A problematizing review on the assumptions underlying research on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements

In this review the underlying assumptions in existing studies on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements were studied. The problematization approach by Alvesson and Sandberg was used in order to identify and analyse underlying assumptions. A typology of assumptions open for problematization is elaborated on. Seventeen articles were analysed, and alternative assumptions were formulated. These alternative assumptions will hopefully inspire researchers to develop new and insightful research questions for future research.

Keywords: problematization, assumptions, organizational commitment, alternative work arrangements

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Introduction

In the last decade, the amount of alternative work arrangements has increased rapidly (Guest, Oakley, Clinton, & Budjanovcanin, 2006; Lepak & Snell, 1999; Silla, Gracia, & Peiró, 2005). The changes and variations in the structure of the workforce can be attributed to various causes. Organizations ought to increase flexibility to deal with fluctuations in market demand, to reduce labour costs or to develop the knowledge of the workforce (Boyce, Ryan, Imus, & Morgeson, 2007). In this research, alternative work arrangements are defined as work arrangements that do not meet the requirements of traditional employment (fulltime employment without an end date carried out at the organization of the employer) (Kalleberg, 2000). Examples of alternative work arrangements are temporary agency workers and day labourers (Duggan, Sherman, Carbery, & McDonnell, 2020). As workforces become more flexible and work is often temporary, organizational commitment is becoming more fragile and complex. In this research organizational commitment is defined as the relative strength of one's identification with and involvement in an organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

Traditional work arrangements have long been the standard for collaborations between employees and organizations. Most theories and management practices are based on the traditional, full-time, employment model and the unique relationships between employers and employees (Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Connelly & Gallagher, 2004; Gallagher & Sverke, 2005). The underlying assumptions of such theories may not directly apply to alternative work arrangements. An example is the assumption underlying the social exchange theory. It is assumed that workers want to be and feel committed to an organization and that organizations want to commit to employees. It might be, however, that workers in alternative work arrangements don't feel commitment as a necessity as they often change jobs and organizations or maybe they don't want to be committed at all. Instead, non-standard workers may be more committed to their career or professions, yet do not wish to commit to a single organization (Meyer, Allen, & Topolnytsky, 1998). On this basis, I expect there could be other assumptions underlying theories on organizational commitment which may no longer be applicable given the time or space. In this article theory is defined as "a statement of relations among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints" (Bacharach, 1989, p. 496). Assumptions are propositions that are commonly seen as truths and as facts without them being established as true (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Fortus, 2009). A theory is only valid within the boundary of certain assumptions made by the theorist. Assumptions can be made about values, time, and space. Spatial and temporal boundaries limit the empirical generalizability of theories where spatial boundaries refer to conditions restricting the applicability of a theory to specific units of analysis and temporal boundaries refer to the historical applicability (Bacharach, 1989). It may very well be that our current assumptions regarding certain phenomena and theories related to organizational commitment are no longer accurate and relevant making it necessary to re-evaluate existing assumptions.

To give direction to this study, I will focus my research on answering the following research question:

What are the assumptions researchers make in their research on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements?

The objective of this review is to answer the research question and to problematize some of the widespread assumptions underlying current research on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements and to develop a new point of view on these assumptions. An additional goal is to inspire and challenge other researchers within the field of organizational behaviour and human resource management to re-evaluate current understandings and theories on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements. Studying the assumptions researchers make in their research is important to be able to re-evaluate what we think we know about organizational commitment among employees in alternative work arrangements. This will hopefully lead to new insights and to the development of new theories.

Theory

Traditional employment

Traditional employment refers to the standard work arrangement in which there is a direct relationship between the employer and the employee. In this case the employer has full directive control over what task the employee has to perform and how to perform it (Cappelli & Keller, 2013). In standard, traditional, work arrangements it is common for employees to have lifetime employment at the same employer, work is done full-time, and the jobs are carried out at the employer's place under direct supervision of the employer (Kalleberg, 2000).

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment refers to one's identification with, and involvement in an organization (Mowday et al., 1979). The strength of organizational commitment depends on several factors. First, on how well the employee can identify him or herself with the goals and values of the organization. Rousseau (1998) describes identification as "a psychological state wherein an individual perceives himself or herself to be part of a larger whole" (p. 217), for example, an organization. Second, on the willingness to exert effort for the organization. And third, on how much the employee wants to stay part of the organization (Beck & Wilson, 2000). Organizational commitment is a much researched construct because of its important relationship with essential business-related outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover, job satisfaction and job involvement (Eby, Freeman, Rush, & Lance, 1999).

Next to business-related outcomes, organizational commitment is also positively related to employee well-being (Galais & Moser, 2009). Organizational commitment provides a feeling of belonging to the employee and helps to create his or her social identity (Rousseau, 1998). Furthermore, previous research found a negative relationship between organizational commitment and occupational strain. This means that committed employees often experience less strain in performing their job due to the identification with the organization, in comparison to less committed colleagues (Galais & Moser, 2009). It also seems like people want to be committed as a natural instinct to feel better (Pittinsky & Shih, 2004). Since organizational commitment can have many positive outcomes for the organization as well as for the employee, it seems worthwhile to work towards an environment which encourages commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Studying previous research shows that approaches to defining organizational commitment vary considerably making it difficult to find a general accepted definition (Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Mowday et al., 1979; Wiener & Gechman, 1977). In a study by Meyer & Herscovitch (2001) twenty-two definitions of commitment were analysed and all of these definitions had two common features namely, commitment as a binding force and as a factor giving direction to behaviour. According to Gallagher and Parks (2001), the relevance and strength of organizational commitment may vary depending on the type of work arrangement. Considering this and the scope of this study, research on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements, I use the previous mentioned definition by Mowday et al. (1979) describing organizational commitment as the relative strength of one's identification with and involvement in an organization. This means the individual can identify himself with the organization's goals and is willing to invest time and energy in the organization. Organizational commitment gives direction to behaviour as it restricts freedom and encourages the employee to pursue the organization's goals (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). This means organizational commitment refers to more than just loyalty to an organization. As it gives direction to behaviour, organizational commitment refers to an active relationship between the individual and the organization in which the employee is willing to exert effort on behalf of the organization (Mowday et al., 1979). Therefore, the level of commitment to an organization can partly be judged on the employees' actions.

In line with these ideas, Meyer & Allen (1991) proposed a three-component model to organizational commitment. In this model, a distinction is made between affective, continuance and normative

commitment. A distinction between these three components was made because of key differences in mind-sets causing differences in commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). These three components share the view that "commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization" (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 67). They differ in antecedents and lead to differences in employees' behaviour (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Although some empirical questions remain whether affective and normative commitment are truly distinguishable forms, most results evidently support the dimensionality of the construct (Allen & Meyer, 1996). The three-component model by Meyer and Allen (1991) is used in this research and each component will now be briefly explained.

Affective organizational commitment

According to Meyer & Allen (1991), "affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (p. 67). This means that employees with a strong affective commitment to an organization have a desire to stay with that organization and want to continue employment there.

Antecedents of affective commitment can be categorized into four categories, namely personal characteristics, structural characteristics, job related characteristics, and work experiences (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 2013). Consistent and strong relationships have not yet been found between affective organizational commitment and demographic characteristics such as age, gender and education (Mottaz, 1988). However, personal values such as a feeling of belonging and autonomy have been studied in relation to commitment and have been found to correlate (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Such relations with commitment can explain differences in employees' tendency to become affectively committed to a company. Another antecedent which may influence affective organizational commitment is organizational structure. There is some evidence suggesting that this form of commitment is related to decentralization of decision making and formalization of policy and procedure (Morris & Steers, 1980). Decentralization gives employees the feeling of participating in decision making and formalization refers to the availability of written rules and procedures and the awareness of them. Previous research has extensively studied the relation between work experience and affective commitment, but this research has mostly been carried out unsystematic. There is, however, evidence for relations between a lot of different work experiences and affective organizational commitment such as autonomy, job challenge and organizational support (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Continuance commitment

Continuance commitment differs from affective commitment as employees with a strong continuance commitment to an organization don't necessarily want to stay with an organization but they need to stay in regard of the costs associated with leaving, for example, losing their income (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Continuance commitment develops and gets stronger when there is a lack of alternative job opportunities for the employee and the costs of leaving the organization are too high, making it very unattractive to leave. Anything that increases the costs of leaving, and other reasons making it less attractive to leave the organization, can be interpreted as antecedents of continuance commitment.

Normative commitment

The third component of organizational commitment is normative commitment which refers to a feeling of obligation towards the organization. Employees feel they ought to continue employment at the particular organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees with a strong normative commitment behave in a certain way not for their own benefits but because they focus on the right or moral thing to do. They act on their own moral standards determined by social and personal beliefs (Wiener, 1982).

It should be mentioned that the three components of commitment are not mutually exclusive as it seems logical that an individual can feel all three constructs of commitment though maybe not all to

the same extent (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Previous research shows empirical evidence for the dominance of affective organizational commitment in public organizations (Nyhan, 1999). Research by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky (2002) suggests a dominance of affective organizational commitment in public and private sectors. However, the dominance of affective organizational commitment is based on employees with traditional, standard, work arrangements and may not be applicable on employees with alternative work arrangements.

Assumptions underlying research into organizational commitment

This research is about the assumptions that underlie research into organizational commitment of employees in alternative work arrangements. Before detailing these assumptions, it is important to first explain the notion of assumptions. Assumptions are propositions that are commonly seen as truths and as facts without them being established as true (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Fortus, 2009). Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) distinguish five types of assumptions differing in depth and scope namely in-house, root metaphor, paradigm, ideology, and field assumptions.

In-house assumptions "exist within a particular school of thought in the sense that they are shared and accepted as unproblematic by its advocates" (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 254). The set of ideas held by a group of researchers affect how they conceptualize a certain subject matter (Rolland, Dingsoyr, Fitzgerald, & Stol, 2016). This form of assumptions can be identified by studying internal debates and the interaction between a specific group of authors who relate their work to each other by using the same type of research style and use of vocabulary (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

Root metaphor assumptions have more broad images of a certain subject matter, for example, when organizations are seen as cultures with certain values and beliefs held by the members of that organization (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Root metaphors are seen as world hypotheses arising from everyday experiences and applied to another area or scope. It functions as a worldview that forms presuppositions about the world or part of it (Botha, 2009; Pepper, 1942). A root metaphor shapes an individual's perception of the world and interpretation of reality. Root metaphors indicate a deeper aspect of the subject by using conceptual imagery to understand the subject of study. A well-selected metaphor can be a powerful analytical tool for understanding the world or a part of it (Rolland et al., 2016). These assumptions can be studied by identifying the basic image of social reality informing a text or school (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

Paradigmatic assumptions are "concerned with the underlying epistemological and ontological views of the research in the dominant literature" (Rolland et al., 2016, p. 4). Ontology is about the nature of reality, what it consists of, what entities operate within it and how they interrelate to each other. Ontological assumptions relate to the nature of phenomena to be investigated (Bahari, 2010). Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and considers what is regarded as acceptable knowledge in a particular discipline. Epistemological assumptions can be regarded as a matter of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a certain field of study (Bahari, 2010). The differences in assumptions and views in terms of ontology and epistemology depend on the paradigm (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). According to Park, Konge, and Artino (2020) "Research paradigms guide scientific discoveries through their assumptions and principles" (p. 690). Therefore, it is important to understand the paradigm specific assumptions to help clarify the findings of scientific studies. Two research paradigms are positivism and interpretivism. The positivism paradigm is based on the assumption that there is a single objective reality to any phenomena, a reality that can be identified and measured (Park et al., 2020). Positivists view on the nature of knowledge is that knowledge can and must be gathered and developed objectively without involving the values of the researchers or the research participants. This means absolute separation of the researcher and the research participants is required which positivists claim and assume to be possible (Park et al., 2020). The interpretivism paradigm is a reaction to the view of positivists and has a subjective perspective. Interpretivism assumes, in contrast to positivism, that reality is subjective and that reality can be experienced differently as it depends on the individual, meaning that there is more than one reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). As individuals can have their own reality, knowledge cannot be divided

from humans and therefore interpretivists assume that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena. The values of the research participants are very valuable in interpretivism paradigm (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In identifying paradigmatic assumptions it might be useful to read about paradigm debates and some familiarity with an alternative world view is desired (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

Ideology assumptions include the "various political-, moral-, and gender-related assumptions" underlying the research (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 255). An example of gender-related assumptions are the gender normative assumptions (the existence of two binary genders) while people may not feel comfortable choosing between two sexes because they experience themselves not as male nor female (Baker & Beagan, 2014). A different example of ideological assumptions is the norm of reciprocity. It is not written anywhere that reciprocity is self-evident or a law to be obeyed but rather is a moral norm that people often adhere to (Gouldner, 1960). Ideology assumptions can be explored by being aware of very different positions compared to the central assumption regarding interests, focus, identifications, values, and ethical commitments (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

Field assumptions are a broader set of assumptions about a specific subject that are shared by several different schools of thought (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Because field assumptions are shared among so many scholars, they are difficult to identify since they are rarely elaborated on in studies. One way to identify field assumptions is to search across theoretical schools to study whether they have anything in common concerning the conceptualization of the relevant subject. Another way is to look at discussions between different positions and to search for what is not elaborated on, thus the common consensual ground which is taken for granted.

Taken together, assumptions made by the theorist form the boundary within which a certain theory is valid and thus limits the theory's generalizability. This boundary consists of assumptions about values, time, and space. Assumptions about values are often implicit meaning they are not explicitly explained or elaborated on by the theorist. These assumptions are therefore often very difficult to assess by an outsider since these are the product of the theorist's creative imagination and life experience (Bacharach, 1989). Assumptions of space and time are explicit restrictions of a theory. Bounding assumptions in the form of spatial boundaries refer to conditions restricting the applicability of the theory to specific units of analysis, for example to specific types of organizations. Temporal boundaries restrict the generalizability of a theory to specific period of time. Theorists should specify the assumptions they make about time and space in order to be able to evaluate their theory and the generalizability of the theory.

There are different theories that researchers rely on to explain organizational commitment. Two main theories are the social exchange theory (SET) and social identity theory (SIT) (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Guerrero & Herrbach, 2009). These theories are also bounded by their underlying assumptions which limit the generalizability of these theories. To understand which assumptions underlie research on organizational commitment, I discuss these two theories next.

Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory is often used by scholars as a means of understanding the antecedents of organizational commitment (Guerrero & Herrbach, 2009). Although over the years different views of social exchange have emerged, scholars agree that social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). These interactions are seen as interdependent and dependent on the actions of the other party. SET defines the employment relationship as an exchange process between the employer and the employee. For example, when employees feel supported by their organization, they feel inclined to return this feeling and demonstrate stronger organizational commitment (Guerrero & Herrbach, 2009). An important principle of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments. For this, both parties must engage in this exchange relationship and follow the rules or guidelines of exchange. Central in the social exchange perspective is the assumption that the relationship between

an employer and employee is built on the trade of effort and loyalty in return for benefits such as salary or immaterial goods such as organizational support (Blau, 1964; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). This exchange principle is also referred to as the norm of reciprocity which is a universal accepted principle stating that reciprocity is a conditional mutual exchange of gratitude (Gouldner, 1960). The norm of reciprocity is an underlying assumption of the social exchange theory. There is no written law prescribing this interaction of social exchange, it is a norm embedded in cultures.

Theories are bounded by assumptions about values, space, and time. Social exchange theory is bounded by the assumption of reciprocity which is based on norms and values. The norm of reciprocity can be regarded as an in-house assumption since this assumption is shared and accepted among scholars (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). It can also be identified as an ideology assumption as the norm of reciprocity is based on moral norms and values. It is not a written law but you are expected to abide by it and is embedded in the culture (Gouldner, 1960). The norm of reciprocity is thus a bounding assumption limiting the generalizability of the social exchange theory as it is only valid within the boundary of assumptions.

Social identity theory

Social identity theory is also used by scholars to study the antecedents and/or outcomes of organizational commitment. SIT claims that people are inclined to classify themselves and others into social categories. Examples of these categories are groups based on age, gender, religion, or nationality. Individuals can be categorized in several groups at the same time (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Depending on the context, people use criteria to categorize themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups (Brewer, 1979). When someone experiences their own in-group as more favourable compared to the out-group, his feeling of social belongingness grows (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Important in this theory is the notion that "individuals may conceive of the self not only as I, but also as we" (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, & Tetrick, 2012, p. 89). When one can identify him or herself with the organization, the employee is motivated to pursue the organization's best interest as this is now also the self-interest. The employee perceives him or herself as a member of the group, the organization, and now the fate of the organization is also his or hers fate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Meyer and Allen (1991) describe organizational commitment as the attachment to, identification with an involvement in the organization. Social identity theory is a means to understand the identification process which result in organizational commitment. An underlying assumption of social identity theory is that the identification process implies that the employee no longer sees a difference between the self and the organization (Postmes, Tanis, & De Wit, 2001).

SIT starts from the assumption that social identity is mainly derived from group membership. The theory suggest that people strive for a positive social identity by making comparisons in their own favor between the in- and outgroups (Brown, 2000). This assumption is an in-house assumption as the process of identification is shared by several scholars (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer, 1979). This assumption is a boundary condition within which the social identity theory is applicable and within which the antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment can be explained.

Alternative work arrangements

Over the last decade there is a big increase in alternative work arrangements. The increase in the number of employees in alternative work arrangements is partly caused by an organisations' need to adapt to market demands. By working with temporary workers, organisations strive to permanently increase flexibility in their workforce and to reduce labour costs so they can more easily respond to changing economic circumstances (Beer & Kraamwinkel, 2012). This way the risks of fluctuations in workload are divided between employer and employee (Knegt, Klein Hesselink, Houwing, & Brouwer, 2007). Because of this distribution, or even transfer in risk, there are several disadvantages for temporary workers compared to colleagues with a permanent contract. For instance, unequal opportunities, unequal treatment and the lack of certainty provided by a contract (Verhulp, 2013).

Alternative work arrangements include all arrangements except standard, traditional work arrangements. As discussed earlier, traditional work arrangements are characterized by fulltime employment without an end date carried out at the organization of the employer (Kalleberg, 2000). Alternative work arrangements do not meet these criteria. Alternative work arrangements come in many shapes and sizes, such as independent contracting, working for a temporary help agency, contract work, self-employment or gig work (Duggan et al., 2020; Kalleberg et al., 1997). All these various work arrangements are often grouped together in categories such as "nonstandard work" and "contingent work" even though they differ from each other and have different characteristics (Cappelli & Keller, 2013).

Due to the increase in alternative work arrangements a classification of these arrangements is necessary to understand the differences between various forms of alternative work arrangements. The classification system of Cappelli and Keller (2013) is used as they distinguish between alternative work arrangements by grouping arrangements together based on common properties in a way that is important for practice and research. According to Cappelli and Keller (2013), "the classification system is based on distinctions about the sources and extent of control over the work process, the contractual nature of the work relationship, and the parties involved in the work relationship" (p. 575).

There are three main groups of alternative work arrangements namely; coemployment, direct contracting and subcontracting (Cappelli & Keller, 2013). There is, however, a new upcoming economy named the "gig economy" which caused a new form of alternative work arrangements namely "gig work" (Duggan et al., 2020). Taken this form of alternative work arrangements into account, a description of alternative work arrangements is given divided in four main groups.

Coemployment

Coemployment refers to employment relationships where the traditional features of a work arrangement are shared between a client company, an intermediary and the worker (Bidwell & Fernandez-Mateo, 2008). The client company does not hire these employees directly but through an third party agency, making the agency the legal employer (Cappelli & Keller, 2013). The agency is, among other, responsible for the screening, hiring and payments of these workers. The client company is not a direct employer of the employee and does not have a contractual relationship with the employee. However, because the employee is outsourced to the client organization, the company is often involved in the hiring process, and will most likely be responsible for the management of the employee at the client's site such as task allocation (Bidwell & Fernandez-Mateo, 2008). An example of work arrangements based on coemployment are temporary agency workers. These employees are hired on a temporary basis through a temp agency and are outsourced to the client organization. Specific features of coemployment are shared directive control between the client organization and the agency and an indirect relationship involving three parties (the client organization, the third-party agency, and the employee) (Cappelli & Keller, 2013).

Direct contracting

A specific feature of direct contracting is the direct relationship between two parties namely the client organization and the worker, on the contrary to coemployment where the relationship involves three parties. The worker and the organization for which the job is performed negotiate a contract and the terms within this agreement. The difference with traditional employment is that the worker in a direct contracting arrangement is contracted for a predetermined period of time, making the cooperation temporary, and s/he is in full control over the work process (Cappelli & Keller, 2013). Direct contract arrangements, like other forms of alternative work arrangements, is spreading to many different professions and is not limited to one occupation in particular. As a result direct contracting is an increasingly common form of alternative work arrangements (Barley & Kunda, 2006). However, to have a successful direct contracting arrangement, the job performed should be well understood without any disagreements about the execution of the work as the contractor is in control. As a result, this form

of alternative work arrangement is most common in well-defined professions such as computer programmers. Examples of direct contracting are independent contractors and day labourers (Cappelli & Keller, 2013).

Subcontracting

Another form of contract work, subcontracting, is featured by an indirect relationship involving three parties namely the client organization, a third-party vendor, and the worker. The client organization can use the service of a vendor to accomplish a certain job. Together they agree on the end product or service which is agreed upon in a contract. However, it is the vendor's employees who carry out the work that leads to this end product. The vendor is responsible for his workers and hires and manages them. The difference with coemployment is that there is no shared directive control. The client organization does not play a role in the way the work product is produced so the feature of direct leadership does not apply here (Cappelli & Keller, 2013). According to Cappelli and Keller (2013), subcontracting arrangements count as alternative work arrangements because "the employees of the vendor work directly with and on behalf of the client" (p. 589).

Gig work

A younger form of alternative work arrangements is "gig work". According to Duggan et al. (2020), the gig economy is "an economic system that uses online platforms to digitally connect workers, or "individual service-providers," with consumers and represents a new form of contingent labour" (p. 115). However, a big difference with other forms of alternative work arrangements is that the most typical feature of gig work is the presence of an intermediary in the form of a digital platform organization (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). A digital platform organization functions as an online business that makes commercial interactions between workers (also called contractors or self-employed workers) and customers possible (Gramano, 2020).

Gig work is a form of alternative work arrangements because its digital on-demand or work-as required principle sees the contractors as lower ranking, replaceable workers without permanent contracts (Duggan et al., 2020). As the name says, the gig economy does not provide long term work arrangements but offers "gigs" which are tasks expected to be completed within a short period of time which often leads to low commitment relationship between the employee and the organization (Friedman, 2014).

In the world of gig work it often occurs that the contractors get paid for the quantity of work they carry out instead of the time spend on their tasks leading to a very strict transactional relationship. There is very little empathy and little intention to develop trust and commitment in these kinds of relationships. Commitment is low and turnover numbers are high in the gig economy (Duggan et al., 2020).

Gig workers are supposed to be free to choose their own working hours and which jobs or gigs to accept. In practice however, the level of autonomy depends on the platform. In the case of Uber, there is a high degree of platform control which limits autonomy. Instead of self-government and making own decisions, these self-employed workers work long hours and must meet strict requirements during peak times to earn their income and maintain their ratings at the platform (Duggan et al., 2020). On the online platform Fiverr however, freelancers can offer their digital services directly to customers all over the world. These services are referred to as "gigs" and the control of the platform is limited (Green, 2018).

Assumptions about commitment in alternative work arrangements

Based on the social exchange theory and the social identity theory, it can be expected that employees in alternative work arrangements will have different, less strong, relationships with their temporary organization than their colleagues with a permanent contract. Temporary employees most often do not receive similar rewards, will not be offered a permanent contract and are often labeled as just a "temp" leading to a feeling of inferiority (Chattopahyay & George, 2001; Rousseau, 1997).

The underlying assumptions of the social exchange theory and the social identity theory might not apply to employees in alternative work arrangements. The concept of an evolving and growing relationship between an employer and employee is based on an underlying assumption of the social exchange theory namely the norm of reciprocity. However, in alternative work arrangements employees do not have long-term collaborations with the same employer and the norm of reciprocity may not be applicable at all. Also, the assumption that employees want to identify themselves with the organization they are working for may not be applicable to employees in alternative work arrangements as they often quickly change organizations and employers. Therefore, these assumptions may not be relevant in alternative work arrangements and there may be more underlying assumptions which are not applicable to alternative work arrangements. Workers in alternative work arrangements may not even want to be committed to an organization. Take for example independent contractors or gig workers. They can, more or less, decide for themselves whether they want to take a certain job or gig. They are not depending on an employer giving them directions in how to perform their job, independent contractors and gig workers are free to decide how they perform their work so they might be more committed to their job than to any organization. Also, in the case of an indirect relationship involving a third party, the worker may be more committed to the agency or vendor through whom he works for than to the client organization where he performs his job only temporarily before he goes off to the next. And in this case, is it even possible for workers to feel committed to organizations where they only work for so shortly. Instead of having a long employment contract with a permanent organization, these employees work at several different organizations where they only stay for a short period of time making it almost impossible to build a long-lasting relationship and to feel committed to the organization.

In conclusion, there are assumptions underlying the social exchange theory and the social identity theory which might not apply to alternative work arrangements. There might be more underlying assumptions. Theories are only generalizable within the boundaries formed by the assumptions theorists make about values, time, and space (Bacharach, 1989). Identifying and challenging these underlying assumptions helps us to evaluate whether widely accepted principles and theories regarding organizational commitment are still valid. The aim of this study is to identify and evaluate other underlying assumptions in the literature on organizational commitment in alternative work arrangements.

Methodology

The problematizing review was used as a research method in order to identify underlying assumptions in the literature on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements. Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) propose problematization as an alternative to the gap-spotting approach. The gap-spotting approach refers to identifying research questions by spotting gaps in current theories. Here research is expected to draw from and build upon previous research (Rolland et al., 2016). Gap-spotting has led to significant contributions in several fields of research making it an important approach in doing research. However, in this approach existing theories are often reinforced rather than challenged leading to a problem of under-problematization (Rolland et al., 2016). Problematization, on the other hand, seeks to challenge the underlying assumptions of existing theories making it an assumption-challenging approach (Rolland et al., 2016). Problematization is not a goal but a means to identify and challenge assumptions in order to formulate alternative assumptions which can lead to new theories (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

The general assumption is that review articles ideally should include all articles in leading journals over a long period of time on a selected topic (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020). Based on the approach of Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) to problematization, this review focuses on a smaller amount of articles. They advise to work on the basis of the principle "less is more" by which fewer readings of a

large number of studies are advised (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). This way the selected articles can be carefully read, and more attention can be given to coming up with new and unexpected insights.

To answer the research question, data was used in the form of existing literature. The online databases Web of Science, ScienceDirect and Wiley Online Library were used for article retrieval. There were no journals selected to search through prior to the data search in order to avoid subjectivity and to avoid limiting results in advance. In order to search through the online databases, several search strings were used combining the keywords derived from the theoretical framework. To search for articles which studied a form of organizational commitment the following keywords were used: *organizational commitment, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment.* In the search for articles studying a type of alternative work arrangements, the following keywords were used: *alternative work arrangements, co-employment, temporary agency workers, contingent workers, temporary employees, leased employees, direct contracting, independent contractors, freelancers, self-employed workers, day laborers, subcontracting, contract labour, contract workers, gig work, gig economy, crowd work, online platform working, e-lancing, independent professionals, independent contracting, app work.* The search strings were formed by combining the keywords of both sets (keywords regarding commitment with keywords regarding a type of alternative work arrangements).

Because of the four main groups of alternative work arrangements described earlier in the theoretical section, the search for relevant articles was also divided in these four groups. According to Kalleberg (2000), economic changes around 1975 led to new market conditions and organizations searching for more flexibility in their workforce. Hereafter, in addition to the traditional form of employment, more and more alternative forms became available and these became more common. Because of these developments the time span selected for this research runs from 1975. After using the search strings in the online databases, a large number of articles were found. During the first selection only articles studying the relationship between organizational commitment and one of the main groups of alternative work arrangements were included. This was done by viewing the resulting articles by their titles and abstracts and if necessary, by reading a part of the article. Also, for articles to be included, they need to be written in English. A large part of the articles initially found were excluded because they studied other types of relationships.

Because Alvesson and Sandberg (2020) advise to limit the amount of articles used for problematization, a second selection of articles was made. Per main group of alternative work arrangements an attempt was made to include around five articles, then a total of twenty articles would be thoroughly studied (a feasible number of articles to read, re-read and analyse). This selection was done based on the article's number of citations as Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) advise a more narrow literature coverage of key texts. The number of citations gives an indication whether the article plays a key role on the subject of organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements as the more often an article is cited, the more often this article is built upon.

However, the number of citations is not for every group of alternative work arrangement suitable. Research on organizational commitment regarding employees in gig work arrangements is for example limited and articles are often just recently published making the number of citations as a criterion unsuitable. Therefore, another inclusion criterion was used. The quality of the articles is checked by using the Scimago Journal rank for controlling whether the journal in which the article is published is of good enough quality. SCImago Journal & Country Rank indicates which journals are the most leading based on the journal's impact and influence. This indicator was used to control whether the journal in which the articles were published is a leading journal. In order to guarantee the quality of the journals, the journal needed to score at least a Q2 (which refers to the level of quality, varying from Q1 to Q4) in the SCImago Journal & Country Rank.

Not for every type of alternative work arrangement enough articles were found to select five. And in some cases, there was an overlap in articles found between online databases reducing the number of usable articles. In total seventeen articles were selected for the analysis. Table 1 shows the number of articles selected from each online database after the first and second selection.

Table 1: Number of articles selected

	Web of Science			ScienceDirect			Wiley Online Library		
	Articles initially found	Articles after first selection	Articles after second selection	Articles initially found	Articles after first selection	Articles after second selection	Articles initially found	Articles after first selection	Articles after second selection
Coemployment	204	49	3	234	11	1	313	9	2
Direct Contracting	130	9	4	78	4	2	130	0	0
Subcontracting	264	4	2	135	2	1	213	1	1
Gig work	182	1	1	38	1	0	34	0	0

After selecting articles based on the inclusion criteria, the entire articles were carefully read and re-read searching for underlying assumptions. Assumptions underlying theories are most often not explicitly formulated and remain mostly implicit or barely articulated making identifying assumptions the main goal of the problematization methodology (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). The challenge here is to transform what is often seen as truths or facts into clearly formulated assumptions.

In-house assumptions can often be identified by examining the used narrative style and vocabulary meaning how particular subject matters are conceptualized (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Rolland et al., 2016). Root metaphor assumptions can be identified searching for the use of conceptual images used to understand the topic studied (Rolland et al., 2016). Paradigmatic assumptions relate to the research style applied in the study and are concerned with the underlying epistemological and ontological views. This is elaborated on in the method(ology) section and special attention is paid to this section of an article in relation to paradigmatic assumptions. Ideological assumptions can be identified by focusing on values and ethical commitments (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Field assumptions are harder to discover as these assumptions are not elaborated on as they are often seen as obvious. Field assumptions are being made across theoretical schools. Special attention regarding field assumptions is paid to assumptions that appear in articles published in journals that specialize in different directions of research. Meaning these assumptions are being made in different schools of thought.

Identified assumptions were categorized into one of the five assumption groups (in-house, root metaphor, paradigm, ideology, and/or field assumptions). Next to the assumptions found, other information was gathered namely the name of the journals in which the articles were published, the studied type of alternative work arrangement, the theory used to explain organizational commitment and the studied form of organizational commitment (affective, continuance and/or normative).

After having identified the underlying assumptions and having them classified in one of the five assumption categories, they needed to be assessed. According to Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) not every underlying assumption is worthwhile to problematize as problematization should lead to new insights and new research questions. The broader the assumptions and the more often an assumption occurs, the more likely challenging them will lead to new insights. A criterion for challenging an identified assumption was that this should lead to new theories or reasons for future research. Common assumptions will stand out because they will appear more often in several reviewed articles. Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) advise to continually ask yourself what the theoretical potential of

challenging a particular assumption can be. An identified assumption will be problematized as this underlying assumption does not contribute to a "good" understanding of organizational commitment among employees in alternative work arrangements but is commonly shared. Alternative assumptions are developed by combining various theoretical stances and by using creativity (outside the box thinking) as recommended by Alvesson and Sandberg (2011).

Results

During this review I kept track of the journals in which the studied articles were published. Only three journals occurred more than once in these results namely the Journal of Vocational Behavior (three times), the Journal of Organizational Behavior (two times), and the Journal of Management Studies (two times). The vast majority of articles published in the Journal of Organizational Behavior and in the Journal of Vocational Behavior use a quantitative research method (Bartunek & Seo, 2002; Harmon, 1991). According to Bartunek and Seo (2002, p. 237), the majority of articles in organizational behavior use quantitative methodology. The approach of quantitative methodology is used when researchers start with a theory and form hypothesis which are then tested to determine whether they are true or false. This in contrast to a qualitative approach in which observations and interpreting reality are used to develop a theory in order to explain what was experienced (Newman, Benz, & Ridenour, 1998).

The number of articles found per type of alternative work arrangements (table 1) points out that most research is done on coemployment. Results show that little research has been carried out regarding the alternative work arrangement type gig work. Gig work, or online platform working, is a fairly new form of alternative work arrangement, and not much research has been carried out yet on this subject in combination with organizational commitment.

Studied components of organizational commitment

Results from this problematizing review show that most research has been done into the form of affective organizational commitment. In all of seventeen articles analysed, the component affective organizational commitment was studied. Continuance commitment was studied in four articles and the normative component of organizational commitment in only three articles. Normative commitment refers to a feeling of obligation towards the organization. Employees who have a high level of normative organizational commitment don't necessarily want to stay with their organization, but they feel that it's the moral thing to do. Several researchers assume that it is not likely that employees in alternative work arrangements feel morally obliged to continue working for the organization as "a social norm or obligations to maintain temporary work seem unlikely" (Felfe, Schmook, Schyns, & Six, 2008, p. 84) and therefore exclude the normative type of organizational commitment from their research (Felfe et al., 2008; Menatta, Consiglio, Borgogni, & Moschera, 2021).

Theoretical explanations for organizational commitment

Several theories can be used to explain organizational commitment. In the theory section the social exchange theory and the social identity theory were described as these theories are often used by researcher to explain organizational commitment and their underlying assumptions were discussed. Results show that in the majority of the studied articles (thirteen out of seventeen), the social exchange theory has been used to explain organizational commitment. Social identity theory was only used in three articles studied making the social exchange theory the most prominent theory in this review on explaining organizational commitment. As results show, there were three more theories found which were used to explain organizational commitment, namely, relational-transactional framework, dual labour market theory and the organizational support theory. I will briefly elaborate on these theories. *The relational-transactional framework* refers to an exchange relationship between the employee and the organization. The relational aspect is applicable on permanent employees with whom the organization forms long-term relationships. In this relationship the organization invests in the

employee and the employee is more likely to commit himself to the organization. The transactional aspect refers to the relationship with temporary employees which are more transactional in nature as the focus is often on monetary inducements since this relationship is temporary (Cooper, Stanley, Klein, & Tenhiälä, 2016). The theory predicts that workers in alternative work arrangements are less likely to commit to the organization they temporary work for as this commitment is less important to them. As the relationship with the organization is mostly transactional, these employees are more likely to focus on performing their job well and to commit to their profession (Cooper et al., 2016; Lepak & Snell, 2002).

The dual labour market theory claims the labour market can be divided into a primary and secondary market. The primary labour market is characterized by better features than the secondary market. The primary market has higher wages, long term employment contracts instead of temporary work, better working conditions and more and better career opportunities. Temporary workers are an example of employees in the secondary market as their jobs are characterized by lesser working conditions and they have lower job security (Sharma & Warkentin, 2019). The claim that temporary workers are part of the secondary market is an assumption as this may depend on the type of temporary contract. The secondary market may apply to day labourers but highly skilled freelancers on temporary contracts hired for their unique skills may be part of the primary market. According to the dual labour market theory, employment status influences employee's organizational commitment. Employees in the primary market are permanent employees in which the organization invests and in return these employees commit themselves to the organization. Employees in the secondary market (temporary employees) are less committed to the organization because of the little investments of the organization and the high level of job insecurity (Sharma & Warkentin, 2019; Wandera, 2011).

The organizational support theory argues that perceived organizational support (POS) positively influences employee's affective organizational commitment and encourages employees to exert effort in helping achieve the organizational goals (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Employees with a higher level of POS have a higher level of organizational citizenship and are likely to be more affectively committed to their organization than employees who do not. In return for perceived support, these employees reciprocate by being committed to the organization and to increase work effort beyond what is expected (Sharma & Warkentin, 2019). This norm of reciprocity is in line with the underlying assumption of reciprocity in the social exchange theory.

The main objective of this review was to study which assumptions researchers make in their research on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements. During this problematizing review, underlying assumptions open for problematization were searched for according to the typology of Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) (in-house, root metaphor, paradigmatic, ideology and field). An extensive list of assumptions resulted (see the Appendix). As not all underlying assumptions are relevant for problematization these results were finalized in a set of assumptions displayed in table 2.

Assumptions underlying research on organizational commitment

In-house assumptions

The most common assumptions made were in-house assumptions (the Appendix provides further details). The most often reoccurring in-house assumption was the norm of reciprocity. In eight of the seventeen articles analysed, assumptions about reciprocity were being made in relation to employees in alternative work arrangements. The norm of reciprocity turned out to be an underlying assumption in explaining organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements as the following quotes show: "Contingents who feel supported by both agency and client organization, albeit for different reasons, reciprocate by showing commitment toward each organization" (Liden, Wayne, Kraimer, & Sparrowe, 2003, p. 612). "We believe that, in return for this commitment from the organization, consistent with the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), agency workers with high levels of perceived insider status will be more likely to be affectively committed to the client

organization" (Lapalme, Stamper, Simard, & Tremblay, 2009, p. 925). Resulting from the studied articles, the norm of reciprocity as underlying assumption was also used as an explanation for a negative exchange relationship "a contract worker is unlikely to reciprocate attachment to an organization where he or she is made to feel devalued or disregarded, like a second-class citizen" (Boswell et al., 2012, p. 456). "Contingent workers such as temp employees will have less encouraging exchange relationships than regular employees because of the different inducements these two types of employees receive from organizations" (Sharma & Warkentin, 2019, p. 2).

The assumption that employees in alternative work arrangements can form dual commitments was also reoccurring in five articles. Dual commitment refers to an employee being committed to the organization or agency that employs them, and to the client organization where they actually perform their job. "It can only be assumed that contractor employees will also be similarly committed to their employer. That is, it is likely that dual commitment will exist in this context" (Benson, 1998, p. 358). For temporary agency workers this means they feel committed to their agency and to the client company. "Owing to the double relationship that TAWs develop both with the staffing agency who hires them and the client organization they work for, these workers are likely to develop two distinct, although positively related, commitments" (Menatta et al., 2021, p. 2). It is not possible for all employees in alternative work arrangements to form dual commitments as this underlying assumption is only applicable to employees in a triangular relationship. In, for example, direct contract relationships, there is no third party.

Root metaphor assumptions

Several researchers made use of root metaphor assumptions, however, none of these specific assumptions were reoccurring in the studied articles. In the first article reviewed, the researchers made use of the term 'protean careers'. The authors did not elaborate on this metaphor in their article, but protean careers are referred to as a career that is not driven by the organization, but by the person performing the job. This person and his environment will most likely change and develop over time resulting in a reinvented career. The term is based on the Greek god Proteus who could change his shape whenever he wanted to (Hall, 1996). Pursuing a protean career means the employee is in control and there is a high level of autonomy. This also means the employee is responsible for development and cannot simply rely on the organization for this progress (Hall, 1996). The metaphor 'cosmopolitans' refers to employees who feel more committed to their professions than to the organizations they work for (Cooper et al., 2016). The metaphor 'moonlighting' was also only found once and refers to having a second job next to the main, primary job. This second job is performed at the expense of the main job as it is performed during working hours or it is performed in free time (Choudhary & Saini, 2021).

Paradigmatic assumptions

In every article studied, quantitative research is applied. Hypotheses were formulated which were tested by using surveys. In one article the surveys were adapted after a pre-test with semi-structures interview, but the research which led to the results and tested the hypothesis of this study was also quantitative. In none of the article's interviews were used in order to interpret the answers given by the participants or to evaluate common definitions of concepts. In the studied articles, researchers were separated from the participants as they surveys were send to them and there was no direct contact.

Ideological assumptions

As with the paradigmatic assumptions, there is one assumption reoccurring regarding the ideological type of assumptions. The norm of reciprocity is used in eight out of seventeen articles. The norm of reciprocity can be placed under in-house and ideological assumptions. It is also an ideological assumption as the norm of reciprocity is a social norm, something we ought to do, without being it an obligation.

Field assumptions

Reoccurring field assumptions are the assumption that individuals want to feel committed and that employees can be dually committed. These assumptions are common in several articles published in journals in different fields.

Table 1: Identified underlying assumptions

In-house assumptions
• Norm of reciprocity as an underlying assumption of the social exchange theory.
• Temporary workers are employees in the secondary market (Sharma & Warkentin, 2019).
• It is not likely that employees in alternative work arrangements develop normative commitment (Felfe et al., 2008; Menatta et al., 2021).
Root metaphor assumptions
• Protean career to indicate the career is driven by the person and not the organization (Galais & Moser, 2009).
• Cosmopolitans to refer to employees as being more committed to their profession than to their organzation (Cooper et al., 2016).
• Moonlighting to refer to employees who have a second job which may or may not be take place after regular working hours (Choudhary & Saini, 2021).
Paradigmatic assumptions
• A postivistic point of view. Interactions between researchers and participants are prevented by using surveys and knowledge gathering is done in a systematic manner using predevined definitions.
Ideological assumptions
• Norm of reciprocity as an underlying assumption of the social exchange theory.
Field assumptions
• Individuals seek to be committed (Galais & Moser, 2009).
• Employees are able to form dual commitments.

Discussion

Based on the results described above, we see several reoccurring assumptions. Assumptions are only suitable and interesting to investigate if they are often made by researchers meaning they are big enough to problematize. Only then it will be of added value to challenge them hoping this will lead to new insights. In table 3 the predominant assumptions and the alternative assumptions are summarized.

Affective organizational commitment resulted to be the most studied construct of commitment. As discussed in the theoretical background, affective commitment refers to "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Accordingly, employees with a high level of affective commitment desire to stay with their organization. For most employees in alternative work arrangements there are no long-term employment contracts. Therefore, you may wonder if this form of commitment is applicable to this group of employees. They may not feel the necessity to develop such a strong relationship with their temporary employer or may not get the chance to develop a high level of affective commitment before the end of their term of employment (Lapalme et al., 2009). It may be that continuance organizational commitment may play a greater role for these employees. Employees with a high level of continuance commitment don't necessarily want to stay with their organization but they are not able to leave due to, for example, a lack of alternative job opportunities and not able to miss the income (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The type of organizational commitment (affective, continuance or normative) that employees in alternative work arrangements develop may be depending on the type of work arrangement. Highly skilled freelancers, for example, may develop affective commitment to an

organization because he/she is repeatedly rehired by the same organization even though it is not permanent. Contract workers may develop strong relationships with client organizations because the organization they work for gets rehired by the client organizations. So not every employee in alternative work arrangements have only one (short) temporary employment relationship with an organization. This can depend heavily on the type of arrangement making it interesting for future research to study whether the type of organizational commitment depends on the type of alternative work arrangement. Also, for platform work, the component of organizational commitment may be depending on the type of platform. There are digital platforms in which there is a relationship between the platform, the employee, and the customer, for example Uber. There are also online platforms in which the interference of the organization (platform) is very limited, for example Fiverr. Different types of platforms may lead to different types of organizational commitment. Future research can study whether the type of organizational commitment depends on the type of alternative work arrangement and the type of platform.

Related to the question whether employees in alternative work arrangements can develop (a high level of) affective commitment to their temporary organization is the question whether these employees want to commit to an organization at all. Social exchange theory turned out to be a widely used theory which assumes that employees want to feel committed and that organizations want to commit themselves to their employees. This assumption, however, may not hold true for employees in alternative work arrangements and for their temporary organizations. Both parties know in advance that their collaboration is temporary. Central in the social exchange theory is the assumption of an exchange principle also called the norm of reciprocity. This norm is not a written law but an assumption being made about the exchange relationship between employer and employee. This norm of reciprocity underlies this social relationship and is essential for the relationship to grow stronger. The norm of reciprocity turned out to be a common assumption which should be challenged. Future research should examine whether employees in alternative work arrangements and the organizations they work for even experience this obligated feeling of reciprocity. As this norm is related to building long term mutual relationships which do not occur in the same way for employees in alternative work arrangements as they do for permanent employees, the related assumption may not hold true. Similar to the different components of organizational commitment, experiencing the norm of reciprocity may depend on the type of alternative work arrangement. Many organizations hire external employees on a temporary basis because of their knowledge and skills. These employees may be hired regularly making an exchange relationship more likely than for, for example, day labourers who don't return to a temporary organization. This reasoning leads to a new assumption ground, that the norm of reciprocity depends on the type of alternative work arrangement.

According to Bartunek and Seo (2002), most articles in organizational behavior use quantitative methodology. This is what also resulted from this current review. In many quantitative studies the assumption is being made that predefined variables have the same definition and have the same meaning for researchers and research participants in different settings. Qualitative research however, tries to increase the understanding of the different meanings concepts and variables can have for different groups of people (Bartunek & Seo, 2002). Since there is a big gap between our understanding of organizational commitment regarding employees in standard work arrangements (a much-researched topic) and our understanding of organizational commitment regarding employees in different types of alternative work arrangements, it might very well be possible that organizational commitment means different things for these different groups of employees. With quantitative methodology, researchers predefine concepts without testing them against their research group. The methodology chosen by researchers affects how they understand the phenomena studied. It may be necessary to adopt a different paradigm for studies on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements. Instead of making assumptions in pre-defined definitions researchers should adopt a more interpretive style and study whether organizational commitment can mean different things to employees in different types of alternative work arrangements. As underlying

assumptions of existing theories, for example the norm of reciprocity, may not hold true for all employees in alternative work arrangements, an interpretive standpoint may lead to new insights. Interpretivists experience knowledge and reality as part of human beings and therefore this paradigm may be suitable in order to interpret the viewpoint of employees in alternative work arrangements on organizational commitment. Qualitative studies can help researchers move beyond general definitions (Bartunek & Seo, 2002). It is not suggested that qualitative research is, by definition, better than quantitative research. Based on the theory discussed and the results on paradigmatic assumptions in this study, qualitative research could be a helpful way of exploring other meanings to preconceived notions. This will hopefully help the development of new understandings about different meanings that employees might give to the concept of organizational commitment. For qualitative research to be of added value, the execution of these studies should be done well. There are several journal editors who decline qualitative research because of the way it is executed (Shah & Corley, 2006). An alternative paradigmatic assumption is that an interpretive standpoint and the combination of quantitative and qualitative research could lead to new insights regarding this less studied group of employees in alternative work arrangements.

With an increase in employees working in alternative work arrangements, the role for HRM also changes. Employees working for the organization are no longer limited to permanent employees for which HRM is mainly responsible. There are many forms of alternative work arrangements which are often still grouped together as one with all the same characteristics. There is an opportunity for future research to generate a more nuanced discussion and analysis of all these different workers. These workers can be distinguished by several dimensions such as the duration of the temporary employment, the possibility of getting rehired (freelancers for example) and the difference between high and low skilled jobs. A freelance designer can hardly be compared with a seasonal worker in a production factory. More research on the differences between the different types of alternative work arrangements in combination with organizational commitment will hopefully lead to new insights making it possible for HRM to also manage these very different groups of employees. In doing so, the function of HRM will expand from a function inside an organization to a function of a whole system.

This problematizing review focused on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements. The approach of problematization was chosen as this is an assumption-challenging approach and the goal was to identify and challenge underlying assumptions in existing research articles. In comparison with a problematizing review, the structured literature review strives to include all relevant published and un-published studies on the subject. These studies are reviewed in a systematic manner and conclusions are based on these reviewed studies. During the structured review researchers built upon existing studies and theories without questioning them leading to reinforcing conclusions. In the problematizing review the focus is on critically evaluating which underlying assumptions are worth challenging hopefully leading to new insights and better research questions. It might be fruitful when researchers would use the problematization approach occasionally, in order to challenge researchers in keeping a critical view on existing studies and theories so they don't experience these as evident.

Table 2: Predominant assumptions versus alternative assumptions

Predominant assumptions	Alternative assumptions
In-house assumptions	
• Norm of reciprocity as an underlying assumption of the social exchange theory.	• It depends on the type of alterantive work arrangement whether the norm of reciprocity is applicable .
• Temporary workers are employees in the secondary market (Sharma & Warkentin, 2019).	• It depends on the type of work arrangement whether these employees are included in the primary or secondary market (e.g. freelancers versus day labourers).
• It is not likely that employees in alternative work arrangements develop normative commitment (Felfe et al., 2008; Menatta et al., 2021).	• The type of alternative work arrangement influences the development of different types of organizational commitment.
Paradigmatic assumptions	
• A postivistic point of view. Interactions between researchers and participants are prevented by using surveys and knowledge gathering is done in a systematic manner using predevined definitions.	• An interpretivism point of view may lead to new insights. Reseachers should use qualitative methodology and interview participants in order to investigate whether definitions of concepts may be different for different types of groups. Opnions, emotions and values should be included in research to understand the viewpoint of employees in differtent types of alternative work arrangements.
Ideological assumptions	
• Norm of reciprocity as an underlying assumption of the social exchange theory.	• It depends on the type of alterantive work arrangement whether the norm of reciprocity is applicable .

Limitations

Some limitations of this problematizing review must be acknowledged. Every researcher makes assumptions based on, for example, own preferences or experiences. It is often difficult to catch yourself or someone else making assumptions because sometimes they are so widely accepted that you no longer experience it as an assumption. During this problematizing review, I studied the articles included in this review by myself. It is quite possible that some assumptions have been overlooked. For future studies on assumptions, I would recommend to read and re-read the articles but to also have them read by a second researcher to minimalize the opportunity of missing important assumptions. When you write a problematizing review together with another researcher, you can also check each other for making assumptions yourself. It is easy to make assumptions, it is harder to catch yourself in making them. If you do, elaborate on them so that it is clear to readers within which boundary of assumptions your findings can be applied. Writing a problematizing review together with other researchers also gives the opportunity to use brainstorm sessions and discussions in the process of developing alternative assumptions which might lead to more novel insights.

Conclusion

This problematizing review started with the research question: *What are the assumptions researchers make in their research on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements?* In this review common underlying assumptions were challenged. The approach to problematization by Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) turned out to be very useful for this research. The most common underlying assumptions were identified and challenged being the norm of reciprocity, the assumption that temporary workers are employees in the secondary market and the paradigm assumption which have been challenged and for which alternative assumptions are formulated. By proposing a new set of assumptions new research questions can be formulated which may help overcome underlying bounding assumptions.

Many researchers have devoted much time and attention on studying organizational commitment regarding employees in traditional work arrangements (Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Connelly & Gallagher, 2004; Gallagher & Sverke, 2005). Theories resulting from those studies are not always applicable regarding employees in alternative work arrangements due to their underlying assumptions. Researchers are inclined to use a gap-spotting approach and built on existing theories. This problematization of underlying assumptions and identification of alternative assumptions shows how the problematization approach can lead to new insights. Hopefully these new insights will help researchers in their studies on organizational commitment regarding employees in alternative work arrangements. With the many different types of alternative work arrangements available each with their own dimensions, many interesting studies can be carried out in how these different types of work arrangements influences (the components of) organizational commitment.

Appendix

The following table shows the gathered information during the analyses of the seventeen articles studied.

Article No.	Article Title	Journal	Form of alternative work arrangement	Theory used to explain commitment	Studied form of OC	In-house	Root Metaphor	Paradigmatic	Ideology	Field
1	Organizational commitment and the well-being of temporary agency workers: A longitudinal study	Human Relations	Coemployment (temporary agency work)	SIT	Affective	• Individuals seek to be committed. Process of identification. Need for belonging. • Most employees prefer permanent employment. • Commitment is a resource for coping with organizational stress. Being committed moderates the negative effects of change and transitions. • Temporary agency work is often regarded as a work arrangement with a considerable amount of stressors. • OC is related to well-being. • Reassignment decreases well-being. • Temporary agency work is primarily seen as a stepping stone into a permanent job.	Protean careers	Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys).		• Individuals seek to be committed. • OC is related to well-being.
2	The dual commitments of contingent workers: an examination of contingents' commitment to the agency and the organization	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Coemployment (contingent workers)	SET	Affective	• Norm of reciprocity. • Employees want to build a relationship with their agency and/or organization. • Contingent employees form dual commitments. • A sense of procedural justice contributes toward the formation of POS which contributes to OC. • Managers' perceptions of affective commitment are distinct from, yet related to, self-rated affective commitment. • Treating contingent employees as second-class citizens may result in lowered levels of commitment and willingness to help co-workers and supervisors.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys).	Norm of reciprocity	Employees want to build a relationship with their agency and/or organization.
3	Organizational and client commitment among contracted employees: A replication and extension with temporary workers	Journal of Vocational Behavior	Coemployment (temporary agency work)	SET	Affective Continuance	• The extent to which temporary workers have voluntarily chosen this form of employment is significantly related to their affective commitment to their temporary agencies. • POS from the temporary agency is in fact a significant predictor of temporary workers' affective and continuance commitment towards the temporary agency. • Perceived organizational support from the client organization predicts continuance commitment towards the temporary agency. • Workers' attitudes and perceptions formed towards their temporary agency can "spill over" and result in behaviors that are directed towards these workers' client organizations.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, using surveys).		

#	Title	Journal								
4	Bringing the outside in: Can "external" workers experience insider status?	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Coemployment (temporary agency work)	SET	Affective	• Norm of reciprocity. • Agency workers can experience perceived insider status. • Perceived insider status is an indicator of a sense of belonging to the community of the work organization. • Perceived organizational support can contribute to employees' perception of being insiders. • The organization's agents can play an important role in employees' perceived inclusion. • Individuals employed by an organization frequently act on behalf of that organization, thus becoming the organization's agents. • Employees may ascribe to the organization humanlike qualities and view actions by agents of the organization as flowing from the organization itself. • Individuals determine their status in the group on the basis of how they are treated by the authority figures. • Support from the client organization's permanent employees will be a significant contributing element to the perceived insider status of agency workers. • Agency workers with high levels of perceived insider status will be more likely to be affectively committed to the client organization. • Agency workers who think of themselves as insiders of the organization would be more likely to adopt interpersonal facilitation behavior. • The more agency workers feel like insiders in the client organization, the more likely they are to both be affectively committed to the organization and adopt interpersonal facilitation behaviors.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys).	Norm of reciprocity	
5	Tit for tat? Predictors of temporary agency workers' commitments	Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources	Coemployment (temporary agency workers)	SET	Affective Continuance Normative	• It is important for both, agencies and clients, to have agency temps who are committed to them, to gain the maximum benefit from the contingent work arrangement • Temporary agency workers can form dual commitments. • The antecedents of commitment, at least commitment to the client organization, are the same for both types of worker.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys)		Temporary agency workers can form dual commitments.
6	Dual commitment profiles and job satisfaction among temporary agency workers	Applied Psychology	Coemployment (temporary agency workers)	SET	Affective Continuance	• Dual commitment • Norm of reciprocity • Affective commitment seems to be the more reasonable way through which TAWs may reciprocate for the support provided by the agency and the client organization. • TAWs are more likely to experience commitment to their current work assignment rather than their employment arrangement signed with the agency. • Employees simultaneously experience different forms of commitment to varying degrees. • A normative mindset, characterized by obligation to the organization, may be more relevant and distinguishable in non-Western countries. • Normative commitment and affective commitment largely overlap.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys).	Norm of reciprocity.	Dual commitment

#	Title	Journal	Employment	Theory	Commitment	Findings	Trusted agents	Paradigm	Norm	Notes
7	Does the form of employment make a difference?—Commitment of traditional, temporary, and self-employed workers	Journal of Vocational Behavior	Coemployment (temporary agency work). Direct contracting (self-employment, freelance)	SIT	Affective Continuance Normative	• New forms of employment make it difficult to form a form of commitment. • Employees in temporary work show less commitment due to low investment in the organization and the limited perspective on the length of employment. • Entrepreneurs are expected to be highly committed to their own organization and their independence. • Commitment to the form of employment gains importance. • Different foci of commitment uniquely explain outcomes. • Strain is negatively related to commitment. • Affective organizational commitment is lower for temporary workers than for classic employees. • Affective organizational commitment is higher for self-employed than for classic employees. • Affective commitment to temp work is lower than commitment to traditional work. • Commitment to the employment form is higher than organizational commitment. • Commitment to the form of employment is important for the understanding of organizational behavior and attitudes. • Commitment decreases if the social contract of long-term employment in return of loyalty is broken. • In a tight labour market, people are forced into temporary work rather than prefer this form of employment. • Self-employment leads to high commitment.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys).		Strain is negatively related to commitment.
8	Job Insecurity and Employability in Fixed-Term Contractors, Agency Workers, and Permanent Workers: Associations With Job Satisfaction and Affective Organizational Commitment	Journal of Occupational Health Psychology	Coemployment (temporary workers). Direct contracting (fixed-term).	SET	Affective	• Fixed term contract workers are closer to the core of permanent workers than temporary agency workers. • Unpredictability and uncontrollability contribute more to the experience of job insecurity in permanent workers compared with temporary workers. • The relationship between job insecurity and job satisfaction is more negative in permanent, compared with temporary, workers. • Employability reduces strain. • The relationship between employability and job satisfaction is stronger in temporary than in permanent workers and is stronger in temporary agency workers than in fixed-term contract workers. • Job insecurity contributes less to affective organizational commitment in temporary agency workers compared with fixed-term contract workers. • Employability relates negatively to affective organizational commitment in temporary, but not permanent, workers and is strongest for temporary agency workers (compared to fixed-term workers).		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys).		
9	Do I really belong? Impact of employment status on information security policy compliance	Computers & Security	Direct contracting	• SET • Dual Labor Market Theory • Organizational Support Theory	Affective	• Labor forces with different employee positions bring different stakes and level of commitment. • Norm of reciprocity. • Temporary workers are an example of employees in the secondary market. • Contingent workers such as temp employees will have less encouraging exchange relationships than regular employees because of the different inducements these two types of employees receive from organizations. • The status of the employment will affect the security compliance by the employees. • Organizational commitment of employees has a positive linkage to job performance, citizenship behavior, and enactment of beneficial information security behaviors	Trusted agents	Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys).	Norm of reciprocity	Organizational commitment of employees has a positive linkage to job performance, citizenship behavior, and enactment of beneficial information security behaviors

#	Title	Journal	Employment type	Framework	Commitment	Findings/Propositions		Methodology		
10	Profiles of commitment in standard and fixed-term employment arrangements: Implications for work outcomes	European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology	Direct contracting (fixed-term employment arrangements).	Relational-transactional framework	Affective	• Individuals can develop various combinations of commitment to different targets. • Employees in standard employment relationships will develop strong attachments to the organization and their job, profession and supervisor because the organization invests in them and makes efforts to retain them. • In return for both relational and transactional entitlements, standard employees may commit to the full range of workplace targets, whereas fixed-term employees may focus on targets that are most relevant to the inducements that they expect to receive (i.e., pay, experience)—the job and profession. • Fixed-term employees are less likely to develop attachments to the organization and their supervisors in order to protect themselves from the stress and sense of loss that may occur at the end of the contract.	Cosmopolitans	Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys)		Organizations invest less in temporary employees compared to permanent employees.
11	Independent professionals and the potential for HRM innovation	Personnel Review	Direct contracting (independent professionals)	SET	Affective	• Engaged employees tend to have high levels of personal resources (such as optimism and self-efficacy), and be enthusiastically involved in their work. • Self-efficacy is an important personal resource. • Norm of reciprocity.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys)	Norm of reciprocity.	
12	Commitment and work-related expectations in flexible employment forms: An empirical study of German IT freelancers	European Management Journal	Direct contracting (freelancers)	SET SIT	Affective Continuance Normative	• A commitment of freelancers may be established towards the employing company as well as towards informal work groups or projects. • The employer-related commitment of a freelancer decreases with his increasing qualification.		Pre-test with semi-structured interviews. Actual survey was quantitative.		
13	Dual commitment: contract workers in Australian manufacturing enterprises	Journal of Management Studies	Subcontracting	SIT	Affective	• Possibility of dual commitment (to the employer and the host enterprise). Contractor employees will be similarly committed to their employer as to their host enterprise. • The presence of contract labour can have a negative impact on regular employees. • If contract workers have little loyalty to their host company they are unlikely to co-operate with regular employees to improve work processes and productivity.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys)		Dual commitment
14	Serving two organizations: Exploring the employment relationship of contracted employees	Human Resource Management	Subcontracting	SET	Affective	• Norm of reciprocity • There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and affective commitment and also between POS and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). • Possibility of dual commitment.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys)	Norm of reciprocity	Dual commitment

15	Second-class citizen? Contract workers' perceived status, dual commitment and intent to quit	Journal of Vocational Behavior	Subcontracting	SET	Affective	• Dual commitment exists. • The employment arrangement can serve as a status distinction similar to other social identity group markers (e.g., race, gender). • Perceptions of employment status similarity influence the extent to which a contract worker has affective commitment to both the client and employing organizations. • Perceptions of status can shape the attitudes and behaviors of contract workers. • Norm of reciprocity. • Perceiving one has low status at the client organization is likely to erode feelings of commitment. • In triadic relationships, individuals seek to maintain consistency in their sentiments toward those in the relationship. • Individuals are unlikely to want to remain in a situation where they feel they have low status compared to others.		Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys)	Norm of reciprocity	Dual commitment
16	Refashioning Organizational Boundaries: Outsourcing Customer Service Work	Journal of Management Studies	Subcontracting	SET	Affective	• It is difficult for sub-contracting firms to maintain long-term employment relationships. • Contracting organizations generally engage in tighter forms of super vision and labour control. • Dissatisfied employees have lower OC and more intentions to leave. • Peceptions on HR practices correlate with OC and negative perceptions are asssociated with higher intentions to quit. • Perceptions of greater work pressure and higher burnout were believed to be associated with lower commitment and increase turnover intentions. • OC reduces intentions to quit.		The questionnaire was formulated after site visits and extensive discussions with focus groups of employees, trade union representatives and call centre managers. Qualitative research		
17	Effect of Job Satisfaction on Moonlighting Intentions: Mediating Effect of Organizational Commitment	European Research on Management and Business Economics	Gig work	SET	Affective	• Norm of reciprocity. • Work relationship is a form of social exchange relationship. • High level of job satisfaction leads to high level of OC which minimizes intentions to leave or to work for a second organization. • Moonlighting is a significant precursor towards turnover. • Employees who do moonlighting strive for more job satisfaction. • Moonlighters tend to be less committed towards their primary organizations. • OC mediates between job satisfaction and turnover intentions.	• Moonlighting. • E Lancing	Positivism (quantitative methodology, hypotheses testing using surveys)	Norm of reciprocity	

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