

Mission attachment and job embeddedness in the trade union sector of South Africa

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Abstract

The job embeddedness construct is a totality of forces that act as a web of attachments to mitigate employee turnover. This view has gained support from research by Holtom, Mitchell and Lee (2006) but further research is needed to expand our understanding of the concept. In this article the applicability of mission attachment as a fourth dimension of job embeddedness is tested, thereby adding to our understanding of the construct.

Data from 134 (trade union) and 30 (comparison group) respondents were analysed quantitatively and it was found that within a social organisation such as a trade union there is a strong, consistent and positive ranking between mission awareness and organisational job embeddedness. The results also show that the different dimensions of mission attachment had a significant impact on employees in the trade union sample. An additional finding was that employees in the trade union sector who are highly attached to the mission of the organisation tend to be those who have been employed in that sector for a relatively short period and that mission attachment declines over time.

Key words: *job embeddedness, mission attachment, retention, trade unions, non-profit, employees*

1 Introduction

The retention and development of human resources is one of the most important challenges faced by modern managers. In the current business environment, organisations intent on developing their competitive advantage have to rely on competent, talented and dedicated employees (Tanova & Holtom 2008; Swider, Boswell & Zimmerman 2011). Moreover, the organisational and personal cost of voluntary employee separation is high and organisations try to limit these costs. They are also conscious of the fact that the social relationships created by the person both inside and outside the organisation contribute to what authors refer to as social capital (Holtom, Mitchell & Lee 2006). Social capital is a resource that is increasingly recognised as a crucial aspect of the modern organisation. These factors, among many others, suggest that employee retention warrants the attention of senior management in today's institutions. Failure to systematically address retention issues is likely to have a negative long-term impact on organisational performance.

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In the course of their research to advance knowledge of retention, Mitchell and Lee (2001) developed the construct of job embeddedness. The foundations of job embeddedness lie in a new understanding of what gives rise to the turnover process, and this is expanded into three sets of ideas that culminate in the construct of job embeddedness. Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton and Holtom (2004) believe that staying and leaving involve different psychological and emotional processes and they were instrumental in developing the construct of employee retention which is defined as job embeddedness. This concept emphasises the totality of forces that constrain people not to leave their current employment. Empirical research has provided some initial support for job embeddedness and has extended the researchers' understanding of the antecedents to leaving or staying in one's' job. It is this construct that forms a central theme of this article.

The job embeddedness approach suggests that there are many off-the-job factors that are important for attachment. Traditional attitudinal models included family attachments and the conflict experienced between family and work roles. Research by Johnson (2007) and others show that non-work factors such as family, church life and hobbies have a significant influence on job attitudes and attachment. In addition to non-work factors, a variety of other organisation-specific factors which are not attitudinal have been empirically associated with retention. These include: working with certain groups and working on specific projects that create types of commitment that are different from those of a person who identifies directly with his or her organisation. Maertz, Mosley and Alford (2002) called these attachments "constituent commitments"; they include attachments to union groups, teams and other work-related groups.

In summary, job embeddedness examines other important variables that have been ignored in the traditional and current turnover and retention literature. This construct also adds to our understanding of why people stay in their jobs and identifies interesting principles of the attachment process. However, since the construct is relatively new, it has both limitations and possible utility in other avenues such as effectiveness of HRM practices (Wheeler, Harris & Harvey 2010) or its influence on employee performance and leader-member exchange (Sekiguchi, Burton & Sablinski 2008).

The limitations provided impetus for research which could refine the job embeddedness construct. There was also a need for the construct to be tested in an environment other than profit-driven organisations. Further, it was possible that additions could be made to the construct. The research evaluated the possibility of adding mission attachment to the notion of job embeddedness. The study of the role of mission attachment in job embeddedness is most starkly demonstrated in organisations that do not exist to generate a profit for their shareholders, but rather to achieve a particular aim or serve a greater cause. Organisations of this kind are heavily dependent on intrinsic-type motivators of their staff as they rely on employees' contributing significantly more value than the organisation is able to pay for, and exist to further a particular aim or cause. Trade unions mobilise their members in pursuit of their objectives and aims (Cregan, Bartram & Stanton 2009), the effective achievement of which requires a collective mission and vision.

South African trade unions have a rich history of pursuing political aims and objectives, maintain strong mission awareness and are actively involved at the community level of the South African working class. Jegers and Lapsley (2001) state that organisations are linked to a particular history and this guides the behaviour of their employees. Employees' congruence with the mission of their trade union provides an intrinsic motivation for staying in that particular organisation to help to fulfil the mission of that trade union.

2 Aim of the study

Staff retention has received a great deal of attention in the private and public sectors and extensive research has been conducted into the reasons why people leave or do not leave organisations (Kaifeng, Dong, MacKay, Lee & Mitchell 2012; Holtom, Burton & Crossley 2010). The majority of research has focused on two major causes of employee retention, namely job satisfaction (positive pay incentives, chances of promotion, supervision and a positive work environment) and job alternatives. People with a wider array of job alternatives are more likely to leave than those who have fewer alternatives. Thus, the major theories of turnover combine both attitudinal measures (job satisfaction and commitment) and measurements that relate to “ease of movement” such as job alternatives and job search behaviour.

A number of researchers have attempted to break away from the attitudinal and alternative models and have focused their research on broadening understanding of the predictors of a breach in organisational attachment, such as lateness and absences. Other researchers have focused on the effect of individual differences on the turnover process (Zimmerman 2008). New empirical research on the unfolding models of turnover shows that there may be different reasons why people decide to leave an organisation (Holtom et al 2010). These authors have identified factors which contradict traditional turnover research. For example, an employee might be relatively satisfied with his/her job, and may not conduct a job search before leaving. The precipitating factor which prompts the person to leave may be some negative (shock) event which happens outside the job environment. In this case it is an event rather than a negative attitude that gives rise to the decision to leave.

The results of the above studies suggest that current models for predicting who will leave their job are not conclusive. Limited turnover research has focused specifically on why an employee will decide to remain with an organisation and what determines this (Daley 2013). The aim of this research was to explore job embeddedness as a construct which could improve our understanding of what prompts employees to leave an organisation, and the extent to which mission awareness plays a role in employee retention.

3 Literature review

Job embeddedness and the potential of a mission statement to contribute to the retention of staff are the cornerstones of this study. Is an inspiring mission statement, and the attachment of employees to the mission statement, capable of attracting and retaining employees by increasing job embeddedness?

3.1 Job embeddedness

The concept of job embeddedness was informed by two distinct bodies of knowledge: Kurt Lewin’s force-field theory (Lewin 1951) and the research on the embedded figures test (Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough & Karp 1962). Embedded figures are figures immersed into a background and attached or linked in various ways. Lewin (1951) suggests that humans view themselves in a similar fashion, in terms of being enmeshed in a network of forces and connections. The strength of attachment to various factors can be viewed as lying on a continuum, ranging from a low to a high strength of attachment.

Job embeddedness can be work-related, for example it could depend on positive relationships with co-workers or good employee benefits. Alternatively, it could be non-

work-related, for example where an employee's spouse works in the same area (Ramesh & Gelfand 2010). Mitchell and Lee (2001) propose that there are three main factors that contribute to job embeddedness. They label these factors links, fit and sacrifice.

Links are defined as formal and informal connections which an employee has with other groups or individuals either on or off the job. These links can be viewed as levels of attachment that resemble a web and could involve friends, family, teams and community groups. The number of these links is a strong determinant of whether one would choose to stay in an organisation. There could also be a hierarchy of links in terms of importance.

Therefore, leaving an organisation would mean that the employee is forced to leave people, projects, teams and groups that are important and valuable. An added dimension here is that certain obligations may be present in the work environment that would prevent people from leaving the organisation. These obligations include mentorship, friendships and avenues of contribution that other co-workers are dependent on. In many instances, these obligations are separate from the way employees feel about their jobs and their commitment to the organisation. Johnson (2007) explains links simply by stating that when an employee has strong, positive connections with other people in the organisation and with people and groups in the community the result is likely to be job embeddedness. Employees have formal and informal connections with other entities on the job and, as the number of those links increases, embeddedness is higher (Halbesleben & Wheeler 2008).

Cohen (1995) demonstrated that outside activities, including hobbies and church activities, solidified retention. These links have a varied impact on retention. The sheer number of links positively influences the individual to stay. The closer the relationship webs between individuals and others, the greater the pressure not to leave one's job. Links (both off the job and on the job) are assumed to have a direct impact on retention. However, while links are mentioned in the literature, the empirical research is limited (Maertz & Campion 1998).

Fit can be defined as people's compatibility with their work and non-work settings. The assertion is that the better the fit, the less likely one is to leave. The topic of person-organisational fit is supported by a large body of knowledge that was initiated by Schneider's (1987) contribution, namely that organisations are characterised by homogeneity and that people who do not fit in will leave the organisation.

Ramesh and Gelfand (2010) distinguish between two types of fit: fit with the organisation and fit with the community. Similarly, Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez (2001) propose that the job embeddedness construct addresses how well employees fit their jobs, including how well their personal skills are suited to their work, and secondly how well they fit in with the community (e.g. whether they like the amenities a community provides).

Johnson (2007) describes fit as the extent to which employees perceive themselves to be compatible with the organisation and the surrounding community. It exists, for example, if they believe that their employer shares their values and also if they feel a sense of belonging to the community in which the company is located. Higher fit in turn indicates higher embeddedness (Holtom et al 2006; Lee & Maurer 1999).

The dimension of sacrifice defines the things that a person will relinquish when leaving a job. The loss defined under this dimension could mean the perceived material loss, psychological loss, loss of interesting projects, loss of pleasant perks and financial

losses such as stock options. It also includes the perceived social cost (Halbesleben & Wheeler 2008). Having to relinquish these has been shown to reduce a person's tendency to leave. Some of the financial factors have been previously built into existing measures of job satisfaction or organisational commitment (Meyer & Allen 1997). Sacrifice also occurs outside the organisation in that individuals are forced to relinquish the benefits of belonging to a community should they relocate to another community for work purposes (Wheeler, Harris & Harvey 2010).

In summary, job embeddedness includes several factors that "enmesh employees in their jobs" (Felps, Mitchell, Hekman, Lee, Holtom & Harman 2009).

3.2 Mission statement

A mission statement can be defined as a declaration that provides direction for the organisation and motivation for the staff and also articulates the organisational mode of survival for the future (Smith, Heady, Carson & Carson 2001; Pearce & David 1987). It has been argued that a clear mission statement can be an intrinsic motivator in organisations, especially those that are not financially driven (Kirk & Shabnam 2010).

Some organisations take the view that articulating the mission is primarily a strategic tool and an intellectual discipline that defines their commercial rationale and target market. It exists to answer two fundamental questions: "what is our business, and what should it be?" Other organisations see mission as the "cultural glue" which enables them to function as a collective unity. This cultural glue consists of strong norms and values that heavily influence the way in which people behave, how they work together and how they pursue the goals of the organisation.

A mission exists when strategy and culture are mutually supportive. Mission is an organisation's character, identity and reason for existence. It can be divided into four interrelated parts, namely purpose, strategy, standards of behaviour and values

The "purpose" dimension addresses the reasons why an organisation is in existence, while the "strategy" considers the nature of the business, the desired positioning in relation to competitors and the main sources of competitive advantage. The "behaviour standards" are the norms and rules that dictate "the way we do things around here", and the "values" dimension represents the beliefs and moral principles that underpin the organisation. By spelling out these elements, the mission statement becomes the cornerstone of the organisation's formal strategy. It also acts as a tool which can shape employee attitudes towards the organisation and its role in society. In sharing the organisational values, employees connect with the mission through their behaviour (Jegers & Lapsley 2001).

In the context of non-profit organisations, mission statements are often viewed as particularly important. Lacking a profit motive, non-profit organisations rely on a mission statement to explain their reason for existence (Kirk & Shabnam 2010; Glasrud 2001). There is evidence that a mission serves as a cohesion-building and energy-stimulating tool for these organisations (Hesselbein & Cohen 1999). In their research, Brown and Yoshioka (2003) found that employees in a non-profit environment expressed positive attitudes towards the organisation's mission and those attitudes were related to employee satisfaction and intention to remain with the organisation. These employees felt an "attachment" to the mission statement and it influenced their behaviour and decisions.

In measuring the relationship between mission and attitudes in non-profit organisations, and in assessing the attachment of employees to the mission, three aspects need to be considered:

- 1) Awareness of the mission: To what extent are employees aware of the mission? This is the first step in testing whether mission awareness can be positively associated with job embeddedness.
- 2) Agreement with the mission: Do employees agree with the expressed purpose and values of the organisation? Do they feel an attachment to the mission statement? This is relevant as employees in non-profit organisations are paid less than their counterparts in the for-profit sector, and they therefore need to perceive agreement between their values and those of the organisation.
- 3) Alignment with the mission and the resulting behavioural changes that occur: Do employees perceive a connection between their work and the achievement of that mission (Brown & Yoshioka 2003)?

In contrast to the for-profit sector, the non-profit sector uses mission as a management tool to guide the organisation, partly because these organisations often resemble loosely coupled systems consisting of a decentralised organisational structure in which the manager does not directly compare the activities of staff members (Orton & Weick 1990). The non-profit sector has to rely on intrinsic rather than extrinsic instruments to attract resources and guide decision making. Increasingly, mission statements in the non-profit sector are being seen as a strong and influential management tool that can motivate employees and keep them focused on the organisation's purpose. The mission is more than just a physical involvement in activities and practices. It is driven by a clear and compelling purpose that is linked to a deep emotional bond between the person and the organisation. Mission statements have become important aspects of organisational functioning for non-profits because the increasing complexity and dynamism in certain organisations such as health care, non-profit and social welfare institutions has made new demands of accountability imperative. In addition, shifts in funding sources, changing mandates and strategic imperatives have forced organisations to look at new ways to ensure employee motivation (Bart 2000; Baetz & Bart 1996; Tanova & Holtom 2008; Dawley & Andrews 2012).

These aspects require managers in these organisations to use strategies that draw on employees' intrinsic motivations rather than on extrinsic financial motivations (Brown & Yoshioka 2003). One such strategy is the use of a clear mission or purpose statement which binds the employee to the organisation.

Studies have consistently shown that a match between employee and organisational values is a predictor of commitment and satisfaction (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001; Kristof 1996; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell 1991). Mission statements have also been shown to play a role in both the for-profit and the non-profit sectors. Non-profit organisations are known as mission-driven entities, in which people are attracted by their passion for the mission and remain to accomplish it (Kim & Lee 2007) and this makes them an interesting sector for the research.

Regarding the choice of non-profit organisations as the context for the research, turnover in these organisations has attracted keen interest, partly because it is perceived to be a major problem in this sector (Barak, Nissly & Levin 2001; Brown & Yoshioka 2003). Mason (1996) states that it is the expressive benefit (participating in something that one believes in) that attracts people and that may retain paid and unpaid employees in non-profit organisations. Exploring employee attitudes toward the mission can inform its relevance in retaining employees. In one of the few studies that focused on mission attachment and retention, Rycraft (1994) found that child care workers identified mission as the most important explanation for their choice to remain with the organisation.

Despite its significant role, little is known about how employees perceive its importance and how this influences organisational attitudes and behaviour such as turnover.

4 Research questions

Job embeddedness and the role played by mission statements, particularly in non-profit organisations, frame the research. The study is concerned with the relationship between the different elements of the mission concept and how this relates to organisational job embeddedness. If employees feel an attachment to the mission of the organisation, does this influence their attitude towards the organisation and are they less likely to leave? In evaluating the mission attachment of individuals in relation to the elements of job embeddedness, the study tests the applicability of attachment to the mission as a component of the job embeddedness factors that motivate employees to remain in their organisations.

More specifically, the research set out to test whether mission attachment (expressed as awareness, support, belief and contribution) can be added to the organisational job embeddedness variables of links, fit and sacrifice.

The research was structured to answer the following questions:

Research question 1: Is mission awareness positively associated with job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?

Research question 2: Is mission support positively associated with job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?

Research question 3: Is mission belief positively associated with job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?

Research question 4: Is mission contribution positively associated with job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?

Research question 5: Can a significant difference be found between the mission attachment variables (awareness, support and contribution) and the job embeddedness variables (links, fit and sacrifice) when comparing social and commercial organisations?

5 Research design

The study was quantitative in nature, consisting of questionnaires completed by employees in five trade unions. For purposes of comparison, employees in a commercial firm also completed the questionnaire. The reason for using the comparison group was to explore the differences in terms of the strength and relevance of the mission phenomenon.

5.1 Population and sampling

The research focused on the non-profit sector, specifically trade unions. Trade unions were chosen because they have a strong mission statement that is likely to guide business and employee motivations and because trade unions are accessible for research purposes. The population consisted of large, nationally organised trade unions, chosen because they are more likely to have a sophisticated structure, a large body of full-time employees and strong mission statements and objectives that they recruit and mobilise around. In 2014 there were 188 registered trade unions in South Africa (Department of Labour) of which about 60 were large national trade unions that

had a national presence and significant numbers of full-time employees. The sample was further reduced to trade unions with head-offices in the Gauteng area. All the trade unions on the Department of Labour's list were approached to participate in the study but most of the trade unions were not willing to participate. The list of those unions that were willing to participate in the research was further reduced to five trade unions when the size of the full-time workforce and access to the workforce to collect completed questionnaires were considered.

5.2 Research participants

The research participants were full-time employees of trade unions in the Gauteng provincial area. Full-time employees are employed by trade unions to provide both support to members and administrative support to the organisation. Trade unions were chosen because of their strong mission emphasis, which was likely to influence employee behaviour and motivation, and the fact that they are non-profit organisations.

The survey questionnaire was completed by 134 respondents at five different trade unions. The study yielded a response rate of 48%. To understand the relationship between mission attachment and job embeddedness, a comparison group was also surveyed using the same questionnaire. The comparison group consisted of employees at a commercial firm that had no formal mission orientation and had been operational for a relatively short period of time.

To test response bias, non-participants at the different trade unions were compared with those who responded and no significant differences were found in terms of age, education, ethnicity, gender or tenure at the organisation.

Although the trade unions worked in different sectors of commerce and industry, they all had a strong mission orientation in terms of their establishment and daily activities. It was felt that further insights and conclusions may be derived by comparing the results of the trade union employees with those of a comparison group drawn from a commercial, profit-driven firm, in this case a medium-sized firm active in the IT industry. A profit motive is the opposite of intrinsic motivation and the IT industry is recognised as an industry with a high labour turnover. Thirty completed questionnaires were obtained from the comparison group.

The questionnaire was answered by 91 females (68%) and 43 males (32%) in the trade union group. The average age of the respondents at the time the questionnaire was completed was 39 years, with most of the respondents having an average of 11 years of experience in the trade union sector of South Africa. The education level of the majority of the respondents was grade 12 (37%), followed by respondents with grade 12 plus a diploma qualification (35%). Fifteen percent of respondents possessed a first degree with 11% having a postgraduate degree. Sixty percent of respondents were married, and 69% reported having children living in their households.

Questionnaires were completed by 30 individuals from the comparison group. The gender composition of the comparison group was 18 females (60%) and 12 males (40%). The average age of the respondents was 33, with most of the comparison group of respondents having an average of 8 years of experience in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector. Education levels in the comparison group were broadly similar to those in the trade union sample. Forty-seven percent of respondents were married, with 60% reporting that they had children living in their households.

Table 1
Distribution of the sample group

Trade union	Questionnaires distributed	Completed questionnaires
SADTU	30	3
HOSPERSA	50	42
DENOSA	45	43
PSA	50	42
IMATU	50	4
Total	275	134

5.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to explore the job embeddedness and mission attachment constructs and the correlations between them. Both components of the questionnaire that was used for this study originate from peer-reviewed, published articles by well-known authors in the field.

Job embeddedness was measured using questions relating to both organisational and community embeddedness as proposed by Mitchell et al (2001). Mitchell et al (2001) describe job embeddedness according to six dimensions and use a survey instrument to measure the causal indicators of job embeddedness – fit, links, and sacrifice. Mitchell et al (2001) applied the instrument to samples consisting of 171 employees in a grocery chain and 232 hospital employees. The results of the survey were satisfactory and Mitchell et al (2001) found high alpha reliability scores with each of the three measures in both samples. This showed that the items within the dimensions measured were internally consistent. The instrument includes a composite variable for each dimension that equally weights the influence of the distinct dimensions to show a measure of embeddedness. The links items were measured on an open-ended numerical scale (e.g. years, number of co-workers); the fit and sacrifice items were scored on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Prior to combining items into subscales (links, fit, and sacrifice) and embeddedness scores, item scores were standardised. The questionnaire is reproduced in appendix 1.

The other dimension that was surveyed was mission attachment. This was tested using four key categories of questions taken from the study by Brown and Yoshioka (2003). These were:

Mission awareness of their organisation's mission

Mission support: the role that the mission plays in the organisation's daily activities

Mission belief: Are they in agreement with the mission?

Mission contribution: Is the mission of the organisation relevant in terms of alignment to their personal values and aspirations?

The Brown and Yoshioka (2003) instrument was developed to assess mission attachment of employees at a voluntary charitable organisation and their intention to leave. The instrument linked specific statements to each dimension and respondents were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a Likert-type scale. Analysis of the results was by means of a combination of descriptive statistics, correlation analyses and stepwise regression, where they tested embeddedness and intention to stay.

5.4 Data analysis

The data collected consisted in the main of categorical variables, which were ordinal in nature. The Chi-squared test was not suitable for the data analysis process as it would ignore the ordering of the data. There were a small number of frequencies for categories 1 and 2, which made it necessary to merge categories for all variables. Since more than 20% of cells contained expected frequencies of less than 5, the Pearson's Chi-squared could not be applied in this case and the Likelihood Ratio Chi-squared was a more appropriate test to use. If the Likelihood Ratio Chi-squared is less than 0.05 this means that there is evidence that the two variables are dependent (i.e. there is a relationship between the two variables).

The ability to measure the strength of association becomes useful when ordering exists in data. Two measures of association (Gamma and Kendall's Tau) were used to study the nature of association of mission attachment and the links, fit and sacrifice components of job embeddedness. Kendall's Tau is a measure of correlation, measuring the strength of the relationship between two variables. It works with variables that are separately put in order and are numbered. Like other measures of correlation, Kendall's Tau takes the values between minus one and plus one. A positive correlation signifies that the ranks of both the variables are increasing (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009).

On the other hand, the negative correlation in Kendall's Tau signifies that as the rank of one variable is increased, the rank of the other variable is decreased. The Kendall's Tau coefficient (τ) has the following properties:

- a) If the agreement between the two rankings is perfect (i.e., the two rankings are the same) the coefficient has a value of 1.
- b) If the disagreement between the two rankings is perfect (i.e., one ranking is the reverse of the other) the coefficient has a value of -1 .
- c) For all other arrangements the value lies between -1 and 1 , and increasing values imply increasing agreement between the rankings. If the rankings are completely independent, the coefficient has a value of 0 on average (Quessy 2009).

To determine whether the increase in attachment level tends to increase the fit, links and sacrifice in the organisation, it has to be determined whether the pairs can be classified as discordant or concordant. This is the first measure of association and it can be assessed using the Gamma test. The pair is concordant if the subject ranks higher on both variables (for example: x and y). The pair of variables is discordant if the variables rank higher on x than y or vice versa. The pair is tied if the subject has the same classification on x and y . The other measures of association for ordinal data are dealt with in the Kendall's Tau test, which is a special case for the Gamma test (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009).

6 Research results

6.1 Association between job embeddedness and mission awareness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice

Research question 1 asks whether mission awareness is positively associated with job embeddedness. Mission awareness refers to the employee's cognitive awareness of the mission at his/her organisation and its role in the daily activities of the organisation. Table 3 shows the Likelihood Ratio Chi-squared test results for the mission awareness

variable and the different organisational job embeddedness categories. The dependent relationships across the above-mentioned categories of job embeddedness include:

- a) Time in the organisation (questions 7, 8 and 9). Sixty-one percent of respondents from the trade union sample agreed that they were aware of the direction and mission of the organisation. Thirty-five percent of the 61% that agreed had been employed in the organisation for less than five years. The results indicate that there is higher mission awareness among new employees than among those who have been in the organisation for more than ten years. The length of tenure in this particular sector shows that 41% of the respondents had been working in the trade union sector for less than five years and were well aware of the direction and mission of their organisation. In terms of question 9 (time in present position), 52% of respondents had been in their current position for less than five years and were very well aware of the mission of their organisation.
- b) Dependency on co-workers and team members (questions 10 and 11). The study points to some similarities between employees and their co-workers, and the number of teams they are on. Twenty-six percent of the respondents who were very aware of the mission indicated that none of their co-workers were dependent on them, whereas 26% indicated that between one and five co-workers were dependent on them. Thirty-seven percent of respondents who were aware of their organisation's mission were not on any work team, indicating that respondents who were highly aware of their mission direction and purpose mainly worked alone.

Table 3
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Squared test for mission awareness

Embeddedness construct	Mission attachment–Awareness	P value
Links–Organisation	Q7–Years by Q25–Awareness	0.861
	Q8–Non-profit by Q25–Awareness	0.565
	Q9–Years in Organ by Q25–Awareness	0.425
	Q10–Co-workers by Q25–Awareness	0.599
	Q11–Work teams by Q25–Awareness	0.694
	Q16–Get on by Q25–Awareness	0.0014*
Fit–Organisation	Q12–Good match by Q25–Awareness	0.007 *
	Q13–Skills and talents by Q25–Awareness	0.048 *
	Q14–Personally valued by Q25–Awareness	0.021 *
	Q15–Remain in organisation by Q25–Awareness	0.435
	Q17–Respect by Q25–Awareness	0.012*
	Q18–Interaction by Q25–Awareness	0.011 *
Sacrifice–Organisation	Q19–Authority by Q25–Awareness	0.001 *
	Q20–Sacrifice by Q25–Awareness	0.2525
	Q21–Promotions by Q25–Awareness	0.0441*
	Q22–Perks by Q25–Awareness	0.0062 *
	Q23–Prospects by Q25–Awareness	0.016 *
	Q24–Compensation by Q25–Awareness	0.0089 *

* indicates the existence of a dependent relationship

- c) Mission awareness and organisational fit in terms of people's fulfilling their goals if they remain in the organisation (question 15). Forty-four percent of the respondents

who were highly aware of the mission of the organisation indicated that staying with the organisation would help them achieve most of the goals. There is congruence between highly mission-conscious people and the achievement of career and personal goals.

- d) Mission awareness and sacrifice as reflected by unwillingness to leave an employer because of the sacrifice of benefits that leaving would entail (question 20). Respondents who showed a high level of mission awareness (44%) also indicated that the sacrifice would be great if they left their jobs in the trade union sector.

Table 4 shows the Gamma and Kendall's Tau tests of association and the results for the variables for which an association was found. In terms of the associations, the organisational embeddedness variable was related to length of tenure in order to achieve goals (question 15) and mission awareness respectively show a weak but positive relationship. The value lies between -1 and 1, which implies increasing agreement between the rankings. The results of the above analysis indicate that mission awareness can be positively associated with organisational job embeddedness in terms of the "fit" category.

Table 4
Gamma and Kendall's Tau test of association between mission awareness and organisational job embeddedness variables

Mission attachment component	Job embeddedness component	Questions	Gamma		Kendall's Tau	
			Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Mission awareness	Link	Q7	-0.255	0.261	-0.075	0.159
		Q8	-0.158	0.367	-0.014	0.220
		Q9	-0.311	0.250	-0.098	0.146
		Q10	-0.103	0.315	0.002	0.206
		Q11	-0.052	0.446	0.046	0.276
	Fit	Q15	0.023	0.463	0.086	0.301
	Sacrifice	Q20	-0.174	0.431	-0.011	0.230

6.2 Test for association between mission components and job embeddedness

Research questions 2–4 established whether mission support, mission belief and mission contribution could be positively associated with job embeddedness. The findings of the research showed similar trends of dependency between the variables to those found in the tests for research question 1.

6.3 Comparison between the results for the comparison group and the trade union sample

The results from the trade union sample indicated some degree of consistent association between the variables. The following section highlights the results from the comparison group analysis.

The comparison group results differed for both the Likelihood Ratio Chi-squared and the Gamma/Kendall's Tau tests. The statistical test of dependency showed different levels of association between the comparison group and the trade union sample.

In terms of consistency and strength of association in the statistical analysis, the trade union sample indicated a higher degree of positive and consistent association for the relationship between mission attachment and organisational job embeddedness than the comparison group. The comparison group displayed inconsistent and weaker levels of association in terms of mission attachment and organisational job embeddedness. In addition, the trade union sample showed consistent associations of dependence between the organisational job embeddedness variables, but this was not the case for the comparison group.

In terms of the Likelihood Ratio Chi-squared tests for the trade union sample, there was a degree of consistency with regard to the variables for which a significant relationship was found. In terms of organisational links, the variables that related to the employee's time spent in the trade union sector, the years spent in that particular organisation and working in teams and with other colleagues showed a dependent relationship. The Gamma and Kendall's Tau test provided further confirmation for a positive, although weak rank fit with organisational links and organisational fit. In terms of organisational links, the employee's functioning in the work team allowed him/her to realise the impact of the mission in his/her organisation and this created a sense of embeddedness. In terms of organisational fit, the trade union employees indicated that their mission awareness and mission contribution were positively related to their remaining in the organisation. These results are shown in tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5

Statistical summary of results for research questions 1–4 for the trade union sample

Tests	Mission awareness	Mission support	Mission belief	Mission contribution
Likelihood Ratio Chi- squared test	Links–Q7–11 Fit–Q15 Sacrifice–Q20	Links – Q7-11 Fit Sacrifice–Q20	Links–Q7–11 Fit Sacrifice– Q20	Links–Q7-11 Fit–Q15 Sacrifice
Gamma/ Kendall's Tau tests	Q15	Q11	Q11	Q11

Table 5 also provides an indication that mission support and embeddedness are linked in terms of organisational links and organisational sacrifice. The test of association indicated that increased participation in work teams increases mission support of the organisation. Mission support is therefore positively associated with organisational job embeddedness.

When the comparison group was compared with the trade union group, some meaningful differences were found. Table 6 below highlights the results of the statistical tests for the comparison group. The statistical test for the comparison group indicates results that are different from those of the trade union sample.

Table 6

Statistical summary of results for research questions 1–4 for the comparison group

Tests	Mission awareness	Mission support	Mission belief	Mission contribution
Likelihood Ratio Chi- squared test	Links–Q7–16 Fit–Q12–14,Q17,Q18 Sacrifice–Q21–24	Links–Q7–16 Fit–12–19 Sacrifice–Q20–24	Links–Q7–11 Fit–Q12–Q17,Q19 Sacrifice–Q20–Q24	Links–Q7–11 Fit–Q12–Q18 Sacrifice–Q20–Q24
Gamma/ Kendall's Tau Tests	Q16, Q17	Q17	Q12, Q17,Q18,Q23	Q9,Q10,Q11,Q13

7 Discussion

7.1 Research question 1

Research question 1 asked “Is mission awareness positively associated with organisational job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?” In terms of organisational fit, question 15 was the only job embeddedness variable that showed a significant positive fit to mission awareness. Question 15 deals with goal achievement should the employee remain in the organisation for a longer period.

The results for research question 1 confirm that mission awareness for trade union employees is an important organisational factor. This supports the view that there are a variety of factors that have been empirically associated with retention that are not attitudinal but organisational in nature (Mallol, Holtom & Lee 2007). Employees in the trade union sector have a level of mission awareness that becomes internalised into their own personal goals, and leaving the organisation would sever the link to achieving those goals. The benefits from remaining in the organisation create a sense of accomplishment and achievement for the employee.

The results also indicate that there is a relationship between personal success and organisational goals. This in turn defines a level of fit with the organisation for trade union employees. This sense of fit is dependent upon the realisation that the employee goals can be achieved. An exit from the organisation would create a sense of unachieved personal goals.

Achievement of personal goals is related to a good working environment and job satisfaction and this would be lost if the employee left the organisation (Sherwood, 2003). Other researchers have also found that this organisational dimension can predict employee job performance (Lee et al 2004). They based the relationship between embeddedness and performance on the idea that if an employee is highly linked within an organisation, fits well, and would have to sacrifice a great deal by quitting, his or her motivation to perform should be high.

In other words, the links with others increase the obligation to perform well (as they might be dependent on an employee’s performance). Moreover, the fit between the person and the job will lead to an intrinsic motivation to perform well. Finally, if sacrifice is high, the employee will feel that he or she has a lot to lose by not performing well. Together, these factors suggest that embeddedness should be associated with performance.

7.2 Research question 2

Research question 2 asked “Is mission support positively associated with organisational job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?” Mission support refers to the daily activities in the employee’s working life that support the mission of the organisation. Organisational links in the embeddedness construct refer to formal and informal connections that exist between an employee and other people or groups within the organisation. These create a form of attachment both to the team members within a single group and between different groups. The higher the connections between these variables (groups and other people) the more embedded the employee will be in the organisation.

The results show that the employee activities in work teams contribute to supporting the mission of the organisation. In the case of trade unions, supporting the mission involves activities both within and outside the respective organisations. The trade union

organisations in South Africa are characterised by collective action both within a single organisations and between organisations. The higher the number of links between the person and the web of attachments (groups and co-workers), the more closely an employee is bound to the organisation (Mitchell & Lee 2001).

7.3 Research question 3

Research question 3 asked, "Is mission belief positively associated with organisational job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?" Mission belief is the level of agreement that the employee has with the organisation's mission. The mission belief of the respondents in this study was related to question 11 (How many work teams are you on?). The positive ranking between mission belief and organisational links in the job embeddedness construct confirms a positive relationship between the constructs. The higher the agreement with the mission of the organisation, the more likely employees are to remain in the organisation.

The work team participation of employees reinforces mission belief in an intrinsic and motivating manner. Work teams in trade union organisations such as Hospersa involve teams that communicate by teleconferencing with other teams in different geographical areas. This creates a holistic teamwork environment that fosters employee actions and organisational mission belief. Baetz and Bart (1996) found that for a mission to have an impact on its members and their performance, it must be viewed as being acceptable. The impact is marginal when the organisation's mission statement consists of fine words but has no special relevance to the employees' situation. This study indicated that work teams in the trade union sample created high levels of mission belief for fellow workers. The actions of work teams therefore provide a strong basis for reinforcing mission belief and this promotes organisational embeddedness for employees.

Herrbach, Mignonac and Gatignon (2004) indicate that effective commitment is based on the employees' identification with the organisation, that is on their deriving at least part of their identity from belonging to the organisation. This outcome results from employees' incorporation of the attributes of the organisation into their self-concept. This brings out their commitment to the organisation since they want to pursue their association with it in order to maintain the benefits for their own identities. This reasoning could also explain why trade union employees might feel a deep sense of sacrifice if they had to leave the organisation.

This study found that employees were attracted to a certain organisational culture. It is within this context that goals are connected and shared and this becomes important to employees. The employees then perceive certain levels of compatibility with regard to organisational goals.

Career goals and personal goals become aligned to organisational culture and this serves as a means to achieve those goals. These actions also create a web of attachments that discourages turnover intentions.

7.4 Research question 4

Research question 4 asked "Is mission contribution positively associated with organisational job embeddedness in terms of links, fit and sacrifice?" Mission contribution is the extent to which an employee's daily tasks contribute towards the mission of the organisation. Table 3 indicates the results for this question. The only variable that showed a positive test of association was organisational links (Question

11). Question 11 relates to the number of work teams the employee participates in and the contribution this makes to the achievement of the mission of the organisation. This confirms that there is a positive link between mission contribution and organisational job embeddedness.

The above result shows an important relationship between work teams and the manner in which they provide a mesh of attachment for the employees in the trade union sector. Mission contribution is specifically linked to the employee's daily tasks, which enhance his or her attachment to the mission of the organisation. The mission, in turn, becomes a tangible concept at this level, as it now involves the physical tasks required to fulfil the mission of the organisation.

The study by Brown & Yoshioka (2003) confirms this result. The results of their research showed that employees who felt happy with their work, or facets of it, were more likely to indicate that they believed in the mission of the organisation and that their work contributed to the fulfilment of that mission. Gerling (2009) undertook research into the values that drive the fulfilment of the mission of fire departments. The results showed that leaders in the fire department display high levels of agreement with the core values and mission of the department. This is further evident from various practical tasks that are performed while on duty. This conscious contribution towards the mission of an organisation drives others to become involved in tasks and activities that further attach them to the organisation.

7.5 Research question 5

Research question 5 asks, "Is there a significant difference between the mission attachment and job embeddedness variables for social and commercial organisations?"

The comparison group was a sample taken from a commercial company that had no formal mission statement, and had been in existence as a business for less than six years. It can be argued that in commercial organisations the satisfaction of employees is not necessarily the mission of the organisation, and nor is the belief that one should contribute to the welfare of others. Instead, commercial companies display a focused, individualistic approach that is heavily dependent on profit-related indices.

Organisational commitment was higher among the for-profit employees than among the trade union sample, probably due to the perception that there is limited job security in the private sector. The unstable economic climate in South Africa at the time of the study could be a contributing factor to the strong emphasis on organisational fit in the results. The results also indicate that for-profit employees were more committed to their careers. Changes in the workplace practices and the labour legislation in South Africa could also play a role in the discrepancies between the results for the two samples. The results from this support the perception that non-profit organisations like the trade unions in South Africa are unique organisations that rely on different factors to engender motivation and commitment in their employees. This finding further reinforces the view that the embeddedness construct cannot be uniformly applied to all sectors in a prescribed manner without taking into consideration the unique characteristics of the organisations themselves.

7.6 Research limitations

The limitations of this study are related to three specific dimensions. Firstly, trade union organisations were targeted where other types of socially inclined organisations such as churches and welfare organisations were excluded. Secondly, only trade union

organisations within a specific geographical area (Gauteng provincial region) were included. Thirdly, the study was confined to the organisational aspects of job embeddedness as the study acknowledged that the mission attachment component related only to the organisational aspect of the construct. The community component of the theory was excluded.

8 Conclusion and recommendations

The aim of this research was to determine whether mission attachment could be added to the construct of organisational job embeddedness as a fourth dimension. A secondary aim was to explore the differences between mission attachment and organisational job embeddedness in the social non-profit sphere as compared with a commercial enterprise.

The most significant finding of this research was that within a social organisation such as a trade union, there was a strong, consistent and positive ranking between mission attachment and organisational job embeddedness. The results also show that the different dimensions of mission attachment had a significant impact on employees in the trade union sample. This could be gauged by the analysis of the statistical tests of dependence.

In terms of factors that were found to be important and would lead to higher levels of mission attachment and organisational job embeddedness, the following can be highlighted:

- 1 The construct of mission attachment is positively associated with organisational links and sacrifice, but not fit. This is an important finding for the conceptualisation of embeddedness and may be an indication of the relative importance of Mitchell et al's (2001) three dimensions.
- 2 In terms of organisational links, time in the organisation together with work team and co-workers were important in creating a context of attachment and organisational job embeddedness.
- 3 There was a consistently high level of congruence between staying in the organisation and the achievement of personal and career goals.
- 4 There were differences in organisational job embeddedness between the commercial and trade union sample reflecting differences in mission orientation. This finding is indicative of the power of a mission in creating job embeddedness. By implication, then, it would mean that commercial firms that are able to develop a credible mission that speaks to the intrinsic values of their employees would benefit from a higher degree of job embeddedness and consequently lower turnover.

The main recommendation for employers within the trade union sector would be to understand the different levels that are positively related to organisational embeddedness and to use dimensions of the mission construct to enhance the embeddedness of employees.

An interesting additional finding related to length of employment and mission attachment. The study found that employees in the trade union sector who are highly attached to the mission of the organisation tend to be those who have been employed in that sector for a relatively short period of time. The opposite was true of long-term employees. Since it is not always possible to influence their mission attachment later in their careers, it becomes important to use the concepts of organisational job embeddedness to increase their web of attachments to the organisation. When the

positively ranked variables for mission attachment and job embeddedness were compared, it became evident that organisations need to focus on organisational fit and sacrifice to increase employees' web of attachment.

This study has shown that once employees are part of an organisation that has high mission attachment, their levels of mission attachment, career goals and sacrifice are high. This means that the employee is already engaged in terms of the mission and direction of the organisation. The findings suggest that to ensure that employees remain engaged for a long enough period to become embedded, the organisation needs to look after their accountability (increasing responsibilities in work teams and groups), growth (improving perks and compensation) and balance (work/life balance and sustainability). Increasing their responsibilities in a collaborative manner (work teams and groups) will increase their organisational fit.

In terms of the main purpose of this research, namely to test the addition of mission attachment to the construct of organisational job embeddedness, the results show a positive relationship with one main dimension of the construct. This study highlighted a number of factors that were positively related to organisational job embeddedness but future research will test, elaborate and modify these ideas.

Future research on job embeddedness should concentrate on other factors that could contribute to the theory. Possible factors that could be included as a result of this study are political history and people's affiliation to their employer in terms of job embeddedness. The embeddedness construct has also been tested, mainly among samples in the USA, and future research efforts should concentrate on testing the construct in other countries to be able to validate the construct so that it is widely applicable. It is also recommended that other components of job embeddedness, such as the effects of socialisation, economic climate and different labour segments, for example migrant labour, should also be tested.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Collection of Data

PERSONAL DETAILS
1) What is your gender?
2) What is your age in years at the time of completing the questionnaire?
3) What is your highest level of education?
4) How many years of experience do you have in the type of work you are currently doing, either in your current job or elsewhere?
5) Are you currently married?
6) Do you currently have children living in your household?
EMPLOYMENT DETAILS
7) How long have you worked in the current organization?
8) How long have you been in your present position in the organization?
9) How many coworkers are highly dependent on you?
10) How many work teams are you on?
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR WORK IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?
11) I feel like I am a good match for this organization
12) I feel that my job utilizes my skills and talents well
13) I feel personally valued at work
14) If I stay with this organization, I will be able to achieve most of my goals
15) I generally get on well with my coworkers
16) I feel that people at work respect me a great deal
17) I interact formally or informally with my coworkers regularly throughout the working day?
18) I like the authority and responsibility I have at this organization
19) I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job
20) My promotional opportunities are excellent here
21) The perks on this job are good (e.g., medical aid and pension)
22) I believe the prospects for continuing employment with this organization are excellent
23) I am well compensated for my level of performance
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE MISSION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?
24) I am well aware of the direction and mission of the organization I work for
25) The programs and staff at my branch of the organization support the specific mission of the organization
26) I like to work for this organization because I believe with its mission and values
27) My daily work tasks contributes to carrying out the mission of my organization
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PLACE AND COMMUNITY WHERE YOU LIVE?
28) I work in this organization because it is a convenient distance from where I live
29) How long have you lived in this community? (Years)
30) The area where I live offers the leisure activities and other convenient things that I like. (For example sporting, outdoors activities)
31) The community that live in is a good match for me
32) How many family members live in the same community as you?
33) How many of your close friends live in the same community as you?
34) Do you own the home you live in?
35) If you are married, does your spouse work outside the home?
36) My family roots are in this community
37) Leaving this community would be very hard
38) If I were to leave the community, I would miss my non-work friends
39) People respect me a lot in my community