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Security in a sea of insecurity: job security and intention to stay among service sector employees in Turkey

İşik U. Zeytinoglu*a, Aşkin Keserb, Gözde Yılmazc, Kıvanç Inelmen, Arzu Özsoy and Duygu Uygruf

aHuman Resources and Management Area, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; bLabour Economics and Industrial Relations Department, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Uludag University, Bursa, Turkey; cFaculty of Communication, Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey; dDepartment of Tourism Administration, Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey; eLabour Economics and Industrial Relations Department, Kocaeli University, Izmit, Turkey; fInstitute of Social Sciences, Istanbul Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey

This article examines the association between job security and intention to stay for those who are employed in Turkey. There is a high level of unemployment in the country and many workers there are concerned about their job security. Job security refers to the objective dimensions of continuous contract, working full-time hours and paid and unpaid overtime. Job security also refers to the subjective dimension of perceived job security. We surveyed 407 employees in banking and related sectors’ call centres, five-star hotel front-line staff and airline cabin crews. Results show that objective dimensions of job security are not associated with intention to stay. However, perceived job security is significantly and positively associated with intention to stay. We recommend that human resource managers focus on the perceived job security aspect of employment to keep valuable employees with the company.

Keywords: continuous contract; full-time hours; intention to stay; overtime; perceived job security; Turkish workers

Introduction

There is persistent high unemployment in Turkey (Nichols and Sugur 2004; TurkStat 2010) and many in the labour market are concerned about their job security (Tangian 2007; Blanchflower and Lawton 2009). This article takes under scrutiny the largest group of the workforce (TurkStat 2010), that is, those employed in the service sector in Turkey. The purpose of this article is to examine the association between job security and intention to stay among Turkish employees in the service sector.

For employers, retention of valuable employees is important because they are the organization’s most valuable assets (Becker and Gerhart 1996; Chasserio and Legault 2009) and because organizational costs of turnover are often very high (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez 2001). There are costs associated with recruitment, orientation and training when an employee leaves. In addition, the tacit knowledge that has accumulated by the employee during the duration of employment is lost. Given that employers are interested in keeping valuable employees, focusing on staying rather than leaving is important (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee and Eberly 2008). In this study, we assume that if individuals are employed by their organization they are of value to their...
employers and that employers prefer to retain these employees. Retention of valuable employees becomes even more important in the service sector if employees are the first-contact public voice and image of their organizations.

This study focuses on those employees in Turkey who are in direct contact with the public and clients in providing service: call centre employees of banks and related sectors where employees respond to customer calls and attempt to resolve customer problems; front-line hotel staff in five-star hotels where perfect service and attention to detail and problem-solving skills are demanded by customers; and cabin crews in airlines where service and orderliness in addition to the safety and security of the passengers are expected.

The topic of this article is important and timely for researchers and practitioners in the field. First, this study contributes to the emerging literature on ‘staying’ in the organization (Holtom et al. 2008) by focusing on the job security factor contributing to service sector workers’ intention to stay. Second, expanding the understanding of the retention and turnover issues to other cultures outside the USA and other Anglo-Saxon countries has been recommended in the literature (Gelfand, Erez and Aycan 2007; Holtom et al. 2008), and our study contributes to this literature by providing an international focus on intention to stay. Third, Turkey, the country on which we focus, is a member of the G20 group and is important internationally due to its large economy (16th in the world) (Government of Turkey 2010). It is one of the fastest growing economies in the world (Gurrı´a 2010). There is, however, sparse internationally accessible management and human resources literature on Turkey (Usdiken and Wasti 2009; Aydinli 2010), and to our knowledge, there are no studies in the English-language academic literature focusing on job security and intention to stay issues for service sector employees in Turkey. This study contributes to academic and practitioner knowledge on Turkish labour market issues.

Definition of job security

Job security and insecurity are of ongoing interest for academics (see, e.g., recent special issues edited by Reisel and Probst 2010; Sverke, deWitte, Näswall and Hellgren 2010). Job security and insecurity refer to people’s evaluation of their current employment conditions and perception of their future in their current job from positive and negative perspectives, respectively. In the Turkish context, using job security rather than job insecurity terminology is more appropriate. Job insecurity is so prevalent in Turkish society and ingrained in the work culture that among Turkish employees it is considered the norm and job security the deviance. In communications, employees, employers and the public at large use the positive terminology of job security rather than the negative job insecurity. Thus, we use job security terminology in our study.

In addition, there is no universally accepted definition of job insecurity or security (Muñoz de Bustillo and de Pedraza 2010; Reisel, Probst, Chia, Maloles III and König 2010; Sverke et al. 2010). In this study, we take an approach similar to De Witte and Näswall’s (2003) study of job insecurity and examine job security using objective and subjective dimensions. Objective dimension of job security refers to the employment conditions of continuous contract, working full-time hours and paid and unpaid overtime. Subjective dimension of job security refers to the perceived job insecurity concept, which includes the worker’s perception that he/she is safe from dismissal, feel confident that the workplace will remain a steady place of employment for as long as they want to continue working there, feel confident of the security in the present job, feel that he/she is not likely to be laid off and will likely to be employed in the job 3 months from now, feel not worried
about his/her future in the workplace and feel job security. Overall, the concept emphasizes an individual’s perception of security in the job rather than an actual security that can be experienced through, for example, a formal employment contract stating the continuity in employment with no end date.

Theoretical model and the literature on factors associated with intention to stay

Over the past decade, a focus on staying, rather than on turnover, and the factors specifically associated with staying, has been a major trend in the literature (Holtom et al. 2008). Intention to stay is an attitude showing an employee’s attachment to their employing organization (Mitchell et al. 2001). It refers to an employee’s interest to continue to work for the organization (Lyons 1971). In this study, we use Steel and Lounsbury’s (2009) integrative theoretical model of the retention and turnover process and focus on the intention to stay aspect of the model. As the model states, aspects of the job and that of the individual affect perceived rewards of staying versus costs of leaving leading to separate paths of the intention to stay or leave, and to the ultimate decision of staying or leaving.

Empirical testing of the intention to stay shows that personal and human capital characteristics, work and work environment factors and attitudes are some of the factors affecting the intention to stay (Mitchell et al. 2001; Holtom et al. 2008; Steel and Lounsbury 2009). In particular, being older, married, with longer tenure and having dependent children are all associated with staying in the organization (Mitchell et al. 2001; Steel and Lounsbury 2009). In this study, we control for the effects of these factors and focus on the objective and subjective dimensions of job security and their associations with intention to stay for employees in the service sector in Turkey.

In terms of attitudes, commitment to the organization is one of the widely studied factors associated with intention to stay. When employees are committed to their organization, they have a tendency to stay (Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner 2000; Holtom et al. 2008; McPhail and Fisher 2008; Guchait and Cho 2010; Suliman and Al-Junaibi 2010). Mediating effects of organizational commitment on intention to stay have been shown in past research (McPhail and Fisher 2008; Suliman and Al-Junaibi 2010; Guchait and Cho 2010). Chirulombolo and Hellgren (2003) found that the effect of job insecurity on turnover intention is mediated by organizational commitment. There are, however, differences of opinions on whether mediation can be tested with the cross-sectional data and using hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Rosopa and Stone-Romeo 2008). Since our data are cross-sectional, we include organizational commitment as a variable controlling for its possible association with the intention to stay.

Objective and subjective dimensions of job security and intention to stay

Empirical research shows that continuous employment and working full-time hours are desirable job characteristics for most workers (Burgess and Connell 2008). Depending on personal life expectations or family demands, full-time or part-time hours can contribute to retention (Zeytinoglu et al. 2006). Research shows that young as well as older workers with no dependent children like to work full-time hours while middle-aged workers with dependent children prefer to work part-time (Zeytinoglu et al. 2006). Part-time employment is not common in Turkey and most workers, if employed, work full-time hours. Research shows that job stability is important for Turkish employees and there are many experiencing instability in their jobs (Tangian 2007). Close to 30% of those in the
Turkish non-agricultural labour market are not registered under the social security scheme (Venn 2008; TurkStat 2010) and thus essentially working without a contract. We argue that for those employed, having a continuous employment contract and working full-time hours would provide the stability they seek, and this stability in turn will positively affect their intention to stay in the organization. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Continuous contract will be positively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Controlling for age, working full-time hours will be positively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay.

Rather than hiring new employees, companies use overtime as a strategy for efficiently making use of existing employees. In addition, overtime gives employers flexibility in managing their organizations (Freyssinet and Michon 2003). Workweeks and work hours are long in Turkey compared to European Union member countries (Parent-Thirion, Macias, Hurley and Vermeylen 2007). Almost 50% of Turkish workers report working 7 days a week, and an additional 25% work 6 days a week (Parent-Thirion et al. 2007). The average Turkish workweek is 52 hours compared to a 40-hour workweek in most European Union member countries (Parent-Thirion et al. 2007). In addition, the recently amended legislation allows extended workweeks (Bakirci 2004; Özdemir and Yücesan-Özdemir 2006). Working paid and unpaid overtime is common in the country since those employed do not want to lose their hard-found jobs (Nichols and Sugur 2004). Moreover, while overtime might not be desirable for some employees (Campbell 2002), for many others paid overtime can be an important source of income and thus a desirable characteristic of work that contributes to the intention to stay. On the other hand, employees may feel they are being taken advantage of when the overtime is unpaid, which can therefore be associated with the intention to leave (Zeytinoglu et al. 2006). Thus, the hypotheses are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1c:** Paid overtime will be positively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay.

**Hypothesis 1d:** Unpaid overtime will be negatively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay.

Job security is often discussed within the context of job quality. As discussed by Burgess and Connell (2008), job security is one of the proxies for a ‘good’ job as perceived by workers. Empirical research shows that job insecurity is positively related to turnover intention (Sverke, Hellgren and Näsvall 2002; Cheng and Chan 2008), whereas perceived job security is positively associated with intention to stay (McPhail and Fisher 2008). Many employees in Turkey experience job insecurity or know others who have experienced layoffs or dismissals. Worries about unemployment are high in Turkey (Blanchflower and Lawton 2009) and, because unemployment could have dire consequences, job security is important (Tangian 2007). Similar to the job insecurity climate in organizations studied by Sora, Caballer, Peiro and de Witte (2009), we argue that there is a job insecurity climate in the Turkish labour market. As Burchell (2009, p. 5) suggested, due to economic conditions in Turkey’s labour market ‘insiders have less to worry about, while those who worry about losing their jobs do indeed have a lot to worry about, as unemployment benefits are low and the gap between insiders and outsiders is wide’. Thus, we argue that those who perceive security in their jobs intend to stay in their organizations and hypothesize the following:
Hypothesis 2: Perceived job security will be positively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay.

Method

Background on the study sectors

Service sector employs 50% of the labour force in Turkey (TurkStat 2010). We focused on the service sector because of its large size in the country’s labour market and the accumulated expertise of research team on the three sub-sectors studied.

Call centre employment is new in Turkey and, similar to other countries (Batt, Holman and Holtgrewe 2009), national-level statistics for call centre workers are not available. However, for banking and related sectors’ call centre employment, the Turkish Association of Banks (2009) provides reliable data. It shows that there are 4,872 call centre workers in the banking sector, of which 96% are full-time and 4% part-time. A large majority are female (73%) and young (with average age being 25). Close to half (48%) have a university degree or a 2-year college degree. Almost all (91%) are working in Istanbul, an area where our study was conducted. The turnover rate for banks’ call centres is 7%.

Tourism sector in Turkey ranks eighth in the world with respect to tourist arrivals and ninth with respect to tourism revenue (World Tourism Organization 2009). Within the sector, front-line hotel employment, particularly in the five-star hotels we focused on, is desirable. A study focusing on five-star hotels shows a higher percentage of female employment in these hotels, a young workforce, and more educated workers observed in the overall hospitality sector (Bas-Collins 2007). Another study of close to 1,300 workers in 28 hotels in various regions in Turkey, including Istanbul and area where our study was conducted, shows similar characteristics for hotel employees (Yorgun, Keser and Yilmaz 2009). The turnover rate for five-star hotels is 85% (Bas-Collins 2007), which is often an outcome of the seasonality in tourism employment (Jolliffe and Farnsworth 2003).

The air transportation sector in Turkey is flourishing, with $8 billion in revenue and 35 million domestic and 43 million international travel passengers (Özsoy 2009). The sector is expanding due to investments in new airports throughout the country and the entry of new low-cost carriers to the market, and as a result, there are currently 14 airline companies. Nearly 100,000 workers are employed in the air transportation sector (Ministry of Transportation 2009), with the biggest airline company reporting 3,668 cabin crews (THY 2009).

Data and data collection process

Data collected from these three sectors in Istanbul, Turkey started in 2008 after ethics approval was received from each project coordinator’s university ethics board. Pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted in June 2008. There were only minor changes in the wording of the questionnaire. Data collection was completed in the early fall of 2008 and the process for data collection differed slightly for each sector.

With regard to banks’ and related organizations’ call centres, data were collected from employees in four banks and related sector companies. The questionnaire was distributed to all call centre employees of these companies (N = 233). Each questionnaire included a letter of information outlining the research project, ensuring participant confidentiality and including instructions for the return process. The questionnaire was distributed in sealed envelopes at the workplaces (on site) at the end of the working day. We requested that
workers respond to the questionnaire at home, seal their responses in the enclosed envelope and return it to their office the next day. Any worker not wishing to respond to the questionnaire was asked to indicate it on the form itself and return it in the sealed envelope the next day. Depending on the agreement with the call centre manager, questionnaires were either dropped off at a sealed box by the employees or collected by us at the beginning of the workday. This approach provided us 162 usable surveys from call centre workers, giving a 70% response rate.

In the hotel sector, we sampled front-line staff from 10 five-star hotels in Istanbul. For the sampling process, first a list of all five-star hotels operating in Istanbul was obtained and then 15 such hotels were selected by random sampling. We then requested permission to distribute the survey from hotel management, which resulted in approval from 10 five-star hotels. In total, 300 questionnaires and self-seal envelopes were left with the human resource departments to be distributed to front-line staff. Each questionnaire included the same letter of information as in the call centre worker questionnaire. In coordination with the human resource departments, the sealed envelopes were collected approximately 3 weeks after their distribution. All together, 183 sealed envelopes were returned, and after eliminating those that were blank as well as questionnaires completed by non-front-line staff, 167 questionnaires were found usable giving a 56% response rate.

Cabin crews in the sample were reached with the help of the civil aviation union representing flight crews. Four hundred questionnaires and self-seal envelopes were given to the union officials for distribution to cabin crews at their staff lounge. For security reasons, the questionnaires had to be delivered by union representatives as researchers are prohibited from entering the staff lounge area at airports. The union representatives placed the surveys with self-seal envelopes and a drop-off box in the lounge area. Completed questionnaires, placed in sealed envelopes, were dropped into the box and picked up after 3 weeks. One of the unionized staff also volunteered to distribute the questionnaires and envelopes to cabin crews working for another carrier (a large non-union company). Many of those workers were transferees from this individual’s company, and as ex-co-workers, they socialized at the airport staff lounge. A total of 78 questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 20%. Thirty-six of the respondents were unionized cabin crews, 30 were non-unionized cabin crews and the rest (12) did not give union membership information.

These efforts yielded a total of 407 usable questionnaires. In the multivariate analysis, 326 of these were used due to missing variables in some responses.

**Instrument**

The *Work Life Questionnaire* was the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was the translated and shortened version of the *New Health Care Worker Questionnaire* of Zeytinoglu et al. (2007), of which some questions were adopted from other studies (as referenced below). The questionnaire was originally written in English and was first translated by a professional translator into Turkish and then by a different professional translator into English to control for the accuracy of the terminologies used. For the validation of the items used in the questionnaire, the research collaborators reviewed each question carefully and decided on the wording and the meaning of each item. Five of the six research team members were deemed expert validators since, all native to and having lived in Turkey, they knew the country, its workforce and the culture. In addition, Turkish is the native language of these five members, who also have a very good comprehension of the English language. Only the first author, having lived outside of Turkey for an extensive period, was not involved in this process.
Measures

All variables that were on Likert-type scales were measured with responses ranging from ‘1 = strongly disagree’ to ‘5 = strongly agree’. To create scores for each scale or sub-scale, responses to each item were summed together. In creating the scales, some of the items were reverse-scored as suggested by the scale developer. Confirmatory factor analysis with ‘varimax’ rotation was conducted for all scales, and Cronbach’s alphas were conducted for reliability testing.

For the dependent variable of intention to stay, Lyons’ propensity to leave scale (Lyons 1971) was used. The scale consisted of three positively worded items. A sample item was: ‘I would like to stay at this workplace for a long time’. Responses were scored on a Likert scale with higher values indicating that they strongly intended to stay. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$).

The objective and subjective measures of job security were independent variables in the study. Continuous contract and working full-time hours were each coded as ‘1 = yes’, ‘0 = no’ and paid and unpaid overtime were number of hours. Job security scale was reversed items from Zeytinoglu et al. (2007) seven-item scale that was originally based on the ten-item job insecurity scale of Cameron, Horsburgh and Armstrong-Stassen (1994). A sample item of the scale was: ‘I feel I am likely to be laid off (reversed)’. The scale showed good reliability with high Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.86$). Following Klandermans, Klein Hesselink and van Vuuren’s (2010) suggestion of using a multi-dimensional measure of job insecurity, we included the importance of income for the family as a proxy for the severity of job loss (coded as ‘1 = not important’ to ‘5 = very important’).

Control variables were gender, age, marital status, education, sector and organizational commitment. They were coded as: gender (‘1 = female’, ‘0 = male’), age (years), marital status (‘1 = married or live together’, ‘0 = single or divorced’), education (‘1 = university degree including 2-year college degree’, ‘0 = high school or lower’) and sector (each coded as dummy variables ‘1 = yes’, ‘0 = otherwise’). Having dependent children and tenure, which are variables associated with the intention to stay (Mitchell et al. 2001; Steel and Lounsbury 2009), were not included because most respondents did not have dependent children and tenure variable was highly correlated with age. Organizational commitment was measured using Meyer, Allen and Smith’s (1993) Organizational Commitment Scale. Their scale is a measure of attitudinal commitment focusing on the process by which people come to think about their relationships with the organization. A sample question is ‘I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this workplace’. Research shows this scale to have a good reliability with high Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.97$). For our data, affective and normative commitment scales showed good reliability with high Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.84$ and 0.72, respectively). Continuous commitment scale showed low reliability and was not included in this study.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics, correlations and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. In the hierarchical regression, control variables and then objective job security measures were entered. In the third step, the subjective (perceived) job security variable and the importance of income for the family variable were entered. The equal interval assumption was used for Likert scale measurement of the dependent variable. In the regression analyses, the reference sector was the hotel industry. To reduce missing data in the analyses, missing variables were coded to the mean for the commitment and perceived job security scales. Missing data were at the statistically acceptable level in all scale items.
(5% level), except one item (out of seven) in the job security (where the missing value was at the 6% level). In the paid and unpaid overtime variables, missing responses were coded to the value of ‘0’, meaning no overtime was done. To show the variance explained by the factors in the study, Adjusted $R^2$ was provided. Since the subjectively assessed variables may not be completely independent from each other, collinearity diagnostics were also conducted. Collinearity was not found.

**Results**

**Descriptive statistics**

As presented in Table 1, referring to intention to stay, respondents had more intention to stay in their workplace than leave ($M = 10.84, SD = 3.18$). In terms of the objective dimensions of job security, 69% of respondents were in continuous contracts, 97% worked full-time hours, and the average hours of paid overtime per week was about 5 hours, while unpaid overtime was 1 hour per week. For perceived job security, respondents perceived neither security nor insecurity in their jobs ($M = 24.41, SD = 6.03$). Income from the job was important for their family, with 53% saying it was important or very important.

Referring to control variables, 42% of the respondents were male. Average age was 28, close to three-quarters (71%) were single (or divorced) and 80% had a university degree or a 2-year college degree. A comparison of a few demographic characteristics (age, gender and education) between the respondents and earlier studies and available statistics showed that respondents were similar to the sector averages (Bas-Collins 2007; Turkish Association of Banks 2009; Yorgun et al. 2009). Forty percent of the respondents were employed in the banks’ and related sectors’ call centres, 41% were front-line staff in five-star hotels and 19% were cabin crews in airlines. In terms of affective commitment, respondents were neither committed nor uncommitted, and for normative commitment, respondents were somewhat less committed to their organization ($M = 20.08, SD = 5.43; M = 17.96, SD = 4.17$, respectively).

**Correlations**

Table 1 shows the correlations for dependent and independent variables. When the correlations between intention to stay and dimensions of job security were examined, continuous contract was significantly and negatively associated with intention to stay ($-0.120, p < 0.05$), and job security was significantly and positively associated with intention to stay ($0.437, p < 0.01$). Other objective dimensions of job security (working

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations between dependent and independent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Intention to stay</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.120*</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Continuous contract</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Full-time hours</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Paid overtime</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.109**</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Unpaid overtime</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.109*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Job security</td>
<td>24.41</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>0.437**</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Importance of income for family</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.
full-time hours, paid and unpaid overtime) and the proxy variable for the subjective dimension (importance of income for family) were not associated with intention to stay. Correlations for all variables are available from the first author.

**Regression analyses**

The results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 2. Briefly referring to control variables, which were included in step 1 of the intention to stay regression, marital status, affective commitment and normative commitment were significantly and positively associated with intention to stay. The magnitude of $\beta$ for each significant variable showed that affective commitment ($\beta = 0.502$, $p < 0.001$) followed by normative commitment ($\beta = 0.273$, $p < 0.001$) and marital status ($\beta = 0.110$, $p < 0.01$) were significant factors in explaining intention to stay. Other variables were not significantly associated with intention to stay. The variables in the model explained a substantial proportion of variance (Adj. $R^2 = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$).

Hypotheses 1a and 1b stated that continuous contract and working full-time hours would be positively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay. Hypothesis 1c stated that paid overtime would be positively associated with intention to stay, and Hypothesis 1d stated that unpaid overtime would be negatively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay. Step 2 of the intention to stay analysis showed no significant associations, and these variables did not add much to the variance explained. Thus, Hypotheses 1a–1d were not supported. Continuous contract, working full-time hours and paid and unpaid overtime variables did not add much to the variance explained (Adj. $R^2 = 0.53$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.001$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 2. Hierarchical regression analysis for factors associated with intention to stay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1st step</th>
<th></th>
<th>2nd step</th>
<th></th>
<th>3rd step</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.413</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>-0.208</td>
<td>1.436</td>
<td>-1.227</td>
<td>1.493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>0.257</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>0.769**</td>
<td>0.289</td>
<td>0.747*</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>0.729*</td>
<td>0.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.204</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>-0.159</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
<td>0.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels (Ref)</td>
<td>-0.243</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>-0.236</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
<td>0.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call centres</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>0.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td>0.304***</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.302***</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.282***</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative commitment</td>
<td>0.192***</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.193***</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.183***</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous contract</td>
<td>-0.166</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>-0.170</td>
<td>0.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time hours</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid overtime</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid overtime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of income for family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.560</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.533</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. 
In step 3 we tested Hypothesis 2, which stated that job security would be positively associated with Turkish service sector employees’ intention to stay, and we did further analysis examining the importance of income for the family as a proxy for the severity of job loss dimension of job security. Supporting Hypothesis 2, job security was significantly and positively associated with the intention to stay though at the lower significance level ($p < 0.05$). The magnitude of $\beta$ for job security ($\beta = 0.108$, $p < 0.05$) showed that, after affective and normative commitment, this was the third important factor associated with the intention to stay. Marital status continued to be positively significant though at the lower level ($p < 0.05$). The importance of income for the family was not associated with the intention to stay. The variables in the model explained 54% of the variance ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.54$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.009$, $p < 0.001$).

**Conclusions and discussion**

Results of this study show that the objective dimensions of job security, that is having a continuous contract, working full-time hours and paid and unpaid overtime, are not significantly associated with the intention to stay for Turkish service sector employees in this sample. These results are different than expected. Based on the literature that showed continuous contracts and full-time hours as desirable job characteristics (particularly when the age factor was controlled) (Zeytinoglu et al. 2006; Burgess and Connell 2008), we had thought that these objective job security characteristics would contribute to employees’ intention to stay. However, when the effects of other factors are controlled, we find no significant relationship between continuous contract and full-time hours and intention to stay. It is possible that employees might be considering these objective job security characteristics as workplace norms and therefore they do not significantly affect their intention to stay with the organization.

In addition, our results are different than expected with regard to the relationship between paid and unpaid overtime and intention to stay for Turkish service sector workers. The literature shows that paid overtime might be a factor for employees’ intention to stay (Freyssinet and Michon 2003), and unpaid overtime might be a factor for employees’ intention to leave (Zeytinoglu et al. 2006). The non-significant associations between paid and unpaid overtime and intention to stay might be related to employees’ understanding of workplace expectations and what is necessary for continued employment. We argue that because of persistent high unemployment (Nichols and Sugur 2004; TurkStat 2010) employees in Turkey accept job offers without critically evaluating the positive and negative aspects of the employment conditions, including paid overtime requirements and expected unpaid overtime when needed. Even if overtime is not a preference, employees would still intend to stay in that job. This is likely due to conditions in the Turkish labour market where a job is better than no job at all. The unemployment rate is high in Turkey and unemployment benefit is not widely available. Similar to the Nichols and Sugur (2004) study, when compared with the alternatives available in a slack labour market, we argue that workers in our study accept the working conditions on the job for the fear of losing their job. New individual employment legislation in Turkey has twisted the power towards employers, providing them with ample opportunity to use staff flexibly (Özdemir and Yücesan-Özdemir 2006). In such a labour market, employees in our sample might consider their working conditions acceptable and not associated with their decision to stay in the organization.

Perceived job security is significantly related to intention to stay for Turkish employees in our sample. Overall, the positive association with job security and intention
to stay is in line with studies that included Turkey in their analyses (Tangian 2007; Blanchflower and Lawton 2009) and studies on other countries (McPhail and Fisher 2008), along with the meta-analyses on the topic (Sverke et al. 2002; Cheng and Chan 2008). As studies on the Turkish labour market have shown, despite employment protection legislation, in practice, a very high proportion of Turkish workers do not have a contract of employment (Koçer and Fransen 2009) and job insecurity is widespread (Nichols and Sugur 2004; Burchell 2009). Unemployment rate is high, and the unemployment insurance system, established only recently, covers less than a quarter of the workforce, and when applied provides very little compensation for those eligible (Gundogan 2009). Research shows that individuals in Turkey seek stability in life (Özbilgin, Küskü and Erdogmuş 2005) and at work (Tangian 2007). Similarly, we argue that the respondents to our survey are keenly aware of this labour market environment, the endemic unemployment in the country, the consequences of unemployment, and as a result seek security at work and in their personal lives. As shown by Aldemir, Arbak and Ozmen (2003), Turkish employees’ work mentality is not solely based on rationality, but also on collective sub-consciousness. The latter is affected by traditionalism, emotionality, fatalism and family ties. Although significance of perceived job security rather than the objective dimensions may seem odd at first glance, the reality of the work environment in Turkey is that contractual agreements provide little protection to employees, and it is possible that the employees make decisions on intention to stay based on emotions rather than rational decision making. In the employment context studied here local work values consisting of factors such as emotionality, fatalism, opportunism and unfaithfulness may overrule and lead employees to doubt objective job security conditions and value perceived job security more highly in their intention to stay in the organization. In this context, the significance of perceived job security can be explained as associated with intent to stay in the organization.

Among other factors included to control for their known effects on intention to stay, affective and normative commitments are the two most important factors in this study. Emotional connectivity with the organization, feeling a sense of inclusion in the ‘organizational family’ and feeling an obligation to contribute to the organization appear to be important factors for Turkish service sector employees to stay with the company. These findings are similar to conclusions in studies from other countries (Griffeth et al. 2000; Holtom et al. 2008; McPhail and Fisher 2008; Guchait and Cho 2010; Suliman and Al-Junaibi 2010). Married employees are more inclined to stay with an organization and this is perhaps another indication that these employees want stability in their lives. We would also like to note that the regression analyses show that age, gender, education and the sector of employment are not associated with the intention to stay for Turkish workers. Taken together, the factors included in our study explain a substantial proportion of variance (between 53% and 54%) of intention to stay for Turkish service sector employees.

It is important to address a few limitations of our study. First, as it is limited to three service sectors in Turkey and has a small sample size, results cannot be generalized to all Turkish workers or similarly situated workers in other countries. In addition, we recommend qualitative studies to further elaborate on our findings and provide explanations of why employees behave in the way they do. Second, respondents to our survey are from large companies that are in the ‘formal’ sector while 96% of Turkish companies are small with less than 30 employees (TurkStat 2010). These large companies gave us access to survey their employees. However, working conditions are very different in small-sized companies. Those with less than 30 employees provide reduced employment protection for workers, and workplaces with less than 10 employees are
exempt from labour law and function in informal labour market conditions, without registration under the social security system (Gundogan 2009). Thus, we caution readers from generalizing our results to all companies in Turkey. Third, it should be stated that the data for the present study were collected before Turkey was under the influence of the 2008 global economic crisis, and it is possible that in the aftermath, workers would be even more concerned about the consequences of losing their job, and their perceived job security would probably show a stronger association with intention to stay.

In conclusion, our study of Turkish employees in banks’ and related sectors’ call centres, front-line hotel staff and airline cabin crews show that it is the perception of job security rather than continuous employment contract, working full-time hours, paid or unpaid overtime and perceived importance of income for the family that affect workers’ intention to stay with their organization. We recommend that human resource managers interested in the relationship between job security and intention to stay focus on the perceived job security aspect of work rather than the objective dimensions of job security.

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