



Job involvement, commitment, satisfaction and turnover: Evidence from hotel employees in Cyprus



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HIGHLIGHTS

- We investigate job satisfaction, involvement, organizational commitment and turnover intentions.
- Affective and normative organizational commitment, have positive associations with job satisfaction.
- Affective organizational commitment and satisfaction have negative associations with turnover.
- A negative association between intrinsic job satisfaction and turnover intention cannot be supported.

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ABSTRACT

The study of attitudes at work seeks to enhance organizational knowledge and capabilities in developing an 'ideal' working environment that delivers exceptional customer service. The current study investigates the causal relationships of job involvement, organizational commitment (normative and affective), and job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic), with the intention of hospitality employees in Cyprus to either remain at or leave their job. Utilizing structural equation modeling, positive associations were found between job involvement, affective and normative commitment, and intrinsic job satisfaction. Positive associations between affective and normative organizational commitment, and intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction were also found. In addition, negative associations between affective organizational commitment, extrinsic job satisfaction and turnover intention were revealed. However, a negative association between intrinsic job satisfaction and turnover intention was not supported. The implications of these results for future research are also discussed.

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1. Introduction

The tourism sector is highly labor intensive with the performance of its human resources being a significant and determining factor in its sustainability. Consequently, this reliance on human resources for its proper functioning and growth, demands both effective and efficient workforce practices in order for employees to perform at optimum levels, thereby enabling the sector to remain viable in a rapidly changing, and fiercely competitive, global environment (Ogbeide & Harrington, 2011; Zopiatis & Constanti, 2007). As organizations in the tourism sector have become increasingly aware that

mismangement of resources can lead to their demise, they have focused on cost minimization while simultaneously maintaining quality (Birdir, 2002; Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). Thus informed, these organizations are encouraged by the literature (Gronroos, 2000; Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000) to consider employee performance, as a means to gain competitive advantage.

Subsequently, scholars have investigated workplace issues that are likely to impact on employee attitudes in order to better understand, and therefore to develop strategies to improve both individual and organizational performance. One of the issues includes the tacit acceptance that turnover behavior is quite appropriate and an accepted element of life within the industry (Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010; Iverson & Deery, 1997). The profound impact that turnover behavior has on an organization's costs has increased the need for continual management vigilance in order to mitigate any likely adverse effects to the enterprise (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; Lashley, 2001; Ryan, Ghazali, & Mohsin, 2011; Simons & Hinkin, 2001).

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Others have posited that low levels of job satisfaction, which is impacted by routinization, role conflict and lack of promotional opportunity (Carbery, Garavan, O'Brien, & McDonnell, 2003; Lambert, Lewig, & Dollard, 2003), can have deleterious effects on the organization. In the same vein, two further universal dimensions of the work experience, organizational commitment and job involvement, can impact not only an employee's decision to quit an organization, but also on its bottom line results (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2002; Falkenburg & Schyns, 2007; Johnson et al., 2005).

Upon scanning the job involvement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover literature in Cyprus we found a barren landscape. Utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM) and grounding our research in the turnover, job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment theories, we embarked on a theoretical and empirical journey to discover the relationships between the aforementioned workplace constructs. Before presenting an overview of the relevant literature which is synthesized with the development of several hypotheses, we provide the context and background of the study.

2. Context and background

Studies of the tourism industry's impacts on island destinations in the Mediterranean region have tended to focus on the sector's significant contribution to the destinations' economies. This includes a plethora of studies in other parts of the Mediterranean where island destinations have experienced periods of rapid growth, with its ensuing challenges (Garín-Munöz & Montero-Martin, 2007; Knowles & Curtis, 1999). Accompanying this rapid growth is a heavy dependence on tourism with its subsequent impacts (Palmer & Riera, 2003), including seasonal demand which also impacts labor demand, the latter providing a myriad of challenges for those charged with managing an organization's human resources (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2007). The study is therefore relevant and useful for at least two reasons.

Firstly, it may contribute to important practical implications at the micro-level. Cyprus, an island in the Eastern Mediterranean, joined the European Union in 2004 and the Euro-Zone in 2007. Its dependence on tourism is significant, accounting for 10% of its GDP in 2011 (Cyprus Tourism Organization, Annual Report 2011). In 2011, according to the Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2.4 million tourists visited the island with tourism receipts reaching €1.745 billion Euros (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus: Tourism Statistics, 1999–2011). The United Kingdom is the largest contributor, with 42.7% of tourism arrivals, followed by Russia (13.9%), Germany (6.6%) and Greece (5.8%). Despite the current financial crisis caused by Cyprus' overexposure to Greek financial institutions, official statistics revealed an increase of 10.1% in tourist arrivals from the previous year. Impressive and noteworthy is the 49.2% increase of tourist arrivals from Russia, a direct result of the country's extensive promotional campaign toward that particular market (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus: Tourism Statistics, 1999–2011).

As a significant service industry, tourism's heavy reliance on human resources means that it must continually strive to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global environment (Sharpley & Forster, 2003; Zopiatis & Constanti, 2007). According to official figures the local tourism sector provided gainful employment in 2009 to 34,000 individuals (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus: Labor Statistics, 2009). Unfortunately, the industry is impacted by the vagaries of seasonality; employment of a small number of permanent, core staff; with a reliance on peripheral labor, consisting mostly of migrant workers during periods of high demand. According to Zopiatis and Constanti (2007, p. 392) "...the effects of the country's European Union (EU) accession, and its close

geographic proximity to some of the planet's conflict areas, give the Cyprus tourism industry a somewhat distinctive flavor" and challenges which accompany this distinction. Moreover, paradoxically and despite the growing numbers recorded in 2011 in both tourist arrivals and receipts, the industry continues its 'downsizing' tactics by terminating the employment of vast numbers of employees. This has culminated in local politicians calling for an independent inquiry into the industry's human resource practices (Psyllides, 2012).

Secondly, besides contributing to the body of knowledge at the micro-level, findings of the current study may present important practical implications at the macro-level. Garín-Munöz and Montero-Martin (2007) provide a lucid argument regarding the impacts of inbound tourism on island destinations. Clerides and Pashourtidou (2007) critique the need for Cyprus to rethink its tourism strategies if it is to become a key player in the international arena. An almost exclusive dependence on seasonal tourism creates fluctuating demands on infrastructures, making the destinations more susceptible to environmental degradation, and to global, as well as, regional trends. Subsequently, Cyprus' dependence on tourism for its development and economic well-being requires herculean efforts in order to maintain a delicate balance between development and degradation of the tourism product. Aligned with this, is the need for effective and efficient utilization, and management of the industry's human resources (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Lanquar, 2011).

Successful enterprises in the luxury end of the market tend to place greater emphasis on the development and management of people (Baum, 2007). However, on a global scale, human resource management practices have a tendency to be characterized as ambiguous and inflexible (Conlin & Baum, 2003), often unplanned and unstructured, lacking a cohesive strategy. This approach, labeled 'ad hocism' (Baum, 2012, p. 125), has profound repercussions for island destinations with regard to recruitment, retention, training and career progression (Adler & Adler, 2004; Baum, Hearn, & Devine, 2007; Baum & Lundtorp, 2000; Shakeela & Cooper, 2009).

Having identified and defined the context, the relevant literature on which the study has been grounded is outlined in the next section while simultaneously formulating the research hypotheses.

3. Literature review and hypotheses development

The focus of the paper is on specific human resource practices which are likely to impact productivity and, by default, sustain profitability of organizations in the hospitality and tourism sector. Specifically, there now follows a review of the job involvement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intention literature, accompanied by the relevant hypothesis development.

3.1. Job involvement and organizational commitment

The seminal investigation by Allport (1943) conceptualized job involvement as active participation in one's job, or the degree to which employees are actively engaged in it, in order to fulfill their intrinsic needs. Fulfillment of these needs enables the achievement of personal satisfaction. In a later but significant contribution, Blau (1985) posited the view that job involvement provides the opportunity for individuals to make decisions, the foundation for strengthening their job involvement. Continuing his critique, Blau, citing Dubin's (1956) not insignificant contribution, informs us that job involvement is the perception that the work we do is so important that anything related to it or affected by it has a profound impact on our self-image. In a similar vein Paullay, Alliger, and

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