



The effect of psychological empowerment on employees' commitment in travel agencies: The moderating role of perceived job security

Dr. Noha Ahmed Kamel
Tourism Studies Department
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels
Alexandria University, Egypt
E-mail: noha.kamel@alexu.edu.eg

Abstract

Psychological empowerment is becoming one of the most important issues in human resources management as it is thought to increase employees' commitment in business organizations. Meanwhile, the effect of psychological empowerment on organizational commitment could change according to other managerial aspects, such as perceived job security. Thus, the main objective of the current research is to explore the influence of psychological empowerment on employees' commitment to travel agencies in Egypt, and to investigate the moderating role of perceived job security. A quantitative approach was used for data collection. A questionnaire technique was chosen as the survey instrument to gather relevant data. A random sample of 714 employees of travel agencies in Egypt participated in the research. Data were analyzed firstly using descriptive statistics, then Pearson's correlations to identify associations between the study variables, and finally hierarchical moderation regression to ascertain the moderating effect of perceived job security on the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. The findings demonstrated that the psychological empowerment constructs were significantly correlated with the employees' commitment. Besides this, perceived job security had a moderating effect on the relationship between psychological empowerment and employees' commitment. No study has previously attempted to examine the moderating role of perceived job security on the importance of psychological empowerment as a determinant of employees' commitment in travel agencies in Egypt, an important sector of the travel industry.

Keywords Psychological Empowerment, Organizational Commitment, Perceived Job Security, Travel Agencies.

Introduction

At present, turbulent change in the tourism business, high customer prospects, and international competition in the tourism market require employees to show ingenuity, enthusiasm, and creativity in the work environment. This, undoubtedly, propels today's organizations, especially in the tourism sector where service quality is much required, to permit employees to exhibit creativeness and innovative ideas, rather than adopting a controlled hierarchy approach (Garg & Dhar, 2014). Ambad and Bahron (2012) stated that employees were the main source of knowledge, improvement, creativity, and progress for thriving organizations. Accordingly, employees' commitment and loyalty have become indispensable requirements for achieving organizational success and efficiency in the long run (Tanasky & Cohen, 2001). Organizational commitment (OC) is explained by several authors as an attitude that represents individuals' behaviors in an organization and reflects their engagement with the workplace (Catherine et al.,



2009). As a result, it is important to explore the determinants of employees' commitment to tourism organizations, in order to help organizations reach their goals. Several factors have been found to influence employees' OC. Among these, psychological empowerment (PE) is emerging as a distinct management approach that helps organizations to be outstanding in today's business environment by increasing employees' commitment to business organizations. Meanwhile, the effect of PE on employees' commitment could change according to other managerial aspects, such as perceived job security (PJS). The high rate of employee turnover in the tourism sector causes a sense of job insecurity among employees, which could in turn influence the relation between PE and OC.

Consequently, the main purpose of the current study is to investigate the relationship between PE and OC, as well as to examine the moderating role of PJS in this relation. Based on this, the current study seeks to (1) examine the level of employees' PE, OC and PJS in travel agencies in Egypt, (2) determine the relationship between PE as a whole and OC, (3) examine which of the PE sub-dimensions is most correlated with OC, (4) measure the impact of PE as a whole on OC patterns, and (5) investigate whether or not PJS strengthens the association between PE and OC, by analyzing the interaction between PJS and PE in predicting employees' commitment in travel agencies in Egypt.

Literature Review

Psychological empowerment

Recently, the term PE has received a great amount of attention in tourism and hospitality publications (Kara, 2012; Yilmaz, 2015; Muqadas et al., 2017). In management theory, this concept offers an explanation for employees' support, persistent work, belongingness, and loyalty (Yilmaz, 2015). From a review of the literature, it is noticeable that empowerment has been studied through two approaches: the *psychological approach*, which is based on a motivational theory that aims to raise individuals' sense of power and competence in a way that makes them feel able to deal fully with their job requirements (Stander & Rothmann, 2009), and the *structural approach*, which focuses on managerial actions, such as giving individuals more access to information and opportunities to learn in organizations (Mohsen, 2014).

The current study focuses on the psychological perspective of empowerment. It involves the cognitive elements of empowerment, which reflect how individuals experience their working life in an organization, and the degree to which a sense of empowerment is perceived by individuals (Muqadas et al., 2017). Besides this, it has been widely accepted that the psychological construction of empowerment could enhance employees' involvement and motivation at work. It provides them with more flexibility and personal control over their job responsibilities, which eventually lead to valuable managerial consequences in organizations (Kara, 2012). The structural approach, on the other hand, is built on giving responsibility to individuals at all organizational levels (Ambad & Bahron, 2012). Chiang and Jang (2008) stated that PE is specifically important for the tourism industry, since the nature of service providers' work requires higher standards of service, quick responses, and a high level of customer satisfaction. Therefore, in this industry, empowering employees contributes to achieving customer satisfaction and enhances organizational effectiveness.

Avan et al., (2016) described PE as an intangible and emotional state consisting of a variety of perceived feelings. It involves employees' experience of being authoritative and dependable in



their working life. The practice of PE in an organization involves supervisors giving employees more discretion and autonomy since this makes the employees more committed to their organization (Mohsen, 2014). It also generates many other positive behaviors towards the workplace, for instance cooperative manners, job involvement, organizational citizenship behaviors, and higher-quality performance (Özaralli, 2015; Kara, 2012). Thus, tourism organizations need to adopt various empowerment initiatives that could boost employees' level of commitment, such as spreading a culture of participation based on rewards that does not penalize risk taking, sharing power, giving responsibility, granting decision-making authority, and developing continuing involvement programs (Chiang & Jang, 2008). On the contrary, Ambad and Bahron (2012) clarified that, thus far, many organizations, especially public-sector organizations in developing countries, had not been able to nor had even wanted to put PE into practice. This was attributed to two main reasons: the fear of losing control over the employees and the problems that might occur as a result of the wrong decisions being taken by employees. Such a hierarchical management perspective may affect employees' level of commitment and cause copious negative organizational outcomes, such as employees' dissatisfaction, poor performance, and high turnover rates.

PE is a multidimensional concept comprising four cognitive dimensions through which employees may appraise their empowerment in organizations. These dimensions are shaped through the work environment and can be described as follows (Spreitzer, 1995; Muqadas et al., 2017): (1) *Impact*: the degree to which an employee can make a difference at work through his/her actions. As noted by Avan et al., (2016), empowering employees in terms of the impact dimension could improve their inner beliefs and create a cognitive state through which they are able to influence their work and create positive outputs at all organizational levels. (2) *Meaning*: employees' acceptance of work values and task goals. This refers to the consistency between the requirements of one's work responsibilities and one's own values, thoughts, standards, and attitudes (Mohsen, 2014). Taamneh and Al-Gharaibeh (2014) stated that meaning reflects the degree to which an individual feels that his/her own efforts contribute towards the work of their organization as a whole. (3) *Competence*: this inherently reflects individuals' beliefs that they have the abilities and skills to perform job tasks adeptly (Kara 2012; Stander and Rothmann 2010). It indicates a person's trust in his/her self-efficacy and his/her ability to produce high-quality job outcomes. (4) *Self-determination*: individuals' independence and perceived freedom in carrying out their work roles, as well as the authority granted to them to make decisions regarding work systems, techniques, and processes (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Spreitzer (1995) pointed out that, ultimately, each component of PE is essential for achieving the structure of the term "empowerment". Thus, tourism organizations should enhance each aspect through specific managerial practices.

Organizational commitment

OC is considered one of the premier issues in human resources management, reflecting the connection between employees and their organizations. It focuses on employees' modes of behavior within their organization, and interprets their absences, inefficiency, irresponsibility, job dissatisfaction, low performance, likelihood of departure, and many other organizational behaviors (Kazlauskaite et al., 2006; Yeshanew & Kaur, 2018). The OC concept was formulated for the first time by Porter et al., (1974), when they described employees' commitment as the degree to which individuals associated with their organization and felt they belonged to it. They and numerous other researchers (Meyer et al., 2002; Avan et al., 2016; Yeshanew & Kaur, 2018)



distinguished between three patterns of OC: affective commitment (AFF.C), continuous commitment (CON.C), and normative commitment (NOR.C). AFF.C reflects an employee's emotional attachment to his/her organization. It is about feeling connected to, involved in, and proud of the organization, and having an actual desire to remain with it, for the good of the organization itself, but not obliged to stay (Porter et al., 1974). In other words, it is based on a person's positive mental attitude and inner emotions towards their workplace (Lalopa, 1997). According to Yeshanew and Kaur (2018), AFF.C refers to people having the enthusiasm to exert considerable efforts, and an inclination to sustain their membership of the organization.

As for CON.C, it has been described as a negative type of OC, as employees need to keep working for the organization, because they benefit from it, in terms of salary. Hence, they continue working there, owing to the costs that would be associated with their departure (Joarder et al., 2011). Lastly, regarding NOR.C, employees are obligated to stay in the organization. There are many reasons that may force individuals to keep working for a specific organization, regardless of their satisfaction or positive attitudes towards it, and simply for the organizational advantages they obtain, for example rewards, promotions, suitable work conditions, acceptable punishment policies, and social pressure. Thus, employees who have a high level of NOR.C are keen to satisfy their employers (Yeshanew & Kaur, 2018). Thus, AFF.C involves a stronger degree of commitment than the other two types of OC. Catherine et al. (2009) are in agreement that AFF.C is the most influential dimension of OC and can produce many positive consequences, such as job satisfaction, efficiency, and a low turnover rate. Finally, the degree of each form of OC varies from one organization to another according to the nature of the organization and its size, as well as the working conditions there.

The moderating role of perceived job security (PJS)

Job security (JS) is regarded as one of the main organizational concerns that should be taken into consideration when discussing OC. It has been mentioned as a job-related problem in tourism organizations due to its significant effect on many other managerial aspects, such that it can have numerous consequences in the workplace (Gallie et al., 1998). However, Furaker and Berglund (2014) and other authors (Hellgren et al. 1999; De Cuyper et al., 2009; Piccoli et al. 2011) have distinguished between two perspectives of JS: (1) objective JS, which refers to an individual's chance of finding or ability to find another equally good job in his/her field, and (2) subjective JS, which expresses an individual's own judgment and perception of his/her employment security, in terms of feeling secure in their current job, regardless of the economic conditions in the society, the latter being external determinants outside the control of the organization. Similarly, Taamneh and Al-Gharaibeh (2014) asserted that perceived JS is characterized by a decrease in feelings uncertainty and anxiety about losing one's current job. Sjöberg (2000) affirmed that this type of JS can be perceived differently by different individuals. It involves employees' sensory perceptions and subjective appraisals regarding the risk of being laid off by their employer (Furaker & Berglund, 2014).

According to Goretzki (2016), the probability of losing one's job is considered to be a "risk", and the way someone perceives this type of risk is known as a "job security perception". For this reason, PJS is believed to be a risk perception (Sjöberg, 2000). Nevertheless, it can be said that PJS happens when an employee feels secure in his/her job and does not worry about the future existence of the job (Furaker & Berglund, 2014; Sverke et al., 2006). Simply put, an employee believes that his/her current job position will exist as long as he/she demands it. Thus, the



current study sheds light on the subjective approach to JS as it expresses people's perceptions of their JS, which differ from one person to another. This was described by Dienhart and Gregoire (1993) as an intangible and poignant item that is conspicuously individualized. As mentioned earlier, it revolves around a subjective assessment, stemming from a person's own perceptions.

A review of the existing literature demonstrates the connection between JS and OC (Borg & Elizur, 1992; Gallie et al., 1998; Feather & Rauter, 2004; Sverke et al., 2006; Furaker and Berglund, 2014). For example, Dienhart and Gregoire (1993) emphasized that individuals who perceived they had JS were more committed to their workplace than others, as they felt they were very important to their organizations. Furaker and Berglund (2014) corroborated the idea that job insecurity leads to numerous passive consequences, for instance, lower commitment, dissatisfaction, decreased performance, a reduction in employees' organizational citizenship behavior, less affiliation, and a strong desire to leave the organization. They confirmed that OC was related to a person's feeling of safety in his/her current job. De Cuyper et al., (2009) also emphasized the significance of PJS for the achievement of high employee OC. Likewise, Goretzki (2016) disclosed that PJS affected individuals' attitudes and behaviors during work time. Accordingly, employees' commitment can definitely be said to be influenced by their perception of JS, while they will be unable to pay full attention to their tasks if there is a probability they may lose their job in the coming years (Borg & Elizur, 1992).

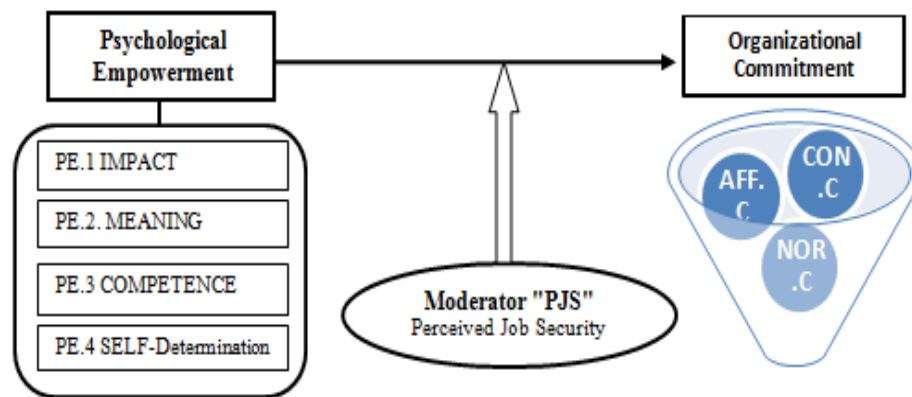
Furthermore, PJS is affected by many factors within the organization, that are considered by Feather and Rauter (2004) to be important aspects that affect the degree of an individual's sense of JS; one of these factors is PE, which has been found to be related to the number of employees who perceive themselves to have employment security. In fact, it seems that a culture of empowerment generated by managers reduces individuals' sense of job insecurity and confusion (Dienhart & Gregoire, 1993). When a sense of powerlessness is perceived by employees, it increases their sense of job insecurity.

Thus, Stander and Rothmann (2010) agreed that employees' PE was certainly a paramount variable in the study of job insecurity. Moreover, Goretzki (2016) stated that PE was considered one of the main factors within an organization that could decrease an employee's fear of loss of employment. He added that, if these internal factors were well controlled by executive managers, a positive direct consequence on employees' PJS could be expected. Therefore, the current study concentrates on the subjective aspect of JS. Based upon these theories, which align with the phenomena under study, the current study proposes that PJS may influence the direct connection between PE and OC in travel agencies in Egypt.

Conceptual framework and research hypotheses

Based on the above theory, the following figure represents the proposed model of this research.

Figure 1. Conceptual proposed model for field study



Hypothesis 1 (H1): The PE constructs have significant correlations with employees' OC.

- H.1.a. There is a significant correlation between PE-impact and OC.*
- H.1.b. There is a significant correlation between PE-meaning and OC.*
- H.1.c. There is a significant correlation between PE-competence and OC.*
- H.1.d. There is a significant correlation between PE-self-determination and OC.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Employees' commitment is significantly affected by the PE as a whole in travel agencies in Egypt.

- H.2.a. AFF.OC is significantly affected by PE as a whole.*
- H.2.b. CON.OC is significantly affected by PE as a whole.*
- H.2.c. NOR.OC is significantly affected by PE as a whole.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3): PJS moderates the correlation between PE and OC.

Methodology

Population and sample

The population for this study included employees of travel agencies in Egypt. Category (A) consisted of 1915 travel agencies, according to the Egyptian Travel Agents' Association (ETAA 2018). The study targeted employees of travel agencies in three main governorates, Cairo, Giza and Alexandria, where the majority of the travel agencies are located (n=1605), representing 85% of the total number of travel agencies in Egypt (ETAA 2018). There was some difficulty obtaining an accurate figure for the number of employees working in travel agencies in Egypt, but experts at the ETAA and the Ministry of Tourism estimated that the average number of employees ranges from about four to six per agency. Thus, assuming that the average number of employees in each travel agency was five, the study population included approximately 8025 employees. A random sample was used to collect the research data. Relying on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) concerning the size of random sample required for a significance level of 0.95 and error rate of 0.05, it was found that the size of the sample for this study should not be less than 311 employees, but could exceed that number. The equation adopted by Thompson (2012) was also applied, giving the same result.



Data collection

A survey was deemed to be an appropriate method for collecting data regarding opinions, especially given the large number of participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2011).

Instrument

A questionnaire was chosen as the survey instrument for gathering the data. It was designed and distributed via two methods: **First**, the travel agencies were contacted by phone – using the directory of Egyptian travel agencies – and asked for permission to ask their employees to participate in the questionnaire. After that, 388 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, who were politely requested to complete it. Some of the distributed questionnaires were then collected directly, while others were received the following day, by the respondents' request. **Second**, in order to increase the participation rate, a questionnaire link – in a Google form – was sent by e-mail to some travel agencies that had stated a preference for this format. In addition, the researcher employed a snowball technique, following Veal and Darcy (2014), by asking participants to forward the questionnaire to other employees of travel agencies in Egypt, in order to increase the response rate. Overall, this online format yielded 462 responses. The total number of questionnaires distributed was 850. Of these, 766 were returned, of which 714 were found to be valid for analysis, representing a respectable response rate of 84%. The researcher collected data from June to the end of September 2018.

The questionnaire was composed of four main categories and contained 31 items. The first category covered the demographic characteristics of the targeted sample through six items (Table 1). The second discussed the PE sub-dimensions, with 12 statements adapted from Mohsen (2014), and the third the OC dimensions, with nine items based on the scale of Curtis et al., (2009). Finally, the fourth category addressed PJS, with four statements derived from Furaker and Berglund (2014) and adjusted to the current study's purposes. All questionnaire answers were arranged on a five-point Likert scale, for example, for the PE subscale, "I am able to determine how to fulfill my job responsibilities", for the OC subscale, "I'm willing to work hard to help my organization achieve its goals", and for the PJS subscale, "I don't feel worried about losing my current job".

Validity and reliability of the study instrument

Regarding the questionnaire pre-testing, the reliability of all items was revised by respective experts, which resulted in a reduction of the number of questionnaire statements from 36 to 31 based on their feedback. The validity of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.795, indicating that the study instrument was close to the acceptable range (0.7) recommended by Nunally (1978). Thus, it was found acceptable and suitable for additional analysis.

Data analysis techniques



The study's hypotheses were evaluated and tested using various statistical methods, such as mean and standard deviation (STD) to determine the extent of PE, PJS and OC, Pearson's correlations at a significance level of 0.05 to identify associations between the study variables, linear regression, and finally hierarchical moderation regression at a significance level of 0.05 to ascertain the moderating effect of PJS on the relationship between PE and OC, with SPSS 22.0 used for all data analysis.

Analysis results

Respondent profile

Table 1. Sample profile (n=714)

Demographic variables	Items	N	%	Demographic variables	Items	N	%
Gender	Male	425	59.5	Years of experience	Less than 5 years	187	26.2
	Female	289	40.5		5-9 years	221	31.0
Age	Less than 25	119	16.7		9 years or more	306	42.9
	25-39	374	52.4	Employment contract type	Permanent	561	78.6
	40 or more	221	31.0		Temporary	153	21.4
Level of education	Bachelor's degree	595	83.3	Marital status	Single	289	40.5
	Master's degree	34	4.8		Married	68	9.5
	Doctoral degree	51	7.1		Married with children	323	45.2
	Other	34	4.8		Not married (divorced or widow)	34	4.8

Regarding the employees' characteristics, the results indicate that more than half of the respondents are male (59.5%). The majority of the employees held a bachelor's degree (83.3%), while a lower proportion had either a master's or a PhD (11.9%). Nearly half of the employees were aged 25-39, while 31% were 40 or older. Very few employees (21.4%) had temporary employment, while more than three quarters (78.6%) had permanently contracts. In terms of marital status, the largest proportion (45.2%) were married with children. As for years of experience, the highest proportion of employees (42.9%) had worked for 9 years or more, while the lowest group (at 26.2%) was those who had worked for less than 5 years.

Hypothesis testing

The levels of PE, OC and PJS, and the correlations among the different research variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas and correlations

Variables	Mean (M)	STD	Correlations					
			"a"	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.OC	3.4247	.6670	.792	1				
2.AFF.C	3.2540	1.034		.840**	1			
3.CON.C	3.2740	.7860		.698**	-	1		
4.NOR.C	3.7460	.7697		.759**	-	-	1	
5.PE	3.8248	.5556	.841	.696**	.695**	.345**	.523**	1
6.PE-impact	3.7190	.6497		.489**	.546**	.180**	.354**	.309**



7.PE-meaning	3.4015	.7400		.421**	.493**	.110**	.321**	.762**
8.PE-competence	4.0121	.7561		.669**	.599**	.285**	.642**	.462**
9.PE-self-determination	4.1667	.8054		.511**	.463**	.439**	.259**	.767**
10.PJS	3.1071	.8136	.720	.655**	-			.534**

Table 2 shows that the overall PE in the travel agencies was perceived to be quite high ($m=3.8248$). The four dimensions of PE are all acknowledged by the employees, with mean scores above three. *Self-determination* has the highest mean score ($m=4.1667$) among the PE dimensions, while *meaning* received the lowest mean value ($m=3.4015$). Generally, this clearly shows that satisfactory PE practices are being employed by the travel agencies' managers with regards to the employees. As for the employees' OC, the data demonstrate that the overall level is acceptable, with a mean of 3.4247. On the other hand, the respondents show a relatively moderate score for PJS, with a mean of 3.0171.

Correlations between study variables

Regarding the correlations between the study variables, **firstly**, the results disclose that there is an observed significant relationship between PE and OC as a whole ($r=0.696$, $p < 0.001$), which means that employees who feel more empowerment are more committed to their organizations. Moreover, Table 2 shows positive and important associations between the PE items and OC, with significance values of $p < 0.05$. Despite that, the PE dimensions show different correlations with OC. Among these dimensions, *competence* has the highest correlation with employees' commitment ($r=0.669$, $p=0.000$), while *meaning* ($r=0.421$, $p=0.000$) has the lowest association. This means that competence is more essential than the other PE factors in terms of its relation to employees' OC. Hence, the Pearson correlation results support H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d, implying that the fourth construct of PE has positive correlations with employees' OC in travel agencies in Egypt.

Secondly, the results of the bivariate correlation exhibit a positive, significant relationship between the moderator variable (PJS) and OC ($r=0.628$, $p < 0.01$), demonstrating that a positive perception of JS is needed to motivate employees' OC.

Regression analysis

Next, in order to test hypothesis 2 (H2a, H2b and H2c), regression analysis was employed to investigate the contribution of PE as a whole to the three forms of OC; the findings are shown below in Table 3:

Table 3. Effect of PE on three forms of OC

Dependent variables	PE (independent variable)		
	Adjusted R ²	Beta	Sig.
AFF.C	.482	.695	.000
CON.C	.118	.345	.000
NOR.C	.272	.523	.000

As we can see from Table 3, although PE emerged as a significant predictor of OC's three types, it makes a different contribution to each one. It shows a highly significant effect on AFF.C (adjusted $R^2=.482$, $\beta=.695$, $p < 0.001$) and a moderately significant one on NOR.C (adjusted $R^2=.272$, $\beta=.523$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that, the more PE employees feel, the more AFF.C



and NOR.C they have towards the organization, which verifies hypotheses H2a and H2c. Although the results showed PE to have only a limited effect on CON.C, explaining only 11.8% of the variation, the effect was still significant. Thus, hypothesis H2b was also supported.

Modeling the effects of PJS as a moderating variable

Based on the observed correlations, the researcher adopted a moderated multiple regression analysis to test the moderating effect of PJS on the relationship between PE and OC, following Baron and Kenny (1986). Firstly, linear regression analysis was employed to determine the direct impact of PE on the dependent variable (OC) as a whole, as illustrated in Model (1), Table 4. Then, the predictor (PE) and the moderator variable (PJS) were entered, in Model (2). Finally, the interaction term (PE×PJS) was entered in Model (3) to confirm whether the third variable was indeed having a moderating effect on the relationship between PE and OC and if this interaction effect was statistically significant or not.

Table 4. Moderated multiple regression

Variables	Model (1)			Model (2)			Model (3)		
	β	Sig	T value	β	Sig	T value	β	Sig	T value
Predictor: (constant), PE									
	.696**	.000	25.860	.484**	.000	17.184	.541**	.000	20.081
PJS	-	-	-	.396	.000	14.055	.365	.000	13.737
Moderator: (PE*PJS)	-	-	-	-	-	-	.231	.000	10.152
Adjusted R ²	.484			.595			.646		
Std. error of estimate	.47930			.42430			.39678		
R-square change (ΔR ²)	.484			.112			.051		
F change	668.724***			197.530***			103.065***		
Sig. F change	.000			.000			.000		
Dependent variable (OC)									
Level of sig: * p < .05 ; ** p < .01 ; *** p < .001									

In Table 4, it can be seen that, in model (1), before testing the moderating impact of the PJS variable, the coefficient of determination (adjusted R²) between PE as a predictor and overall OC is equal to 0.484 (β=0.696, F-ratio=668.724, p<0.001). This result indicates that PE can account for 48.4% of the variance in employees' OC, which reveals that, when PE practices are present to a greater degree, greater commitment from the employees will be achieved.

In model (2), the adjusted R² (0.595) and standardized beta (β=0.396, p<0.001) demonstrate a significant effect of PJS on OC, with PJS explaining almost 60% of the variation in employees' commitment when it is entered in model (2) along with the predictor from the previous model (PE).

Next, as shown in model (3), where the moderating effect of PJS is entered, it can be observed that 64.6% of the variance in employees' commitment is elucidated by the moderating effect of



PJS (adjusted $R^2=0.646$, $\beta=0.231$, $p<0.001$), showing that PJS adds explanatory power to the model. Table 3 shows that the coefficient of determination has increased by 0.051, according to ΔR^2 , which is meaningful at the level of $p<0.001$ with respect to the change in F of 103.056.

Therefore, it is estimated that, the greater is the perception of JS, the greater will be its moderating effect. Hence, H3 is supported, showing that PJS has a fully moderating role in the effect of PE on OC in travel agencies in Egypt, as it strengthens the correlation between those two variables.

Discussion of results

This study aims to address the role of PE in increasing individual employees' commitment to travel agencies in Egypt. Special attention is given to investigating the correlations between different dimensions of PE and employees' commitment. The effect of PJS as a moderator variable is further analyzed and verified in inferential analysis using linear and moderated multiple regression tests.

Analyzing the study's outcomes regarding the levels of PE and OC in travel agencies in Egypt, which were found to be moderate, presents some remarkable observations. The work environment developed by travel agencies' managers for their employees has resulted in satisfactory degrees of PE and OC. Contrary to the researcher's expectations, especially given the high rate of employee turnover in the tourism sector (Lalopa 1997), the respondents exhibited a relatively acceptable score for PJS. This result might be attributed to the fact that most of the employees surveyed had permanent contracts. Also, a high percentage of them had been working for nine years or more (Table 1). Thus, they do not seem to be worried about their employment security. This coincides with several prior studies (Clark, 2005), which have reported that temporary employees are more likely to perceive that they have low JS, which will certainly affect their trust and commitment to their organization. In addition, as mentioned above, the agreeable empowerment practices recognized by these employees give them a sense of power, confidence and autonomy, which might make them feel more secure in their workplace. Thus, they will interpret these practices as organizational support.

The results of the correlation analysis reveal a positive association of a high magnitude between PE and OC in travel agencies in Egypt, confirming that employees who feel more empowerment are more committed to their organizations. Although the four constructs of PE have significant correlations with OC, the *competence* construct shows the strongest relationship, consistent with Ambad and Bahron (2012), who noted that feeling competent in dealing with the requirements of one's job is extremely highly correlated with a person's OC. This result is also in line with Spreitzer (1995) and Goretzki (2016), who have attested that employees will not feel empowered unless they have confidence in their capabilities. Similar outcomes were found in the study of Ambad and Bahron (2012), in which competence was revealed as a factor of PE that had a paramount role in promoting individuals' commitment at work. Consequently, it can be claimed that, when employees feel competence and have the authority to decide how to accomplish their assignments, they will work hard to execute tasks successfully.

On the contrary, Kraimer et al., (1999) concluded that impact and self-determination were the only two attributes of PE to have a positive relationship with OC. Meanwhile, Chiang and Jang (2008) found that self-determination was the strongest PE dimension in terms of its influence on



OC and JS. This contradiction reflects a noteworthy point, that the four dimensions of PE do not exhibit the same associations with OC.

On the other hand, the analyzed data demonstrate that employees' perceptions of their JS are positively associated with their level of commitment towards their workplace. This confirms the outcomes of De Cuyper et al., (2009), who asserted that a positive perception of JS indeed increases employees' OC and provides them with the energy to develop their performance, by influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviors during work time.

Additionally, PE has been found to be a significant predictor of employees' commitment in travel agencies in Egypt. It augments employees' work attitudes and devotion, and reduces their tendency to leave an organization (Ambad & Bahron, 2012). Consequently, the more PE is available, the more committed the employees will be. This is consistent with Lan and Chong (2015), as empowered employees are more committed to their organizations and willing to give their best efforts to complete their assigned tasks effectively. Therefore, an organization with committed staff is less likely to face problems with indolence, absence, apathy, turnover intentions, and low performance (Kuruuzum et al., 2009). This study's findings are that PE is a strong predictor of employees' AFF.C, and a moderate predictor of NOR.C. However, it has a lesser effect on CON.C. This goes in line with (Shore and Wayne 1993), who stated that CON.C was a negative form of OC, in which employees need to remain in their current job only for the benefits they obtain from it, but would leave the organization right away if they found a job with a better salary. This certainly contradicts the idea of AFF.C, which involves a meaningful harmony between employee and organization, prompting the employee to stay because they want to (Joarder et al., 2011).

Examining the findings in Table 4, a significant effect of PJS on OC appears when it is entered in model (2) along with the predictor from model (1), PE. This indicates that employees' commitment towards their organizations is certainly affected by their perception of JS and by the extent to which they feel secure at their workplace. This conforms to Piccoli et al., (2011), who noted that, when employees feel satisfied with their JS, they will be willing to fulfill their job responsibilities to an exceedingly high standard, and will be focused on a common goal, improving their productivity and their loyalty to the organization. Taamneh and Al-Gharaibeh (2014) added that individuals who are gratified by their employment security, especially in the tourism sector, are motivated to work effectively so as to prove their efficiency, which eventually leads to better performance. Besides this, PJS appears to be a statistically significant moderator between PE and OC when entered in model (3). This shows that employees' commitment, encouraged by PE practices in their organization, could be higher if their PJS is high. In other words, an increase in PJS will definitely strengthen the explicit connection between PE and OC in travel agencies in Egypt.

Conclusion, implications and recommendations

The present study adds to the existing body of literature set in the tourism sector concerning the relationship between PE and employees' commitment. The researcher performed an exploratory study into the moderating role of PJS on the importance of PE as a determinant of employees'



commitment, specifically in travel agencies in Egypt. The research hypotheses were confirmed through scientifically suitable methods.

This research can be used as a pillar for managers in the tourism sector who want to better understand the connection between empowering their employees and those employees' commitment, based on a specific example of travel agencies in Egypt. This can help managers plan PE practices for their employees based on the most effective dimensions that are shown to increase commitment, and to decide which empowerment practices they should give priority to improving, if they want to achieve a higher degree of commitment among their employees. Moreover, this research will be valuable for future researchers seeking to determine the extent of employees' empowerment in travel agencies in Egypt, so as to discover its influence on other managerial aspects. Also, future studies will be able to use the data discussed in this research to compare the differing perceptions of employees regarding JS in different tourism organizations within Egypt. The results of this research can also make managers aware of the importance of PJS to employee-related issues such as commitment and empowerment. The inferences drawn from this research, namely that getting committed employees starts with the management's efforts to create an ideal workplace characterized by a culture of appreciation, delegation, supportive evaluation and work flexibility, could be extremely valuable for both private- and public-sector tourism organizations. Additionally, the outcomes mentioned in this study could give travel agencies' managers insight into the practices that can make employees feel secure in their employment, so that they make better decisions in this regard in the future.

Based on the above, this research presents some recommendations for managers in travel agencies in Egypt:

- (1) Egyptian travel agencies' managers should develop a culture of trust by delegating tasks, welcoming employees' suggestions and communicating with them frequently to develop closer relationships.
- (2) Managers should avoid a culture of intimidation and resentment, since it leads to a hostile work environment. Employees should be given extra time to handle the complaints and problems they encounter at work, rather than being blamed or punished for them.
- (3) Organizational justice should be considered when allocating responsibilities. An employee has to know his/her formal job description to minimize unnecessary work, time and effort. This can be ensured by setting up a structure for each department in the company that defines the tasks, responsibilities and authorities of each job. Salaries should be determined according to the difficulty of the tasks and efforts exerted, as well as the employees' qualifications, taking into account the need to provide financial incentives.
- (4) Managers should encourage employees' personal innovations by challenging them to come up with new ideas and encouraging them to take risks with no fear. This can be accomplished if the employees realize that taking risks is becoming an essential requirement of growing and competing in the tourism market. Thus, managers need to make their employees realize that the traditional approach to work will not lead to progress. Truly, employees need to be encouraged to take risks and should not be sanctioned for their mistakes.
- (5) More efforts should be exerted towards enhancing employees' perceptions of their JS, in order to make them more dynamic and committed to their work, through PE



practices - as discussed previously - which in turn will help to achieve the vision of travel agencies. Job security can be achieved through different methods, such as the following:

- developing employees' skills by giving them different experiences to raise their confidence for their future career;
- giving them incentives through salaries associated with performance and results;
- improving their promotion opportunities;
- setting certain standards within a contract of employment, which may give the employees a sense of security, which could include linking employees' compensation to profits, through a commission based on sales;
- presenting a future job plan containing the desired goals and objectives the travel agency would like the employee to reach, thereby giving employees confidence that they are an essential part of their organization and needed to achieve the planned goals, and encouraging them to do their utmost to prove their efficiency without fear of losing their job.

The above-recommended practices should make employees feel secure in their current jobs. When this is achieved, they should be more relaxed and enthusiastic about carrying out their work. Finally, employees' level of commitment needs to be assessed regularly through employee surveys, regular meetings or any other method, to discover the factors that may affect their OC and improve this in the future.

Limitations that could guide future research

This research opens the way for additional contributions in this area of research. It has four main limitations. First, future research can examine the factors that hinder empowerment practices in travel agencies in Egypt. Second, other moderating variables that may have an impact on the relationship between PE and OC in travel agencies, such as organizational justice, employees' satisfaction, organizational climate, gender discrimination and leadership styles, should be examined. Third, the current study was conducted only on employees in travel agencies in Egypt. Thus, studying different samples of employees in other tourism sectors in Egypt, such as employees of the governmental tourism organization, and comparing the results between the public and private tourism sectors, would be useful for applying the results on a wide scale. Finally, this paper has dealt with employees' commitment as a dependent variable, but future studies could investigate the influence of employees' commitment on other managerial issues, such as organizational performance, organizational effectiveness, and organizational citizen behavior, which could offer extensive research opportunities.

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