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“Thinking job embeddedness not turnover: Towards a better understanding of frontline hotel worker retention”

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ABSTRACT

This article reports the findings of a study of 327 Australian hotel frontline employees using a survey of job embeddedness. The research provides a novel application of the job embeddedness construct to the hospitality industry, not only validating the factor structure of the job embeddedness scale, but also investigating the relationship between job embeddedness and other job-related attitudes that influence employee turnover. Findings indicated that a six factor solution is the best explanation. Testing a model of the embeddedness-commitment and embeddedness-turnover relationship, the embeddedness dimensions of organizational sacrifice and community links displayed a positive relationship with organizational commitment. A negative relationship was found between organizational sacrifice and intentions to leave, while a positive relationship was found between community links and intentions to leave. One implication for hospitality managers is that there is an opportunity for hotel organizations to increase the job embeddedness of their employees by increasing the perceived costs of leaving.

Keywords: job embeddedness; organizational commitment; intentions to leave; turnover; hotel; workforce

1. Introduction

Employee turnover and the high levels of labor mobility in the hospitality workforces are major issues. The consequences of employee turnover include direct and indirect costs such as recruiting and training new employees and the loss of organizational knowledge when employees leave (Hinkin & Tracy, 2006, 2008). Potential solutions to high turnover include increasing attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Davidson & Wang, 2011; Deery, 2008; Griffith, Hom & Gaertner, 2000). However, while increased levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment predict lower intentions to leave, they are often poor predictors of actual turnover (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Holtom, Mitchell & Lee, 2006; Holtom, Mitchell, Lee & Tidd, 2006; Mitchell & Lee, 2001).

Clearly other factors are at work in terms of labor turnover, as has been noted (Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee & Mitchell, 2012), and further research is needed in the hospitality and other industries to understand the nature and role of this broader range of factors. For example, towards developing a more robust explanation of the factors influencing intentions to leave, some investigators have begun to examine the role of off-the-job factors such as the impact of work-life balance (e.g. Deery, 2008; Karatepe & Baddar, 2006; Karatepe & Kilic, 2007). However, in a more radical re-positioning of the research, others argue that gaps in our current understanding are associated with too great a focus upon the reasons why people leave their jobs rather than why people stay. In particular Mitchell and his colleagues (2001) initially theorized the job embeddedness construct to account for the role of on-the-job (e.g. personal alignment with the job and organization) and off-the-job (e.g. connections with the community through history, family and social groups) factors that might influence employee attitudes and behaviors in relation to turnover. It is proposed that these factors override job attitudes that would ordinarily induce intentions to leave (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2001; Mitchell & Lee, 2001).

Since its initial conceptualization, various investigators have developed multi-dimensional and global measures of job embeddedness (e.g. Crossley, Bennett, Jex & Burnfield, 2007; Holtom et al., 2006b; Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton & Holtom, 2004; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski & Erez, 2001). Most studies operationalize job embeddedness as a composite measure and effectively subsume the effects of different on- and off-the-job factors into an aggregate whole (e.g. Mitchell et al, 2001; Felps, Mitchell, Hekman, Lee, Holtom & Harman, 2009). However, global measures of job embeddedness also produce a single score for job embeddedness (e.g. Crossley et al., 2007) which provides little insight into the unique and more subtle influences upon why individuals might stay in a

job. Consequently, there is continuous debate not only about the nature and structure of job embeddedness (Zhang, Fried & Griffeth, 2012), but also the conceptual distinctiveness between job embeddedness and related constructs such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, amongst others (Crossley et al., 2007; Smith, Holtom & Mitchell, 2011).

The current study investigates the nature and role of job embeddedness, in particular adding to the body of research into the structure and impacts of the construct. While traditional turnover theory is premised on the notion that people will *leave* if their job satisfaction and organizational commitment are low, a job embeddedness ‘retention’ perspective contends that people will *stay*, given a particular combination of on-the-job and off-the-job factors that make leaving disadvantageous. In essence, this captures this study’s retention approach, which embraces a positive mindset towards employee organizational commitment. Firstly, the current study applied job embeddedness to the context of frontline hotel workers to test and validate the factor structure of the construct. Secondly, the relationship between the dimensions of job embeddedness and other job-related attitudes that are established predictors of employee turnover (i.e. organizational commitment and intentions to leave) was investigated. This examination of job embeddedness, in conjunction with organizational commitment and intentions to leave, examines the utility of promoting job embeddedness as an alternative approach in the retention strategies used to better manage high staff turnover among frontline hotel workers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Job embeddedness*

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 organizational commitment being two of the most commonly operationalized variables (e.g. Maertz & Campion, 1998; Hom & Griffeth, 1995, Mitchell et al., 2001). However, while there are significant results, the effects are also weak and many argue that not enough attention has been given to alternative explanations (see Maertz & Campion, 1998).

Breaking away from this narrow focus upon attitude-driven turnover research, the job embeddedness construct proposes the role of three inter-related factors (Mitchell et al, 2001). First, non-work factors influence a person’s attachment to their work. For example,

researchers such as Marshall, Chadwick and Marshall (1992) propose a ‘spillover’ model of turnover where work and family life interact. In addition, Lee and Maurer (1999) found that organizational commitment was not as strong a predictor of intention to leave as having a spouse and/or children at home. Second, other organizational factors that are not attitudinally based are empirically linked to turnover, including working with particular people or projects – these attachments to teams, groups and tasks have been labelled as ‘constituent commitments’ (Reichers, 1985). Third, the ‘unfolding model’ of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel & Hill, 1999) challenges traditional models of turnover and describes a variety of motives for leaving one’s job, many of which are related to outside ‘shock’ factors (Morrell, Loan-Clarke & Wilkinson, 2004). Morrell et al. (2004) suggest that shocks, for example traumatic marital breakdowns, not only influence intention to quit but are also strongly correlated to “final straw” turnover decisions. In support of the ‘unfolding model’ negative attitudes and active job search are not strong predictors of actual turnover (Campion, 1991). Together these three literatures have positioned job embeddedness as an alternative approach to understanding the factors that shape voluntary turnover intentions and behaviors (Mitchell et al., 2001).

2.2 Dimensionality of job embeddedness

Job embeddedness is “a broad set of influences on an employee’s decision to stay on the job” (Holtom et al., 2006a, p. 319). The influences are either on-the-job (organizational embeddedness) or off-the-job (community embeddedness) and these two dimensions are independent from the traditional measures of affective commitment, job satisfaction and perceived job alternatives as validated by previous research (see Jiang et al., 2012). These two dimensions, or influences, are further divided into three factors; each of which is represented once in the organizational embeddedness dimension and once again in the community embeddedness dimension. These six factors represent the influences an employee evaluates when making the decision to stay in a job: fit, links, and sacrifice. Fit is defined as: “an employee’s perceived compatibility or comfort with an organization and with his or her environment” (Holtom et al., 2006a, p. 319). Links are defined as: “formal or informal connections between an employee and institutions or people” (Holtom et al., 2006a, p. 319). Sacrifice is defined as: “the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that are forfeited by organizational departure” (Holtom et al., 2006a, pp. 319-320).

Although the original framework (Mitchell et al., 2001) clearly explicated six facets of job embeddedness residing in two sub-dimensions, there are now competing positions about

the structure of job embeddedness (Zhang et al., 2012). Over time, the construct has largely been operationalized as a composite of the two sub-dimensions of organizational and community embeddedness (Crossley et al., 2007). In this aggregate measure, each of the ‘fit’, ‘sacrifice’ and ‘link’ facets is equally weighted and averaged to form the organizational/community sub-factors, and then again to form overall embeddedness (i.e. a “mean of means”; Mitchell et al., 2001, p.1111). Generally speaking, researchers operationalize the composite measure of overall job embeddedness (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2001; Felps et al., 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2010).

However, there are various conceptual issues related to the sub-dimensions and individual facets of job embeddedness. First, mixed results in support of a direct relationship between community embeddedness and turnover could be explained by a range of factors. Zhang et al. (2012) for instance argue that the lack of predictive validity derives from the individual facet scales that comprise the community embeddedness sub-dimension, as factors are included that do not always equate to employees feeling “stuck” in their jobs. Second, the ‘links’ facet is not yet fully considered – the underlying principles of job embeddedness suggest that the more connections an employee has, the less likely they are to leave (Mitchell et al, 2001). More is not always necessarily better however, with more links there is a higher chance of conflicting demands (Kim, Price, Mueller & Watson, 1996), and the quality and structural characteristics of links must also be considered (Zhang et al., 2012). Turning to the hospitality industry, its jobs span the globe with many ‘small world’ networks (Batey & Woodbridge, 2007), and indeed these connections may actually pull employees away rather than encourage them to stay. Third, there are questions about the discriminant validity of the ‘fit’ and ‘sacrifice’ facets of job embeddedness (Zhang et al., 2012). An employee who makes an assessment that they ‘fit’ with their organization would quite likely perceive a ‘sacrifice’ if they were to leave. As a result of these issues, it is argued that combining facet scale scores into one composite score denies the unique role of each individual facet.

In the original conceptualization of job embeddedness, the direction of causality between indicator items and the latent construct was formative rather than reflective (Mitchell et al., 2001). In a formative model, responses to items combine summatively to *form* the respondent’s level on a latent construct, whereas in a reflective model, responses to items *reflect* the respondent’s level on the latent construct (Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000). However, many items used in subsequent job embeddedness studies are a mix of formative and reflective indicators, yet are all treated as formative indicators and a composite measure is

operationalized (e.g. Lee et al, 2004). This is particularly problematic when a short form of the job embeddedness scale is used (e.g. Holtom et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2012).

Crossley et al. (2007) also criticise the utility of a composite (formative) measure of job embeddedness and argue instead for a global measure of job embeddedness (i.e. a reflective model). Their reasoning is that mental processes involved in arriving at the end product (i.e. a gestalt) assume a complex consideration and differential weighting of all relevant factors, some of which may not even be considered in a facet-level scale. This view is supported by both the original authors (Mitchell et al., 2001) and the findings of subsequent research (e.g. Burton, Holtom, Sablinski, Mitchell & Lee, 2010; Karatepe & Karadas, 2012). Unfortunately, the preference for a composite or global measure has obscured more meaningful analysis of individual factors. The “mean of means” approach (Mitchell et al., 2001:1111) obfuscates divergences and contradictions between factors through the application of central tendency formulae.

Nor can it be assumed as some have concluded (Crossley et al., 2007; Burton et al., 2010), that job embeddedness can be adequately captured as a gestalt. Indeed, Crossley et al.’s (2007) global measure contains only seven items, none of which directly mention any off-the-job considerations. The items read like affective organizational commitment items, despite the authors providing evidence of discriminant and convergent validity in their measures. Individual personalities, values, goals and circumstances will embed people in markedly different ways in their organizations and communities. Attempting to capture this embeddedness through an unweighted composite measure or a universal scale, it is contended, is specious. One of the aims of the present study is to provide an exploratory investigation of the dimensionality of the job embeddedness construct using a reflective measurement model. This test will allow an examination of the specific relationships between individual job embeddedness factors and important outcome variables.

2.3 Job embeddedness, commitment and turnover

A second focus of the present study is to examine the impact of job embeddedness on established predictors of employee turnover in the context of the hospitality industry. There is conceptual and empirical support for an overall theory of job turnover with numerous studies reporting that job embeddedness is a significant predictor of intentions to leave (e.g. Allen, 2006; Crossley et al., 2007; Holtom et al., 2006a; Holtom & O’Neill, 2004; Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). In many studies, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are less significant predictors of intentions than job embeddedness (Felps et al., 2009). Some

investigators (e.g. Tanova & Holtom, 2008) contend that job embeddedness complements rather than replaces the traditional attitudinal based models of turnover. In support of this position, they found job embeddedness explains a significant amount of variance above and beyond measures of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Turnover decisions are not just about job attitudes, labor market opportunities and demographics, but also about the amount of real and perceived attachment to one's job and one's community (Tanova & Holtom, 2008).

There are a handful of prior studies of job embeddedness in the hospitality sector. 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 prior research in other contexts (e.g. Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Lee et al., 2004), 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.

In some cases, researchers have examined the differential effects of the organizational and community sub-factors (e.g. Allen, 2006; Lee et al., 2004; Wheeler, Harris and Harvey, 2010). Such examples treat the first order dimensions of job embeddedness as equally weighted facets and aggregate them to form composites. Results using this approach are mixed. For instance, Allen (2006) found that organizational embeddedness was the strongest predictor of turnover, but other researchers (e.g. Lee et al., 2004) report that community embeddedness is a better predictor. As Smith et al. (2011) report, it is unclear what circumstances determine the importance of one sub-dimension over another.

The present study aims not only to investigate the dimensionality of the job embeddedness construct, but also to examine the specific relationships between particular dimensions and employee attitudes. Although not yet tested in the particular context of the hospitality industry, previous studies reveal (e.g. Allen, 2006; Crossley et al., 2007; Holtom et al., 2006a; Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Lee et al., 2004) a positive relationship between stronger feelings of job embeddedness and increased organizational commitment, and a negative relationship between job embeddedness and turnover intentions. Mitchell et al.'s (2001) job embeddedness framework suggests that where an employee's personal values, career goals and future plans are aligned with the demands of the job, the individual experiences an alignment with the larger corporate culture and feels suited to their

surrounding community and environment. Therefore an embedded employee is more likely to feel committed to their organization, and less likely to have intentions to leave.

Consistent with Mitchell et al.'s (2001) framework and previous findings, *a positive relationship was expected between the job embeddedness dimensions and organizational commitment* (Hypothesis 1), while *a negative relationship is expected between job embeddedness dimensions and intentions to leave* (Hypothesis 2). As is apparent in figure 1, also individually tested, as sub-hypotheses, were the three sub-factors (fit, link and sacrifice) of the two job embeddedness dimensions. However, as noted, there are features of the hospitality industry that might result in mixed rather than strong relationships between job embeddedness, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Nevertheless, a more robust understanding of theories and constructs often emerges from such examinations in different contexts (e.g. industries, cultures). In addition, as noted there is continuous debate about the structure and factors of job embeddedness (Zhang et al., 2012) and the conceptual distinctiveness between job embeddedness, job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, amongst others (Smith et al, 2011).

3. Methods

3.1 Sample and data collection

Data for this study were collected through a survey of frontline employees at hotel properties belonging to global and national chains around the country. These frontline employees had customer contact responsibilities in the three key operational hotel departments of front office, food and beverage service and housekeeping. Hotel properties were selected on the basis of being full-service, located in an urban centre and primarily serving the corporate market. Authorization to conduct the study was first sought from the regional human resource executive from these various hotel groups and, once granted, individual requests were made of eligible properties within each group's portfolio. From the three participating hotel groups, ten out of a potential eighteen individual properties agreed to be involved in the study. Participating hotel properties represented a range of 3.5 to 5 star properties, each with between 100 and 400 rooms.

Surveys were distributed to all eligible employees in a paper-based or an electronic format via employees' direct supervisors and managers. Sealed and self-addressed envelopes were provided to ensure the anonymity of paper-based responses. The data collection window at each property lasted around one month. Follow-up calls were made to the human resource managers to prompt departmental managers and supervisors to maintain the data collection

drive throughout the collection period. A total of 327 usable responses were returned. This represented an aggregated response rate of 23% from the 1,400 frontline employees at all ten participating hotels. Respondents were predominantly young with 57% under 28 years of age. More than half the sample was female (57%), with 43% male. Around a third of the sample (35%) had less than one year's tenure with their organization and over half (56%) had less than two year's tenure. Half of the respondents were front office employees (50%), with 30% from food and beverage and 20% from housekeeping.

3.2 *Instrument and measures*

The questionnaire used in the current study comprised of three parts. The first section explained the nature and purpose of the research and requested demographic information. The second section of the survey contained the job embeddedness items, whilst the final section was designed to solicit employee attitudes and opinions towards their job, in terms of affective organizational commitment and intentions to leave. With the exception of demographic items, all survey items used a five point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to provide a ratings from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Job embeddedness. An adapted version of the short form of the job embeddedness construct developed by Holtom et al. (2006b) was utilized. Holtom et al.'s (2006b) short form measure consisted of twenty-one items, all of which are represented in the original 40-item measure. Holtom et al. (2006b) found a very strong product moment correlation between the long and short versions ($r = .92$) and no differences in the amount of variance in turnover explained by either form of the predictor instruments. The short form has also been successfully used by other researchers (e.g. Felps et al., 2009). In the current study, eighteen of the twenty-one questions were retained. Three dichotomous questions relating to having a partner and a mortgage were not used in this study as they are not dimensional in nature, rather categorical. Of the eighteen items retained, three items represent each of the six first order dimensions: fit, link and sacrifice in relation to organizational embeddedness and community embeddedness respectively.

Organizational commitment and intentions to leave. Affective organizational commitment was measured using seven items adapted from scales developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) and Crossley et al. (2007). Intentions to leave were measured using four items adapted from a scale developed by Crossley, Lin, Grauer and Stanton (2002). This scale was designed to avoid content overlap with constructs such as job search and job attitudes and was also used in a previous study of job embeddedness (Crossley et al., 2007). As with the

job embeddedness items, both of the dependent variables were measured on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Cronbach alphas for organizational commitment and intentions to leave were $\alpha = .89$ and $\alpha = .87$ respectively.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1 Measurement model

To examine the dimensionality of job embeddedness, these items were subjected to a series of exploratory factor analyses using principal components analysis with an oblimin rotation. The first solution, identified on the criteria of eigenvalues greater than 1.00, contained five factors, accounting for 65% of the variance. However, some items were split across factors even after suppressing coefficients at $<.5$. Consequently, a two-factor solution and a six-factor solution were also calculated. The six-factor solution accounted for 70% of the variance and the eighteen items loaded onto separate factors. The six factors reflected the purported structure of the job embeddedness construct (Mitchell et al., 2001). The identified factors also supported the use of the short form measure introduced by Holtom and his colleagues (2006b). The only item that did not load where expected was “If I stay with my organization, I will be able to achieve most of my goals”. The factors identified in this study were labelled ‘organizational fit’, ‘organizational sacrifice’, ‘organizational links’, ‘community fit’, ‘community sacrifice’ and ‘community links’.

For a more rigorous assessment of the measurement properties, confirmatory factor analysis using structural equation modelling software was conducted. The results in Table 1 indicate a good fit of the eight-factor model (i.e. six dimensions of job embeddedness, and the two factors of organizational commitment and intentions to leave) to the data on the basis of a number of goodness-of-fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 675.56$, $df = 343$; GFI (goodness of fit index) = .88; AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index) = .85; NFI (normed fit index) = .86; CFI (comparative fit index) = .92; IFI (incremental fit index) = .92; RMSEA (root mean square of error approximation) = .05. Furthermore, consistent with Anderson and Gerbing (1988), there is evidence of convergent validity, as all observed indicators loaded significantly on their latent variables. The magnitudes of the loadings ranged from .51 to .89, with 20 out of the 29 loadings above .70.

INSERT TABLE ONE HERE

Next, an evaluation of the discriminant validity of factors was performed using a series of χ^2 tests of difference. To do this, the items from each factor (eight in total, i.e. the six revealed job embeddedness factors as well as organizational commitment and intentions to leave) were tested against those from each other factor, in successive pair-wise comparisons. Specifically, a two-dimensional model for each pair was fit first, followed by a single-factor model. For each pair of measures, the χ^2 difference test produced significant results, indicating that imposing a single-factor model seriously deteriorated model fit. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to conclude that discriminant validity exists between the constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). With the measurement structure of the study variables confirmed, analysis then moved to testing the study hypotheses.

4.2 *Structural model*

The two hypotheses were tested using the six-dimensional structure of job embeddedness. In AMOS 19.0, the structural models of the null hypotheses were simultaneously identified and evaluated. Figure 1 depicts the results of the analysis of the influence of job embeddedness on affective organizational commitment and intentions to leave. Goodness-of-fit statistics indicated a good fit of the hypothesized model to the data: $\chi^2 = 739.91$, $df = 353$; GFI (goodness of fit index) = .87; AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index) = .84; NFI (normed fit index) = .85; CFI (comparative fit index) = .91; IFI (incremental fit index) = .91; RMSEA (root mean square of error approximation) = .06.

INSERT FIGURE ONE HERE

Tests of the model revealed that the higher levels of ‘organizational sacrifice’ and ‘community links’ have a significant relationship with increased organizational commitment. This strong and positive link between ‘organizational sacrifice’ and organizational commitment explained 75.2% of the variance in the dependent variable. The link between ‘community links’ and organizational commitment was a positive but moderate to weak relationship, only explaining 13.6% of the variance. Therefore Hypothesis 1, that job embeddedness is positively related to organizational commitment, was only partially supported, in that only some dimensions of job embeddedness have a significant positive relationship with organizational commitment.

In further tests of the model, the dimension of ‘organizational sacrifice’ showed a strong and negative relationship with intentions to leave, explaining 57.7% of the variance in the dependent variable. The link between ‘community links’ and intentions to leave was a positive but moderate relationship explaining 19.1% of the variance. Only two out of the six dimensions of job embeddedness had a significant relationship with intentions to leave, while one of these relationships was positive instead of negative. Hypothesis 2, that job embeddedness is negatively related to intentions to leave, is therefore partially supported.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Scale reliability and validation

This study confirms that the most substantive and robust factor solution for the job embeddedness scale is six dimensions: a three-by-two matrix of ‘fit’, ‘link’ and ‘sacrifice’ aspects across organizational (internal) and community (external) domains. This structure reflects the original six-dimension conceptualization proposed by the originators of the job embeddedness construct (Mitchell et al., 2001). This factor solution also supports Zhang et al.’s (2012) contention that treating the three sub-dimensions of community embeddedness as one factor undermines its predictive validity. As noted, many studies have created a single composite score for the entire job embeddedness scale rather than factor scores for each sub-dimension (e.g. Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012, Mitchell & Lee, 2001; Mitchell et al., 2001) or limited sample sizes have prevented their testing (Jiang et al., 2012). However, as others argue (e.g. Crossley et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2012), the items included in Mitchell et al.’s (2001) original 40-item job embeddedness instrument propose that a range of attitudes, opinions and states influence an individual when making an assessment of their own embeddedness. Some job embeddedness sub-dimensions will be more influential than others in particular contexts, and to treat them all as one rather than two scales undermines the theoretical basis of the job embeddedness construct. Particularly when the short form of the job embeddedness survey (Holtom et al., 2006) is utilized, the use of a reflective measurement model is more appropriate (Zhang et al., 2012).

In this study, there was a clear distinction between different sources of embeddedness, as well as a marked difference in the influence of these sources on other attitudes. While it has been argued that there are questions over the discriminant validity of the ‘fit’ and ‘sacrifice’ facets (Zhang et al., 2012), the results of this study lend weight to the idea that employees do consider these concepts separately. This finding gives investigators and practitioners a focal point for future research – the important nuances of particular sub-

dimensions can be better understood if they are not subsumed into a composite whole that may indeed be less than the sum of its parts.

5.2 *Job embeddedness and organizational commitment*

Contrary to expectations, only two dimensions of job embeddedness had a significant positive relationship with organizational commitment. The influence of ‘organizational sacrifice’ on organizational commitment was quite strong. Where employees consider that leaving would be disadvantageous, they are more likely to display affective commitment to the organization. Yet no relationship was found between the ‘organizational fit’ and ‘organizational link’ dimensions and organizational commitment. ‘Organizational fit’ captures an employee’s level of perceived compatibility or comfort with an organization – the person’s values, career goals and plans for the future must ‘fit’ with the larger corporate culture as well as the demands of the immediate job (Holtom et al., 2006). ‘Organizational links’ considers the formal and informal connections that exist between an employee, other people, or groups within the organization (Holtom et al., 2006). Zhang et al. (2012) explain that more links within the organization does not automatically mean a higher level of embeddedness – this notion is supported in the findings of this study

Explanations for these findings do emerge from past studies of the hospitality industry. There is a high degree of mobility in this industry, while the transient nature of the hospitality workforce is well-known (Finegold, Wagner & Mason, 2000). Others refer to the ‘small world’ networks that exist across the global hospitality industry (Batey & Woodbridge, 2007). Indeed, Deery and Shaw (1998) describe a omnipresent ‘turnover culture’, that both facilitates and destigmatizes mobility, in their study of Australian hotel workers. Given these and other factors related to this industry, it is not entirely surprising to find little influence of organizational ‘fit’ and ‘links’ on affective commitment. Employees are aware that similar working conditions and social opportunities exist in alternative jobs through their occupational community networks (Guerrier & Adib, 2003) and so the provision of these conditions and opportunities by the organization may not engender feelings of commitment. Those organizational aspects and benefits that are *unique* to the company could be considered a potential sacrifice, congruent with Cho, Johanson and Guchait, (2009), who found perceived organizational support to have a positive impact on intention to stay. In this vein employees that perceive a greater sacrifice are more committed to their organization. This line of thinking resonates with the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), in that those internal aspects of the organization that are inimitable are the source of competitive advantage.

The single community dimension that had a positive relationship with affective commitment was ‘community links’ and the effect was moderate at best. Neither ‘community fit’ nor ‘community sacrifice’ had significant influences on commitment. This finding partially supports the results of previous studies that found organizational embeddedness to be a stronger predictor than community embeddedness (Allen 2006; Wheeler et al., 2010). It is not entirely clear why one community dimension would relate to commitment, while the others do not. Perhaps it is an affective position where people who feel more ‘connected’ to their life outside of work display the same feelings toward their work/organization, as part of an integral assessment of their lives. Moreover, the pervasiveness of occupational and pan-industrial (Lee-Ross & Pryce, 2010) communities and cultures, and the blurring of leisure/work boundaries (Guerrier & Adib, 2003) within hospitality and tourism may confound respondents’ ability to differentiate organizational and community factors other than ‘links’. Otherwise, the strong bond between members of an occupational community may substitute the belongingness otherwise found in neighbourhoods or family and friend networks, as found in restaurant workers (Marshall, 1986). Indeed, recent work suggests this area is not well understood in hospitality research (see Chen, Cheung, & Law, 2012).

5.3 Job embeddedness and turnover

Turning to the relationship between job embeddedness and turnover only one job embeddedness dimension, ‘organizational sacrifice’ had a negative relationship with intentions to leave. The organizational dimensions of ‘fit’ and ‘link’ were not related to intentions to leave. Person-organisation fit, applied to hospitality newcomers, has been found to enhance organizational commitment by a range of measures, though intention to leave by inference only (Song & Chathoth, 2011). This finding suggests that the organizational dimensions of job embeddedness are not as robust predictors of turnover in hospitality contexts than in other industries. Nonetheless, as previous research in hospitality contexts has shown the expected inverse relationship between intention to leave and intention to stay is not necessarily manifest (see Cho et al., 2009), hence supporting a retention approach.

Interestingly, the ‘community links’ dimension was positively related to intentions to leave. A negative, if weak, relationship would have been consistent with theory and previous job embeddedness studies (e.g. Lee et al., 2004) and generally vindicating of work-life balance research. ‘Community links’ address the connections that exist between an employee and other people, or groups within the community and recognizes the significant influence family and other social institutions exert on individuals and their decision making (Holtom et

al., 2006). The typical youthful and transient profile of the hospitality worker (Baum, 2010), as consistent with this current sample, may mitigate the development of strong community fit and sacrifice attributions, but again the anomalous ‘community links’ finding may be linked to occupational and industrial community relationship perceptions.

The theoretical underpinnings of the job embeddedness construct infer that connections to the community influence an employee to stay, as part of a symbiotic relationship where life outside of work supports their work life and vice versa (Mitchell et al., 2001). However, these front line employees with substantial connections to their community were more likely to have intentions to leave. Possibly these connections outweigh the importance of holding a particular job. However, this finding could also be a function of the need to better specify the term ‘community’, particularly when respondents are located in large areas (see Zhang et al., 2012), as all did in the present sample. Similarly, research on Gen Y, constitutive of the majority of the sample, reveals they live with their parents for longer and value family (Solnet & Hood, 2008). This may suggest that ‘home’ for this group offers an embeddedness substitute for the role of a community.

Alternatively, this finding may be suggestive of personal stability in out-of-work contexts being conducive to risk-taking vis-à-vis alternative job searching. Possibly, again, there is a blurring of work/leisure boundaries in this industry (Guerrier & Adib, 2003) or indeed, as others have found, a strong sense of occupational community that plays down the importance of outside communities (Lee-Ross, 2004). This is particularly exacerbated for workers that might be isolated from other networks for a period of time, such as hotel employees in regional tourist locations, or cruise ship workers (Lee-Ross, 2008). For instance, outgroups are well-known to search for distinctive and positive features that psychologically separate them from wider communities (Haslam, 2004). The nature of the hospitality industry – with its long hours, the high numbers of casual employees, and a lifestyle that means that individuals associate more with members of the industry than those outside of it (Lee-Ross, 2004; Marshall, 1986) – might be a major explanation for these mixed findings. Moreover, individual employment characteristics, for example those that assign core or peripheral worker status within organizations (see Timo, 1999), account for much variation in hospitality employment satisfaction with work environments and intentions to leave (Lee & Way, 2010).

5.4 Implications for practice and research

This study has a number of specific implications for industry practice and theory development. In terms of practice it is not only rewards and benefits that employees sacrifice on leaving, it is also the opportunity to work in a particular organizational climate and industry (Schneider, 1980; Schneider & Bowen, 1993). The growing body of literature indicates that more embedded employees are retained employees (Allen, 2006; Crossley et al., 2007; Holtom et al., 2006; Holtom & O'Neill, 2004; Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). Thus, providing an on-going program of training and career development (Walsh & Taylor, 2007), for example, would constitute an organizational attribute individuals would need to consider sacrificing if leaving.

The results of this study reveal an opportunity for hotel organizations to increase the job embeddedness of their employees by increasing the perceived costs of leaving. Hotel organizations 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 socialization to an organization have long been recognized as fundamental to longer-term organizational success (e.g. Ulrich, Younger & Brockbank, 2008), and selecting employees who are more supportive of organizational goals and values is crucial. In addition, the unique working conditions of this industry, including seasonality, irregular working hours, reproductive and often unskilled work (Zampoukos & Ioannides, 2012) need to be considered in building job embeddedness. The evidence is that the intrinsic rewards offered, such as autonomy (Yang, 2010) and creativity (Robinson & Beesley, 2010) are more likely to engender organizational commitment for hospitality employees. Specific tactics hoteliers can employ in this regard might include input into housekeeping work team performance measurement indicators, menu design for food and beverage staff and empowering front office staff in exceeding guest needs (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). These strategies are likely to deflect employee attention from the industry's immutable structural characteristics that their organizations are subject to, and cannot fully control.

As previously noted, further psychometric research is needed to better understand the structure and dimensionality of the job embeddedness construct. Questions remain regarding the applicability of a uni-dimensional or even a composite construct. More research is needed into boundary conditions for the job embeddedness construct – organizational contexts, different facets of embeddedness and the types of voluntary turnover (e.g. retirement) that might influence results (Smith et al., 2011). Under what circumstances are people more embedded in their jobs? Are certain occupations or cultures naturally more embedded, or are

people perhaps more embedded at certain stages in their lifecycle? To answer these questions, longitudinal data are needed, across a range of industry sectors.

5.5 Limitations

While the study benefited from the participation of a suitable range of hotel properties across Australia from different hotel companies, the results are limited by the sample size and the non-random sampling. Nevertheless, the response rate achieved was reasonable for research conducted in the hospitality industry (Keegan & Lucas 2005). Care must be taken when interpreting the results however – the results may not be generalizable to hotel employees in other countries or market segments. An improvement to the research design would be to include time series data and the results of actual turnover.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

Workforce issues, and particularly turnover, is continuous challenges for the services sector and the labor intensive hospitality industry. Adopting a retention approach and operationalizing the job embeddedness survey, this study confirmed the instrument's six-faceted 'fit', 'link' and 'sacrifice' dimensionality across the organizational (internal) and community (external) domains. In particular this study found, unexpectedly, that only the influence of 'organizational sacrifice' on organizational commitment was significant. The practical implication is that hoteliers should focus on tactics and strategies that require employees to carefully consider what benefits and rewards they might lose when leaving (Schneider, 1980; Schneider & Bowen, 1993). Alternatively, job embeddedness was not found to be a generally strong predictor of turnover although, surprisingly, 'community links' were positively related to turnover intentions. One explanation is that the organisational and occupational communities formed at work form "surrogate families" (Lee-Ross, 2008) such that employees are less cognizant of neighbourhood communities in the traditional sense.

Clearly, there is much potential to further investigate the embeddedness concept as managing retention intuitively seems a far more positive approach than managing turnover. Given the direct influence that hospitality employees have on customer satisfaction and organizational performance in the corporate hotel sector, there is a need to continue to develop a greater understanding about employee retention in this idiosyncratic industry.

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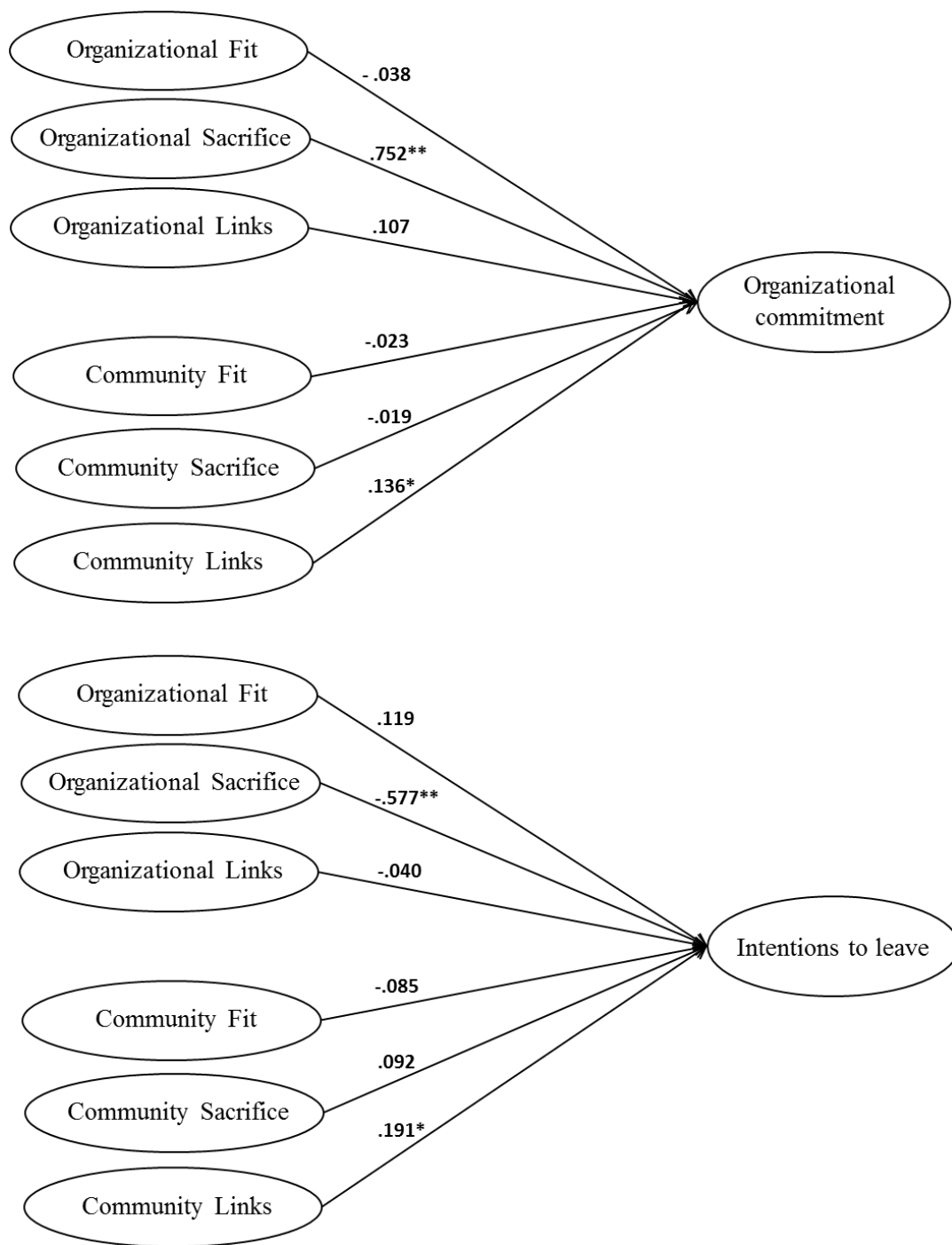
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Scale Items	Standardized loadings	<i>t</i> values
Job embeddedness - organizational fit		
My job utilizes my skills and talents well.	.73	10.16
I feel like I am a good match for my organization.	.74	10.20
Job embeddedness - organizational sacrifice		
I believe the prospects for continuing employment with my organization are excellent.	.76	13.56
If I stay with my organization, I will be able to achieve most of my goals.	.75	13.19
I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job.	.72	12.71
I have a lot of freedom on this job to pursue my goals.	.62	10.70
Job embeddedness - organizational links		
I work closely with my co-workers	.83	8.17
I am a member of an effective work group.	.59	7.76
On the job, I interact frequently with my work group members.	.58	7.60
Job embeddedness - community fit		
The place where I live is a good match for me.	.89	9.41
I really love the place where I live.	.85	9.49
The area where I live offers the leisure activities that I like	.52	7.23
Job embeddedness - community sacrifice		
Leaving the community where I live would be very hard.	.81	11.02
If I were to leave the area where I live, I would miss my neighbourhood.	.70	9.98
If I were to leave the community, I would miss my non-work friends.	.63	9.58
Job embeddedness - community links		
I participate in cultural and recreational activities in my local area.	.82	12.21
I am active in one or more community organizations.	.78	11.90
My family roots are in this community.	.60	9.92
Affective organizational commitment		
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	.65	11.05
I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	.67	11.58
I feel attached to this organization.	.75	13.03
It would be difficult for me to leave this organization.	.83	17.66
I'm too caught up in this organization to leave.	.74	12.77
I feel tied to this organization.	.51	8.74
I am tightly connected to this organization.	.75	13.04
Intentions to leave		
I plan to leave this organisation in the next little while.	.86	16.59
I intend to leave this organisation soon.	.81	15.48
I will quit this organisation as soon as possible.	.77	14.64
I may leave this organisation before too long.	.74	14.03

Note: all loadings are significant at $p > .001$

Table 1: Scale items and confirmatory factor analysis results.



* Significant at $p < .05$ **significant at $p < .001$

Figure 1: Structural model