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Examining the relationship between presenteeism, professional commitment, and the intention to leave the profession among tour guides¹

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationship between presenteeism, professional commitment, and the intention to leave the profession among tour guides. A quantitative research method was employed to collect primary data to achieve this. The study utilized the "Stanford Presenteeism Scale" developed by Koopman et al. (2002), the "Professional Commitment Scale" developed by Meyer et al. (1993), and the "Intention to Leave the Profession Scale" developed by Weng and McElroy (2012) as data collection tools. The study population consisted of licensed tour guides registered with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and currently employed in the field. A total of 461 questionnaire responses were collected for the research. However, incomplete questionnaires were excluded, resulting in 456 valid responses that were analyzed. The results of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their professional commitment, as well as a significant negative correlation between presenteeism behaviors and their intention to leave the profession. Additionally, the study found a negative relationship between the level of professional commitment of tour guides and their intention to leave the profession.

KEYWORDS

Presenteeism, professional commitment, intention to leave the profession, tour guides

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INTRODUCTION

Tour guiding is a labor-intensive profession characterized by an intensive work schedule and demanding conditions. Tour guides play a crucial role in contributing to the tourism sector, destinations, and the economy of their respective countries, both socially and economically. As a result, tour guides are expected to exhibit high levels of professional commitment. However, the demanding nature of the profession, coupled with individual health issues, may lead to illness or other ailments. Despite these challenges, tour guides often continue working unwell to avoid job loss or complete their tours. This behavior aligns with the concept of "presenteeism," defined as attending work despite being unable to perform at full capacity. Tour guides may engage in presenteeism for various reasons, such as economic anxiety, fear of job loss, a desire to maintain their standing in the sector, or workplace competition. Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) state that one of the factors influencing presenteeism could be professional commitment. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that presenteeism behaviors may contribute to tour guides' intention to leave the profession. In this context, examining the levels of presenteeism, professional commitment, and intention to leave the profession among tour guides and the relationship between these factors is essential. Additionally, understanding the potential negative impacts of presenteeism behaviors on the profession may raise awareness among tour guides about the importance of taking necessary precautions. This study is expected to contribute to the theoretical and practical literature on the subject.

Therefore, determining the relationship between presenteeism with professional commitment and intention to leave the profession of tour guides constitutes the main purpose of the study. In this direction, the following questions were sought to be answered:

- What is the level of presenteeism behavior of tour guides?
- What is the level of professional commitment of tour guides?
- What are the intentions of tour guides to leave their profession?
- Is there a relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their professional commitment?
- Is there a relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their intention to leave the profession?
- Is there a relationship between tour guides' professional commitment and their intention to leave the profession?

In the related literature, various studies addressing professional commitment (Arslantürk, 2016; Özoğul, 2017; Yetgin, 2017; Özoğul & Ege, 2018; Ateş & Pelit, 2022; Agustina, 2023; Huyen et al., 2023; Yang & Choi, 2023) and intention to leave (Gökdemir & Hacıoğlu, 2018; Xu et al., 2018; Yumuk & Koçoğlu, 2020; Dalkılıç Yılmaz et al., 2021; Rahimiaghdam et al., 2024) the profession of tour guides were found, but no study was found to address presenteeism behaviors in tour guides. In addition, there is no study in which these concepts are addressed together. Accordingly, it is thought that this study is important to fill a gap in the literature and has a high original value.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Presenteeism

The concept of presenteeism is derived from the English word "presence," which refers to the state of "being present" or "being there." From this meaning, it can be understood that presenteeism refers to the condition of being physically present (Çiftçi, 2010). The term was first introduced by Cooper (1996), who defined it as "the state of being physically present but not functionally present at the workplace." This definition is further elaborated as "going to work despite being unwell and needing rest at home" (Akdoğan et al., 2018; Karanika-Murray & Cooper, 2018). Cooper (2018) also described it as "the problem of employees being at work but unable to work fully due to illness or other medical conditions." Presenteeism is often associated with the tendency of employees to attend work despite illness, injury, or anxiety, which can lead to decreased productivity (Abasilim et al., 2015; Prater & Smith, 2011). Sanderson and Andrews (2006) and Dewa, McDaid, and Ettner (2007) define the concept as "coming to work but being unable to work due to functional impairments." Another definition characterizes it as "the

phenomenon of people coming to work despite medical complaints and health problems that require rest and absence from work" (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005). In other words, it can be described as *"the situation in which an employee attends work despite a medical illness that prevents them from working fully"* (Widera et al., 2010). Based on these definitions, presenteeism is a global phenomenon, commonly defined as *"frequently going to work sick"* (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). The common point in the definitions of presenteeism is that *"employees are present at work despite physical and mental health problems, and their productivity decreases"* (Öztürk & Öztürk, 2023). Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) defined presenteeism as working at low capacity and argued that presenteeism is a combination of physical presence and psychological absenteeism. In this case, employees may be mentally distracted from work in case of illnesses but still feel obliged to be physically present at the workplace (Şeremet et al., 2023; Çelik & Durmuş, 2024). The concept of presenteeism is discussed under the following headings in the context of the theoretical framework (Johns, 2010; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019):

- **Health:** Health should be recognized as a subjective concept. Health and illness are two opposite poles of a continuum, and in relatively non-serious health events, employees make decisions based on their assessment of where they see themselves on the continuum.
- **Presenteeism and Absenteeism:** The relationship between presenteeism and absenteeism should be considered. Studies show both positive and negative correlations between these two concepts.
- **Job Insecurity:** The job insecurity thesis should be developed. This tends to be contradictory with downsizing and temporary employment. It is stated that job insecurity should be measured directly instead of inferring it from organizational practices.
- **Individual Characteristics:** An individual's personality, work attitude, and experience should not be excluded. Considering the motivational component of presenteeism, employees' characteristics, such as conscientiousness, self-esteem, resilience, and job-related attitudes, such as organizational citizenship behavior and job satisfaction, as well as their subjective experiences of stress and organizational justice levels, should be considered.
- **Social Dynamics:** Attention should be paid to social dynamics. These may include gender and social expectations regarding an employee's interaction with team members, supervisors, and customers. Depending on the type of work and organization, some situations may encourage a culture of presenteeism, while others may encourage absenteeism.

Employees often continue to work despite poor mental or physical health, which suggests that their presence in the workplace may be insufficient, potentially leading to issues arising from presenteeism (Karagöz & Bektaş, 2020). In this context, presenteeism represents a risky form of organizational behavior, particularly for employees who are unwell but remain at work. Delaying or postponing sick leave may result in minor health issues becoming more serious (Avcı, 2023). Within the conceptual framework of presenteeism, *"illness"* encompasses both acute and minor health problems, such as the common cold, and chronic and more serious conditions, including diabetes, arthritis, and irritable bowel syndrome (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). Other health issues that may contribute to presenteeism include allergies, asthma, heart disease, hypertension, migraines, respiratory infections, neck and back pain, along with mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, burnout, stress, family issues, and financial difficulties (Abasilim et al., 2015).

Presenteeism, which negatively affects individual productivity, is more costly than absenteeism. There are also uncertainties, as it is usually impossible to say when or how much an illness or medical condition hinders a person's performance (Cooper, 2018). Although presenteeism is an interdisciplinary subject, it has not yet been fully explained (Çiftçi, 2010). In recent years, significant research has been conducted on the concept from a range of disciplines and perspectives, including work psychology, work and management, occupational health, public health, and economics (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Karanika-Murray & Cooper, 2018).

However, in the years when the concept of presenteeism was first introduced, it was explained in terms of illness and feeling unwell. In later years, the definition of the concept evolved into "not doing or not being able to do work for whatever reason." Although the concept has been handled in the context of the body and thought in the studies on the subject, it is stated that observable behaviors can determine the concept, and this determination is difficult (Yılmaz & Söyük, 2024). Therefore, it can be said that it is a controversial concept in the relevant literature, and there is no single definition or clear consensus on the conceptual framework.

Job insecurity (employees' uncertainty about their jobs) (Menéndez-Espina et al., 2020) and financial concerns are among the most common reasons why employees go to work despite being sick (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Bergström et al., 2009; Widera et al., 2010; Prater & Smith, 2011; Bierla et al., 2013; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Ardiç, 2024). Workplace-based situations such as workplace norms, workplace climate, and managers' approaches also cause individuals to exhibit presenteeism behavior (Karanika-Murray & Cooper, 2018; Akyol & Evren, 2022).

Presenteeism has adverse individual effects, such as a decrease in employees' productivity, deterioration of their health conditions, and negative organizational effects, such as general workforce productivity and corporate culture in the long term (Dökmeci & Ertürk, 2024). In addition, the consequences/outcomes of presenteeism include the need for additional time to complete tasks, a decrease in the quality and quantity of work performed/impairment in service quality, functional disorders in the execution of work, decreased performance capacity, deterioration of social relations with colleagues, and decreased motivation (Abasilim et al., 2015).

The literature reveals a notable presence of studies that address the concept from a theoretical perspective (Sanderson & Andrews, 2006; Dewa et al., 2007; Çiftçi, 2010; Johns, 2010; Widera et al., 2010; Abasilim et al., 2015; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015; Cooper, 2018; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Karanika-Murray & Cooper, 2018; Tok et al., 2022; Yılmaz & Söyük, 2024). There are also empirical studies on the concept of presenteeism in different fields and disciplines (health, psychology, public administration, education, business, commerce, textile, sports) (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Bergström et al., 2009; Prater & Smith, 2011; Bierla et al., 2013; Akdoğan et al., 2018; Seçkin Ağırbaş & Çakmak Yıldızhan, 2019; Çiçek & Kılınç, 2020; Karagöz & Bektaş, 2020; Akyol & Evren, 2022; Bakan et al., 2022; Karaçınar & Özdemir, 2022; Şahin & Kanbur, 2022; Avcı, 2023; Oğuz, 2023; Özel & Erbaşı, 2023; Şeremet et al., 2023; Türkkkan & Soyman, 2023; Ardiç, 2024; Çelik & Durmuş, 2024; Dökmeci & Ertürk, 2024; Öztürk & Hırlak, 2024; Sarı & Demirbağ, 2024). In addition, presenteeism has also been a concept studied in the tourism literature. The concept of presenteeism has been addressed in the context of variables such as job insecurity, emotional exhaustion, burnout, personality traits, life satisfaction, physical and mental well-being, emotional commitment, organizational silence, perceived servant leadership, organizational alienation, and job satisfaction in the tourism literature (Güdü Demirbulat & Bozok, 2015; Erbaş & Yeşiltaş, 2017; Çiçek & Aknar, 2019; Özdemir & Yılmaz, 2019; Karagöz & Uzunbacak, 2020; Yücel, 2020; Özer & Atay, 2021; Öztürk & Öztürk, 2023).

Professional Commitment

The concept of professional commitment has its roots in studies on the concept of "career" (Greenhaus, 1971). However, career and professional commitment have been re-evaluated recently, leading to a consensus that these terms are essentially interchangeable. In their study, Lee et al. (2000) suggested that the terms "career" and "occupation" are sometimes used interchangeably in the commitment literature, emphasizing that this distinction is largely a matter of perspective. They argued that "occupation" is the most appropriate term for such evaluations. The literature indicates a growing number of studies on the concept of commitment. As more researchers engage with the topic, the concept has become more clearly defined, moving away from its previous complexity and multifaceted nature (Meyer et al., 1993). Consequently, commitment theory and research have been the subject of numerous critical reviews (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Morrow, 1983; Reichers, 1985).

Professional commitment can be defined as "*a psychological bond between an individual and his/her current or future occupation*" (Lee et al., 2000). This bond is based on an emotional

response to the profession and the desire to stay in that field. It also creates an idea of satisfaction and determination to stay in the same profession/field in the future. The more an individual identifies with his/her profession (or field of work) and the more positive feelings he/she has about this field, the higher his/her level of professional commitment (Blau, 2003; Schmidt et al., 2022). Professional commitment is also defined as "a concept associated with an individual's understanding of the importance of his/her profession in his/her life as a result of his/her skills and expertise" (Özdevecioğlu & Aktaş, 2007). In other words, professional commitment can be explained as "an individual's perception of the importance of his/her profession in his/her life and how central it is as a result of his/her studies to gain skills and expertise in a certain field" (Baysal & Paksoy, 1999). Factors affecting professional commitment include (a) *personal factors* (gender, age, education level, personality traits, values, etc.), (b) *role-related factors* (role ambiguity, role conflict, etc.), (c) *professional experience factors* (working experience, satisfaction, etc.), (d) *cultural factors* (differences in management ideas and practices in the context of culture, etc.) (Ağdoğdu & Aşıkil, 2011; McCarthy, 2014). The consequences of professional commitment are examined under four headings: professional performance, work withdrawal, absenteeism, and intention to leave the profession (Aydoğdu & Aşıkil, 2011):

- **Professional Performance:** Performance can be evaluated from different perspectives, such as participation in work, fulfillment of assigned tasks, and behavioral processes. Performance evaluation can be obtained from various sources such as employees themselves, their managers, and output measurements (sales or production figures, etc.) (Arbak & Kesken, 2005; Derin et al., 2017; Karimivand, 2023; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall, 1990).
- **Work Withdrawal:** When professional commitment is low, employees do not try to do their jobs and cannot make sacrifices for their jobs. The motivation levels of these employees also decrease (Arbak & Kesken, 2005; Karimivand, 2023; Meyer et al., 2002).
- **Absenteeism:** Research shows a negative relationship between absenteeism and professional commitment. In other words, employees with lower levels of professional commitment are more likely to be absent (Arbak & Kesken, 2005; Karimivand, 2023; Randall, 1990).
- **Intention to Leave the Profession:** Research in this area shows that there is a negative relationship between intention to leave and professional commitment (Arbak & Kesken, 2005; Derin et al., 2017; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Uştu & Tümkaya, 2017).

In the related literature, Meyer & Allen (1984) suggested that professional commitment may have two dimensions, namely "affective commitment" (meaning an emotional attachment, identification, and involvement in the organization) and "continuance commitment" (reflecting the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization). However, Allen & Meyer (1990) suggested that "normative commitment" (reflecting a perceived obligation to stay in the organization) could be added as a third dimension (Meyer et al., 2002).

Three distinct themes have been identified based on the definition of commitment in the existing literature. These themes are explained as affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization), continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving the organization), and normative commitment (obligation to remain in the organization). The commonality among these three themes is that commitment is a psychological state that defines the employee's relationship with the organization, influencing the decision to continue or terminate membership. However, each form of commitment differs due to the nature of the psychological state involved. Employees with strong affective commitment remain with the organization because they want to; those with strong continuance commitment stay because they need to; and those with strong normative commitment stay because they feel they should (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In light of this information, professional commitment is conceptualized as a three-dimensional model. These dimensions include affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment arises when involvement in the profession is a satisfying experience, such as when

an individual can engage in fulfilling work or develop valuable skills. Continuance commitment emerges when an individual makes investments—such as the status associated with membership in a particular occupation or the time and effort spent acquiring occupation-specific skills—that would be lost or diminished if they were to change careers. Finally, normative commitment develops through internalized pressures to adhere to specific actions and the receipt of benefits that create a sense of obligation to reciprocate. For instance, belonging to a family with a history in a particular profession or receiving financial support to pursue a career can foster normative commitment (Meyer et al., 1993). Further details on the dimensions of professional commitment are provided by Scholl (1981), Wiener (1982), Hartmann and Bambacas (2000), and Ağdoğdu and Aşıkil (2011).

- **Affective Commitment:** This dimension refers to the sense of belonging and commitment to the profession. It is associated with personal characteristics such as pay, supervision, role clarity and skill diversity, organizational structures, and work experiences.
- **Continuance Commitment:** It is associated with the perceived cost of leaving the profession. Investments made directly or indirectly in the profession are included in the perceived costs. Demographic factors such as age, educational attainment, and professional experience are expected to show the most substantial relationship with continuance commitment.
- **Normative Commitment:** It refers to an employee's feeling of obligation to remain in the profession. Therefore, employees with strong normative commitment stay in the profession because they believe it is the “right and moral thing to do.” Normative commitment is developed through social experiences that show that it is appropriate for the employee to remain loyal to the profession and through benefits (tuition fees, training, etc.) that create a sense of obligation to reciprocate.

Professional commitment is a concept studied in tourism literature and different fields and disciplines. In the tourism literature, professional commitment has been discussed in the context of variables such as tourist incivility, job stress, job satisfaction, career commitment, work-family conflict, tourism education, intention to leave the profession, burnout, and economic anxiety (Özdevecioğlu & Aktaş, 2007; Arslantürk, 2016; Yetkin, 2017; Ağca et al., 2018; Özoğul & Ege, 2018; Yumuk & Koçoğlu, 2020; Akgündüz & Eser, 2022).

Intention to Leave the Profession

Intention to leave the profession is “*a situation that arises due to negative perceptions formed by the individual towards the profession he/she is practicing and reflects attitudinal tendencies accordingly*” (Çiftçioğlu, 2011). According to another definition, the concept is also expressed as “*a conscious decision or intention of employees to leave the organization or profession.*” Intention to leave the profession, which is related to the desire or plans of employees to leave their profession, is defined as “*the probability that an employee will leave his/her current profession within a certain period of time.*” In other words, the intention to leave the profession is “*the situation in which employees have the desire to switch to another profession due to dissatisfaction with the organizational work environment or the work performed*” (Büyükyılmaz et al., 2020). Leaving a job or profession is a time-consuming process that requires actions such as forming ideas and reviewing new job alternatives (Özçelik-Bozkurt & Bayram, 2020).

The action of leaving the profession can occur voluntarily (e.g., desire to quit, resignation, finding a better job, etc.) or as a result of external factors (e.g., dismissal, retirement, death, or disability) (Çiftçioğlu, 2011). Accordingly, it can be said that personal characteristics, relationships at the workplace and organizational culture, the characteristics of the work performed and the remuneration received in return, career opportunities, and future expectations are practical on the intention of employees to quit the profession (Büyükyılmaz et al., 2020). Individuals with negative perceptions may think of changing their profession and turn to different occupational groups. For this reason, leaving the profession is shown among the behaviors that these individuals frequently exhibit (Blau et al., 2003; Arıkan Saltık et al., 2016). Therefore, it is seen that the intention to leave a profession is a different concept than the intention to quit a job.

Intention to leave a profession is defined as the intention to act entirely outside of one's profession and career path (Hayne, 2009).

The intention to leave the profession has been studied in tourism literature and other fields. In tourism studies, it has been examined concerning factors such as professional commitment, individual-occupation fit, social status of the profession, burnout, job insecurity, working conditions, job satisfaction, crisis, perceived organizational support, and perceived professional barriers (Arıkan Saltık et al, 2016; Avcı et al., 2017; Gökdemir & Hacıoğlu, 2018; Seçilmiş et al., 2019; Özçelik Bozkurt & Bayram, 2020; Yumuk & Koçoğlu, 2020; Dalkılıç Yılmaz et al., 2021).

Tour guides are tourism professionals who accompany local and foreign tourists to their desired destinations, explaining the natural, cultural, and historical attractions in the language preferred by the tourists. They guide visitors throughout the tour, helping to create a unique experience. The level of professional commitment among tour guides is crucial for promoting the tourism sector, destinations, and countries (Yumuk & Koçoğlu, 2020, p. 190). Nevertheless, tour guides also have some problems like other tourism employees. Presenteeism, expressed as being unable to go to work due to illness or different reasons but still being at work, can negatively affect tour guides in their professional lives and cause them to spend the tour inefficiently. Accordingly, it is predicted that the professional commitment of tour guides will be negatively affected, and tour guides may intend to leave the profession. Although intention to leave the profession is one of the results/outputs of professional commitment, it is stated that there is a negative relationship between these two concepts (Ağdoğdu & Aşıkil, 2011; Karimivand, 2023). On the other hand, it is stated that professional commitment is closely related to presenteeism (McKevitt et al., 1997; Bierla et al., 2013; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015).

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses and the theoretical background/theoretical supports of the research are presented below.

Organizational commitment leads employees to invest their full energy and effort for the organization's benefit, often resulting in behaviors such as continuing to work despite illness, exceeding job expectations, and working beyond legal obligations (Kaygın et al., 2017). The development of organizational commitment encourages employees to engage in work behaviors that contribute to organizational effectiveness. Key positive work behaviors include reduced absenteeism, decreased intention to leave, and lower levels of tardiness (Selamat et al., 2013). Strong attachment to one's job, a sense of moral obligation, or fear of job loss (job insecurity) can all contribute to presenteeism (Johns, 2010). When presenteeism is driven by an employee's concern about negatively impacting the organization, it can be viewed as a specific outcome of organizational commitment (Kendir et al., 2018). Organizational commitment is also closely related to professional commitment (Blau, 2003; Meyer et al., 1993). Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis (H1) was developed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their professional commitment.

Individuals who try to fulfill their duties by forcing themselves despite the negativities (excessive workload, stress, etc.) in the business environment exhibit presenteeism behavior. Ultimately, these negative situations lead to the emergence of the intention to leave the profession and a process that leads to quitting the job completely (Türkan & Soyman, 2023). When employees feel obliged to go to work despite being sick, after a while, this state of obligation can reduce their commitment to the organization and cause them to intend to leave (Quazi, 2013; Chun & Song, 2020). Employees with presenteeism behavior may feel independent from the organization after a while and may have a higher intention to leave the profession (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016). A person who needs treatment or rest is likely to continue working (presenteeism) and wear himself/herself out physiologically or psychologically and intend to leave over time. In this respect, presenteeism should be considered among the antecedents that increase employees'

intention to leave (Kendir et al., 2018). In light of this information, the following hypothesis H2 was created.

H2: There is a positive relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their intention to leave the profession.

Commitment to the organization means that the employees view themselves as an integral part of the organization and are not inclined to leave the job. This emotional state requires the employee to actively work for the organization's benefit (Güven & Kaplan, 2017). It is generally accepted that employees with a strong bond with their organization are much less likely to leave (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Professional commitment refers to the way individuals are interested in their profession. Professional commitment is linked to important outcomes such as reduced intention to leave and higher satisfaction levels at both organizational and occupational levels (Bline et al., 1992). It is observed that when individuals are provided with a work environment that is suitable for their work requirements, their organizational and professional commitment increases. In contrast, employees' professional commitment decreases in the opposite case (negative work experiences). Employees who decide to leave the organization due to negative work experiences also tend to leave the profession (Ayree & Tan, 1992; Cohen, 2000). Based on this information, the following hypothesis, H3, was formulated.

H3: There is a negative relationship between tour guides' professional commitment and their intention to leave the profession.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of licensed tour guides who are actively working and authorized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Collecting data from the entire population is considered comprehensive, whereas gathering data from only a subset is known as sample-based data collection. Comprehensive data collection is superior to sample-based data collection in terms of providing a precise idea about the population. However, this method is more problematic as it is time-consuming and costly (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2004). Therefore, in this study, data were collected by determining the sample group. From this point of view, firstly, the size of the entire population was determined, and then the number of the sample was determined. According to the information obtained from the Turkish Tourist Guides Association (TUREB), it was determined that the number of tour guides registered to the chambers of tourist guides and working actively in 2024 was 10,709 (tureb.org.tr.2024). The research employed the convenience sampling technique, wherein individuals who volunteer to participate are included in the sample (Ural & Kılıç, 2011). The sample size was determined using a population-based formula widely accepted for quantitative research, and it was calculated that the minimum required sample size should be 371 (Altunışık et al., 2012). Tour guides from this population who agreed to participate in the survey were included, resulting in a total sample size of 462 individuals.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

A quantitative research approach was employed in this study, with the questionnaire technique used to collect primary data. The questionnaire was developed based on the theoretical insights from the literature review. The questionnaire consists of four sections. The first section includes the "Presenteeism Scale" developed by Koopman et al. (2002) and adapted into Turkish by Baysal (2012) to assess the level of presenteeism behavior among tour guides. This scale comprises six items and was initially analyzed as a single dimension. However, subsequent factor analysis revealed that the scale actually comprises two factors: completing the work and avoiding distraction (Karagöz & Bektaş, 2020). Three items in the scale (Items 1, 3, and 4) were reverse scored, and these were calculated by reversing their values during scoring. The second section features the "Professional Commitment Scale" developed by Meyer et al. (1993) and adapted into Turkish by Tak and Çiftçioğlu (2009) to measure the professional commitment levels of tour guides. This scale contains 18 items, analyzed across three dimensions: professional continuity,

normative, and affective commitment. Five items in the scale (Items 2, 4, 5, 11, and 14) were reverse scored and recalculated by reversing their scores. The third section of the questionnaire includes the "Intention to Leave the Profession Scale" developed by Weng & McElroy (2012) and adapted into Turkish by Arıkan Saltık et al. (2016) to assess tour guides' intentions to leave their profession. This scale consists of four items and was analyzed as a single dimension. The fourth section comprises ten questions aimed at capturing the socio-demographic characteristics of the tour guides participating in the study. The questionnaire was created and distributed online between May and September 2024 to facilitate the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS statistical software following the study's objectives and hypotheses. The dataset was first examined for missing data, extreme values, and outliers during the data analysis process. Outliers were identified using the Mahalanobis method, ensuring that the criterion for multivariate normality was met. A box-plot test was applied to 462 questionnaire forms, and 6 questionnaires found to have extreme values and outliers were removed from the data set. The study continued with a total of 456 questionnaires. Afterward, "Reliability Analysis" was conducted to test the reliability of the scales used in the study. The suitability of the data for parametric tests was determined by a normal distribution test, and then "Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)" was performed for each scale to test the construct validity. Finally, the strength of the relationship between the variables in line with the established model was indicated using correlation analysis.

FINDINGS

As part of the research, the socio-demographic characteristics of tour guides were analyzed. The findings revealed that 59.2% of the participants were male, while 40.8% were female. The majority of the participants were aged 21-40 (Generation Y) at 46.5%, followed by those aged 41-55 (Generation X) at 37.7%. Additionally, 53.7% of the participants were married. Most tour guides were found to hold a bachelor's degree (45.8%) or an associate degree (26.3%), indicating that they are well-educated individuals.

An analysis of the findings related to the professional lives of the participating tour guides shows that the majority are experienced, with 42.3% having over 10 years of experience and 28.4% having 6-9 years of experience. Regarding employment status, 35.1% of the participants identified as self-employed, 31.8% reported working under an agency, and 33.1% indicated working both under an agency and as self-employed. Additionally, 45% of the participants obtained their licenses by completing a university program in tourism guidance or tour guiding, while 18.6% acquired their licenses through ministry-run courses. Examining their service types, the majority of tour guides conduct daily tours (33.2%), followed by package tours (30.9%).

When the answers to the question of willingly choosing the profession directed to tour guides and their satisfaction with the profession are analyzed, the majority (79.2%) chose their profession willingly and stated that they are satisfied with the tour guiding profession (66.3%).

As a result of the reliability analysis of the Presenteeism scale, Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated to be 0.77. This value exceeds the 0.70 threshold, which is considered the minimum acceptable value for reliability analysis (Bayram, 2004, p. 128; Altunışık et al., 2012, p. 126), indicating that the scale is 'highly reliable' (Kayış, 2010, p. 405). The mean level of participants' agreement with the items on the scale ranged from 3.49 to 3.67. Based on these results, it is evident that tour guides exhibit a high level of principled behavior ($\bar{X} = 3.57$), meaning they remain at their jobs and complete their tasks even when sick or otherwise unable to perform fully.

Table 1.
Distribution of Participants According to Socio-Demographic Characteristics

<i>Variables</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender	Female	186	40,8
	Male	270	59,2
Age	20 years and younger	8	1,8
	21-40 years	212	46,5
	41-55 years	172	37,7
	56-74 years	64	14
Marital Status	Single	211	46,3
	Married	245	53,7
Education Level	High School	43	9,4
	Associate Degree	120	26,3
	Bachelor's Degree	209	45,8
	Postgraduate	84	18,4
Guidance Experience Duration	1 year or less	32	7
	2-5 years	100	21,9
	6-9 years	131	28,4
	10 years or more	193	42,3
Work Type	Agency	145	31,8
	Self-employed	160	35,1
	Both agency tours and self-employed	151	33,1
License Acquisition Method	Associate Degree Program	83	18,2
	Undergraduate Program	205	45
	Master's Program	83	18,2
	Course by the Ministry	85	18,6
Service Group	Transfer	183	19
	Night Tour	162	16,9
	Daily Tour	318	33,2
	Package Tour	296	30,9
Voluntary Choice of Profession	Yes	361	79,2
	No	95	20,8
	Very Satisfied	122	26,8
Occupational Satisfaction	Satisfied	180	39,5
	Undecided	99	21,7
	Dissatisfied	48	10,5
	Very Dissatisfied	7	1,5
Total		456	100

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the construct validity of the Presenteeism scale. Before the EFA, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were applied to determine whether the sample size was adequate for factor analysis. The KMO value for the scale was 0.740 ($\chi^2 = 1275.020$; $df = 15$; $p < 0.05$), which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.50, indicating good suitability for factor analysis (Sharma, 1996, p. 116). It was found that the factor loading values for the scale were all greater than 0.50 (ranging from 0.851 to 0.896). The scale, comprising six items in total, was divided into two dimensions: "Completing the Work" and "Inability to Concentrate on Work." The two dimensions of the Presenteeism scale accounted for 77.707% of the total variance.

Table 2.
Explanatory Factor Analysis Results of the Presenteeism Scale

Item	Statement	Factors	
		Completing Work	Avoiding Distraction
6	Despite having my (health problem), I felt energetic enough to complete all my work.	0,896	
5	At work, I was able to focus on achieving my goals despite my health problems.	0,889	
2	Despite having my (health problem), I was able to finish hard tasks in my work.	0,851	
1	Because of my health problem, the stresses of my job were much harder to handle.		0,884
3	My health problem distracted me from taking pleasure in my work.		0,877
4	I felt hopeless about finishing certain work tasks due to my health problem.		0,855
Factor Eigenvalues		2,851	1,811
Variance Explained by Each Factor (%)		39,135	38,572
Total Variance Explained (%)		77,707	
Overall Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient		0,778	
Overall Arithmetic Mean of the Scale		3,57	
Overall Standard Deviation of the Scale		,83113	
KMO Value		0,740	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approximate Chi-square	1275,020
		df	15
		Sig.	0,000

As a result of the reliability analysis of the Professional Commitment Scale, Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated to be 0.914. This value exceeds the 0.70 threshold, the minimum acceptable value for reliability analysis, indicating that the scale is 'highly reliable' (Kayış, 2010, p. 405). The mean level of participants' agreement with the items on the scale ranged from 3.46 to 3.84. These results show that the level of professional commitment among tour guides is high ($\bar{X} = 3.61$).

The KMO value for the Professional Commitment Scale was 0.933 ($\chi^2 = 3953.648$; $df = 105$; $p < 0.05$). This value is well above the minimum threshold of 0.50, confirming that the scale is highly suitable for factor analysis (Sharma, 1996, p. 116). Following the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), three items were removed from the original 18-item scale due to redundancy. The factor loading values for the remaining items ranged from 0.618 to 0.817, all exceeding the 0.50 threshold. After the removal, 15 items were grouped into two dimensions: 'Professional Continuance and Normative Commitment' and 'Affective Commitment.' The total variance explained by the two dimensions of the Professional Commitment Scale was found to be 61.718%.

As a result of the reliability analysis of the Intention to Leave the Profession Scale, Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated to be 0.773. This value exceeds the 0.70 threshold for reliability, indicating that the scale is 'highly reliable' (Kayış, 2010). The mean level of participants' agreement with the items on the scale ranged from 2.22 to 3.32. Based on these results, it is evident that the intention of tour guides to leave their profession is low ($\bar{X} = 2.28$).

Table 3.
Explanatory Factor Analysis Results of the Professional Commitment Scale

Item	Statement	Factors	
		Professional Continuance and Normative Commitment	Affective Commitment
16	Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel that it would be right to leave the tourist guidance profession now	0,817	
10	It would be costly for me to change my profession now.	0,794	
9	Too much of my life would be disrupted if I were to change my profession.	0,784	
17	I would feel guilty if I left the tourist guidance profession.	0,773	
12	Changing the profession now would require considerable personal sacrifice.	0,761	
15	I feel a responsibility to the tourist guidance profession to continue in it.	0,756	
8	Changing the profession now would be difficult for me to do	0,718	
18	I am a tourist guide because of a sense of loyalty to the profession.	0,693	
13	I believe people who have been trained in a profession have a responsibility to stay in that profession for a reasonable period of time	0,618	
7	I have put too much into the profession to consider changing now	0,607	
2	I regret being a tourist guide.		0,747
5	I do not identify with the tourist guidance profession.		0,745
3	I am proud to be in the tourist guidance profession.		0,742
1	Being a tourist guide is important to my self-image.		0,686
6	I am enthusiastic about being a tourist guide.		0,679
Factor Eigenvalues		7,301	1,956
Variance Explained by Each Factor (%)		39,182	2,5362
Total Variance Explained (%)		61,718	
Overall Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient		0,914	
Overall Arithmetic Mean of the Scale		3,61	
Overall Standard Deviation of the Scale		,73250	
KMO Value		0,933	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approximate Chi-square	3953,648
		df	105
		Sig.	0,000

The KMO value for the Intention to Leave the Profession Scale was 0.700 ($\chi^2 = 360.931$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.05$), exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.50 and indicating that the scale is suitable for factor analysis at a good level (Sharma, 1996). Following the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), one item was removed from the original four-item scale due to redundancy. The factor loading values for the remaining items ranged from 0.819 to 0.838, all above the acceptable threshold of 0.50. After item removal, the remaining three items were grouped under a single dimension, which dimension accounted for 68.807% of the total variance in the Intention to Leave the Profession Scale

To determine whether the scales used in the research followed a normal distribution, the Kurtosis and Skewness values of the scale items were calculated. These values fell within the range of +1 and -1, indicating a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2014, p. 34). Consequently, Pearson correlation analysis was employed to test the study's hypotheses.

Table 4.
Explanatory Factor Analysis Results of the Intention to Leave the Profession Scale

Item	Statement	Factor	
3	I intend to ask people about new job opportunities.	0,838	
2	I am planning to look for a new job.	0,832	
1	I am thinking about leaving this organization.	0,819	
Factor Eigenvalues		2,064	
Variance Explained by Each Factor (%)		68,807	
Total Variance Explained (%)		68,807	
Overall Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient		0,773	
Overall Arithmetic Mean of the Scale		2,28	
Overall Standard Deviation of the Scale		,91510	
KMO Value		0,700	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approximate Chi-square	360,931
		df	3
		Sig.	0,000

Upon examining Table 5, the results of the correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their professional commitment ($r = 0.672$; $p = 0.00$). Based on this finding, the hypothesis "H1: There is a positive relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their professional commitment" is supported. In contrast, the analysis of the relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their intention to leave the profession indicates a statistically significant and negative relationship ($r = -0.473$; $p = 0.00$). Therefore, the hypothesis "H2: There is a positive relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their intention to leave the profession" is not supported. Finally, the correlation between tour guides' professional commitment and their intention to leave the profession shows a statistically significant and negative relationship ($r = -0.555$; $p = 0.00$). As a result, the hypothesis "H3: There is a negative relationship between tour guides' professional commitment and their intention to leave the profession" is accepted.

Table 5.
Correlation Analysis Results

	Presenteeism	Professional Commitment	Intention to Leave
Presenteeism	1	,672**	-,473**
p	-	,000	,000
Professional Commitment	,672**	1	-,555**
p	,000	-	,000
Intention to Leave	-,473**	-,555**	1
p	,000	,000	-

Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it has been concluded that tour guides exhibit high levels of presenteeism. This behavior indicates that tour guides often participate in tours despite experiencing fatigue or illness, exerting considerable energy and effort to ensure that the tours proceed without disruption. Similar to many other professions, tour guiding is highly demanding, requiring significant physical and mental resilience due to its challenging working conditions. Although the profession necessitates frequent travel, it is frequently described as tiring and stressful, with inherent risks such as occupational accidents, an intense work pace, and prolonged

working hours. These demanding factors contribute to a variety of health problems among tour guides. Consequently, the profession is recognized as one prone to occupational health issues, including accidents and work-related diseases, within the tourism sector (Ulusoy et al., 2024). Despite these challenges, tour guides often continue their work, driven by concerns such as avoiding the loss of assignments, financial considerations, and the need to maintain their professional presence in the field. These motivations are reflective of presenteeism behaviors. Another significant finding of the study is that tour guides demonstrate high levels of professional commitment and a low intention to leave the profession despite its demanding nature. This situation highlights that tour guides possess a deep affection for and strong identification with their profession. Indeed, previous research in the literature indicates that tour guides exhibit high levels of professional commitment (Yumuk & Koçoğlu, 2020; Özoğul, 2017; Yetkin, 2017; Arslantürk, 2016). When examining the dimensions of professional commitment, affective professional commitment emerges as the predominant type within the tour guiding profession. Affective commitment reflects a positive emotional connection to one's profession, motivating individuals to enhance their skills and knowledge with a strong sense of dedication. Tour guides who exhibit affective commitment tend to have favorable attitudes toward their profession, perform their duties willingly, and show a low tendency to leave the profession. In addition to their affective attachment, tour guides are believed to remain in the profession and demonstrate low intention to leave due to their vocational training and significant professional investments. These factors further reinforce their commitment to the profession and reduce their inclination to seek alternative career paths.

When evaluating the hypotheses in this study, it was determined that there is a significant and positive relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their professional commitment. In other words, as the presenteeism behavior among tour guides increases, their professional commitment also increases. This finding supports the expectation that tour guides with high professional commitment are more likely to continue participating in tours despite health issues. This result aligns with previous studies conducted on different sample groups in the literature. For instance, Mürtezaoğlu (2021) identified a positive correlation between presenteeism and professional commitment in a study on teachers. Similarly, Özmen (2011) found a positive and significant relationship between presenteeism and affective and normative commitment—sub-dimensions of organizational commitment—in a study on textile workers. Additionally, Kaygın et al. (2017) observed a moderate positive and significant relationship between organizational commitment and presenteeism among public employees. Şahin (2016) also reported a significant relationship between employees' organizational commitment levels and their presenteeism behaviors in a study involving hotel employees. Erbaş and Yeşiltaş (2017) concluded that there is a weak positive relationship between presenteeism and affective commitment in their study on travel agency employees.

The research findings revealed a significant and negative relationship between tour guides' presenteeism behaviors and their intention to leave the profession. In other words, as the level of presenteeism behaviors among tour guides increases, their intention to leave the profession decreases. This result contradicts the expectation that tour guides exhibiting presenteeism behaviors would, over time, experience burnout, reduced productivity, and, consequently, lower performance, ultimately leading to a higher intention to leave the profession. This finding diverges from some studies in the existing literature. For example, Kendir et al. (2018) found that the inability to avoid distractions—a dimension of presenteeism—had a weak positive effect on the intention to leave among hotel employees. Similarly, Yean et al. (2020) concluded in a study on academics that employees with high presenteeism exhibited a lower intention to stay. In the study conducted by Wynen et al. (2022), the intention to leave and presenteeism behaviors of public employees were examined in response to organizational changes. The findings revealed that reactions to change were associated with increases in both intentions to leave and presenteeism behavior, with these two variables progressing in parallel. In the present study, it is suggested that tour guides tend to remain in their profession despite exhibiting presenteeism behaviors because of their high level of professional commitment, which serves as the other key variable in this research. The results indicate that the tour guides

participating in the study continue to work and are likely to persist even under challenging conditions because they love their profession and strongly identify with it.

The research findings revealed a significant and negative relationship between the professional commitment of tour guides and their intention to leave the profession. Specifically, as the level of professional commitment among tour guides increases, their intention to leave the profession decreases. This result supports the expectation that tour guides passionate about their profession will likely remain in the field. This finding aligns with the work of Yumuk and Koçoğlu (2020), who found that the affective and normative commitment dimensions of professional commitment have a significant negative effect on the intention to leave, with the dimension of "affective commitment" having the most decisive influence. Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with existing literature on the topic.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are offered for tour guides, travel agencies, and tour operators employing tour guides, and professional institutions and organizations.

- The persistence of presenteeism behaviors among tour guides may result in more significant long-term issues, including job and income losses. Therefore, it is recommended that tour guides undergo regular health checks to maintain their physical and mental well-being and reduce the occurrence of presenteeism behaviors.
- Ignoring tour guides' health concerns could lead to more severe health problems and the development of permanent occupational diseases in the future. Consequently, tour guides should prioritize their health by adopting habits that positively influence their well-being, such as maintaining a balanced diet, taking necessary supplements, engaging in regular exercise, and ensuring adequate rest.
- Travel agencies and tour operators should ensure that tour guides undergo health checks at regular intervals and require documentation of these checks. This approach will help guarantee that health assessments are not neglected and that the tour schedule is not disrupted due to health issues with the guide.
- The rest periods of tour guides employed by travel agencies and tour operators should be regulated by the agencies themselves. On the other hand, self-employed tour guides should be encouraged to prioritize their own rest and well-being by adhering to appropriate rest periods.
- The Turkish Tourist Guides Association (TUREB) and the professional chambers under it should organize in-service training programs to enhance tour guides' physical and mental health. Additionally, concrete steps should be taken to address key professional issues (e.g., wages, regulatory oversight, and legislation) to increase their professional commitment further.

The theoretical framework of this study is limited to the accessible domestic and foreign literature, and the research part is limited to the field research conducted on tour guides serving in Turkey. The fact that the research data were obtained through surveys conducted with tourist guides between May and September 2024 causes the research to be limited to tourist guides serving in this period. In addition, according to the data of TUREB, it has been determined that the number of actively working tourist guides is 10,709. In this framework, the research is limited to 456 tourist guides taken as the sample group due to the problems of time, cost and accessibility.

Future researchers interested in this topic could explore the relationship between the presenteeism behaviors exhibited by tour guides and other variables such as burnout, job satisfaction, job stress, and similar factors. Additionally, by selecting diverse populations and samples and employing various research methods and data collection techniques (e.g., interviews), researchers could not only confirm the existence of these relationships but also identify their underlying causes. In addition, the mediating effect of the professional commitment variable between presenteeism and intention to quit the profession can be examined.

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