experiences in the form of exploratory interviews, which contributes to the small body of theory. Finally, this study considers multiple targets of employees that are part of their commitment system, as this conceptualisation, based on Klein et al. (2020), is still relatively novel, and demands more attention, specifically with regard to context and the dynamics of CST. As such, this study is also a contribution to developing how commitment systems can be studied methodologically.

Gender identity. In terms of gender identity, the goal is to provide a foundation and directions for future research in management studies that focus on marginalised groups with regard to diversity in business context. Thereby, the aim is to arrive at a new way of understanding gender identity, by examining it through a different framework, i.e., CST. Finally, previous research has mainly focused on differences between cis men and women but disregards non-traditional gender definitions, such as trans and non-binary. This study examines specifically how gender identity manifests for a minority group.

General outline

In the following, the thesis starts off with a theoretical background on the concepts relevant to understanding the topic. Furthermore, the methodology section will elaborate on the type of research conducted to answer the research question, as well as the sample from which data is collected. After the results have been presented and analysed, the discussion and conclusion will end the thesis, connecting the findings

to the theory, closing off with implementations for business, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical background

This chapter provides an overview of the current state of research on the most relevant concepts to this study. It will start with the conceptualisation of work commitment and commitment systems theory. This is concluded by an explanation of transgender and non-binary gender identities, and expanding on the potential struggles those individuals may face in the workplace.

Commitment systems theory

Until previously, commitment had been almost exclusively studied in connection to only one target at a time. In some cases, multiple commitments were studied but then usually in groups of two, and seldomly larger than that. Theories about multiple commitments existed but those were flawed in several essential ways. The recent paper by Klein et al. (2020) on commitment systems theory provides a structured theoretical approach towards the interrelationship of multiple commitments to multiple targets, and how they influence each other. It proposes multiple commitments as a dynamic, complex system which 'interacts with its environment' (p. 8), and contextual changes can influence several parameters: the number of elements, the strength of those elements (i.e., how strong the commitment to those elements is), and the coupling of elements (i.e., the relationship between two random elements of that system).

There are three categories of coupling: neutral, conflicting and synergistic relationships. The latter describes a relationship in which change in one element positively influences another, whereas in conflicting relationships, the opposite is the case. Neutral relationships, then, describe two so-called decoupled elements with no connection and thus change in one does not affect the other. Couplings may be strong, weak or non-existent. Typification, then, refers to what meaning is ascribed to a commitment, according to which commitments with the same typification are grouped into a subsystem. For example, *teaching* would include commitment to people such as students, grading and lecturing. Those commitments then have a synergistic relationship. If commitments within one typification develop conflicting relationships, those are then decoupled, for example, if a hospital is changing its strategy in favour of profit instead of the patients, forcing a nurse to split their system in two in order to accommodate both their hospital's profit goals as well as their commitment to treating patients. It is also possible to couple previously decoupled commitments, and subsystems can intersect; however, commitments within a subsystem will always be positively coupled with another (Klein et al., 2020).

When a commitment is especially strong, and stronger than other commitments, it moves to the centre of a commitment system, where other commitments relate to it, and where it determines 'the

system's purpose' (Klein et al., 2020, p. 23). The more important a commitment is 'to the individual's self-concept and self-esteem' (p. 23), the more central it will be. If a central commitment is disturbed, it could have serious consequences for the system, such as the whole system being restructured to cope with the disturbance.

CST emphasises the importance of context and the impact it has on the parameters and the behaviour of a commitment system. TGNC individuals have a unique context, as their gender identity deviates from the cis-gender norm. As such, it is expected that their commitment systems are characterised differently than those of binary individuals, making their systems worth examining. In the following, some essential gender-related concepts will be introduced, followed by a short background of what challenges TGNC individuals might face, both in their private lives as well as the workplace, and finally, the role their gender identity may play in this.

Gender identities outside the norm

The world of binary gender standards is sometimes referred to as 'the gender binary' (Matsuno & Budge, 2017, p. 117), based on biological sex; however, this is not the full perspective. *Transgender* is a term referring to individuals who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. Despite increased awareness and acceptance, this group still suffers from stigmatisation, during transition as well as after (Verbeek et al., 2020). *Transition* describes the process of either socially or physically living the desired gender, respectively by wearing clothes typical for that gender, and/or by taking hormones or even undergoing surgery to obtain the desired physical characteristics (Miller & Grollman, 2015). As such, the transition is part of an individual's gender expression.

Gender expression is defined as the behaviours associated with an outward expression of culturally defined ways of communicating masculinity and/or femininity, or a rejection of these stereotypes (e.g., clothing, hairstyle, language). (Matsuno & Budge, 2017, p. 117)

*Non-binary*², on the other hand, describes people that neither identify as male or female, or wish to remain genderless, but can also describe gender fluidity, which refers to fluctuations in gender identity on the man-woman/male-female spectrum. Additionally, transgender individuals can also identify as non-binary, either as primary or additional label of identification (Matsuno & Budge, 2017). To many of them, 'gender is experienced as a spectrum covering a plurality of identity experiences' (Vijlbrief et al., 2020, p. 96), and they see gender identity as a 'state of mind' (p. 97), independent of physical characteristics.

²There are other terms that may be preferred or more common among certain groups but for reasons of simplicity, the term 'non-binary' will be used continuously in this context.

It is generally quite difficult to obtain population demographics with regard to gender identity or sexual orientation (Deveaux, 2016). Percentages of non-binary prevalence vary but it is suggested that around 20% (Monro, 2019) to 35% (Fiani & Han, 2019) of TGNC individuals (also) identify as non-binary. Given the relative novelty of the concept of a non-binary gender definition, that percentage might be higher even, as 'some people who previously would have identified as trans(sexual) [...] may have identified outside of the binary if that discourse had been available to them' (Richards et al., 2016, p. 98). Kuyper and Wijsen (2014) confirm that the percentage of non-conforming gender identities in the total population is difficult to measure, and is often only estimated.

Thomas (1992) talks about the 'danger of assimilation' (p. 8), stating how people will attempt to work how they think it is expected of them, thereby discarding any advantages they might bring the firm in terms of performance. Depending on how diversity is handled and communicated, employees with non-traditional gender identities might either feel they have to suppress their identity in order to fit in, or try to emphasise their uniqueness at the cost of fitting in. Findler et al. (2007) have found evidence that members of diverse minority groups (i.e., female, elderly and immigrant workers) generally experience more exclusion, which suggests TGNC individuals might experience similar. A study by Dietert and Dentice (2009) found the three main issues for trans men to be coming out, lack of support by colleagues and supervisors, and not being addressed with their preferred pronouns and names. Due to these issues, some even quit their work, showing the relevance of gender identity for these individuals.

Hereby, it is important to distinguish between 'identity' and 'identification'. Klein et al. (2012) characterise commitment as a type of bond separate from identification, which is another, stronger type of bond. As opposed to this, identity is defined in the following way:

Generally, we consider an identity to be a shared set of meanings that define individuals in particular roles in society [...], as members of specific groups in society [...], and as persons having specific characteristics that make them unique from others [...]. (Stets & Serpe, 2013, p. 31)

The definition given above about gender identity, 'a person's internal sense of one's own gender, as it is privately experienced in one's self-awareness of being along/outside a gender continuum' (Matsuno & Budge, 2017, p. 117), shows that gender identity can be considered a part of a person's general identity, being more focused on a specific characteristic.

Many studies on organisational commitment and identity focus on organisational identity (e.g., Marique et al., 2013; Lam & Liu, 2014; Fuller et al., 2003; Afshari et al., 2019), rather than on an individual's personal identity. Even though organisational identification has been named as an antecedent of commitment (Becker et al., 2012), studies on identity commitment have established that having a stable commitment to oneself is crucial in maintaining one's well-being and functioning as a person (Berzonsky,

2003). Foote (1951) suggested that motivated individuals are, by necessity, committed to their identity, as otherwise their behaviour would not have any meaning attached to it. Using an example from Becker (1960), Burke and Reitzes (1991) explain how commitment to one's professional identity can prevent a person from frequently changing employment, or make a student choose studying over partying.

In this context, it has also been proposed that individuals experience more stress on a psychological level when said stress 'threatens identities that are important to an individual's self-definition' (Marcussen et al., 2004, p. 289). Berzonsky (2003) established three styles of identity, suggesting that a well-developed and strong commitment to oneself leads to better coordination when dealing with conflicting identities. In turn, a weak commitment to one's identity was found to correlate with higher chances of depression. Finally, an older study by Hammersmith and Weinberg (1973) proposes that the more homosexual individuals are committed to their identity as such, the more self-esteem and the more stable a self-concept they display. While this study is still from a period when LGBTQI+ individuals were not as open about their gender and sexuality as they are today, it suggests that individuals, and also TGNC individuals, in order to be mentally healthy and content with their lives, are committed to their (sexual/gender) identity.

Identity can also change depending on the situation, and commitment to identities may also change in those cases (Santee & Jackson, 1979). Pearce (1989) describes identity as petals of a flower, in the sense that different contexts (i.e., flowers) are influenced and made up by different identities (i.e., the petals). Thus, as an example, a transgender person might make use of different petals in the workplace and in their private life, therefore potentially experiencing conflict when they are unsatisfied with the identity they display at work. Furthermore, there are several key concepts that are of importance to identity theory, among which are salience and verification (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Salience refers to how likely an identity is to become important in a situation, and whether an individual will act upon it in. Verification refers to individuals perceiving that others see them in a situation in the same way they see themselves' (p. 35). Finally, commitment and centrality are further key concepts, in that identities can have different levels of importance, and individuals are more committed to their identity the harder it is for them to verify it. Thus, it is suggested that TGNC individuals are more committed to their identity, and thus it also has greater salience for them, as they have to work harder than the majority to be accepted for who they are.

Methodology

This chapter will explain the methodological choices made for this research, including the method of data collection, the method of study, as well as the chosen sample.

Research design

The choice of methodology has been made based on the current state of research, identifying the methodological fit as described by Edmondson and McManus (2007). Given the considerable gap in management and especially commitment research on gender differences, this study is of abductive, exploratory nature, and follows the philosophy of interpretivism/constructivism, as explained above. Abductive research is common for exploratory research, and highly suitable for the analysis of open codes and themes (Lipscomb, 2012). It is an alternative to inductive and deductive approaches, where the former one creates and tests hypotheses based on previous literature, and the latter one develops theory based on real-life observations. In an iterative process, this study took its direction from literature and gaps in previous research, then conducting interviews with real-life participants, finally drawing conclusions and matching the theory (Kovács & Spens, 2005). An exploratory approach was chosen as not much research exists on this specific topic, and thus this study aims to serve as a starting point for future research to explore more aspects of this, and develop appropriate frameworks.

Instrumentation and conceptual validity

The interview script has been developed based on the theoretical framework used for analysis. It focuses on three main themes: the participants' commitment systems, their feelings of inclusion based on their perceived degree of uniqueness and belongingness based on Shore et al. (2011), as well as their gender identity and its perceived importance. The inclusion of Shore's model of inclusion was a decision made in the early stages of this research. Even though the focus has shifted multiple times during the analysis and writing process, the data from the interviews proved useful nevertheless as the perception of inclusion can be considered part of a commitment system's dynamic environment. Furthermore, even though this study is not longitudinal, it is designed to reveal some parts of the dynamics of a commitment system by examining the context and asking about participants' previous employments.

During the interviews, participants were asked for their definition of commitment, which was then referred back to the definition used for this research. This step ensured validity of results but also made sure the participants were able to fully understand the concept under investigation. Not every participant defined commitment as a type of bond but most used some synonym of dedication. One participant used the term loyalty, which has been excluded as definition Klein et al. (2012), but also included an explanation of dedication, so it is assumed that their perception of commitment corresponded to the definition used for this study. An overview of the participants' definitions can be found in Table 1.

Part #	Definition	Quote
1	Stronger bond; taking responsibility	"A bit stronger bond? Is that right? [...] That you want to do something for somebody?"
2	Dedication	"[...] I will do my very best to do the best work that I can. And if necessary, stay a little bit longer or just just try to do the very best I can for the company."
3	Feeling of responsibility; dedication	"So commitment for the team means that we, as a team, say in the next three weeks, this is what we will achieve. [...] So I, I am committed to do the things they think are important. [...] And so I feel responsible, or achieving the things we want to achieve as an organisation."
4	Passion; loyalty; dedication (to reach goals)	"I think the commitment that you have towards your work, so, like the passion that you have for your work and how you function like what you do in order to achieve your goals and to get like the effects that you wanted to achieve like work ethic, but also what do you do daily to achieve the goals that you that you have to Yeah, that you want to reach. [...] I would say commitment will be loyalty on different levels, like, for example, that you check in with people but also that you like ... formal and informal way so like, an informal way like that you check in, like, how are people doing especially in the pandemic, but also work related. [...]"
5	Feeling of responsibility; dedication	"Commitment means that you're, for me at least, that you do everything to get where you want. Or what you want. [...] With customers I have a commitment if they are coming to me and they want something done with with the garden that I have a commitment to help them and I'm doing my best to give them the best price of course. With my friends, it's when we are making an appointment, to get together or to do something or to get to the city to make it in time and to be at my best behaviour, of course. And so my family, is just that you need to be there for them, if there is some kind of emergency that you're ready to help."
6	Trust; loyalty; dedication	"It means that you should put your word on something, people can trust you, and that you're there."
7	Responsibility; dedication	"People take time for me, so I would like to take time for them as well. In terms of school, it would mean putting in the work to get my grades and like, graduate, hopefully in a couple of weeks. In terms of work [...] on the one hand, I think, yeah, of course, the ... selling the shoes and being a good representative for the brand and getting [...] the sales [...] but at the same time, also creating a work environment that's also fun and relaxed for the rest of the team. [...]"
8	Dedication	"That you are dedicated to do a particular thing for yourself or for someone else. [...] Well, obviously if it's for a project, then our shared commitment is to get a good grade. [...] And at work, I am aware that I want to work there for quite some time. So I did ... [commit] more to the relationship with them. [...]"

Table 1: Participant definition of commitment

The interview process

Before the actual interview, participants were given a short description of the topics and the research, as well as a digital consent form for them to sign, which also once more included a short summary of the purpose of the interview. They had the opportunity to ask questions before the meeting (in email or chat correspondence) as well as before the actual interview (during the call).

The interviews took place in the months of April and May 2021, and were semi-structured, making use of the script and attempting to cover all themes and concepts with pre-determined questions that could be adapted as needed, but was otherwise rather free, also occasionally with regard to order of topics that naturally emerged during the conversation. At the end, participants were able to ask questions or add additional comments they thought would be interesting or useful for the study. All participants agreed to remain available after the interview for any remaining questions from the researcher's side; however, this was only necessary to inquire about participants' ages and their pronoun preferences.

Informants

To find participants, the study made use of purposive snowball sampling methods by contacting several LGBTQI+ organisations, posting in thematic discussion boards on social media as well as asking friends, fellow students and acquaintances to aid this endeavour. Employees needed to be of the desired demographic (TGNC) as well as employed in the Netherlands, but otherwise could be of any other background, including various cultural backgrounds, as the aim was to gain insight not specifically into Dutch individuals' perspective but trans and non-binary individuals in a working context.

Participants were selected according to accessibility and convenience. In total, eight interviews were conducted, and participants ranged from 23 to 61 years of age, coming from various employment backgrounds. The sample included two students as well as one self-employed participant. Among the participants, several gender identities from the TGNC spectrum were represented, and all of them had come out in the past to at least part of their professional network. There were two participants that simply identified as trans women, and one who identified as trans masculine. One participant liked to identify as male but did not really see himself as a particular gender, and one identified as non-binary but referred to themselves occasionally as trans. The remaining participants saw themselves as both non-binary and transgender (one of which specified it as trans masculine), seeing the transgender part as representative of their transition. Preferred pronouns were he/him, she/her and they/them. One participant requested the alternation of he/him and she/her but for the sake of readability agreed to the use of they/them. An overview of the participants' gender identity and their preferred pronouns can be found in Table 2.

The interviews lasted approximately between 40 and 60 minutes, and took place via phone call, with one exception which took place in person at the participant's workplace. The calls/conversations were

Part. #	Gender identity	Quote	Pronouns
1	Non-binary	"It's difficult, and I don't really understand it myself yet, totally. I would say ... so I'm not dissatisfied with my male body but I'm more feeling like a woman you could say, if you if you want to note percentages, so 40% male and 60% female, but I, there are typical male things in my behaviour and there are also typical female things."	She/Her; He/Him; They/Them
2	Trans masculine non-binary	"Puh. I'm just me. I'm not a woman. I'm not a man man, I tend to be more on the men's side and less on the woman side. So, for the moment, my gender identity is mostly non binary, trans masculine, more on the non binary than on the trans masculine, but I am taking hormones to look less feminine."	He/Him
3	Trans woman	"Well, that means that deep inside this part of my body, that deep inside in, I know, I feel I know that I'm a woman. Despite the fact that when I was born, people gave me the label boy, because of my sex. So they labelled me wrongly, just on the basis of my physical appearances. But in my head, my deeply felt belief was, I am a girl I'm a woman."	She/Her
4	Trans non-binary	"The trans part for me, basically means I'm not the gender I was assigned at birth. So I was assigned female at birth. And I'm non binary, so I am not female. So that's the trans part. The trans part for me individually also stands for my transition. And the non binary part ... I'm neither a woman, I'm also not a man. And it's very difficult to really define what I am then. I like to live in the space outside. So yeah, basically, I just know that I'm not a man. I'm not a woman. That's why I call myself non binary."	They/Them
5	Trans woman	"At the moment, for me, is that I want to get to the transgender [inaudible]? So I would like to take hormones. [...] For now, I just introduce myself as many times as I can [...], but I try to also when I work to have my appearance as much as I can as a woman."	She/Her
6	Trans non-binary	"It means that ... the transgender part means that I am in transition, constantly in life, constantly in gender ... That's an important part of how I develop. non binary is for me that I am neither of the genders we decide on to be. I think it's a concept and a way of expression. And I like them both. And I disagree with them both. So I am around that. Doesn't make sense."	They/Them
7	Trans masculine	"I've been like, kind of like going from a trans guide to being trans masculine, lately, so I think I feel more comfortable with with that definition. [...] I don't necessarily identify as a man, but I feel masculine. So if you have to scale like man and woman, and of course it's more towards being a man. But I don't think it's fully there. So for that reason, I don't feel like a guy fully."	He/Him
8	Male	"I would I would say maybe not really ... internally, I don't really see myself as particular gender. I just know that masculine, I guess, so. I don't really, I'm not really aware of gender, when I'm with myself, or with friends I feel very comfortable with. But to the outside world, I like to just identify with male."	He/Him

Table 2: Participant gender identities and pronouns

recorded and subsequently transcribed. The participants did not receive any monetary compensation for their participation but were promised a copy of the final research paper.

Data analysis

The semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded in two rounds. In the first round, the entire interview was openly coded, making use of template analysis, based on Braun and Clarke (2006). The aim was to capture as many details as possible, trying to highlight critical quotes and creating themes. After reviewing the literature once more, the second round of coding began, this time, with more focus on the central concept of CST. The analysis was an iterative, exploratory process, whereby new insights were found and afterwards included in the framework, finding new approaches and perspectives throughout the research period. The interviews were incentive in reworking the theoretical framework, finding potential explanations and connections for the phenomena and experiences addressed by participants.

For transcription, the programme Otter.ai was utilised, which facilitated the process by automatically transcribing the recorded audio. While the transcripts still had to be edited afterwards due to mistakes from the software, the time spent on transcribing was significantly reduced, all the while enabling a second read-through of the transcripts prior to analysis. Atlas.ti was used to facilitate the coding process in organising the codes and allowing to accumulate all documents. The programme helped in gathering all the codes and easily bundling them into themes, independently of the documents they were taken from. This aided the exploratory approach in that, at first, the documents were loosely coded, and then afterwards coded again with regard to the theoretical concepts introduced above, this time with more focus and concentrating on only a few essential codes. The coding scheme can be found in the Appendix.

Ethical considerations

This study aims to capture the interviewees' perspectives as true as possible, and interpret them accordingly. Furthermore, participants were asked for their informed consent and were able to ask questions before the interview. It is acknowledged that commitment might be a sensitive topic for some individuals, and even more so gender identity, and thus they were informed that dropping out was always possible at any time during the interview, and that this would have no consequences for them whatsoever. In addition, interviewees were able to read the final transcript of their interview to either add or remove information if they wanted something excluded from analysis retrospectively. Most participants made use of this and contacted the researcher about information they wished to exclude. During the interview, there were no expressed issues from the participants' side, e.g., feeling uncomfortable sharing information.

Participants' information have and will be treated with high confidentiality and be only used for the

academic purposes described above. The names have been changed by the researcher who furthermore hopes to have sufficiently respected the participants' pronoun preferences. The researcher is not aware of any biases (interviewer bias) that might have influenced the interview process, though of course, those can never fully be excluded. Furthermore, in accordance with the participants' anonymity, additional names and companies were removed.

Results and analysis

Commitment systems theory and the study's main research question lay the foundation for the following concepts used for analysis.

- Gender identity as a target of commitment
- Gender identity at the centre of a commitment system
- Gender identity shaping the commitment system
- Gender identity shaping commitment to the organisation
- The key role of the supervisor
- The role of context: inclusion

Gender identity as a target of commitment. Most participants saw their gender identity as a target of commitment and as part of themselves. Participant 3 (trans woman), for example, directly connected her commitment to her gender identity with finally being able to be and commit to herself, after pretending and hiding it from her family for a long time.

I want to be committed to myself, maybe that's, that sounds strange. If you ... for a long time, I lived the life of someone else, so to speak, you know, before I went into transition, I didn't live my true life. So now, since six or seven years, I feel committed to myself, I want to be me, you know, so that's also some form of commitment to me personally.

Participant 6 (trans non-binary) was different than the others in how they saw their gender identity. They very much saw their gender identity as an essential part of who they were, but also simply as something they could not change or influence, and therefore had to be committed to it, and neither did they think they would be able to hide it if their work asked for it.

So would you say your your gender identity is a target of commitment?

Yeah.

And do you feel it interacts in a way with other commitments that you have? In the sense as if your gender identity was a person, and you would have to prioritise or balance it with commitments you have towards other people.

But it's always there. It's not ... it's not ... I cannot say it's not.

What's not?

My gender identity is always there.

But do you feel more or less committed to it?

I feel committed to it. But that's because I cannot stop it. It's not a choice.

[...] I once thought maybe I've made it up. I'm a woman. And I'm straight from now [on]. It's ... I could ... I don't know how to be that. It's just so weird. It's like ... I don't know. I know what a woman is. And I know what's being straight means. And it's great for them. But I don't know. It's like asking a monkey to become a horse. It's like the weirdest thing. I ... I wouldn't know how to do that. If they asked me that.

Participant 8 (male) was the only participant who stated he did not see his gender identity as a target of commitment, as he did not think it was related to who he was as a person.

Do you see your your gender identity as a target of commitment?

No, I don't think so.

So you're not do you feel committed to yourself or being yourself?

Yes, but I don't think my gender is particularly related to that for me. Like, I know who I am, what I what I like to do, and I know that those things also change and that I will like change all the time. But I don't feel like those things are very related to my gender.

However, based on his other responses about, for example, changing his gender expression and entering the transition process, he is still assumed to be committed to his gender identity in some way.

Gender identity at the centre of a commitment system. Almost all participants attached high importance to their gender identity, or rather being committed to their gender identity, and thereby to themselves. Participant 3 (trans woman), for example, saw commitment to herself as most important, as only then would she be able to commit to others.

Well, to be honest, I feel most committed to myself. Yeah. Because I also think that, if you cannot be truly yourself, I cannot perform in my work, I cannot, I cannot be a really good partner or friend. So being committed to myself, since a few years, makes me a better colleague makes me a better friend. Make me a better daughter or parent.

For many participants, others accepting their gender identity was a prerequisite for them to even be committed to work in the first place, and they would quit their job if they would feel too discriminated because of their identity.

So if people would deny my existence, you know, that would be a real showstopper. So if I would not be respected for who I am. So for instance, people would start to misgender me, or to use my old name, dead naming, things like that, on that area? And I will definitely, I will definitely quit the organisation. (Participant 3, trans woman)

Like if I would work like if I would stop working here and like start working someplace like a bank, for example, then I wouldn't be that open about my identity, so I wouldn't be committed to the job. But in a place where I can be like, fully myself. I'm like, way more committed to people. (Participant 4, trans non-binary)

Their gender identity plays an important role in participants' lives in general. Some even volunteer(ed) in queer committees of their organisations or country-wide activist NGOs. Participant 6 (trans non-binary) even started their own lifestyle coaching office to help TGNC and queer individuals, and Participant 4 (trans non-binary) is currently looking for alternative employment that is more 'queer friendly' and includes some degree of activism. A great deal of participants also brought up their gender identity and/or coming out early on in the interview, often unprompted by the interviewer.

Gender identity shaping the commitment system. All participants had come out at some point in their lives, after which they experienced improvement in their relationships and commitment to others, both privately and at work, as well as to themselves. For Participant 1 (non-binary), for example, their relationship to their colleagues and thus their feelings of inclusion improved immensely after coming out and starting to express their gender identity at work, and thus they started to feel more committed to them and their work.

For both Participants 7 (trans masculine) and 8 (male), their desired gender identity seemed to be less obvious than for the other participants. Both were assigned female at birth, identified as male or masculine, and both reported that most people recognised them as men. Thus, they would not come out to everyone, simply because they did not have to.

A common theme among the interviews is that, in the past, commitment to the gender identity used to conflict with other commitments when the identity had not been fully accepted by the person yet but became an enabler when accepted. Participant 7 (trans masculine) noticed more energy to commit to his friends after coming out and fully committing to his gender identity. Participant 3 (trans woman) used to hide her gender identity in front of her family and at work, before finally coming out and accepting it.

Now she states that, without being committed to herself and her gender identity, other commitments are not possible. Participant 4 (trans non-binary) states that in previous, more temporary employments, they were not able to fully open up about their identity, which in the end, made them 'less committed to the people'.

And my commitment to my to myself is now finally very, very important. Because if I can be who I supposed to be, I can support you better. Because then I don't have to put all my energy in hiding a part or changing a part or not being who I am for true. So if I add me I can support you better. (Participant 2, trans masculine non-binary)

Gender identity shaping commitment to the organisation. Just as commitment to gender identity shapes the commitment system, it also influences how committed participants can be to their colleagues and their work in general. Participant 1 (non-binary), as mentioned above, has experienced a great change after coming out to their company last year, becoming more committed to their colleagues because those showed great interest in their gender identity, and they engaged in more conversations, also of private nature, than before. This, in turn, led them to become more committed to the company, as the people there are the reason for them to stay.

It's funny, I ... I always said that my job is just my job, and they are not my friends. After my coming out, they became my friends ... like my friends. Also, also a little bit because they were more understanding than my family.

Participant 7 (trans masculine), since being fully committed to their gender identity, has become more open and is able to commit more to his job and thereby the customers he works with, thus improving performance.

As already mentioned above, many interviewees have also stated that a reason to quit their work would be if people were not accepting their gender identity, or purposefully misgendering them. Participant 4 (trans non-binary) states that they are not necessarily less committed to people who do this unintentionally but they are able to commit more to those that put in the effort and act understanding.

Like, when I noticed that people are not LGBT friendly or not that LGBT friendly. I don't really like working with them. And so of course, sometimes you have to, so you do, but I'd rather ... and, like, I'm more committed to people who are also LGBT friendly.

The key role of the supervisor. For most of the participants, commitment to their supervisor is an essential benefactor to their work commitment. Participants 3 (trans woman) and 4 (trans non-binary), for example, experienced positive feedback from their colleagues when their supervisor took the first

step in showing understanding and acceptance for their gender identity after coming out. Participant 3 (trans woman) states how her supervisor accepting her gender identity was vital in feeling supported and included after coming out, and it even made her feel safe enough to come out to the rest of her colleagues.

But to be honest, my manager, she is a woman. She accepted me from the very first moment although she didn't know about transgender people. But she supported me from the very beginning. And it was really key for me.

And even something small as asking for the correct pronouns, like in Participant 8's (male) case, had an important impact on feelings of inclusion. Participant 6's (trans non-binary) supervisor played a major role in their inclusion process. She helped them overcome their own personal blockades, opening up to their colleagues, and thus, the effort and commitment was on both sides.

Once a month, I've a coaching with her. And she was like: you feel ... you're so afraid. She actually explained it to me. And normally, I don't really like that. But she made me think about it, that ... She said: you are so afraid that someone is going to disapprove that you already started the fight. And that was so true. I thought yeah. And I forgot to look at what these people maybe think or what their backgrounds are, what their situation is. And I was very self-centred. Because I was so afraid to be that odd one out in that binary world.

For Participant 4 (trans non-binary), there was a situation at work where their supervisor ensured bins were installed in the male bathrooms on one floor, which increased their commitment; however, this was, in a way, negated but the rest of the company not doing so on the remaining floors.

However, also independent from gender identity, commitment to the supervisor is important for work commitment. Participant 4's (trans non-binary) work commitment is strongly influenced and, to some degree, dependent on their commitment towards their supervisor, who gives them enough space to develop and learn.

Like, the way she enables my commitment, the commitment to my job and like, she gives me a lot of space, like, whenever she whenever there are tasks that need to be done. Like, she looks at all individual people, and she's like, okay, who would best do the job, but who would also like, like doing this job? And so she looks at people and looks at me, like, Where can I grow? What can I still be taught? What can I learn? So she, yeah, I think she enables by giving me tasks that are, like, exciting to do or new to do. She makes the job fun.

Upon being asked what would have to happen for Participant 2 (trans masculine non-binary) to quit his job, he stated that a different supervisor would be a valid reason for him, as a supportive supervisor

plays a major role to his work commitment, unrelated to his gender identity. A similar reason has also been described by other participants.

I think if there would be if we would have a different supervisor. Because the supervisor we have is the best supervisor one can get. He is really sticking his neck out for his people. And he is going that extra mile also for us. So that means if he is going that extra mile, I want to go that extra mile. And if there would be a different person than him, I think I would have left the company already. Because I really don't like all that travelling but thanks to COVID we don't have to do that. But that is a very important thing for me that you know your supervisor will have your back.

Many participants connected their level of gender expression to their level of confidence they felt in that regard. Here as well, the supervisor was a key factor in creating a safe space for confidence to build, and for participants to take the important step of coming out, and expressing their identity, e.g., via clothing, at the workplace.

So I did small things, I changed, I started using makeup and paint my nails with transparent nail polish but that was only after 10 years I was working there. [...] And only after 10 years working for [company], I started feeling confident enough to make the first steps. [...]

And then I told her Well, I think I think I'm trans. I'm trans gender. She didn't know what that meant. So let's ... she said, Well, I, I support you, I will read about it. And you can tell me about it. So and she supported me from that moment. And I felt secure enough to make the next step. (Participant 3, trans woman)

The role of context: inclusion Coming out and thereby accepting their gender identity also improved many people's feelings of inclusion at their company. Participant 2 (trans masculine non-binary) feels, now that he has come out to his company, 'people understand some things better' and because he can be just himself, he feels more included. His colleagues are also respecting his new pronouns and name, also in his absence, which makes him feel accepted.

But no, as far as I understand, people are just using my new name. That is [Company A], and from what I understand from my colleague, who is working in [Department] at the company, on the work floor, he says: Well, everybody is talking about you. Like 'he' and is using your new name. So, wow, hey, I'm not even present. So I'm very happy about that.

For Participant 5 (trans woman), commitment to her gender identity meant having to found her own company, as she would not find employment otherwise. She works in gardening, and the places she applied to would not have her express her identity publicly.

I was actually, a little bit forced to start right away for myself, because most of the companies have a little bit difficulties having a transgender at the workplace. [...] There was one company that just like, I would love to have you at my work place but for the customers it's Not possible to have visible female [appearance].

Understanding in general seems to play an important role in feelings of inclusion. Participant 7 (trans masculine), for example, has made the experience that even though he felt included at previous jobs, not being well understood impeded this. And although Participant 3 (trans woman) feels 'very much included at [her] work', some people do not fully understand her situation and ask her 'awkward questions', which slightly dim those feelings of inclusion.

A good company policy also seems to aid feelings of inclusion. Participant 1 (non-binary), for example, thinks that part of why they feel so included is because of their company's transgender policy, which is 'not only a written policy' but is also lived by the people working there.

Finally, what also became important for Participant 6 (trans non-binary) was the realisation that they did not have to defend themselves in front of others anymore, and they had to lower their defences before they could give themselves the chance of feeling included.

I was hard. I was still in my [queer activist NGO] mentality. I was fighting. I felt I was fighting. And I stopped fighting. And I thought if I want people to do something that I appreciate, I should not fight them. I should teach them or have a conversation with them. But not fighting.

Almost all participants felt more or less included at their work. Participant 5 (trans woman) was an exception, as she experienced repeated discrimination at previous employments for being transgender, feeling 'like an outsider' but this was not always necessarily intentional.

I had this one time. I had long hair. There was this colleague that walked in and he said just, like ... and I was not out to others at that moment, he made the joke, like: I thought there was some girl sitting here, to try to be funny. And I was like: why? Because ... [at] this moment, it was nice to hear but [on the other hand] it was not really nice. Because he didn't know I was transgender, so ...

During this moment, Participant 5 (trans woman) also did not receive support from colleagues who were present.

Discussion

This following section will provide an answer to the research question by discussing the findings in relation to the theory. Furthermore, this study set out to (1) advance the body of research on commitment by providing empirical evidence for the novel framework of commitment systems theory, (2) by means of examining the unique experiences of a minority gender group of employees, (3) researching the role of gender identity within commitment systems, and ultimately (4) providing a starting point for future research. The research question is:

How do transgender and non-binary employees experience the role of gender identity in shaping their commitment systems?

The primary finding of this study is the high importance of gender identity and how individuals are committed to it, as well as how it affects the commitment system. Not only are TGNC individuals highly committed to their gender identity, this also significantly affects their commitments to other targets, and for many it is even a prerequisite to feeling accepted and included at work, and consequently, to even be committed to their work in the first place. Here, commitment to the supervisor plays a key role as well: participants reported that positive and accepting behaviour from their supervisor often encouraged corresponding behaviour from their colleagues, and fostered work commitment, as well as increased their confidence to come out, and openly express their gender identity.

One participant stated he did not perceive his gender identity as a target of commitment, however, from the rest of the interview it became apparent that it nevertheless had an effect on his other commitments, although smaller than for others. This may relate back to the concept of identity verification (Stets & Serpe, 2013), in that commitment to one's identity is stronger when it has to be defended and harder to get verified by others. Looking back at this study's participants, those who have had less trouble coming out or whose gender identity is not as obvious because their gender expression matches social conventions (e.g., looking like a man while identifying as a trans man), generally mentioned their gender identity less in terms of their commitment systems than those who had or have to explain their identity to people and who have issues with being accepted or treated accordingly. For the former group, gender identity is still important and they stated during the interviews that not being accepted as who they are would be a reason for them to quit their jobs or at the very least feel less committed and included. However, this may be due to a self-perception bias on the participant's side. As Foote (1951) states, everyone is, in some way, committed to their identity, and thus it cannot be ruled out that even though someone states their gender identity is not a target of commitment, they still are committed to it if they express it publicly.

These findings show how important TGNC individuals' gender identity is and the essentiality of

being treated accordingly. Most of the reports from participants were positive in terms of their acceptance at work. With the exception of one, all employees felt more or less accepted and included at work, and had good or even strong commitments to their colleagues and supervisors. Gender identity was almost always reported as a target of commitment, with the reasoning often being that it was equal to 'being yourself' and was not something one might have great influence on. This is in line with previous work on the importance of self-commitment for one's well-being (e.g., Berzonsky (2003)), and participants did report improved attitude to themselves as a person, as well as better commitments to others.

This demonstrates the study of commitment systems provides insight into the complexity and dynamics, which previous studies have been unable to capture. The current study is able to demonstrate how acceptance of, and commitment to, gender identity, both by the individual and by others, contributes to being committed to other targets (i.e., synergistic couplings). Other people accepting the gender identity led to higher commitment, and some participants felt their commitment to their colleagues strengthen after coming out. However, not accepting the gender identity or unconsciously misgendering (i.e., no verification) led to less commitment to work and colleagues (i.e., conflicting coupling). This is evidence for the high complexity of commitment systems and the impact of its dynamic environment, as well as the key role of gender identity.

Coming out is a significant moment. If the gender identity has been hidden before up to this point, commitment to the gender identity can be considered the strongest, as coming out and entering the transition process can be a major change for individuals, both for themselves and their environment. If gender identity has not already been at the centre of the commitment system before, it can be assumed to move there after the coming out, once the individual has started to express their gender identity openly. This, in turn, creates potential for conflict. Klein et al. (2020) state that, if a commitment is central to a system, disrupting it can have major consequences. This can be the case if a person's gender identity is not accepted, and it is negatively coupled with work commitment. In order to cope, individuals might move work commitment to a different subsystem, where it is regarded as separate from gender identity commitment. This situation has not been demonstrated by participants, but it would be expected that if gender identity is not accepted, confidence for gender expression is lowered, and individuals might hide their identity at work, even after coming out. An alternative has been reported by Participant 5 (trans woman), who could not find employment as a trans woman but was too strongly committed to her gender identity to hide it in favour of a job. On the other hand, she was still committed to her professional identity as a gardener, and thus became self-employed in order to be able to keep work and gender identity in the same system.

This situation was unique as coming out happened between graduation and job search, before actually being employed at a company besides during internships. If coming out happens while employed at

a company, and the gender identity is not accepted, quitting the job entirely is an alternative. Some participants indicated that they would quit if their gender identity was not accepted, and one wished for a different job, applying to more queer-friendly organisations in order to achieve higher congruence within the commitment system and keep work and identity in one subsystem. This shows how gender identity can influence and shape a commitment system, either strengthening or weakening commitments, but always being a central factor that will be prioritised, and, if necessary, leading to the creation of a new subsystem.

Commitment to the supervisor seemed to be a central factor, and most participants had a good relationship with their managers and were strongly committed to them. The supervisor was considered an important contact for many participants, and colleagues often followed their lead in treating TGNC employees fairly, but also coping with the novelty of the situation. Thus, strong commitment to one's supervisor influenced the context (especially feelings of inclusion) and facilitated acceptance of the gender identity, which, in turn, led to greater work commitment, also by commitment to colleagues. Some participants reported that a change in supervision would be a reason for them to quit their job, especially if their current supervisor was very understanding, giving them a lot of freedom.

Drawing from CST, Klein et al. (2020) proposed that the more important a commitment is to an individual's self-centrality, the stronger and more central this commitment is, and Hammersmith and Weinberg (1973) suggest a connection between self-esteem (i.e., confidence) and self-commitment. Many participants reported that their degree of gender expression was dependent on their level of confidence, and for example, if being made fun of would emphasise their identity less than when it was accepted. In certain situations, when participants were treated unfairly or found themselves in situations they did not feel entirely comfortable in, they sometimes hid their gender identity or toned down the way they would usually express it. Commitment to the supervisor played a vital role in this as well, as it gave many participants the confidence to come out at work in the first place. However, in the case of Participant 4, the supervisor did accept and support their identity but it was not communicated in the entire company and, in this case, toilet bins in the men's toilets were only installed on one floor, showing how crucial it is that the supervisor shares their attitude with colleagues and other supervisors.

Implications for management

Management needs to recognise all individuals are, to some degree, committed to their identity. This influences commitment to work overall to a great degree. If the gender identity is not accepted, employees experience conflicting commitments between their identity and work. This in turn may compromise their well-being and commitment to their work. Ultimately, this may result in degraded performance or in the employee resigning from their function.

As a consequence, management needs to realise the impact it has on how accepted employees feel in their work environment, and to what degree they feel they can express their gender identity openly. Their gender identity should not conflict with work-related commitments, and thus management needs to understand where conflict arises and prevent it in order to keep gender identity and work in the same system. Since commitment can go both ways, supervisors should also commit to their employees and express support, and foster commitment among employees as feelings of inclusion are an important factor.

Through actively maintaining an inclusive environment wherein employees can safely express their gender identity, management can foster employee commitment by promoting tolerance and acceptance, as well as communicating employee needs in the wider organisation, by, for example, encouraging employees to come forward in case of negative feelings and directly addressing conflicts between employees, showing support. Also regular employee check-ups can help determining the degree of well-being and motivation but also concerning their commitment towards their supervisors. The example above about the toilet bins being installed illustrates how management can make their TGNC employees feel more welcome but also normalise the topic among the remaining employees. By identifying issues, management shows openness and tells TGNC employees that they can express their gender identity at work. Here, management can make use of existing models of commitment to conduct in-house research, such as the bond model by Klein et al. (2012), to identify whether work commitment is present, as well as commitment systems theory (Klein et al., 2020) to determine other factors influencing work commitment, as well as how the environment engages with their commitments. Finally, feelings of inclusion are an important contextual factor and surveys in this direction can possibly identify the degree of how committed employees are among each other.

Management furthermore needs to make sure the topic is introduced company-wide, for example, via workshops or, as recounted in one of the interviews, short informative presentations by TGNC employees, as they might be able to explain their situation best. As identified by Matsuno (2017), supervisors furthermore need to be aware of their biases. Micro-aggressions, such as unintentional misgendering, need to be prevented as much as possible so that TGNC employees can build the confidence to come out at work and openly express their gender identity (Fiani & Han, 2019). It is furthermore important that employees understand their TGNC colleagues' comfort zone within which they can ask questions. A strong policy and especially management leading by example and acting tolerant fosters an inclusive environment and can inspire colleagues to quicker accept and understand the novel situation, and thus facilitates synergistic commitments.

Limitations

One limitation might have been that the conversations took place in English, in favour of the researcher's language proficiency. Even though participants were still able to express complex thoughts, conducting the interviews in Dutch might have given them the possibility to open up further. Similar goes for the fact that seven out of eight interviews were conducted remotely. Face-to-face meetings may engender a more relaxed attitude in participants, prompting them to speak more freely. While remote interviews still allowed participants to explore the subject of the study, follow-up research may employ deeper and longer interviews for which a face-to-face approach may be beneficial.

The current study was cross-sectional, taking place between March and August, and participants were only interviewed once. Time restraints prevented a longitudinal study with a second or third interview; however, participants were asked to recall past situations from memory. Commitment systems have been defined as dynamic, and thus future research is encouraged to conduct a study spread across a longer time period in order to examine (and perhaps compare) different situations for individuals. Examples of this are how transitioning is experienced or how the acceptance process develops, but also how management adapts their strategies in favour of an integrative environment. Furthermore, the pandemic during the course of which this study took place, might have impacted the participants' social situations. Many were working from home, and thus also having less contact to their colleagues. They usually recalled situations from before the pandemic, but more recent events might have revealed different insights, especially since one participant only recently graduated, and another only came out last year, during the pandemic. For those individuals, the situation without the pandemic might have differed.

Retrospectively, the interviews could have been enriched by Critical Incidence Technique (Flanagan, 1954). This technique sees that interviewees talk about a situation that is 'critical' to them, and thus has significant meaning for them. This technique can be useful to extract participant experiences without them actively filtering parts to fit the question, providing rich information. In the current case, CIT could have provided more critical situations during which the importance of gender identity for commitment systems might have further crystallised.

Future research

These findings emphasise the significant gap in research around diverse gender identities and their importance for commitment. When this study was conducted, research on gender identity and commitment limited itself to binary, cis-gender representation. The present findings underline the importance of going beyond these categories, as they show specific and important issues that strongly affect the commitment system of TGNC individuals. Therefore, future attention should be directed to the study of, and management frameworks for, employee behaviour and commitment in the light of TGNC issues and experience.

Generally, there are three directions that need more attention in the future. The first one concerns the key role of the supervisor. The second one aims to advance studies concerning gender diversity and gender identity in a business context, combining diversity with management studies. The third one focuses on the study of commitment systems and their centres, using the appropriate, new frameworks.

First direction. The importance of supervisory support may be further studied, as commitment to the supervisor has been shown to be of great importance for work commitment, and this might be connected to research on perceived supervisor support (PSS) as well as perceived organisational support (POS). However, this study also only shows the perspective of the employee, and not that of the supervisor. Future research is advised to consider multiple perspectives and organisational levels in this regard, examining also the different values individuals hold. Furthermore, various leadership styles might impact employee commitment in different ways, as might inclusion and appreciation strategies.

Second direction. This study has provided insight into the relationships in a commitment system with regards to gender identity, and begun to unravel its complexities. Future research should continue to further develop the role of gender identity (and identity in more general terms) in relation to commitment. One potential and promising avenue for such research would be ethnographic studies, in which TGNC employees would be accompanied through their typical days at work. Some potential issues might not be noticeable by themselves but for external observers. Furthermore, interviews with colleagues might reveal insights into different perspectives, and about how non-TGNC employees think and feel about this topic.

Second, future research should study factors within TGNC individuals that co-determine successful inclusion. The interviews revealed that participants which were assigned female at birth had less issues with expressing their gender identity than participants assigned male at birth. This suggests that within the TGNC demographic, there are yet more nuances and individuals with varying needs. Therefore, future research should elucidate the relationship between sex assigned at birth, deviancy with respect to societal convention, and success of inclusion in TGNC individuals. It should thereby consider an intersectional approach recognising the different layers of differences between employees in the experience of gender identity.

Finally, a point of investigation is the importance of non-TGNC individuals' gender identity. This study shows that identity, and also gender identity, becomes more salient and grows in importance (gaining centrality) when it has to be explained or defended. The question arises whether the increased openness of TGNC individuals, and also other members of the LGBTQI+ community, causes heterosexual and cis-gender individuals to grow more conscious of their own gender identity. Future research should consider this aspect in all work-related academic research to determine the impact gender identity has on

all employees' lives.

Third direction. The connection of commitment and identity should be further examined, also outside of diversity and gender studies, to establish the importance of inclusion and identity for commitment, and in order to develop frameworks for management on how to accommodate their employees. Additionally, what individuals see as their most important commitment has significant influence on their other commitments, and advancing research there can yield insight into how management can deal with individual needs in order to increase work commitment.

Conclusion

Previous research on commitment with regard to gender differences is often contradictory and leaves out the important dimension of gender identity and gender expression. However, it has also so far only focused on differences between cis-gender individuals, disregarding TGNC individuals. For the latter, gender identity might play a much larger role than for cis-gender employees, as they very often attract attention or have to explain their gender identity to others, which makes it more salient in daily life. This study has discovered the centrality of commitment to the gender identity for TGNC individuals, and the significant impact this has on their other commitments. This centrality offers potential for conflict if the gender identity is not accepted, and commitment to the organisation may be compromised, potentially even leading to employees quitting. Management needs to realise the role it plays in influencing how accepted employees feel with regard to their gender identity, and should research their employees' commitment systems, investigating other commitments influencing work commitment. Future research should aim to further combine diversity and management studies, researching the role of gender identity for employees, as well as commitment systems in general, with special attention to their centre.

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Appendix

Coding Scheme

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
4	The more committed I am [inaudible] with the people at my job, like I'm always committed to the job that I have to do, like just the workload and all the tasks that I have to do, I'm always committed. But I'm, like, for me, being committed to the people is like more like a bigger part. And so that differs on how open I can be about my identity. Like if I would work like if I would stop working here and like start working someplace like a bank, for example, then I wouldn't be that open about my identity, so I wouldn't be committed to the job. But in a place where I can be like, fully myself. I'm like, way more committed to two people.	Being able to express gender identity increases commitment to work and colleagues	Commitment to gender identity enables/increases work commitment
3	But now, once I did the transitioning, I mean, I'm divorced now. But I still have very good relationship with my ex partner. So I think I'm a better person now Celine so towards my ex partner. I think I'm a better ex partner now, if you know what I mean?	Being committed to identity makes participant a 'better' person	Commitment to gender identity enables/increases general commitment
4	Like at the beginning of my transition, I think that made it that I was less committed, not less committed to the job, but less committed to the people.	Beginning of transition (not fully committed to identity yet) means less commitment to colleagues	Commitment to gender identity prerequisite to (partial) work commitment

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
4	Well, the people that do it [the pronouns] correctly, are like more close to me. So the people ... no ... So no, actually, there's one person that told me that she's not going to use my pronouns, because she thinks it's weird. I'm after hearing that, I am less committed to her.	(Un)intentional misuse of pronouns leads to less commitment	Nonacceptance of gender identity leads to less commitment
7	Except for the fact that life has become Well, sometimes easier now, because I can live my life the way I want it to. So that leaves more energy for other things. Like I don't have to find this way of people perceiving me as female anymore, I can live as myself. So it It leaves more energy for friends.	Commitment to self leaves more energy to commit to others	Commitment to gender identity enables general commitment
2	And my commitment to my to myself is now finally very, very important. Because if I can be who I supposed to be, I can support you better. Because then I don't have to put all my energy in hiding a part or changing a part or not being who I am for true. So if I add me I can support you better.	Commitment to gender identity gives energy for other people	Commitment to gender identity enables/increases general commitment
6	Actually my manager. Yeah, once a month, I've a coaching with her. And she was like, you feel ... you're so afraid. She actually explained it to me. And normally, I don't really like that. But she made me think about it, that ... She said you are so afraid that someone is going to disapprove that you already started the fight. And that was so true. I thought yeah. And I forgot to look at what these people maybe think or what their backgrounds are, what their situation is. And I was very self centred. Because I was so afraid to be that odd one out in that binary world.	Supervisor helping overcoming own blockages to open up more	Commitment to supervisor enables work commitment

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
2	What would have to happen for me to leave the company. I think if there would be if we would have a different supervisor. Because the supervisor we have is the best supervisor one can get. He is really sticking his neck out for his people. And he is going that extra mile also for us. So that means if he is going that Extra Mile I want to go that extra mile. And if there would be a different person than him, I think I would have left the company already. Because I really don't like all that travelling but thanks to COVID we don't have to do that. But that is a very important thing for me that you know your supervisor will have your back. And yeah.	Supervisor is a reason to stay at company	Commitment to supervisor enables work commitment
4	Well, the colleagues that I've worked with, I just saw it as something like, temporary, so I didn't have a big commitment to that job place. Like I was a little bit scared to come out, like I didn't really want to come out. So I didn't want people to know that I am trans. So I just saw it really as a job thing. Like I knew those people at the job. I saw them at the job not outside of the job. Like it's totally different from what is now like, I didn't really have like friendships or anything.	Low commitment at temporary job leading to not coming out	Work commitment enables coming out

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
1	<p>A: Yes. And I must say, I didn't experience that as much before I came out. [...]</p> <p>C: What what kind of change was that? [...]</p> <p>A: It's a bit weird, because we are working at home since since March last year, so we don't see each other much in person. But I, when I when I when I discovered my identity, I felt the need to tell them because when I would enter the building again, I would dress differently. So just to avoid rumours, I thought it is wise to tell them and I started with a message to my fellow secretaries. And then after consulting the management board, I sent an email to the whole organisation with a kind of rebirth message. And I didn't expect that I would get so many congratulations. But I did. And people were very, some people are curious and wanted to know how, how and why. Not in an annoying way. So I felt validated.</p>	<p>Feeling stronger commitment to employees and work after coming out</p>	<p>Commitment to gender identity enables/increases work commitment</p>
4	<p>Yeah, maybe. Like when I noticed that people are not LGBT friendly or not that LGBT friendly. I don't really like working with them. And so of course, sometimes you have to, so you do, but I'd rather and like I'm more committed. to people who are also LGBT friendly.</p>	<p>Higher commitment to people accepting gender identity</p>	<p>Acceptance of gender identity enables commitment to colleagues</p>

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
6	Yeah. If I, if I cannot ... Well, if I cannot be myself, if I cannot, if I'm not able to develop myself as a teacher, but in the way that I am ... losing my freedom in it, losing my creativity, then yeah, that would be reasonable for me. Because then that this is like, my, I want my job also to be part of my identity, I want to be proud to say, I'm a teacher. Like, I was proud to say, I'm a human rights activist. And to me, that's important. Work's part of my identity. So yeah.	Not being able to live gender identity would be reason to quit	Acceptance of gender identity prerequisite for work commitment
3	So if people would deny my existence, you know, that would be a real showstopper. So if I would not be respected for who I am. So for instance, people would start to misgender me, or to use my old name, dead naming, things like that, on that area? And I will definitely, I will definitely quit the organisation.	Nonacceptance of gender identity would be reason to quit	Acceptance of gender identity prerequisite for work commitment
4	Well, many people don't understand it. So like, the basic simple thing, like toilets, when you go to them, and they're like [without bins], Hey, this is not the way that it's very inclusive to all people. [...] C: Did that situation change your commitment towards them? R: Maybe a little, but it also made me like, like, a little bit more passionate to like, fight for it. C: So it actually enabled your commitment to yourself? R: to myself, yes, yes.	Inconsiderate work environment and (unintentional) exclusion leading to higher commitment to identity	Commitment to gender identity stronger when not accepted

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
2	<p>Recently, two years and before that five years ago, I was busy doing my transition five, six years ago, and then I met my, my husband, and he was not okay with that. And he needed time to think about if he would like that or not? Could he go with that or not? So I went back into the closet. Two years ago, that didn't work anymore. So then I started my transition, again.</p>	Coming out despite husband	Significance of (commitment to) gender identity
6	<p>C: Okay. So would you say your your gender identity is a target of commitment? S: Yeah. C: And do you feel it interacts in a way with other commitments that you have? In the sense as if your gender identity was a person. And you would have to prioritise or balance it with commitments you have towards other people. S: But it's always there. It's not ... it's not ... I cannot say it's not. C: What's not? S: my gender identity is always there. C: But do you feel more or less committed to it? S: I feel committed to it. But that's because I cannot stop it. It's not a choice.</p>	Committed to gender identity because no other choice	Significance of (commitment to) gender identity

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
4	I'm very committed to my job right now. But there are some places that I would want to work that I would rather work. And it's not because of the people. But it's more because I'm very passionate about my work. But it's, it's quite difficult, like I see myself a little bit as an activist, and it's quite difficult to be an activist for [my current organisation]. So I rather work at an NGO that works with LGBT rights. And so there are like, two, two, maybe three, four organisations, that if they would have a job offer, I would like take it, I would like apply. So, if not, like, I will want to go somewhere else.	Wanting to work at queer organisation	Significance of gender identity
6	I think that is going well. I got some students who know that I worked at [queer organisation] and some of them came out to me or started to talk about a situation they didn't dare to talk about with a heterosexual colleague. I really feel committed to these to these people. They Yeah, I don't know them that well. We're all really new to each other. But I feel that I really want to get to know these people. And I want to learn them something I want to learn from them. I want to teach them something and I want to learn from them.	Commitment to queer students	Significance of gender identity

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
3	In my private life, I am very active for the transgender community. I'm a board member of [queer organisation A], I'm responsible for education and work. And I work as a volunteer for [queer organisation B], I'm not sure you know that, Celine but that's an organisation in the Netherlands locally, who represent the interests of the LBT, well QI community as an educator, so I'm responsible for the educator team. And educating means that we will visit schools, secondary schools to tell children about gender diversity and sexual diversity. So my private life is well, it's more or less work as well, as a volunteer. And I'm quite happy to do it.	Gender identity and trans-gender community have high importance in life	Significance of gender identity
4	So having that connection, on an identity level. So because I think like, I have a lot of queer friends, and you just connect on a different level, because you understand each other's struggle, you and you understand each other's identity, on a deeper level, so like starting to work at a different company that's like more like an NGO that's more queer.	Gender identity large part of life and work	Significance of gender identity
6	If you suggest that then tell me how. Because Would you do that then? I don't think so. I don't know how. And I don't want to ... I think it's like, yeah, I don't know. I once thought maybe I've made it up. I'm a woman. And I'm straight from now [on]. It's ... I could ... I don't know how to be that. It's just so weird. It's like ... I don't know. I know what a woman is. And I know what's being straight means. And it's great for them. But I don't know. It's like asking a monkey to become a horse. It's like the weirdest thing. I ... I wouldn't know how to do that. If they asked me that.	Being committed to identity because no other choice	Gender identity as target of commitment, significance of gender identity

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
7	So I do kind of also see it as a way to I don't know normalise it a little bit. So that's why I'm kind of bummed out about the fact that I'm not always open to wearing nail polish, because then I'm like, okay, but I'm able to, so why don't I make use of that. And towards myself, also, because I cage myself for a very long time. And I don't want to be caged anymore. Because that's not a fun way to live life. I have, hopefully you have a long life to live.	Desire to commit more to gender identity	Gender identity as target of commitment, significance of gender identity
3	Well, to be honest, I feel most committed to myself. Yeah. Because I also think that, if you cannot be truly yourself, I cannot perform in my work, I cannot, I cannot be a really good partner or friend. So being committed to myself ,since a few years, makes me a better colleague makes me a better friend. Make me a better daughter or parent.	Highest commitment to identity, enabling other commitments	Significance of gender identity, commitment to gender identity enables general commitment
1	And I am in the LGBT committee where [there] are lawyers and secretaries and other people, other employees ...	Involvement in LGBTQ committee at work	Significance of gender identity
5	And I was actually, a little bit forced to start right away for myself, because most of the companies have a little bit difficulties having a transgender at the workplace.	Starting company because committed to gender identity	Significance of gender identity, stronger than work commitment

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
3	I want to be committed to myself, maybe that's, that sounds strange. If you ... for a long time, I lived the life of someone else, so to speak, you know, before I went into transition, I didn't live my true life. So now, since six or seven years, I feel committed to myself, I want to be me, you know, so that's also some form of commitment to me personally.	Being committed to oneself equals being committed to gender identity	Gender identity as target of commitment
8	Yes, but I don't think my gender is particularly related to that for me. Like, I know who I am, what I what I like to do, and I know that those things also change and that I will like change all the time. But I don't feel like those things are very related to my gender.	Gender identity not necessarily related to 'being yourself'	Gender identity <i>not</i> as a target of commitment but self is
1	I didn't expect that I would get so many congratulations. But I did. And people were very, some people are curious and wanted to know how, how and why. Not in an annoying way. So I felt validated.	Feeling of validation after positive reception of coming out	Acceptance of gender identity leads to positive feeling
2	And I told my supervisor about that, Hey, listen, I am transitioning to man. But then I stopped my transition because of my husband. So that means two years ago, when I started last year, year and a half ago, when I started my talks with my counsellor about my process. I told him, hey, I have to pick up where we're at where I stopped because I can't go on like this. And he said, Okay.	Coming out supported by supervisor	Acceptance and support from supervisor

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
7	I think there's a lot more openness. So also, being able to be more open and more confident when you're talking to a customer. I think the service ... in a way the service I think has gotten better as well because the contact is just better. I'm not ... there's less social anxiety, interfering with life in different ways.	Commitment to gender identity leads to better customer service and more confidence	Commitment to gender identity improves performance
4	So what they did, which I didn't feel included was that my team coordinator, like said, like, Hey, we have to fix this. And so they placed some garbage disposals there, but only specifically on our floor.	Team coordinator supporting gender identity	Acceptance and support from supervisor
6	And not in a in a ... she's not a boss. Yeah, I really like her. She's funny in a way as well. It's just ... I dunno. I think I never met a person like her before. She's really strong in what she does. And she's like, well, if you don't wanna do it, make sure you stop it because you're the only one making yourself unhappy. And making everyone else responsible for it. And that's just stupid. Yeah, I'm committed to her. Yeah.	Strong commitment to supervisor because inspiring	Commitment to supervisor

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
4	And I've had a conversation with my boss, like she said, like it's totally fine if you were that. So I think I would wear that more but I do feel a little bit held back. Like when you look at other people. There are no people who will look like me in that way. So Like dressing like, like having eyeliner, wearing nail polish, wearing earrings, I do those things. But I always like I also wear like formal clothing. So it's like a little bit of a match. Mix and match. Defined like I like to look on the one hand look formal, but also still look like how I want to present and who I am.	Supervisor accepting and supporting (cultural) clothing	Acceptance and support from supervisor
3	But to be honest, my manager, she is a woman. She accepted me from the very first moment although she didn't know about transgender people. But she supported me from the very beginning. And it was really key for me.	Supervisor support crucial to coming out and feeling supported	Acceptance and support from supervisor
3	I think the phase in between, you know, changing your gender expression. That way some questions for my colleagues. That they thought, hey, what's happening? What's happening to [participant's dead name]? And then they asked my manager, my manager, that was quite frank, she just said ask [participant's new name] she will explain. She can explain it to you perfectly. So there were questions in that in those period, but not awkward question. Just Hey, what's happening? And why are you doing that? Yeah, yeah, no problem.	Supervisor supporting transition	Acceptance and support from supervisor

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
4	Yeah, well, for example, my team coordinator is a very good friend of mine, she mentored me when I was still in the internship. And she, she got promoted to Team coordinator. So she's my team coordinator right now. Like the way she enables my commitment, the commitment to my job and like, she gives me a lot of space, like, whenever she whenever there are tasks that need to be done. Like, she looks at all individual people, and she's like, okay, who would best do the job, but who would also like, like doing this job? And so she looks at people and looks at me, like, Where can I grow? What can I still be taught? What can I learn? So she, yeah, I think she enables by giving me tasks that are, like, exciting to do. or new to do. She makes the job fun.	Supervisor taking care of employee well-being and distributing enjoyable tasks	Commitment to supervisor enabling work commitment
3	And then I told her Well, I think I think I'm trans. I'm trans gender. She didn't know what that meant. So let's ... she said, Well, I, I support you, I will read about it. And you can tell me about it. So and she supported me from that moment. And I felt secure enough to make the next step.	Supervisor encouraging coming out, building confidence	Supervisor building confidence, acceptance and support from supervisor
8	Yeah. So recently, it's been very busy at work. And my boss, he is an older guy, like 55. Maybe. And he, he also got some comments from his bosses that some things needed to change. And so recently, he has been, like, really Watching every step I do, maybe. So if that keeps ongoing, then I don't really like that Dynamic. So if I, if that would be worsened, and then I don't really want to work there anymore. But I think I would rather work there with that dynamic than not have a job. I guess.	Bad supervisor leadership would be reason to quit job	Commitment to supervisor determines work commitment

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
3	Yeah, well, I always had the feeling I couldn't be myself. So I was playing a role. So I, I was a parent, I was married, I had a partner, I went to work, people were satisfied with my achievements. But for me, personally, I felt I could do better I could ... So not being you're not being able to be yourself doesn't help you achieve your goals, or the goals of your company, or the or the goals of your family or whatever. So yeah, it was much more difficult to be committed to me, because I felt this is not the life I want to life. This is not who I am.	Commitment to others impeding commitment to gender identity (before coming out)	Before coming out, com- mitment to people con- flicting with commitment to gender identity
3	So I did small things, I changed, I started using makeup and paint my nails with transparent nail polish but that was only after 10 years I was working there. [...] And only after 10 years working for [company], I started feeling confident enough to make the first steps.	Feeling confident enough to come out	Level of confidence deter- mining degree of gender expression
7	So like I said, I tried to stay true to myself, but it doesn't always end up like that. But Depends on how confident I feel in the day. For instance, if I don't mind wearing nail polish, but if my confidence is very low, and I would like to belong a little bit more, I will leave the nail polish, which is a construct that's not very, very, like for the for the first thing not very true, but also, it doesn't work like that.	Level of confidence de- termines degree of gender expression	Level of confidence de- termines degree of gender expression
7	Yes. Because like, for instance, there was also a time I wasn't telling people at university because the classes switched around a lot. So I just didn't want to have to tell them over and over and over again.	Not coming out at tempo- rary jobs because bother- some	Level of confidence de- termines degree of gender expression

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
8	<p>B: At university, I kind of realised that maybe ... well, I finally left my parents house, not that they were doing anything wrong, but they just made me feel like there was a kind of silent pressure or something.</p> <p>C: In what way?</p> <p>B: Well, I could do whatever I wanted, but I don't know. I didn't feel free. I wasn't I wasn't really aware of this until I left and left here. I don't know I started experimenting with other things. And one of them was wearing more masculine clothes until one point most people at my study, who didn't know me would address me like a guy. I really like dressing like that and being seen like that. So I did some more research and stuff like that.</p>	Parents indirectly obstructing commitment to gender identity	Level of confidence determining degree of gender expression
7	<p>Because I was less true to myself, I just kind of wanted to stay under the radar. I was also, I was primarily happy if people just perceive me as a guy. So I made sure I put all the work into that to make that happen. So yeah, I just wanted to be under the radar and belong. And I kind of lost myself in that, I think.</p>	Trying less to express gender identity to avoid attention	Level of confidence determining degree of gender expression
7	<p>But at the other store, I really did not feel like coming out because I was like okay, those people are just not going to ... I don't know, I really felt like the dynamics would change if I told that. So I was very secretive about it, which made me feel more uncomfortable about the job as well.</p>	Not feeling confident enough to come out	Level of confidence determining degree of gender expression

Par. #	Quotes	Initial coding	Focused coding
7	And I also kind of tried to push myself from time to time, but it depends on the the self confidence. So like, for instance, a crop top or something that my partner owns that I then wear, which is primarily female clothing, the same as she wears my clothes. And I think those are the ways that I tried to express that in at least clothing.	Level of confidence determines how gender is expressed via clothing	Level of confidence determines degree of gender expression
7	And you could I could also feel that because at [this job] I had no problem with coming out. Because it was really it's a safe space for me.	Safe work environment facilitating coming out	Safe work environment facilitating coming out
7	The people that I wasn't telling that I'm trans, also started perceiving me as a guy. I think I kind of went a little bit further and added some other things that are mostly perceived more feminine, that I stopped caring about being feminine, because people already saw me as a guy anyway.	Easily perceived as desired gender so no need to come out	No need to come out if gender identity recognised