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Factors affecting employees' job embeddedness in the Egyptian airline industry

Yasser Moustafa Shehawy, Ahmed Elbaz and Gomaa M. Agag

Abstract

Purpose – *The importance of employees' job embeddedness perception in the airline companies has not been given the required attention. To recognise the role of frontline employees' perception regarding job embeddedness, the present research aims to develop and investigate a model that examines the determinants and consequences of employees' job embeddedness in airline industry. The current study also aims to enrich the literature on human resources in the fields of transportation service management as the lifeblood of tourism industry as a related service industry by providing a comprehensive framework and measurement scale regarding the social exchange theory.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The study used a survey among a sample representative of frontline employees operating in Egyptian airline industry across Egypt. In total, 870 questionnaires were collected and analysed using structural equation modelling using WarpPLS 6.0.*

Findings – *The results indicate that both supervisors' support and employees' advocacy have a significant effect on job embeddedness. In addition, it found out that job embeddedness has a significant effect on organisational commitment and employees' intention to leave.*

Research limitations/implications – *This paper is conceptual in nature regarding the social exchange theory in service related industries such as airlines and tourism.*

Practical implications – *The authors intend to use these considerations as a basis for future research implications for tourism small- and medium-sized enterprises in the Middle-Eastern and North-African region.*

Social implications – *This paper contributes to the literature on social exchange theory by measuring factors affecting employees' job embeddedness in the Egyptian airline industry, notably its related human resources as a service industry.*

Originality/value – *This study developed and empirically tested a comprehensive model of job embeddedness with its drivers and evaluated its impact on both organisational commitment and intention to leave. Such findings hold important implications for tourism small- and medium-sized enterprises in the Middle-Eastern and North-African region.*

Keywords *Airline industry, Intention to leave, Supervisor support*

Paper type *Research paper*

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Introduction

The employee turnover intention has become a critical problem in the context of the airline industry in which human resources is considered the most significant factor (Anvari *et al.*, 2013; McGinley *et al.*, 2017). Recent studies conducted to discuss financial determinants of the employee turnover rate have pointed out to this problem (Waldman *et al.*, 2004; Tziner and Birati, 1996; Simons and Hinkin, 2001; Hinken and Tracey, 2000). As voluntary turnover causes a wide array of considerable costs to organisations, they are continuously searching for new ways to retain their qualified employees. Regarding jobs paying under \$50,000 annually, the estimated voluntary leaving cost per employee amounts to about 20 per cent of the annual salary received by that employee (Lucas, 2012). Therefore, the employees'

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turnover intentions should be handled at early stages, and managing human resources effectively is very crucial in this process (Hemdi and Nasurdin, 2006; Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017).

On the basis of the literature related to social exchange theory (SET), the supervision's support to employees has a positive influence on both attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of those employees. Akgündüz and Sanli (2017) investigated the impacts of supervisor–subordinate exchange on employees' job embeddedness in hotel context, while Liden and Graen (1980) studied the influences that supervisor–subordinate exchange causes on job satisfaction and performance in university context. Supervisors can not only be a provider of informational, social and emotional support through helping to avoid work stress or pressure (Himle *et al.*, 1989), but also be considered as organisational mediators in actions towards their followers (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). This support is essential in the airline industry as frontline employees encounter many different challenges. These challenges firstly include unbalanced, extended work hours and rigid work schedules (Karatepe, 2011); secondly, the obstacles exist around obtaining necessary information helping personnel grow and enhancing their job embeddedness (Zhou *et al.*, 2003); thirdly, the need of employees for self-actualisation and satisfaction, which is influenced by the supervision's style (Øgaard *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, despite numerous factors may also affect employees' job embeddedness. It includes personal factors such as personality, gender, age, race and attitudes, as well as organisational factors such as values, culture and climate, fairness of policies and decentralisation (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Ilkhanizadeh and Karatepe, 2017). Some scholars argued that supervisors' support is considered an important predictor of both employees' feelings towards their supervisors and the behaviours they reflect (Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017).

The internal practices concerning communication and employees have positive effects on the employees' behaviours and the cooperation in many ways, which, in turn, raises the employees' advocacy perception (O'Fallon, 2014). The relationships between organisations and employees are based on a win–win concept, and they improve the employees' positive attitude towards their jobs and organisations (Shore and Tetrick, 1991; Yeh, 2014). The organisational practices related to employees' advocacy have become commonly widespread in organisations where employees are considered as valuable assets, while adopting them is becoming difficult in organisations in which employees are treated as “worthless” (Rynes, 2004).

The employees' job embeddedness increases when they perceive that their interests are accepted as valuable as the interests of the company, while their turnover intention decreases (Otaye and Wong, 2014; Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017). The purpose of the current study is to offer a holistic model for supervisors support, employees' advocacy, job embeddedness, organisational commitment and employees' intention to leave. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- to examine the effect of supervisors support on organisational commitment and job embeddedness;
- determine the effect of employees' advocacy on job embeddedness and intention to leave; and
- identify the effect of job embeddedness and organisational commitment on employees' intention to leave.

The present research seeks to analyse the factors that influence job embeddedness of employees in addition to the influence of employees' job embeddedness on both organisational commitment and intention to leave. This will be fulfilled by formulating and testing an integrated model, on the basis of contributions of well-founded theory; this is called the social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964). Accordingly, the current study aims to

enrich the literature on human resources in the fields of transportation service management as the lifeblood of tourism and airline industry through the following:

- identifying the antecedents influencing job embeddedness of frontline employees in the airline companies; and
- investigating the effect of job embeddedness on both organisational commitment and intention to leave.

The research findings are expected to help managers of the airline companies to formulate appropriate strategies that support job embeddedness, consequently increasing organisational commitment of employees and decreasing their intentions to leave.

This research is structured as follows: the next section presents literature related to the research variables and theories in addition to the hypotheses development. After that, data collection methods and measurements have been demonstrated. Finally, the research findings, discussion and practical implications have been provided as well as indicating the research limitations and proposed future research.

Literature review

Established theory on voluntary turnover largely stems from the work of March and Simon (1958), who posited that perceived ease (i.e. the presence of job alternatives) and desirability (i.e. level of job satisfaction) of leaving one's job combine to predict intentions to leave. This model underpins the majority of the subsequent attitude-driven turnover research, with job satisfaction and organisational commitment being two of the most commonly operationalised variables (Hom and Griffeth, 1995; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001; Robinson *et al.*, 2014; Bos-Nehles and Meijerink, 2018). However, while there are significant results, the effects are also weak and many argue that not enough attention has been given to alternative explanations (Maertz and Campion, 1998; Robinson *et al.*, 2014).

On the basis of SET, obligations emerge through interactions that take place between parties (Emerson, 1976; Bos-Nehles and Meijerink, 2018). These interactions are typically based on a counterpart's action (Blau, 1964). The governance dimensions such as responsibility, transparency, participation, structure, effectiveness and power should be considered in human resource management (Ruhanen *et al.*, 2010). The social exchange relationships take place when managers take care of their employees, and, in turn, those employees display positive attitudes as well as effective work behaviours (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Karatepe, 2016). In addition, social exchange relationships proceed between two parties depending on a sequence of shared, despite not necessarily concurrent and exchanges, which produce a pattern of mutual responsibility from each party (Blau, 1964; Karatepe, 2016). Previous studies have indicated that an individual is involved in more than one social exchange relationship (at least two) at work including one with his/her direct supervisor, and another with the organisation at which he/she works (Masterson *et al.*, 2000). The SET proposed by Blau (1964) forms the basic theoretical framework foundation on which the present study based and emphasises the vital role played by supervisors' support in improving the level of organisational commitment, job embeddedness and turnover intention of frontline employees in the airline companies. SET provides the foundation to realising the roles played by organisations, supervisors and employees in the relationships, the level of organisational commitment, as well as organisations' obligation to their employees' well-being (Kottke and Shafranski, 1988; Bentley *et al.*, 2016). Studies linked between social exchanges relationships and supervisors' support (Kottke and Shafranski, 1988; Karatepe, 2016; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017) emerged based on the notion stated that the benefits perceived by employees from their supervisors aligned with the input of those employees in the relationship. While supervisors provide their employees with necessary support needed, those employees feel more

committed to achieve expected performance related to work, which, in turn, reflects positively on both job embeddedness and organisational commitment. Moreover, the positive relation between supervisors and subordinates has been found to improve the level of job embeddedness (Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017) and to reduce the level of turnover intention of employees (Roderick and Deery, 1997; Kang *et al.*, 2015; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017).

Employees in frontline service jobs with turnover intentions can seriously erode service delivery and complaint handling processes (Rathi *et al.*, 2013; Afsar *et al.*, 2018). With this realisation, it is important to retain a pool of talented frontline employees who can develop ideas for performance improvement and offer thorough solutions to customer problems/complaints (Alonso and O'Neill, 2011; Slatten and Mehmetoglu, 2011; Karatepe, 2016). It is also important to hire talented frontline employees who fit the job and organisational culture (Dawson and Abbott, 2011; Karatepe, 2013). As a critical employee retention strategy, job embeddedness appears to enable managers to retain such employees as it focuses on why employees stay on their jobs rather than why they leave their jobs (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001; Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe, 2016; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017). Turnover intention reflects withdrawal behaviour and conscious desire of an employee to leave an organisation within the near future (Harpert, 2013). According to Azanza *et al.* (2015), turnover intention is an individual's behaviour intention to leave the organisation. Khan (2015) further elaborated that turnover intention is the final cognitive decision-making process before an employee decides to leave a job. Researchers found that intention to leave has a direct causal influence on turnover decision (Rahman and Nas, 2013). Based on previous studies, turnover intention was found to be a strong precursor of actual employee turnover (Biron and Boon, 2013; Harhara *et al.*, 2015; Haque *et al.*, 2017).

The potential role of cultural influences on job embeddedness deserves further scrutiny. To our knowledge, only three studies (Hom *et al.*, 2009; Ramesh and Gelfand, 2010; Tanova and Holtom, 2008) have been conducted on samples of non-US workers. Cultural differences may affect the generalizability of job embeddedness theory. In this paper, we take Egypt as an example to illustrate that there is cultural boundary to the theory of job embeddedness. We choose Egypt because the country has been found to own a distinct culture, which is different with the culture in the developed countries (Elbaz and Haddoud, 2017; Elbaz *et al.*, 2018). According to Hofstede's cultural theory (Hofstede, 2001), national culture is composed of five main dimensions: power distance index, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance index and long-term orientation. Studies have shown that Egypt's national culture has major differences with the developed countries' national culture in two aspects: individualism (the following numbers depict how the countries score on individualism: Egypt, 38; the USA, 91; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, pp. 78-79) and power distance (Egypt, 80; the USA, 29; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p. 211). Thus, Egypt provides a good example to test if the theory of job embeddedness can be generalised to other cultural settings.

Theoretical foundation and hypothesis formulation

The underlying premise of the model is that frontline employees with supervisor support and employees' advocacy are embedded in the job and, therefore, display organisational commitment and intention to leave. In technical terms, job embeddedness fully mediates the effects of supervisor support and employees advocacy on organisational commitment and intention to leave.

As mentioned by Burke (2003), both SET and Reciprocity Norm Theory (RNT) have been built on the basis that both employers and employees may be devoted to each other in an emotional manner. SET is based on the notion that people help each other even if they are not obliged to do, and in return, it's expected from other people to help in the future (Blau, 1964; Karatepe, 2016). In this context, it is argued that if employees highly perceive support from their organisation, they will reveal positive behaviours towards their organisations

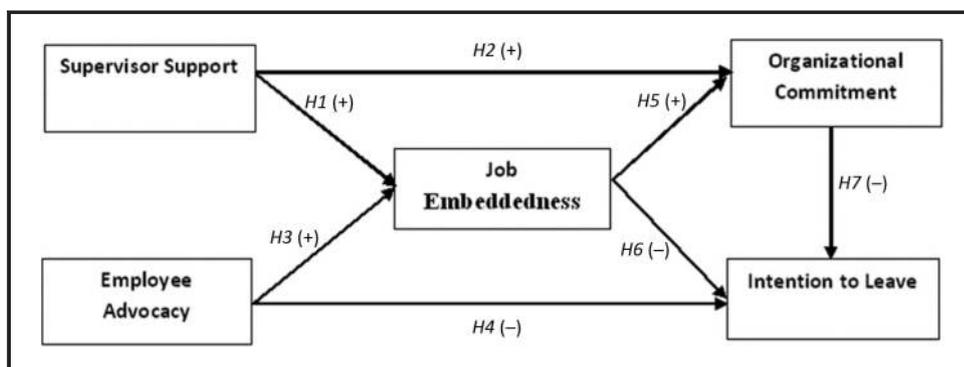
(Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Karatepe, 2016; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017). RNT contends that people feel responsibility towards individuals who help them and accordingly they respond (Gouldner, 1960). Hence, acquired organisational support is associated with employees' socio-emotional needs; this means that employees' performance and innovative are expected to be rewarded by the organisation (Burke, 2003; Martinez-Roman *et al.*, 2015; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017).

In context to that, several studies pointed out that there is a strong association between supervisors' support and affective organisational commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001; Karatepe, 2016; Robinson *et al.*, 2014) aligned with the function and meaning of work and the job (Morse and Weiss, 1955; Robinson *et al.*, 2014). Wadhwa (2012) indicated that supervisors are not only providers of information but also affect their employees' perception regarding work climate in organisations. Supervisors who are not supportive are likely to be unsuccessful in communicating with their employees in an effective manner (Burke *et al.*, 1992; Robinson *et al.*, 2014; Akgündüz and Cin, 2015), which will likely reflect negatively on employees' commitment towards their organisations. Figure 1 shows our conceptual framework. The hypothesised relationships are discussed in the following section.

Supervisors support, job embeddedness and organisational commitment

In light of SET and RNT, the turnover intention of employees and their positive emotions towards their jobs and their organisations is positively affected if they perceive that the organisation adopts their needs. Furthermore, studies reveal that the concept "being embedded in work", which is related to why employees stay in their organisations, is also related to their turnover intention (Akgündüz and Cin, 2015; Takawira *et al.*, 2014; Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017). Felps *et al.* (2009) examined the role of job embeddedness in a study where a hospitality sample was aggregated with other industries. Karatepe and Ngeche's (2012) study of front line hotel employees found that job embeddedness mediated employee engagement and job performance. Consistent with previous research in other contexts (Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017), job embeddedness mediated turnover intentions and enhanced levels of job performance. In the only other hospitality-based study, Karatepe and Karadas (2012) found that job embeddedness mediated the relationship between empowerment and service recovery performance. At the level of empirical studies, it has been revealed that the employees' turnover intention is significantly correlated with their perception regarding organisational support (Pattie *et al.*, 2006; Dawley *et al.*, 2010; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017; Robinson *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that employees who have a high degree of perception concerning organisational support, will have higher positive attitudes towards their job and, consequently, their turnover intentions decrease. In accordance with the results of these

Figure 1 Theoretical framework and hypotheses



studies, it is expected in this research that employees' perceptions regarding organisational support in the airline industry can positively affect both job embeddedness and organisational commitment:

H1. Perceived organisational support has a positive effect on job embeddedness.

H2. Perceived organisational support has a positive effect on organisational commitment.

Employees' advocacy, job embeddedness and turnover intentions

Furthermore, it is possible to explain the association between job embeddedness and intentions to leave and employees' advocacy based on SET and RNT. When organisations invest in their employees' happiness, employees will generally have the tendency to show positive behaviours towards their organisations. In this context, it is expected that the high level of employees' advocacy is likely to reduce the negative considerations and turnover intentions of employees. In the literature, there are few studies addressing the concepts of employees' advocacy and job embeddedness. The empirical studies found out a significant association between: employees' advocacy and their turnover intention (Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017; Yeh, 2014; Pang *et al.*, 2015); job embeddedness and intentions to leave (Akgündüz and Cin, 2015; Peltokorpi *et al.*, 2017); and employees' advocacy and job embeddedness (Akgündüz and Cin, 2015). In addition, the turnover intention of employees has been found to be negatively influenced by the employees' advocacy (Yeh, 2014; Singh and Sharma, 2016) and job embeddedness (Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Robinson *et al.*, 2014). Accordingly, the higher the employees' advocacy, the higher is job embeddedness and the lower is turnover intention of employees. Likewise, in the present research, it is expected that the employees' advocacy perceptions in the airline industry influence positively the job embeddedness. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been investigated and developed:

H3. Employee advocacy has a positive effect on job embeddedness.

H4. Employee advocacy has a negative effect on turnover intention.

Job embeddedness, organisational commitment and intention to leave

The current research focuses on investigating the effect of job embeddedness on employees' turnover in the airline industry setting. Numerous studies have provided a theoretical and empirical evidence for job turnover and showed that employees' intentions to leave is significantly affected by embeddedness (Holtom *et al.*, 2006; Allen, 2006; Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Robinson *et al.*, 2014; Karatepe, 2016). Many different studies also addressed job satisfaction and organisational commitment as investigators. For instance, Chen (2006) and Tanova and Holtom (2008) argued that there is an integration between job embeddedness and the traditional attitudinal-based models of turnover. In a supportive context, they mentioned that job embeddedness interprets a large proportion of the variance higher than and beyond the indicators of job satisfaction and organisational commitment. They also pointed out that decisions concerning turnover are related not only to job demographics, attitudes and labour market opportunities, but also to the degree of actual and perceived interdependence to one's job and society.

Felps *et al.* (2009) compiled a hospitality sample with some other industries and confirmed the important role played by job embeddedness of employees. In their study conducted on front line employees at hotel setting, Karatepe and Ngeche (2012) revealed that job embeddedness is a mediator between employees' engagement and job performance. In addition, previous studies conducted in other settings (Lee *et al.*, 2004; Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008; Karatepe, 2016; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017) indicated that job embeddedness of employees mediates the association between their turnover intentions and job performance.

With respect to the sole etusy on hospitality, it indicates that there is a mediation role of job embeddedness in the relation between empowerment and service recovery performance (Karatepe and Karadas, 2012; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017; Lu *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, some studies have investigated the different influences emerged as a result of some organisational and community sub-factors (Lee *et al.*, 2004; Allen, 2006; Wheeler *et al.*, 2010; Bibi and Jadoon, 2018). These studies dealt with the first-order sub-variables of job embeddedness as equally weighted factors and compiled them to shape composites. Results adopting this approach are mixed in different ways. For example, the study conducted by Allen (2006) have asserted that organisational embeddedness is the strongest predictor of turnover intentions, whereas Lee *et al.* (2004) indicated that community embeddedness is a more stronger predictor. Nevertheless, Smith *et al.* (2011) mentioned that it is not obvious what conditions specify the relative significance of one sub-variable over another.

Moreover, previous research (Allen, 2006; Holtom *et al.*, 2006; Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Robinson *et al.*, 2014; Bibi and Jadoon, 2018; Coetzer *et al.*, 2017) argued that higher levels of employees' feelings regarding job embeddedness are positively associated with higher levels of organisational commitment, while the association between job embeddedness and intentions to leave is found to be negative. Job embeddedness framework provided by Mitchell *et al.* (2001) and Robinson *et al.* (2014) suggested that when an employee's own values, career goals and future plans are consistent with the job demands, they experience an alignment with the larger corporate culture and feel suited with the surrounding environment and community. Thus, employees with job embeddedness are more likely to display a higher degree of commitment towards their organisation, but less likely to have turnover or leaving intentions.

Job embeddedness theory implicitly presents guidance to develop the mediating hypothesised relationships. Organisational systems develop job embeddedness that, in turn, leads to elevated levels of employee retention (Wheeler *et al.*, 2010). Employees are job embedded when they find that they receive support from their supervisors in dealing with work-related problems and obtain support in the family domain to manage their roles effectively. They feel attached to the organisation because they have quality relationships with other individuals in the organisation, fit well with various aspects of the job and organisational culture and know what they will lose as a result of voluntary turnover.

Furthermore, DeConinck and Johnson (2009) emphasised that employees with a low level of organisational commitment are more likely to show negative work outcomes such as job-search behaviour, turnover intention and actual turnover. Turnover intention can be referred to of employees' awareness regarding the possibility of leaving organisation in the near future (Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Ampofo *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2017), and it represents the strongest predictor of actual turnover behaviour (Joo and Park, 2010). The present research confirms that employees' turnover intentions negatively related to organisational commitment (Joo and Park, 2010; Lee and Bruvold, 2003; Fazio *et al.*, 2017; Lim *et al.*, 2017). In the same context, Kang *et al.* (2015) examined a model of employees' turnover intention applying on a sample of employees at hotels and found that the turnover intentions of those employees were negatively associated with the level of organisational commitment; they also found that training and development were significant elements to those employees. Moreover, other studies (Hei and Rahim, 2011; Walsh and Taylor, 2007; Ampofo *et al.*, 2017) asserted the importance of the relationship between employees' organisational commitment and their turnover intentions. Hence, it is crucial to concentrate on expanding the relation between organisational commitment and employees' turnover intention in the airline companies; this takes place, respectively, to the high degree of turnover in these companies. Consequently, the following hypotheses can be stated:

- H5. Job embeddedness has a positive influence on job organisational commitment.
- H6. Job embeddedness has a negative influence on employees' intention to leave.
- H7. Organisational commitment has a negative influence on employees' intention to leave.

Methodology

Sample and data collection

To test the research hypotheses, we used a research approach based on a field survey to collect data from frontline employees working at various airline companies through a questionnaire. In the following sections, we discuss the measures used for this study and data collection process. The setting for the study was 119 commercial airline companies in Egypt. The respondent sample was drawn from frontline employees who worked in the airline companies and had direct interactions with customers. On the basis of the data obtained from the Ministry of Culture & Tourism of Egypt, there are 119 commercial airline companies in Egypt. The participants were accepted as an infinite population, and the minimum sample size was calculated to be 384 as suggested by [Hair et al. \(2013\)](#).

All questions were translated and back translated by bilingual authors from Arabic to English to avoid language related errors in the analysis. A pilot sample of 40 employees who worked in the airline companies and had direct interactions with customers (personally interviewed) was used to ensure that the wording of the questionnaire was clear and to evaluate the quality of content and reliability of measures. Consequently, a few minor alterations were made to improve our instrument.

To avoid over representation of any single company, an equal number of questionnaires (i.e. ten) was distributed to each airline company. However, the employees' questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 1,190 by the authors using the face-to-face method in April 2017. The survey was anonymous and restricted to frontline employees aged 18 years and above, and was approved by the Human Research Ethics Advisory Panel. A total of 1,190 questionnaires were distributed to employees who had served in their positions for more than 1 year. Managers of each company informed their frontline employees about the survey and encouraged them to participate. All employees received an envelope with a cover letter and a questionnaire. To encourage honesty, employees were given a written guarantee that responses would be confidential. Participants completed the questionnaire during working hours and returned it in a sealed prepaid envelope to the researchers. The survey questionnaire was distributed to 1,190 employees.

Participants were assured of confidentiality and allowed to respond to the survey anonymously during working hours; the total number of received responses 894 responses. In all, the researcher collected 894 employees' questionnaires from the respective HR departments of the participating airline companies. Owing to missing data in some of the questionnaires, 24 employee's questionnaires were eliminated. In all, 870 complete questionnaires were received from employees, which resulted in response rates of 73 per cent. Consequently, the total number of valid responses for further analysis amounted to 870 responses (894-24). Overall, it can be seen from [Table I](#), the employees involved in the sample were mostly 18 to 29 years old (33 per cent), followed by the 40-49 years old (32 per cent). As for their gender, a significantly higher proportion of males were recorded (approx. 53 per cent). This is very culturally in the Middle-Eastern where a male population usually dominates the work place. Ultimately, a great number of airline companies' managers hold at least a Bachelor degree (36). Service employees represented 76 per cent of the total, about one-fourth (21 per cent) had worked in their current positions under 2 years and 33 per cent had worked for 2-5 years.

Table I The Sampling profile (N = 870)

Variable	Category	N	% of response
Age	18-29	290	33
	30-39	112	14
	40-49	288	32
	50-59	180	21
	Over 60	–	–
Gender	Male	459	53
	Female	411	47
Education	Bachelor degree	311	36
	Diploma	129	15
	Master or doctorate	278	32
	other	152	16
Position	Manager	210	24
	Service employees	660	76
Organisational tenure	Under 2 years	178	21
	2-under 5 years	286	33
	5-under 7 years	210	24
	7-under 10 years	119	14
	Above 10 years	77	8

Measures

This research includes five constructs: supervisor support, employees' advocacy, job embeddedness, organisational commitment and intention to leave have been measured during the present study. A five-point Likert scale has been used (from 1 to 5), where 1 reflects the highest disagreement and 5 reflects the highest agreement. A set of items were selected to measure the concept, about which generalisations were made, and it was adapted in respect to related literature to ensure the content validity of the research measurements. Perceived supervisory support was measured through five items adapted from [Greenhaus et al. \(1990\)](#). Many studies have used this scale and ensured its reliability, where alpha correlation coefficients exceed 0.90 in all of these studies ([Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012](#); [Wickramasinghe and Jayaweera, 2010](#)). The respondents were asked to express their views in terms of the degree of agreement with each item concerning perceived support from their supervisors. Employee advocacy was measured using four items adapted from [Yeh \(2014\)](#). Job embeddedness was also measured based on the job embeddedness global measure proposed by [Crossley et al. \(2007\)](#). For affective organisational commitment, it has been measured through seven items adapted based on the scales developed by [Meyer and Allen \(1997\)](#) and [Crossley et al. \(2007\)](#).

Finally, four items were used to measure the "intentions to leave" construct, and these items have been adapted deepening on [Crossley et al.'s \(2007\)](#) scale. They have designed this scale to avoid content overlap in constructs including job attitudes and job search, accordingly it has been also adopted in a previous study dealt with job embeddedness ([Crossley et al., 2007](#)) like it has been used with the items of job embeddedness in the current research.

Data analysis and results

To establish the nomological validity of the research model, we analysed the survey data using partial least squares (PLS) with a two-step analytic approach. Firstly, the measurement model was evaluated to assess the validity and reliability of the measures. Secondly, the structural model was evaluated to assess the strength of the hypothesised links among the variables. The psychometric properties of all scales were assessed within the context of the structural model through an assessment of discriminant validity and

reliability. Ruiz *et al.* (2010) mentioned that the PLS has a set of advantages including the following:

- the ability to deal with the very complicated models;
- producing loadings, coefficients of standardised regression and R^2 for all endogenous constructs; and
- providing relaxed assumptions concerning the distribution of the research data.

Measurement model

On the basis of Duarte and Raposo's (2010) study, the present research checked the individual item reliability, internal consistency and discriminate validity so that the measurement model for the research constructs can be evaluated. The results have revealed that there were 26 items had loading rates above 0.70 reflecting the acceptable levels of reliability, while only one item was found to have a loading rate of 0.402. Concerning examining the cross-loadings, the loadings of all items were found higher for their related construct than for other research constructs (Table II). Tests of normality, namely, skewness, kurtosis and Mahalanobis distance statistics (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), have been conducted (Table AI).

<i>Construct/Indicators</i>	<i>Indicator loadings</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>	<i>VIF</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>MSV</i>	<i>ASV</i>
<i>Intentions to leave</i>		0.94	0.91	2.18	0.72	0.321	0.210
INT1	0.95						
INT2	0.93						
INT3	0.86						
INT4	0.92						
<i>Organisational commitment</i>		0.90	0.87	1.92	0.54	0.234	0.194
COM1	0.94						
COM2	0.89						
COM3	0.94						
COM4	0.97						
COM5	0.88						
<i>Job embeddedness</i>		0.93	0.88	1.78	0.54	0.304	0.203
EMP1	0.95						
EMP2	0.94						
EMP3	0.88						
EMP4	0.89						
EMP5	0.94						
EMP6	0.92						
EMP7	0.87						
<i>Employee advocacy</i>		0.95	0.92	1.94	0.52	0.434	0.039
ADV1	0.96						
ADV2	0.94						
ADV3	0.95						
ADV4	0.92						
<i>Supervisor support</i>		0.92	0.90	2.01	0.67	0.327	0.214
SUP1	0.94						
SUP2	0.91						
SUP3	0.93						
SUP4	0.89						
SUP5	0.94						

Notes: INT = Intentions to leave; COM = Organisational commitment; EMP = Job embeddedness; ADV = Employees advocacy; SUP = Supervisor support; VIF = Variance inflation; MSV = Maximum shared squared variance; ASV = Average shared squared variance

The measurement model's internal consistency is investigated through the composite reliability index and average variance extracted (AVE; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). It has been found that the composite reliabilities for all of the research constructs exceeding the acceptable level of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Table II), and the average variance extracted for each construct measure were above the minimum acceptable level of 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Table II). Consequently, it concluded that the internal consistency of the research measurement model is valid. The discriminant validity of the measurement model was examined by comparing the square root of the average variance extracted with the correlations among the research constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The correlation between each construct and its own measure found to be stronger than that exists between a construct and any other construct, which ensures the discriminate validity for all of the research constructs. Furthermore, the AVE square root for all variables was greater than its correlations with any other variable in all cases, which supports the discriminant validity of the study constructs (Klarner *et al.*, 2013; see Table III). Hair *et al.* (2017) suggested that the MSV and the ASV value should be less than the AVE for the discriminant validity. Table II shows that the ASV and the MSV value are less than 25 the AVE value for each construct, which supports the discriminant validity of the measurement model. In addition, Harman's one-factor test was used to check common method bias. The five items of supervisors' support, four items of employee advocacy, seven items measuring job embeddedness, five items of organisational commitment and four items of intention to leave were entered in a principal component factor analysis. The results show that the first factors in the model explained 39.705 per cent of the variance. Thus, common method bias was not an issue.

Structural model

After examining the measurement validity, we used Smart PLS to test the structural model. The significance of the paths was determined using the *T*-statistic calculated with the bootstrapping technique. The results reveal that the SEM fits well the research data: for Job embeddedness, $R^2 = 0.62$, organisational commitment, $R^2 = 0.47$ and for intention to leave, $R^2 = 0.66$. Indicators of the global fit is found to be acceptable, in which average path coefficient (APC) = 0.189 (p -value < 0.001), AARS= 0.720 (p -value < 0.001), average R-squared (ARS) = 0.752 (p -value < 0.001), average variance inflation factor (AVIF) = 2.569 and goodness of fit (GOF) = 0.721. The results indicate that all hypotheses significantly supported except the hypothesis number four (Figure 2)

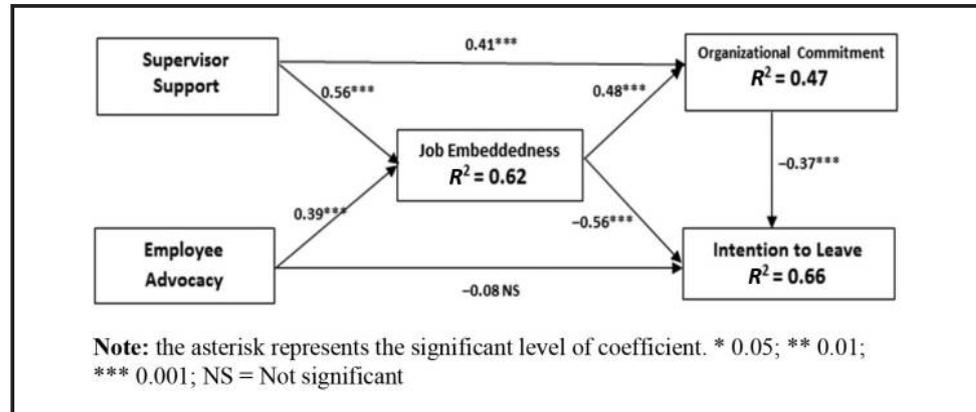
H1 proposed that organisational support has a strong positive relationship with job embeddedness. As expected, the effects of supervisor's support on job embeddedness has a significant impact; the coefficient was $\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the first hypothesis (*H1*) is undeniable affirmed and, thus, supported. This means that the more organisational support is the more likely employees will show higher levels of job embeddedness.

Table III Discriminant validity of the correlations between constructs

Construct	Correlations and square roots of AVE				
	SUP	ADV	EMP	COM	INT
SUP	(0.827)				
ADV	0.649	(0.807)			
EMP	0.541	0.531	(0.847)		
COM	0.509	0.608	0.579	(0.847)	
INT	0.631	0.573	0.404	0.551	(0.893)

Notes: INT = Intentions to leave; COM = Organisational commitment; EMP = Job embeddedness; ADV = Employees advocacy; SUP = Supervisor support

Figure 2 PLS analysis results



H2 proposed that organisational support has a strong positive effect on organisational commitment. As expected, the effects of supervisor's support on organisational commitment has a significant impact; the coefficient was $\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the second hypothesis (*H2*) is supported. This means that the more organisational support is the more likely employees will show higher levels of commitment.

H3 proposed that employees' advocacy has a strong positive effect on job embeddedness. As expected, the effects of employee advocacy on job embeddedness has a significant impact; the coefficient was ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the third hypothesis (*H3*) is supported. This means that the more employee advocacy is the more likely employees will show higher levels of job embeddedness.

H4 proposed that employee advocacy has a negative effect on turnover intention. Despite the authors' expectation, employees' advocacy has no significant influence on their intentions to leave. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis (*H4*) was abandoned or rejected. It means that employee advocacy directly does not affect the turnover intention. Job embeddedness acts as a link between employee advocacy and turnover intention.

H5 proposed that job embeddedness has a strong positive effect on organisational commitment. As expected, the effects of job embeddedness on organisational commitment has a significant impact; the coefficient was $\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis (*H5*) is supported. This means that the more job embeddedness is the more likely employees will show higher levels of commitment.

As expected, the effects of job embeddedness on intention to leave has a significant impact; the coefficient was $\beta = -0.56$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis (*H6*) is supported. This means that the more job embeddedness is the more likely employees will show lower levels of intention to leave.

H7 proposed that organisational commitment has a negative effect on employees' intention to leave. As expected, the effects of organisational commitment on employees' intention to leave has a significant impact; the coefficient was $\beta = -0.37$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis (*H7*) is supported. This means that the more organisational commitment is the more likely employees will show lower levels of commitment.

To investigate the mediating influences of the variables on intention to leave on the basis of job embeddedness and organisational commitment, a separate analysis was performed depending on [Baron and Kenny's \(1986\)](#) procedure. The findings showed that the effects of supervisor support and employees' advocacy on employees' intention to leave partially mediated by job embeddedness and organisational commitment.

Moreover, the effect size f^2 suggested by Cohen (1992), which is “the degree to which the phenomenon is present in the population”, has been adopted to investigate the substantive influence of the research model. Cohen (1992) mentioned that operational definitions of large, medium and small effect sizes were 0.35, 0.15 and 0.02, respectively. Hence, the research model concludes that both job embeddedness and intentions to leave have a high effect size, where $f^2 = 0.65$ and $f^2 = 0.49$, respectively, whereas organisational commitment has a medium effect size $f^2 = 0.24$.

The predictive validity of the structural model tested in the present research based on the Stone–Geisser Q^2 . The cross-validated construct redundancy Q^2 can be used as a prerequisite for investigating the model predictive validity (Roldán and Sánchez-Franco, 2012). When Q^2 is above 0, this emphasises the predictive validity of the research model. In the present research, the Q^2 for job embeddedness, organisational commitment and intentions to leave were 0.61, 0.53 and 0.47, respectively, which is considered positive and matched the previously mentioned condition.

Discussion and conclusions

The importance of employees' job embeddedness perception in the airline companies has not been provided indispensable attention. To identify the role of frontline employees' job embeddedness perception, this research has proposed and investigated a model that examines the determinants and outcomes of employees' job embeddedness in the airline companies. Supervisor support and employee advocacy have been proposed as two factors for building job embeddedness. Nevertheless, both organisational commitment and intention to leave were addressed as consequences to job embeddedness.

On testing the first hypothesis, it was found that supervisor support had a strong positive relationship with job embeddedness, which signified that high degree of employees' perception regarding the supervision's support leads to a higher degree of employees' job embeddedness, and enhances their positive attitudes towards jobs. This result is supported by previous studies conducted by various researchers (Akgündüz and Cin, 2015; Takawira *et al.*, 2014; Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017).

On testing second hypothesis, it was found that perception of frontline employees concerning supervisory support has a positive influence on affective organisational commitment. This is found to be consistent with some previous studies (Pattie *et al.*, 2006; Dawley *et al.*, 2010; Kang *et al.*, 2015). It can be stated that supervisors often represent all that is good or not good concerning an organisation. This is in terms of providing the needed support for their employees.

The results indicate that perceived organisational support enhances the job embeddedness of the employees and reduces their turnover intentions. This research provides an empirical support to Chiang and Hsieh's (2012) and Tsai *et al.*'s (2015) studies that suggested that employees who perceive that they are valued and their rights are protected showing better attitudes towards their organisations.

It can be predicted that employee advocacy would positively affect job embeddedness. This hypothesis has been also supported, in which the findings confirmed that employees who perceive that their employers appreciate and consider their interests have positive attitudes towards their organisation. Regarding the research hypothesis, which implies that employee advocacy would have a significant negative influence on turnover intention, the findings did not provide support for that. This result shows that employees' turnover intentions are not influenced by attitudes and attempts of managers to protect the interests of their employees. This relationship has also been proved by previous studies conducted by various researchers (Takawira *et al.*, 2014; Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017).

The job embeddedness of employees plays a significant role in increasing organisational commitment and decreasing turnover intention (Afsar and Badir, 2016; Burton, 2014; Tanova and Holtom, 2008). The results demonstrate that perceived organisational support appears to be a potential solution. This is consistent with other empirical studies, which indicate that perception of employees concerning organisational support increases job embeddedness as well as with RNT. This result shows that the employees' job embeddedness significantly increases when they perceive it. Accordingly, their needs are supported and their contributions are appreciated and valued by the organisation.

On testing Hypotheses 5, 6 and 7, it was found that job embeddedness had a significant influence on organisational commitment and intention to leave, which signified the better job embeddedness, the higher the commitment of the employees towards their organisations. Furthermore, the current study reveals that organisational commitment had a negative influence on employees' intention to leave. This is found to be consistent with some previous studies (Kang *et al.*, 2015; Akgündüz and Sanli, 2017; Hei and Rahim, 2011; Walsh and Taylor, 2007).

In addition, this research found out that job embeddedness increases when employees perceive that there are employee advocacy practices. This result indicates that if employees see that their interests are protected and ensured, information is shared freely, and the management tries to increase their satisfaction, then consequently, the job embeddedness of those employees will increase. Moreover, it is found out that there is a negative correlation between job embeddedness and turnover intention in this research. This finding supports the work of Crossley *et al.* (2007) and Karatepe and Shahriari (2014); they had argued that employees' termination of employment may cause financial and non-material costs to them and may damage their fit relationships with the organisation and society.

Practical implications

In respect to the results brought up by the present research, there are some significant implications for business practice that could be beneficial from a managerial perspective. Firstly, the high levels of supervisory support behaviour displayed by managers help employees to feel that their efforts and hopes are understood and appreciated. Exceptional supervisors who give tasks matching with employees' skills, confirms some aspects including:

- displaying actions that are compatible with words;
- offering employees the chance to learn how to enhance their performance; and
- showing respect towards employees.

Airline companies that deal with a subculture or counterproductive employees, which lacks engaged employees, should provide crucial resources and training for their supervisors. In response, supervisors can provide support to their employees who are dealing with difficult work conditions. In addition, attention should be provided to supervisors who have recently been promoted and who would confront challenge of providing their employees with required support leading to a higher organisational commitment. Employees receiving continuous support from their supervisors would be more attached to the job as frontline service jobs are stressful requiring long work hours. Therefore, management of the airlines companies should arrange training programs that focus mainly on the critical role of support emerging from supervisors. During such planned training programs, managers may use case studies to precisely define the importance of work support. They may receive feedback from frontline employees about how to maximise support arising from supervisors and co-workers. In such training programmes, supervisors should also practise on how to deal with employees' work and family problems and to offering potential solutions. Having

an appropriate work environment facilitating social support would raise the team spirit among supervisory and non-supervisory employees.

Secondly, airline employees interact with customers and deal with a number of their complaints and requests. For this reason, employee candidates whose skills and attitudes are compatible with the company's plans, purposes and values should be included in the recruitment process of the organisation and placed in departments in which employees work face-to-face with customers. When the job embeddedness of the employees who intrinsically meet the company's purposes and values is higher, the turnover intention of such employees decreases. Airline companies can enhance job embeddedness of their employees by creating opportunities through which employees can improve themselves, by allowing employees to use their skills efficiently, by helping their career planning and by applying teamwork in the organisation. For instance, inadequate training in the airline industry is one of the problems impeding emotion work and engendering safety problems. Therefore, creating chances for continuous training and re-training programmes through video cases is a very indispensable affair. Throughout such training programmes, employees should also learn the approaches leading them to recognise and to practice empowerment. Accordingly, they should learn how to deal with passengers' requests and problems successfully and to cope with passengers who show dysfunctional behaviours.

Thirdly, to let employees realise how much support they receive airline companies' managers should provide comfortable working conditions for their employees, to act in a rightful manner, make sure that employees are involved in decision-making processes and that they are directly related to workers and finally take complaints and suggestions of the employees into consideration. In this manner, airline companies' managers can enhance the job embeddedness of employees; consequently, the turnover intention can be reduced. Establishing team spirit and solidarity among employees and developing the importance of teamwork in training and retraining programs that is known as pays dividends. Such training programmes would be a tool to stimulate teamwork and to motivate employees to generate new ideas for achieving forms of improvement in the service delivery and passenger complaint-handling processes. Employees who are capable of responding to passengers' requests have to deal with a number of problems that are effective and thus lead to team success. Such efforts should also be recognised and rewarded.

Finally, the results of the present study provide an opportunity for airlines organisations to increase the job embeddedness of their employees by increasing perceived costs of leaving. Airlines organisations need to embed their employees more fully, while they might also facilitate this outcome through changes to their selection and retention processes. Recruitment, selection and socialisation to an organisation was considered vital, leading to accomplishment of an organisation for a long term. Moreover, selecting employees who are supportive of organisational goals and values is crucial. In addition, the unique working conditions of this industry, including seasonality, irregular working hours, reproductive and often unskilled work need to be considered in building job embeddedness. The evidence is that the intrinsic rewards offered, such as autonomy and creativity are more likely to create organisational commitment for airlines employees. Specific tactics managers, who can be employed in this regard, might be aware enough to include input into measurement indicators of work team performance, menu design for food and beverage staff and empowering front office staff in exceeding guest needs. These strategies are likely to deflect employees' attention from the industry's immutable structural characteristics that their organisations are subject to target, and cannot fully control. Finally, in addition, job embeddedness functions as a full mediator of the effects of supervisor support and employees' advocacy on commitment and intention to leave. This is congruent with the precepts of job embeddedness theory that job embeddedness is a key variable linking on- and off-the-job variables to employee outcomes (Karatepe, 2013).

Theoretical implications

The current study has several theoretical implications, which can add to the body of the knowledge in various ways: Firstly, in the airline context, job embeddedness considers a major factor that can support employees' behavioural intentions. So identifying factors affecting employees' job embeddedness will give us a clear picture on how to increase employees' commitment and, thus, their intentions to leave. Secondly, the current study investigated the mediating role of job embeddedness in the relationship between supervisors support and their intentions to leave, which have not investigated in the airline context. Thirdly, previous studies call for investigating the role of job embeddedness in countries other than the developed countries, the current study investigates the drivers and outcomes of job embeddedness in different developing cultural contexts (Egypt). Our results indicate that supervisor's support and employees' advocacy are important drivers of job embeddedness in the developing countries. Finally, the findings of this study clarify previous inconsistent findings on the importance of supervisors' support and employees' advocacy. Supervisors' support and employees' advocacy play a crucial role in developing job embeddedness in collectivistic and high context culture (e.g. Egypt).

Limitations and areas for future research

In accordance with other researches, the present research could not overcome all challenges in this domain; however, it can give insight for further coming. Firstly, this research examined the organisational support and employee advocacy only from the perspective of employees. Future research could aim to identify the behaviours of airline companies' managers towards their employees so that both employees' perceptions and managers' behaviours are matched. The data collection period could also be extended across a longer period as organisational support and employee advocacy are not daily activities. Secondly, the research variables have been measured at a specific period. Therefore, future research is recommended to handle longitudinal analysis to examine the validity of suggested model developed in the present research.

This research focuses only on studying the nature of relationships among certain variables including supervisory support, employee advocacy, job embeddedness, organisational commitment and turnover intention. Future research can add other variables such as trust (both organisational and supervisory trust) or leader-member exchange to develop and to enhance model suggested in this study. Culture has to be taken into account as a suitable mediating variable (individualism/collectivism) because they have different expectations. In addition, interviews with supervisors are supportive to identify reasons concerning their failure to provide necessary support to their subordinates. It is argued that supporting the level of organisational commitment and decreasing the level of turnover intentions are a substantial priority for the airline industry, the best practices concerning supervisors' support and investigating the reasons leading to the question why the supervision's support might be insufficient, has to be a focus for future studies. Finally, studying the differences between male and female employees would make a worthwhile contribution to the body of knowledge.

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Appendix

Table A1 Descriptive statistics and normality tests of the constructs in the model

<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Corrected item-total correlation</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>Supporting literature</i>
<i>Supervisor support (SUP)</i>						<i>Greenhaus et al. (1990)</i>
My supervisor takes the time to learn about my career goals and aspirations (SUP1)	3.9	0.804	0.594	-0.594	0.685	
My supervisor cares about whether or not I achieve my career goals (SUP2)	4.6	0.649	0.739	-0.645	0.045	
My supervisor gives me helpful feedback about my performance (SUP3)	4.3	0.849	0.604	-0.445	0.74	
My supervisor makes sure I get the credit when I accomplish something substantial on the job (SUP4)	3.7	0.856	0.778	-0.626	0.428	
My supervisor assigns me special projects that increase my visibility in the organisation (SUP5)						
<i>Employee advocacy (ADV)</i>						<i>Yeh (2014)</i>
The company attempts to represent the employees' best interests (ADV1)	3.8	0.842	0.748	-0.548	0.759	
The company provides its employees with tools to help them solve their problems (ADV2)	4.4	0.682	0.645	-0.489	0.602	
The company attempts to improve employee satisfaction (ADV3)	4.2	0.741	0.731	-0.636	0.684	
The company provides complete and open information for employees (ADV4)	4.7	0.589	0.721	-0.589	0.617	
<i>Job embeddedness (EMB)</i>						<i>Crossley et al. (2007)</i>
I feel attached to this company (EMB1)	4.8	0.859	0.765	-0.503	0.355	
It would be difficult for me to leave this company (EMB2)	3.9	0.914	0.803	-0.691	-0.263	
I am too caught up in this company to leave (EMB3)	4.1	0.740	0.794	-0.480	-0.456	
I feel tied to this company (EMB4)	4.2	0.738	0.483	-0.578	-0.526	
I simply could not leave the company that I work for (EMB5)	4.1	0.478	0.490	-0.434	-0.564	
It would be easy for me to leave this company (EMB6)						
I am tightly connected to this company (EMB7)						
<i>Organisational commitment (COM)</i>						<i>Crossley et al. (2007)</i>
This company has a great deal of personal meaning for me (COM1)	4.6	0.745	0.784	-0.545	0.487	
I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this company (COM2)	3.7	0.859	0.832	-0.690	0.833	
I feel like part of the family at my company (COM3)	4.6	0.756	0.790	-0.741	0.695	
I feel emotionally attached to this company (COM4)	4.3	0.700	0.708	-0.348	0.454	
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my company (COM5)	5.4	0.543	0.540	-0.304	0.564	
<i>Intention to leave (INT)</i>						<i>Crossley et al. (2007)</i>
Within the next year, I intend to leave this profession (INT1)	4.6	0.765	0.769	-0.490	0.174	
I plan to leave this company in the next little while (INT2)	4.1	0.739	0.815	-0.671	0.403	
I intend to leave this company soon (INT3)	4.8	0.705	0.840	-0.583	0.692	
I may leave this company before too long (INT4)	3.9	0.589	0.458	-0.289	0.478	

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