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Predicting employee engagement and job satisfaction among cabin crew

Master thesis

      by

Elena Pavlova

"Employees are the key to success of any organization and we here in the Emirates Group know this well." Gary Chapman, President Group Services and dnata

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Abstract

Enhancing employee engagement and job satisfaction are desirable outcomes of every organization, since they are believed, on one hand, to reduce turnover intention, and on the other hand, to bring loyal customers and thus success to the organization. Cabin crew represent the front line of each airline and they play an essential role in delivering service quality, therefore their engagement and job satisfaction is vital for the organization.

This thesis aims to examine the extentto which cabin crew engagement and job satisfactionare predicted by empowerment and leadership support, using a non-random sample of 103 flight attendants from an airline in the Middle East region.

The research focuses on the linear relationships between leadership, empowerment, job satisfaction and employee engagement, and proposes theoretical concepts and validated measurement scales encompassing these variables. After testing the hypothesized relationships between the variables, using multiple regression analysis, the results of the first hypothesized model revealed that cabin crew engagement is mainly predicted by empowerment, followed by job satisfaction, whereas leadership support did not explain any variance in cabin crew engagement. While testing the second hypothesized model, the results demonstrated that both empowerment and leadership support predict cabin crew job satisfaction.

Most findings were in line with a number of previous studies, however the non-significant prediction of employee engagement by leadership support was unexpected. This interesting result suggested that there might be some gap between employees and leadership, since cabin crew engagement is not predicted by leadership support to any extent.

Thus, based on the current findings, the study elaborates on theoretical and practical implications and suggests future research directions.

The findings of the current thesis are believed to contribute to the research on cabin crew engagement and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that these findings would make the airline's management consider more carefully the leadership training process so that leaders will learn how to inspire and engage cabin crew.

Keywords: Cabin crew, Service delivery sector, Employee engagement, Job satisfaction, Empowerment, Leadership support

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

i

List of Tables

List of Figures

1 Introduction and research aim

Although technologies, strategies and products still dominatethe analysis of gaining competitive advantage, human resources and how they are engaged is receiving increased attention. Gone are the days when a young person starting out in his or her career joined a company and stayed until retirement- in today's business environment there are no guarantees. Today, employee engagement and loyalty are more vital than ever before to an organization's success because the ability to engage and retain valuable employees has a significant impact on an organization's bottom line. Employees are viewed as a big investment that should bring the greatest reward. The questions for management are how to generate an engaged and satisfied workforce and what are the best ways to reach that goal.

Research findings in the customer service delivery sector suggest that being engaged emotionally and feeling satisfied from your work during customer interaction are central for customer service delivery (Deery et al, 2002; Kinman, 2009). The researchers claim that most employees perform some degree of emotional labor, and it is a fundamental component of customer service work. Service employees are a key input for delivering service excellence and among the most demanding jobs in service organizations are the so-called front- line jobs where employees are expected to be fast and efficient at executing operational tasks, as well as friendly and helpful with their customers (Wirtz et al., 2008).

 Flight attendants (or cabin crew) have more responsibilities than most front-line employees in the service delivery sector, because they are trained to maintain cabin safety and security and at the same time to provide customer service (Chen and Chen, 2012). The researchers explain that the sophistication of the duties performed by cabin crew demands both airlines and cabin crew to invest considerable time and money in training. A high turnover rate among cabin crew is costly for airlines and employees, and further research is required to reduce this by investigating potential causes. As Saks (2006) claims that employee engagement negatively relates to turnover rate, and since employee engagement is desired by every organization, this study aims to examine some of the factors that may affect work engagement in the service delivery sector of the aviation industry.

Work engagement is an emerging concept in positive psychology, which focuses on human strengths and positive experiences at work and has been recently discussed by the organizational behavior researchers (Mauno et al, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008). As discussed by Bakker and Schaufeli (2008), recognizing the positive aspects of work is critical, because organizations are in need of employees who feel satisfied, vigorous and dedicated and who are absorbed by their work.

A number of studies suggest that immediate leaders (supervisors) and performance feedback from them are among the key drivers for employees' engagement in the service delivery sector (Bakker et al, 2007; Hakanen et al., 2006; Karatepe et al.; Demerouti et al., 2001). Although there are some studies, which demonstrate that there is no significant relationship between leadership support and employee engagement (Saks, 2006), the greater evidence suggests that leadership support is an important job resource influencing work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2006; Shaufeli et al., 2008). In this regard, some other researchers

claim that the immediate supervisors, who are the ones with limited interaction with customers, should provide effective support to the front-line employees since they are the ones who frequently interact with customers (Li, Karin and Frenkel, 2012; Law et al., 2010). Moreover, supervisor support is suggested to be a major predictor for cabin crew's job satisfaction (Vinnicombe, 1984). Since some studies view employee engagement as a result of job satisfaction, job satisfaction is also a desirable outcome for every organization (Hagedorn, 2000).

In the service delivery literature is also argued that service is the core part of the product and the front-line staff tend to be the most visible element to consumers, hence they are significantly influencing the service quality (Wirtz et al., 2008). The researchers claim that since the customers often see the front-line staff as the firm itself, then the staff need to be empowered to make appropriate decisions on customer service delivery and take corrective actions as needed for service recovery. In this relation, other studies claim that it is essential for front-line employees to be empowered and be able to make decisions independently, since they frequently handle customers on their own, as it is not feasible for managers to constantly monitor employees' actions (Yagil, 2002).

According to Conger and Kanungo (1988) empowerment engages the employees at an emotional level. They distinguish between concepts of empowerment, which are relational and motivational. As a relational concept, empowerment is concerned with issues to do with management style and employee participation, while as a motivational construct; empowerment is about autonomy, power and control. Advocates of empowerment claim that employee empowerment helps firms to enthuse and engage employees to take responsibilities (Barbee and Bott, 1991). Given the need to engage employees at an emotional level and to generate the appropriate feelings about the service encounter, the impact of each empowerment initiative on the employee is critical (Lashley, 1999). Enabling employees to sense their own power and the significance of their role in the service drama may help employees manage the emotions required of their performance (Barbee and Bott, 1991). In this regard, another researcher reveals how much a stewardess's (cabin crew) job has in common with the commercialization of feelings across the service delivery (Hochschild, 1983). The author makes the point that seeming to love the job and managing the appropriate feelings of enjoyment of the customer helps the worker in its efforts. In addition, empowerment is claimed to cause job satisfaction (Laschinger et al., 2004), which same as engagement is negatively related to employee turnover (Hellman, 1997) and respectively desirable outcome for every organization.

Based on past and recent theoretical concepts of relationships showing the effects of empowerment and leadership support on engagement and job satisfaction, and inspired from personal experience and observations, this research aims to examine whether there are significant linear relations of these variables in the service sector of the aviation industry. To examine the aforementioned relations, the study is purposely limited to one industry - aviation - and moreover the service delivery sector - cabin crew - since in this case they are the employees who have frequent face-to-face interactions with customers and are the main actors in the delivery of service. This case is also relevant and significant, because much of the research on employee engagement and job satisfaction has centered on the samples of the developed Western countries such as Netherlands (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004), Spain (Salanova et al, 2005) Finland (Bakker et al., 2007; Hakanen et al., 2006), Canada (Saks, 2006)

and also most of those studies are in the health care, education and hotels sector. Despite the theoretical reasoning, research on work engagement has remained scarce due to the fact that the concept is rather new. Accordingly, building on and extending recent research, this thesis aims to examine whether empowerment, leadership support and job satisfaction predict employee engagement, and also whether empowerment and leadership support predict job satisfaction among cabin crew. The sample group is chosen to be from a national Airline in Middle East, mostly because studies on cabin crew have focused only in European and Far East Asian airlines (Chen and Chen, 2012). Moreover, these existing studies on human resource management for service excellence are mostly examined from a management point of view and not so much from employees' point of view. Therefore this research aims to investigate how some of the main corn stones of the human resource management in aviation such as empowerment and leadership support affect cabin crew engagement and job satisfaction.

The research and the expected results would be beneficial for both management and employees since the high service quality could be reached only through satisfied and engaged employees, who are more likely to modify their own behavior toward customers in order to reach personal and organizational goals (Chebat and Kollias, 2000).

Following the problem formulation detailed above, the research seeks to evaluate the extent to which:

(i) **cabin crew engagement is predicted by leadership support, empowerment and job satisfaction.**
(ii) **cabin crew job satisfaction is predicted by leadership support and empowerment.**

To answer these research questions, a sample group of respondents from the service sector of the aviation industry are chosen to give answers to the surveys. The respondents' answers are measured using theoretical concepts and validated from previous studies scales dealing with work engagement, job satisfaction leadership and empowerment. Therefore, the following chapter presents the literature review, on which the research is based.

2 Literature review

The following section aims to examine the influence of leadership support and empowerment on employee engagement and job satisfaction. In addition, the effect of job satisfaction on employee engagement will be assessed. Therefore the researcher will focus on definitions and suggestions of these variables – engagement, job satisfaction, leadership support and empowerment and the ways of measuring these

variables. The first and second sections of the literature review deal with employee engagement and job satisfaction, why it matters to have engaged and satisfied employees and how to measure it. The third and the fourth sections then emphasize on some of the key drivers for employee engagement and satisfaction such as leadership support and empowerment.

2.1 Employee Engagement

In recent years, modern organizations, especially those in the service sector, need employees who are engaged in their work, who are more proactive, more initiative and give best quality of service to the customers (Bakker and Leiter, 2010; Schaufeli, 2002; Bernerth et al., 2007; Mauno et al., 2006). The researchers agree that the engagement of employees depend on their willingness to go the extra mile or in other words to do what goes beyond their job description.

Recently, in the aviation management literature, it has been argued that elevating the levels of work engagement and job satisfaction might be effective in reducing cabin crew's turnover intention (Chen and Chen, 2012; Chen, 2006). Other studies confirm that even though cabin crew job is still very attractive and the competition for this job position is huge, the turnover rate in the airline industry is still high therefore investigating employee engagement among cabin crew is very beneficial for the organizations (Liang and Hsieh, 2005).

As a concept, work engagement is rather new concept and it reflects the recent trend towards positive psychology, where the concern is positive aspects of employees' behavior. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), when there is a person – job match, employees experience engagement with their work, characterized by energy, involvement, and positive efficacy.

As per Schaufeli et al. (2002), employee engagement is a positive, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. In this regard, attention is paid to human strengths, optimal functioning, and positive experiences at work (Seligmen and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

While, disengaged employees display incomplete role performances and task behaviors become effortless, automatic or robotic (Hochschild, 1983). According to the author, disengagement may be result of employees who lack needed social interaction and support, who experience little autonomy in work roles, or who feel their jobs are unimportant.

The concept of employee engagement has been characterized in different ways. On one hand, a number of researchers define engagement as a multidimensional construct, where employees can be emotionally, cognitively, or physically engaged (Kahn, 1990; Buckingham and Coffman, 1999; Lluthans and Peterson, 2001). The researchers explain that for psychological engagement and organizational behaviors, the two major dimensions are emotional and cognitive engagement. To be emotionally engaged is to form connections to others (co-workers and managers) and to experience empathy and concern for others' feelings, while being cognitively engaged refers to those who are aware of their mission and role in their work (Kahn,

1990). The researcher suggests that engagement occurs when one is cognitively vigilant and emotionally connected to others. For example, employees who know what is expected from them, who from strong relationships with co-workers and supervisors, or who in other ways experience meaning in their work, are engaged.

On the other hand, an alternative and more current theoretical framework in the service delivery management literature aims to add further understanding and validity to engagement as a new research stream. According to a number of researchers (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Bernerth et al., 2007; Mauno et al., 2006; Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli, 2006), work engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling, state of mind characterized by absorption, vigor and dedication. The authors stress that these main engagement dimensions need to be discussed and defined separately as they address different levels of the engagement process.

Shaufeli et al. (2002) explain that absorption refers to total concentration on and happy immersion in work characterized by time passing quickly and finding it difficult to detach oneself from one's work. While the dimension of vigor refers to high levels of energy during work, an employee's willingness to make appreciable efforts in his or her job even in difficult situations. Last but not least, the third important dimension of work engagement- dedication, the authors characterize as a strong psychological involvement at work, combined with a since of enthusiasm, inspiration, significance, pride and challenge. In other words, an individual with dedication will always engage in work with enthusiasm and pride. According to some researches, this dimension of engagement could be related to the more traditional concept of job involvement or commitment (Mauno et al., 2006). These dimensions of employee engagement are recently measured through the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). The scale measures all three dimensions – absorption ("I am immersed in my work"), vigor ("When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work", " at my work, I feel bursting with energy") and dedication ("My job inspires me", " I am enthusiastic about my job").

In recent years, attention has been paid not only to engagement dimensions (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Mauno et al, 2006), but also factors that have predictive influence on work engagement such as leadership support (Ilies et al, 2007; Li, and Sanders and Frenkel, 2012; Huang et al., 2010; Bernerth et al., 2007; Chen and Chen, 2012), as well as empowerment (Laschinger et al, 2006; Zhang and Bartol, 2010; Mathieu and Rapp, 2005; Chebat and Kollias, 2000; Bowen and Lawer, 1992). Some researches also point out job satisfaction as a predictorof employee engagement (Hagedorn, 2000) or in other words employee engagement as a product of job satisfaction.

2.2 Job satisfaction

As argued in the TQM (Total Quality Management) literature, it is essential to measure and conceptualize job satisfaction, also seen as a desirable outcome of different leadership and empowerment strategies (Ugboro and Obeng, 2000). As per a number of studies, job satisfaction is " a favorable attitude or pleasurable emotional state that results from a person's job experience or a fit between a person and an organization" (Ugboro and Obeng, 2000; Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991). The

researchers claim that employee job satisfaction is affected by the availability of information about the organization's mission, values and management strategies, recognition schemes, and involvement in the total quality process or in other words job satisfaction is based mainly on promotion and career opportunities, reward systems, work atmosphere and participation.

According to Hagedorn (2000), when a worker feels a high level of achievement, is intensely involved, and is appropriately compensated by recognition, responsibility, and salary, job satisfaction is enhanced. Furthermore the researcher point out how job satisfaction predicts employee engagement and explains that a worker who is experiencing a high level of job satisfaction would be likely to appreciate her or his position and be proud of the organization, resulting in high likelihood of job engagement. In this case, engagement is perceived as the final product, evidence, and the result of job satisfaction. Respectively, the disengaged worker who, due to very low levels of satisfaction, is not excited or desirous to contribute to the benefits of the organization and therefore is not actively engaged in work (Hagedorn, 2000). In this relation, a number of studies argue that job dissatisfaction is a consistent predictor of burnout and turnover (Laschinger et al., 2006; Hellman, 1997; Harter et al., 2002).

It is also generally held that empowered employees have higher levels of job satisfaction, primarily because of their involvement in goal setting and in making decisions that affect their work (Blackburn and Rosen, 1993; Ugboro and Obeng, 2001; Laschinger et al., 2006;). Additionally, it is claimed that job satisfaction results in higher levels of employee organizational commitment, that in turn produce desirable organizational citizenship behavior -the willingness of an individual to engage in extra role behavior that is not generally considered a part of an individual's job description (Williams and Anderson, 1991). Thus the authors argue that empowerment positively influences job satisfaction and that job satisfaction can also increase levels of employee engagement.

Additionally, in the context of TQM, it is argued that organizations best meet their objectives when top management or leadership is committed and creates an organizatational climate or a positive atmosphere that helps employees feel more satisfied (Ugboro and Obeng, 2001). Other researchers suggest that managers should help create cultural norms of learning by demonstrating a concern for people and their ideas, which would increase employees' confidence, reduce stress and make them feel better about their jobs (Chebat and Kollias, 2000).

In this regard, the Gallup researchers (The Gallup Organization, 1992-1999) indicate the importance of the supervisor or the manager over the job satisfaction level of its employees. The instrument used by the Gallup researchers, the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA, 1992-1999), is composed of an overall satisfaction with one's company that can be seen as a generalized summary of specific affect-based reactions to work. The GWA's 12 items model explains a great deal of the variance in what is defined as " overall job satisfaction" referring to questions such as "I know what is expected of me to work", "In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work". With these 12 items, the Gallup researchers aim to capture broader spectrum of categories such as satisfaction, loyalty, intent to stay in the company, however the outcome is only one- overall job satisfaction with the company (Harter et al., 2002).

2.3 Leadership support

There is great evidence in the literature about the effect of the leadership support on work engagement (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2006; Van den Broeck et al., 2008;Choi and Behling, 1997; Li, Sanders and Frenkel, 2012; Ilies et al., 2007; Chen and Chen, 2012) and job satisfaction (Vinnicombe, 1984; Ugobro and Obeng, 2000). The researchers agree that leadership or supervisors and their communication and relations with the employees have a great impact on employees' motivation, satisfaction and engagement.

In some recent studies, the concept of leadership support towards employees is considered as an essential job resource and together with other job resources such as autonomy and performance feedback influence employees' engagement at work (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009; Hakanen et al., 2006; Bakker et al., 2007; Salanova et al., 2005). Specifically,Slanova et al. (2005) argues that such organizational resources as supervisor's support and communication through specific trainings and practices are positively related to work engagement among frontline hotel and restaurant employees. A great number of studies find positive relations between leadership support and the three main dimensions of work engagement- vigor, dedication and absorption (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009; Bakker et al., 2007, Schuafeli et al., 2008; Hakanen et al., 2006).

According to Vinnicombe (1984), leadership support and communication has a central role in cabin crew job satisfaction. She explains that due to the fact that cabin crew are most of the time physically away from their organizational base and they are far away from their supervisors, therefore they have little opportunity to develop meaningful work relationships with their supervisors. At the same time, the researcher emphasizes the importance of the immediate supervisor for the cabin crew since the supervisor is responsible for all the administration if the crew such as location of allowances, holidays, and sickness pay, letters containing complains and compliments. Therefore, the importance of the leadership and the communication style between the leadership and the employees has a central role for the cabin crew job satisfaction (Vinnicombe, 1984; Chen and Chen, 2012).

Still other researchers examine the relationship between leadership and employees engagement through LMX (leader-member exchange) theory, where the quality of the supervisor-subordinates' relation is tested (Li et al., 2012; Law et al., 2010). It is argued that since the front-line employees are the key element for maintaining service excellence, (because they are the ones who interact with customers), then the back-stage employees (those with limited or no interaction with customers), are expected to provide effective support to the front-line employees (Li et al., 2012). The researchers emphasize that the supportive supervision encourages employee engagement in service delivery sector. LMX theory argues that the supportive actions of the leadership create a sense of subordinate indebtedness with many dimensions such as trust, competence, consideration and motivation (Bernerth et al., 2007; Liden et al., 1997). LMX theory finds also positive relationships between leadership support and overall job satisfaction (Li et al., 2012).

Other findings, in which leadership support is defined as social support, also show evidence for significant associations with work engagement (Karatepe and Olubade, 2009; Chen and Chen, 2012). In this regard, it is argued that as a job resource, supervisor support is one of the viable variables of social support, which refers to an interpersonal transaction that involves emotional concern, information or appraisal (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009). In this relation, other researches claim that supervisors may grant employees' preferred work schedules and give emotional and social support when difficult customers or workloads pave a heavier burden on employees (Vaux, 1988). Social support provides opportunities for reappraisal and an adaptive response to work stress and facilitates well -being (House, 1981). Thus high quality relationships with leaders offer distinct advantages for employees.

In the aviation management literature, there is also evidence for considering leadership as part of the social support together with the colleague support. According to Chen and Chen (2012), because of the distinctive job characteristics of flight attendants, such as working with changing schedule and partners in a confined space, support from immediate supervisors and colleagues is considered as one particularly important resource that helps to restore lots of insufficient resources. The researchers claim that enhancing social support is an important step toward the improving of the well being and satisfaction of flight attendants.

According to other advocates of the social support theory, social support can come from many sources, such as supervisors, co-workers, family and friends (Caplan et al., 1975), but it has been suggested that the people at work site are most important for reveling the effects of work-related stress (Beehr et al., 1985). Supervisors, in particular, are very influential members of employees' role sets (Beehr et al., 1990). One of the models used to define and operationalize the social support of the supervisor is the functional definition, where employees are asked the extent to which they perceive the supervisors as willing to lend emotional support and assistance. The functional supervisor support model represents both emotional social support (support of interpersonal nature) such as " My supervisor is easy to talk to" and instrumental social support (provision of assistance or restructuring of the work environment) such as "My supervisor is willing to change my work schedule when I need it" (Beehr et al., 1990). The researchers argue that this model best measures the communication and interactions between employees and supervisors.

2.4 Empowerment

Empowerment of employees is another approach that has been advocated for service sector management (Lashley, 1999). The researcher argues that the empowered employee is said to respond more quickly to customer service request act to rectify complaints and be more engaged in service encounters. The empowered must feel a sense of personal worth, with the ability to effect outcomes and having the power to make a difference (Lashley, 1999; Johnson, 1993).

In this relation, according to Wirtz et al. (2008), empowerment of cabin crew is among the corn stones of the airlines' human resource management. The researchers claim that since the front-line staff (the cabin crew) are the core part of the offering and the most visible element of the service from a customer point of view, they need

to feel empowered in order to make decisions independently about different situations on board and thus to walk the extra mile to make a customer's day.

On one hand, Conger and Kanungo (1988) define empowerment as a process of feelings of employee self-efficacy through conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques. The researchers distinguish between relational and motivational concepts of empowerment, where as a relational concept empowerment is concerned with issues to do with management style and employee participation, while as a motivational construct, empowerment is argued to be very individual and personal, it is about discretion, power, control and autonomy.

On the other hand, Spreitzer (1995) defines empowerment as a psychological state manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Specifically, meaning concerns a sense of feeling that one's work is personally important. Competence refers to self-efficacy, or belief in one's ability to successfully perform tasks. Self-determination indicates perceptions of freedom and chooses how to initiate and carry out tasks, while impact represents the degree to which one views one's behavior as making a difference in work outcomes. With his concept, Spreitzer (1995) presents evidence that the four dimensions (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) reflect an overall psychological empowerment construct (Zhang and Barol, 2010).

Many writers agree that " front line staff" play a crucial role in service encounters, so human resources management and the strategies needed to engage employees emotionally in the objective of customer service take a new and urgent meaning (Barbee and Bott, 1991; Lashley, 1999; Jahnston, 1993). In this regard, Zhang and Bartol (2010) hypothesize that psychological empowerment have important influence on an employee's willingness to engage at work. In addition, Laschinger et al. (2006) explain that when employees are empowered to accomplish their work in meaningful ways, they are more likely to experience fit between their expectations and their working conditions. That is why, the employees will feel that they have reasonable work loads, control over their work, have good working relationships, are treated fairly, are rewarded for their contributions, and that their values are congruent with the organizational values. As a result, they are less likely to experience burnout and are more likely to engage in their work.

Paradoxically, however, the attempts of one organization to gain competitive advantage through empowered and thus engaged employees may face some difficulties, since it is hard to predict levels of output, efficiency and commitment of the employees (Lashley, 1999). Thus human resources may be very unstable, because under certain circumstances, the employees may collectively resist management instructions, especially in sectors where the commersionalization of feelings is part of the job such as air stewardesses (Hachschild, 1983). However, still other researchers argue that empowerment of employees seems to offer the prize of generating feelings of commitment to the service encounter with the appropriate amount of power and freedom to meet the customer needs (Barbee and Bott, 1991). Also, Fulford and Enz (1995) find employee perception of empowerment to have an impact on employee loyalty, concern for others and job satisfaction.

A great number of researches confirm that empowerment is responsible for subsequent job satisfaction (Laschinger et al., 2001; Laschinger et al., 2004). Blegen (1993), and Irvine and Evans (1995), for example, prove that job satisfaction is consistently predicted by autonomy, good communication with supervisors and peers, and job stress. Of course, autonomy and good communication are consistent with Kanter's (1979) conception of structural empowerment.

3 Hypotheses

For the purpose of answering the research questions and examining the linear relationships between the abovementioned variables- employee engagement, job satisfaction, leadership support and empowerment, five hypotheses were created, based on the above-mentioned literature review.The hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 1 (Hypothesized Model 1) and Figure 2 (Hypothesized Model 2).

Since research hypothesis is considered as a tentative answer to a research problem, expressed in the form of a clearly stated relationship between independent (predictive) and dependent (predicted) variables (Siniscalco and Auriat, 2005), the five hypotheses were developed to test the predicted relationships between the variables. Moreover, in hypothesized model 1 (see fig. 1), leadership, empowerment and job satisfaction are considered as independent variables, meaning that they are assumed to have a predictive impact upon the outcome- employee engagement. While in the hypothesized model 2 (see fig.2), job satisfaction is considered as dependent variable (the predicted outcome) and empowerment and leadership support are the two independent variables.

When creating and testing hypotheses, it is claimed that the role of the theory is critical, in order to accurately estimate the relationships among the variables (Cohen et al, 2003). In this respect, the proposed hypotheses in the current thesis are based on formal theory and previous researches. The premise of this study is that employees' engagement and job satisfaction are desirable and very significant outcomes for every organization's long-term survival and competitiveness. Although there is not much empirical evidence on the factors that predict employee engagement and job satisfaction in the service delivery sector of the aviation industry, this research aims to show some possible predictors for these two outcomes, based on the aforementioned theoretical considerations.

One of the approaches for managing and generating engaged employees is widely considered to be the leadership support towards employees (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2006; Van den Broeck et al., 2008;Ugobro and Obeng, 2000; Choi and Behling, 1997; Li, Sanders and Frenkel, 2012; Ilies et al., 2007). Leadership support, as defined by a number of social support advocates, significantly influences employee engagements, since the supervisors may grant employees' preferred work schedules and give emotional and social support when difficult customers play a heavier burden on employees (Vaux, 1988; Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009). Furthermore, Slanova et al. (2005) claims that supervisor's support through specific trainings and practices is positively related to work engagement among front-line employees, and since cabin crew represent the front-

line employees of each airline (Chen and Chen, 2012), it could be assumed that leadership support should influence cabin crew engagement. Therefore, the proposed relationship between the variables is expressed as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Leadership support predicts employee engagement among cabin crew.

It must be noted that the researcher does not imply that work engagement is fully explained by leadership. Leadership support is assumed to be one of the drivers for work engagement.

Empowerment is considered to be another key predictor of engagement, but on more emotional level, since empowered employee must feel a sense of personal worth, with the ability to effect outcomes and having the power to make a difference (Lashley, 1999; Johnson, 1993). It is claimed that the empowered employee is said to respond more quickly to customer service request act to rectify complaints and be more engaged in service encounters(Lashley, 1999). Laschinger et al. (2006) also argue that when employees are empowered to accomplish their work in meaningful ways and they are likely to experience fit between their expectations and their working conditions and as a result they are more likely to engage in their work. In other words, the more empowered the employees are, the more engaged they are. In the context of cabin crew workforce, it is claimed that empowerment of cabin crew is among the corn stones of the airlines' human resources, because these employees are the most visible element of the service from a customer point of view and thus they need to feel empowered in order to make decisions independently regarding different issues on board (Wirtz et al., 2008).Therefore it is reasonable to hypothesize that empowerment of cabin crew influences their engagement at work. Accordingly, the research proposes:

Hypothesis 2: Empowerment predicts employee engagement among cabin crew.

It is also noticed that a number of studies suggest a positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement, since job satisfaction produces higher organizational commitment that in turn results in engagement (Williams and Anderson, 1991). Furthermore, in the existing literature, it is argued that job satisfaction predicts employee engagement, since a worker who is experiencing a high level of job satisfaction would be likely to appreciate her or his position and be proud of the organization, resulting in high likelihood of job engagement. While, the disengaged worker who, due to very low levels of satisfaction, is not excited or desirous to contribute to the benefits of the organization and therefore is not actively engaged in work (Hagedorn, 2000). Accordingly, since both job satisfaction and employee engagement are claimed to be desirable outcomes for the airlines (Chen and Chen, 2012; Chen, 2006), it seems vital to investigate and confirm how by enhancing levels of job satisfaction, employee engagement will be also enhanced (as proposed by Hagedorn, 2000).Thus, it could be hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3: Job satisfaction predicts employee engagement among cabin crew.

Another expected directional relationship is the one between empowerment and job satisfaction, since it is argued that employee perception of empowerment have an impact on employee loyalty, concern for others and job satisfaction (Fulford and Enz, 1995).Accordingly, it is also claimed that the empowered employees are more involved in the decision-making process and they have some control over their work, which means that they have a degree of autonomy (Blackburn and Rosen, 1993). In addition, Blegen (1993) and Irvine and Evans (1995), prove that job satisfaction is consistently predicted by autonomy, good communication with supervisors and peers, and job stress. Since autonomy and good communication are consistent with Kanter's (1979) conception of structural empowerment, it is expected that empowerment would predict job satisfaction. The following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 4: Empowerment predicts job satisfaction among cabin crew.

Leadership support has also been widely considered as a predictor for job satisfaction, since it is the leadership responsibility to create organizational climate and positive atmosphere in order to reduce the stress at work and help the employees feel more satisfies about their job (Chebat and Kollias, 2000). The role of the leadership support for the cabin crew job satisfaction is also advocated in the service delivery literature, as it has been found that enhancing social support is an important step toward improving of the well being and satisfaction of flight attendants (Chen and Chen, 2012; Vinnicombe, 1984), and since it is held that supervisor support is one of the most important sources of social support (Beehr et al, 1985), it could be assumed that in the context of cabin crew work, supervisor support is a strong predictor of job satisfaction.This relationship is expressed in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Leadership support predicts job satisfaction among cabin crew.

All five hypotheses are graphically illustrated in the two hypothesized models shown in figures 1 and 2.

The first hypothesized model shows the estimated prediction of employee engagement by the three predictors (independent variables)- leadership support, empowerment and job satisfaction. Since the outcome (the predicted variable) for H1, H2 and H3 is the same (employee engagement), all three hypotheses were combined in one hypothesized model with clearly stated directionality of relationship (see figure 1). The direction of the prediction was based on the theoretical concepts mentioned in the H1, H2 and H3 argumentation.
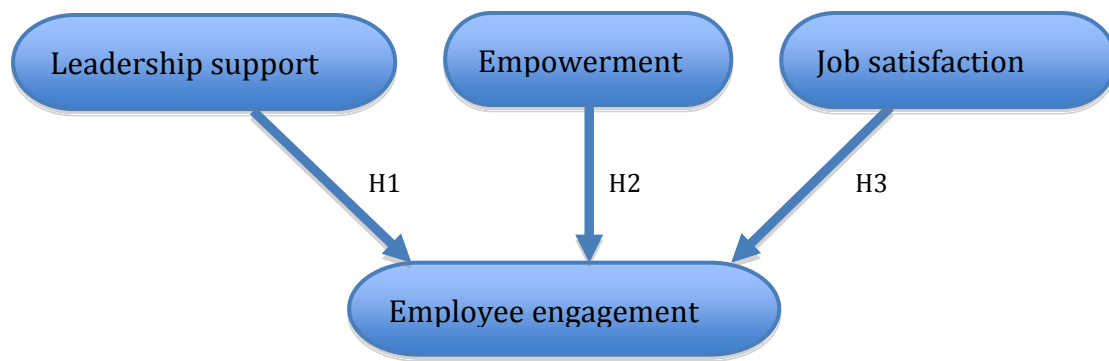
Figure 1 Hypothesized Model 1

Hypothesized model 2, predicting job satisfaction among cabin crew is shown in figure 2. This model has a goal to explain the variance of job satisfaction among cabin crew by the two predictors (independent variables) – empowerment and leadership support. This model's predictive direction is also founded on the theoretical considerations mentioned earlier in this section.

In addition, it could be noticed, that in this hypothesized model, job satisfaction is considered as dependent variable, since it is believed in a number of studies that it is also a desirable outcome by organizations, especially in the service delivery sector. Thus the researcher of the current thesis approaches job satisfaction as both independent (in Model 1) and dependent (in Model 2) variable.
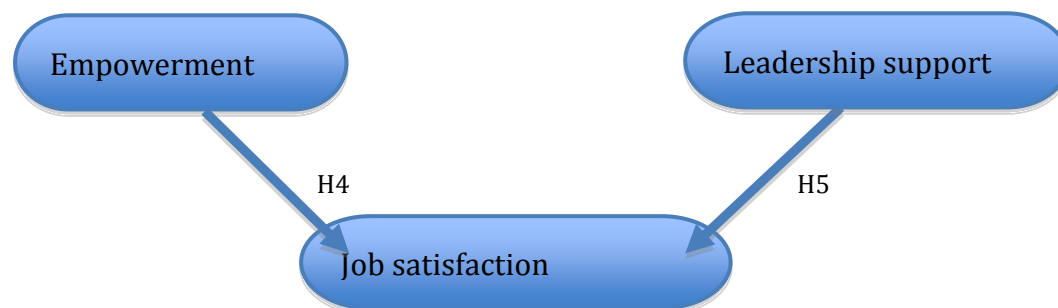
Figure 2 Hypothesized Model 2

After generating the hypotheses based on theories and previous research studies, the next task of the researcher is to develop a statistical model that will accurately estimate the relationships between the variables and will test the proposed hypothesis (Cohen et al, 2003). Accordingly, the research now proceeds to describe the methods and techniques for testing the hypotheses in models one and two.

4 Research Methods

The following section emphasizes on the methodological approach and techniques, used to examine the research questions and test the proposed hypotheses. The first two parts focus on the philosophical paradigm and the research approach, chosen for this thesis. The next sections aim to explain respectively the research strategy, samplingand data collection. While the last parts deal with operationalization, ethical considerations and method for analysis.

4.1 Positivism paradigm as a nature of inquiry

In order to better defend a subject matter in the tourism academe, which is often challenging, it is essential for a researcher to underpin the social inquiry with a board understanding of research philosophies (Ayikoru, 2009). Such research philosophy or paradigm, viewed as a set of basic beliefs or worldview that guides the investigator, is the positivism paradigm. From positivism paradigm point of view, social world is organized by natural laws and mechanisms, where knowledge of why things are is conventionally summarized in the context- free generalization (Ayikoru, 2009). Positivism advocates argue that rules explain the behavior of observable phenomenon through establishment of causal relationships (Ayikoru, 2009). In other words, positivists believe that it is possible to predict social behavior and even find ways to control this behavior, as long as cause-effect relationships are established. Positivism focuses on efforts to verify a priori hypotheses, often stated as mathematical (quantitative) propositions, which can be easily converted into mathematical formulas expressing relationships (Cuba and Linkoln, 1994). In positivism paradigm, the aim of the inquiry is explanatory and since it focuses on prediction and control of natural phenomena, the precision has enormous utility (Cuba and Linkoln, 1994). In addition, positivist advocates argue that only quantitative data are ultimately valid. Overall, the aim of the positivist approach is generally to record, measure and predict reality through sets of predetermined variables and constructs. These are all the reasons why this research is made from positivism point of view and why this paradigm suits most the current thesis.

As previously mentioned, positivism relies on quantitative research methods and explanation (prediction and control) is the inquiry aim of this paradigm, and since the current thesis also relies on these methods and aim for explanation, the following section focuses on these aspects of the research and further elaborates on them.

4.2 Research Approach

In the existing literature as well as social research practice, there are three well-developed and widely spread research approaches -exploration, description and explanation (Saunders et. al, 2009). The purpose of this study is to examine to what extent leadership support and empowerment predict job satisfaction and employee engagement. Employee engagement is relatively new concept for the researchers and the interaction between leadership support, empowerment and job satisfaction with employee engagement hasn't been explored well enough, especially in the service

delivery sector of the aviation industry. According to the aforementioned author, a research that focuses on gaining new insights about recently developed phenomenon is exploratory in nature (Saunders et. at, 2009). However, the present thesis takes a closer look into the contemporary phenomenon like employee engagement, but also aims to reveal the direction and existence of specific relationships between different variables: job satisfaction and employee engagement as dependant variables on one side; and leadership support and empowerment as independent variables on the other side. Thus, based on the clarifications we can conclude that the research purpose in the current thesis is more explanatory than exploratory.

In addition, since Cuba and Linkoln (1994) claim that the inquiry aim of the positivism paradigm is explanation, which enables the prediction and control of phenomena, the explanatory approach was chosen for this research.

The research approach used here is deductive in its nature, since with the principle of deductivism, the purpose of theory is to generate hypothesis that can be tested and will thereby allow explanations of laws, that also refers to positivism (Bryman, 2012). Using deductive approach, the researcher, on the basis of what is know about a particular domain, from a theoretical perspective, deduces hypotheses that must then be subjected to empirical scrutiny (Bryman, 2012). It is argued that the researcher must then translate these hypotheses into operational terms, specify how data can be collected, gather the data and finally analyze the findings and their implications referring back to the theory that prompted the whole research (see figure 3).

1. Theory
   ↓
2. Hypothesis
   ↓
3. Data collection
   ↓
4. Findings
   ↓
5. Hypotheses confirmed or rejected
   ↓
6. Revision of theory
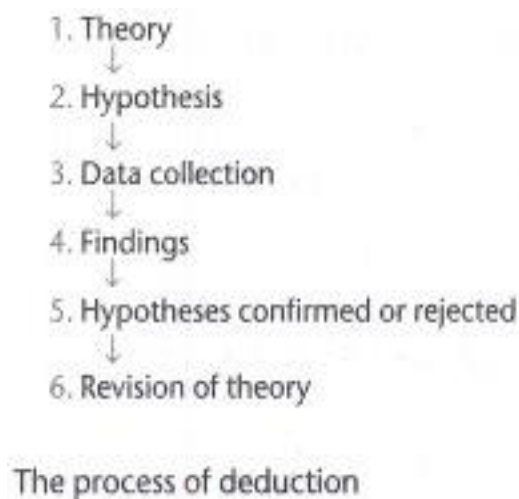
The process of deduction

Figure 3The Process of Deduction (Bryman, 2012)

For the purpose of the current thesis, deductive approach was the most reasonable one. The research starts from more general but goes to more specific (Saunders et.al, 2009). It begins by examining theories of different authors about employee engagement, job satisfaction, leadership support and empowerment and related

concepts and proceeds to narrow down the scope of the enquiry to eventually focus on a number of specific research questions.

In the academic sphere there are two approaches that are most commonly used by researchers (Saunders et. al, 2009). These approaches differ according to the role of theory, methods that are employed for data collection and analysis. As it is commonly held, quantitative research emphasizes quantifications in the collection and analysis of data, while qualitative research can be constructed as a research strategy that emphasizes words rather than quantification in the data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2012).

For the purpose of the current thesis, quantitative research methods will be used as these usually go together with the deductive approach. It is important to mention that quantitative research entails deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, where the accent is placed on the testing of theories (Bryman, 2012). Another characteristic of quantitative research is that it embodies norms of positivism and a view of social reality as an external objective reality.

Very important advantage of quantitative research is that the researcher employs measurement, based on numbers, graphs and scales, which gains precision, whereas in qualitative, no measurement is employed and only description is gained (Bryman, 2012).Since the current thesis aims to find specific results from the researched group, based on numbers and percentages, statistically proven via statistical tests (made with the help of the SPSS software), the quantitative approach helped the researcher to use pre-defined tools, which may reduce the flexibility of the respondents and give more precise results and thus to reach some conclusions.

Finally, quantitative research exhibits a concern that investigations should be capable of replications, which means that it should be possible for the researcher to employ the same procedures as those used in other studies to check validity of the investigation (Bryman, 2012). Respectively, the author of this thesis used finely tuned tools and measurements, based on already tested scales and theories, to validate this research. The measures and operationalization are further developed in the section.

The current thesis uses quantitative research methods in the shape of structured questionnaires, where the research process is based on collecting data through these questionnaires, analyzing the results statistically and eventually making conclusions about the researched group. For implementing the structured questionnaires, a web-based survey technique was used.

4.3 Research Strategy

The research strategy in the following thesis is survey-based. As the research questions of the current thesis address the extent to which leadership support and empowerment affect employee engagement and job satisfaction, the survey strategy is the most logical choice of method for collecting a large number of responses at a relatively low price (Saunders et. al, 2009). Since the researcher is interested in collecting primary data, but the respondents cannot be reached personally, a survey gives the possibility of gathering a sufficient volume of data.

Additionally, the surveys could have easier access to the targeted population, instant distribution and reduced costs if using online survey (Schleyer and Forrest, 2000). The arguments are that internet allows questionnaires and surveys to reach a worldwide population with minimum cost and time, which means that no matter where in the world the researcher is, the target group could be reached easily using the web survey technique. Since the current thesis aims to reach a group of people who are geographically dispersed due to the nature of their work, the online survey technique suits most this research.

In addition, the online survey forms enhance data collection compared with conventional surveys, because of their use of colors, innovative screen designs, question formatting, and other features not available with paper questionnaires. They can also prohibit multiple or blank responses by not allowing respondents to continue or to submit the survey without first correcting the response error (Schleyer and Forrest, 2000). Thus, the program can provide clues to make sure that respondent does not mistakenly skip a question. This is the case with the current thesis, where the researcher designed the questions in the survey to be mandatory, so in order to complete the survey, the respondents should answer all the questions. Also, coding errors and data entry mistakes are reduced or eliminated while compilation of results can be automated (Schleyer and Forrest, 2000). Finally, online surveys can facilitate rapid return of information by participants.

The structured, close-ended questionnaires contain a set of written questions on a particular topic where the opinion of group or groups of people is evaluated (Sommer and Sommer, 1997). Therefore, when designing the questionnaires for the current paper, the researcher used mostly close-ended questions, since the main idea was to reach precise and strict results derived from the opinion of the targeted group and then analyze the results in order to make conclusions.

There are certain types of information that can be collected through questionnaires like facts, opinions, activities, level of knowledge or simply attitudes. The big advantage of using close- ended, structured questionnaires is that all the information could be collected from the respondents by limiting their options of answers, by giving them only alternatives that the researcher is interested in (McBurney and White, 2009). Moreover,the development of a questionnaire commences with the transformation of more general research into specific research questions for which the data are intended to supply answers (Siniscalco and Auriat, 2005).

Another advantage for using the close- ended questions for the current thesis was the fact that it is easier to codify and analyze them comparing to the open- ended questions, especially via statistical tests used in SPSS software.

After all, in order to understand whether a certain research strategy is well designed and efficient, the researcher should know his targeted population and should find the best way to reach them, since in many cases the respondents cannot be reached personally due to different circumstances as claimed by Schleyer and Forrest (2000). Thus, since the targeted population for the current research is hard to reach, due to demanding and consistently changing working schedules and apparent distance between the researcher and the population, approaching the sample group through online surveys was the only possible way. However, in order to understand why this

is so, the next section aims to introduce the sample group, the specific nature and structure of their job, and why this group was chosen for the current research.

4.4 Sample

In an effort to control for sources of heterogeneity, the present thesis was purposefully limited to one industry (the aviation industry), one organization (a national carrier), and one relatively homogeneous geographical area (Middle East). This model opens new research avenues even if the limited sample size precludes the generalization of the findings (Chebat and Kollias, 2000). Also, choosing the population to be from the same organization would help applying the technique used for collecting responses.

Since most of the studies on cabin crew management are focused either on Western airlines (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Street, 1994) or Far East airlines (Chen and Chen, 2012; Wirtz et. al, 2008), this thesis aims to focus on an airline from the Middle Eastern region, as there is scarcity of studies based in this region. In addition, the research aims to investigate this certain airline, because cabin crews' engagement and job satisfaction need to be examined in a wider cultural context, since the airline is highly multinational comparing to the examined airlines in the existing studies. Therefore, the present research was carried among, a similar to the previous studies, sample group of full- time cabin crew, however the respondents were from another, less researched region and from more diverse cultural background.The findings of prior studies revealed that leadership support and empowerment of the employees are among the key management tools for service delivery excellence in the airline industry (Chen and Chen, 2012; Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Street, 1994). The findings of another study have indicated that leadership support is significantly related to job satisfaction among cabin crew (Vinnicombe, 1984). It has also been argued that, due to the fact that airlines invest considerable time and money in cabin crew retention, there is always a high demand on engaged and satisfied employees (Vinnicombe, 1984; Chen and Chen, 2012). To sum up, since there is enough evidence on empowerment and leadership support as key human resource tools for service excellence, and a number of findings claiming that cabin crew engagement and job satisfaction are desired outcomes for each airline, the chosen sample was very appropriate and beneficial.

In addition, as employee engagement is mostly considered to be a new trend in the Western economies, this has fueled the need for firms to take active steps to engage their work force even in the emerging economies of the developing destinations (Cook, 2008). Moreover, in the long run, the persisting economy strength of India, China and Middle East, allows these emerging regions to outgrowth the current key airline market in Europe and US (Franke and John, 2011). For example, Middle East carriers have challenged Europeans, having similarly central geographic location, at least for more southern traffic flows (Franke and John, 2011).

Accordingly, the present thesis was carried among a sample of cabin crew, working in a national airline in the Middle East Region, where the airline industry is new and developing, but fast growing. It is also argued that the favorable cost structure of the Middle Eastern carriers allows them to offer above average levels of quality and service and thus these new carriers will soon emerge as serious global competitor to

the established carriers (Vespermann et al, 2008). Thus the researcher assumed that investigating a sample group from a national carrier in Middle Eastern region would be very relevant and beneficial for the airline management, since there is lack of research in this area, but obviously worthy.

Based on all the above-mentioned arguments, judgmental sampling, which allows personal judgment to be used to select cases that would best enable the research questions to be answered and meet the research objectives (Saunders et al, 2009), was used to determine the sample of the study. As per Karatepe and Olugbade (2009), the judgmental sampling helps picking a case that is judged to be typical of the population in which we are interested. Accordingly, the present thesis was carried out among a sample of cabin crew, working for a national carrier in the Middle East Region. The airline's background is explained briefly, but it provides relevant information on structure and the workforce of the organization.

Organizational context

Launched in 1985, the airline has one of the youngest fleets in the skies, however the growth of the airline is phenomenal and now it is the largest A380 operator in the world.The airline operates more than 1,200 flights per week across six continents (www.emirates.com).This year the airline has received the highest award " World's Best Airline", presented by Skytrax at the 2013 World Airline Awards(www.emirates.com). At the time of the data collection (May, 2013), the airlinehas over 15,000 cabin crew of more than 135 nationalities who speak over 55 different languages (www.emirates.com). The cabin crew are recruited from all over the world, which meets the organization's goal for growing and developing as a multinational global organization. As basic requirements for working as a cabin crew in this airline is to have at least high school degree and to be more than 21 years old. Before being selected for this position in the airline, all candidates must undergo different psychological tests. After joining the organization, cabin crew have intense training for about 2 months before getting licenses to work. The cabin crew job structure is hierarchical and starts from Grade 2- GR2 (cabin crew working in economy class), then followed by Grade 1- GR1 (cabin crew working in business class), then First Grade – FG1 (cabin crew working in first class cabin), Senior Flight Stewardess- SFS (cabin crew working as a more senior in the one of the cabins) and finally Purser – PUR (the most senior cabin crew, who is in charge of all the rest cabin crew). All these grades represent cabin crew job seniority in the organization. No matter what grade they are, all cabin crew have their own managers who are responsible for supervising them and providing instructions, working schedules, awards and warnings, depending on the overall performance of the crew.

According to the leadership of the organization, their most important asset is the workforce, since the employees are the airline's unique strength as a global organization (as claimed by some of the key leaders on the airline's web page).Therefore, in order to keep the employees satisfied and committed, the airline tries to make sure that the employees have all they need to do their job well and to be committed and loyal at the same time (also clamed on the main website). However, it was observed by the current author (who worked as cabin crew for this organization for about 3 years), that there was a high turnover rate among the cabin crew, so the majority of the employees were young, with work experience in average of 2 – 3 years.

The previous paragraphs aimed to help the reader to gain more insight about the population and to understand why this sample group was chosen for the current research, while the next section explains how this targeted population was reached, in order to collect responses.

4.5 Data Collection

The data needed for the survey were collected through the social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Skype. The questionnaire was sent to all the cabin crew ex-colleagues that the researcher has as connections on the social media. The respondents were asked to forward the message to all their colleagues from the same airline. They all should follow a link to a web designed survey. This technique of collecting responses, in which the respondents are passing the survey to other respondents of the same group, is also known as the snowball technique (Heckathorn, 1997). Due to the cabin crew's varied work schedules and difficulties in assessing them, snowball sampling was deemed to be an appropriate approach to reach the prospective respondents and enhance their willingness to participate.

In addition, for the purpose of the thesis a hyperlink redirecting the subject to the questionnaire was posted on the airline's web page on Facebook, where all employees have access. As an introduction to the post, the name of Aalborg University was mentioned. That was an act of authentication and an attempt for generating a better response rate.

After the survey was designed, it was tested using a pilot sample of six (6) cabin crew working in the same researched airline, which took place between 23rd and 26th of April. The goal of the pilot study was to make sure that the questions were understandable and clear to the respondents. The results of the pilot study indicated that respondents did not have any difficulties in understanding the items; therefore no changes in the survey instrument were necessary.

The data collection took place between 26th of April to 30th of May. By the cut-off date for data collection, the number of the respondents that took part in the survey was 113, but only 103 of them fully completed all the required questions and that is why only these 103 responses were included in the analysis. All of the respondents were Facebook users, from which 64 (62.1%) were female and 39(37.9%) were male. Most of the respondents were in the age group from 21 to 31 years old (52.43%), followed by cabin crew between 31 to 40 years old (33.98%) and the age group from 41 to 50 was represented only by 13.59 %. Respectively, the job grades (labeled as job position in the survey) were predominantly represented by the GR2 (economy class) cabin crew (68.93%), followed by SFS (senior flight stewardess) with 20.39%, FG1 (first class) cabin crew with 4.85%, and finally GR1 (business class) and PUR (purser) were both represented by 2.91%. In addition, the length of service results showed that 39.8 % of the respondents have worked for the company from 3 to 5 years, 29. 1% of them have work experience of more than 6 years, then 26.2% have worked between 1 to 3 years, while only 4.9% of the people have less than a year of experience. Regarding nationalities, majority of the respondents were from Europe

(59.22%), then followed by people from Middle East and India with 15.53%, Far East Asia and Australian (9.71%), South American (5.83%), North America (3.8%) and last but not least Africa (1.9%). As for the education level of the respondents, most of the respondents have obtained bachelor degree (58.3%), 19.4% of them hold a professional diploma, 14.6 % have completed high school, while only 7.8 % have reached Masters or above.

4.6 Operationalization and Ethical considerations

The constructs of empowerment, employee engagement, leadership support and job satisfaction are already explained in details in the theory part. However, it is not explained in details how the researcher was going to measure these constructs. To operationalize and measure the study constructs, the current thesis used multi- item scales from a range of sources in the literature.

Most of the questions in the survey were based on a five point Likert Scale, since the main characteristic of this scale is to measure magnitude of opinion (McBurney and White, 2007). Accordingly, since the main aim of the current research is to measure the study constructs from employees' point of view or in other words their opinion, a five point Likert Scale was the most appropriate option. In addition, another main reason for choosing five point Likert Scale is explained in details in the next section, where the method for analysis is presented, since choosing the right type of Likert Scale is vital for the analysis (Owuor, 2001).

After collecting the Likert type responses, the researcher transformed these responses into summated scales, which allowed the researcher to use the chosen statistical method for that thesis. In other words, the data was collected using the multivariate scales, since these were found in the literature as appropriate ones. However, the researcher didn't want to analyze these multivariate scales through latent variable modeling techniques (confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling), since there is probably not enough time for the master's candidate to sufficiently learn these advanced statistical methods. Instead, using summated scales helped the researcher to do the analysis through less demanding statistical procedure such as the multiple regression analysis, which will be explained in the next section.

In addition to this primary reason for using summated scales, the researcher also followed some guidelines, which suggest that creating summated scales could improve the measurement validity and reliability (Grapentine, 1995). For example, Graphentine (1995)explains that when single items are used to measure attributes or opinions, the errors are high, because X1 (one item) is not equal to A (the whole construct/the attribute), rather X1 represents a part of A. Therefore, when multiple items are used in form of a summated scale, the summation process results in a portion of the random error, cancelling out across items (Grapentine, 1995). The same author claims that the more items in a summated scale the more content validity the summated scale has and the less systematic error of the measurement. In addition to the accuracy, it has been argued that when using summated scales, researchers can use more statistical techniques to assess validity and reliability of these scales (Grapentine, 1995). Thus, based on the primary reason mentioned above and following the presented guidelines, after collecting the questionnaires, the current

thesis transformed the 5 Point Likert type responses to summated scales to prepare the data for the statistical analysis.

When it comes to the order of the questions in the survey, right after the introduction of author, the survey begins with a Yes/No question (Question 1) addressing the fact whether the respondents currently work or do not work in the service sector of the aviation industry. The question was designed as mandatory, thus helping the researcher to eliminate responses from people who are not working in the researched group. Since the investigated group was only from people working as cabin crew, all other potential responses were skipped and not analyzed. This technique is also known as inclusion/exclusion criteria, which are considered as the minimum rules that are applied to each potential subject's data in an effort to define a population in a study and determine eligibility (Motheral et at, 2003). The impact of the inclusion/exclusion criteria on the current study is significant, since the respondents from another sector of the aviation industry may have different opinion and may change the results.

The first group of questions (from 2 to 13) aimed to find how empowered cabin crew feel at their current job based on their autonomy in the organization and empowerment components. These questions were asked in regards to the fact that one of the main key approaches in the human resources management of cabin crew is empowerment (Chen and Chen, 2012; Wirtz et. al, 2008) and since autonomy as part of empowerment is highly desired job characteristic (Hoschild, 1983), the concept was necessary to be measured. Empowerment was measured through Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item Psychological Scale, captures all four components of psychological empowerment: meaningful work, competence, autonomy, and impact. All components are scored on a five point Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=neutral, 4=Agree, 5 =Strongly Agree). Spreitzer (1995) found an evidence of convergent and divergent validity for these subscales in a various studies. Laschinger et. al (2001) further validated the same measurement instrument showing causality between empowerment and job satisfaction.

Questions (from 14- 30) seek the understanding of the employee engagement among cabin crew. This concept was measured using the 17- Item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et. al, 2002). Since this model suggests that employee engagement includes vigor, absorption and dedication, all three dimensions were measured. Vigor was measured with (6) items referring to statements such as "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work", " At my work, I feel bursting with energy". Absorption was measured using (5) item statements such as - "I am immersed in my work", while dedication was captured with (6) items referring to "My job inspires me", " I am enthusiastic about my job". Responses to all three dimensions were scored on a five-point Likert Scale rating from 1 to 5 where (1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=neutral, 4=Agree, 5 =Strongly Agree). High scores indicated higher vigor, absorption and dedication and thus higher employee engagement.

Overall job satisfaction was measured through questions (31 to 42), using the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA; The Gallup Organization, 1992-1999) and 12 items referring to statements such as "I know what is expected of me to work", "In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work". With these 12 items, the Gallup researchers aim to capture broader spectrum of categories such as satisfaction, loyalty, intent to stay in the company, however the outcome is only one-

overall job satisfaction with the company (Harter et al., 2002). The GWA items are also perceived as antecedents of personal job satisfaction. Since measuring job satisfaction, the respondents were asked to judge to what extent they agree or disagree with the statements, using a five point Likert scale (1- Strongly Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4=Satisfied, 5 =Very Satisfied), thus the higher scores indicated higher job satisfaction of the employees.

Finally, supervisor support was measured through questions (43 to 46) in the survey. The model used for operationalizing the concept of supervisor support was the one proposed by Beehr et. al (1990), arguing that supervisor support, as part of the social support, is very influential to the employees' well being (Beehr et al, 1990), and it affects job satisfaction (Vinnicombe, 1984) and employee engagement (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009; Bakker et al., 2007, Schuafeli et al., 2008; Hakanen et al., 2006). This model includes four items such as "My supervisor is easy to talk to" or "My supervisor is willing to change my work schedule when I need it". The respondents were asked to judge to what extent they agree with each item, using a five point Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=neutral, 4=Agree, 5 =Strongly Agree), thus the higher scores indicated stronger perceptions of supervisor support. In addition, Beehr et. al (1990) also argue that there is indirect support for the validity of his four item functional index by a number of previous studies.

At the end (from question 47 to 52), demographic data like age, gender, nationality, degree of education, position in the organization and length of service were measured to provide a number of demographic and job characteristic independent variables. Most of these demographic questions were also close- ended, since among the main goals of the researcher was to reduce the amount of time needed for filling the survey and thus to increase the response rate. This was so due to the fact that some respondents may not have time to think and formulate answers.

However, two of the demographic questions – nationality and position in the organization were designed in form of open questions due to different reasons. First of all, due to the vision of the organization for being a multinational airline, all cabin crew come from all over the world and thus it was impossible to have a close- ended question. Secondly, since the structure of the cabin crew job includes different grades, depending on the seniority of the crew in the organization (also explained in the introduction), it was much convenient to leave this question open-ended so every respondent could write his or her grade. After collecting the responses the researcher had to recode the responses from these open-ended questions, in order to adequately measure them and run the statistical analysis in SPSS.

The demographic and job characteristic questions were designed at the end of the questionnaire, because some of them aimed to solicit more private information from the respondents, which is typical for the sensitive questions. Sensitive questions are believed to encompass not only questions that trigger social desirability concerns but also those that are seen as intrusive by the respondents (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007). In other words, these questions are seen as invasion of privacy, regardless of what the correct answer of the respondent is (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007). Questions asking about someone's age, nationality or religion may fall into this group, because respondents may feel that such questions are none of the researcher's business. In addition, it is argued that even though surveys offer assurance of confidentiality, survey respondents do not always believe these assurances (Tourangeau and Yan,

2007). A number of researchers report evidence on the relation between question sensitivity and forms of nonresponse (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007; Coutts and Jann, 2011; Cohen et al., 2007). Some of the biases and issues concerning sensitive questions are that respondents, who need to answer sensitive questions may decline to take part in the survey, thus researchers often recommend that sensitive questions should be kept at the end of a survey so as to minimize the risk of nonresponse or respondents quitting the survey part way through the questionnaire (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007). These are the reasons why the researcher of the current paper chose to leave the demographic questions at the end and not to mark them as mandatory.

In this relation, the questionnaire begins with a text explaining that the respondents were about to answer questions that some might consider personal, therefore the researcher assured that their responses would be treated confidentially. This is another method to protect confidentiality and privacy of the respondents (Cohen et al, 2007). A participant is considered anonymous when the researcher cannot identify the participant or subject from the information provided (Cohen et al, 2007). Following these instructions for addressing ethics, the researcher clearly announces in the introduction that no names are needed and all the information will be destroyed after the research.

Considering the sensitive questions, privacy and confidentiality of the respondents are just some of the ethical dilemmas, addressed by the researcher. As argued by Cohen et al. (2007), ethical considerations should pervade the whole process of research, from the appropriateness of topic, design, methods, confidentiality to analysis and all should be negotiated with openness, sensitivity, accuracy and scientific impartiality (Cohen et al, 2007).

Access and acceptance are other ethical issues considered in the current thesis. It is believed that access and acceptance offer the best opportunity for researchers to present their credentials as serious investigators and establish their own ethical position with respect to their proposed research (Cohen et al, 2007). Therefore the current research has addressed this issue by presenting the institution and the researcher's position in this institution, thus showing access to the researcher and the institution where the research is to be conducted.

Purposes, contents and procedures of the research are other ethical factors that need to be bared in mind when conducting a research (Cohen et al, 2007). Following this suggestion, the current thesis clearly states the purpose of the study and explains the research in a comprehensible fashion.

Another ethical consideration, which the researcher should bare in mind, is not to forget to thank the respondents for their participation and thus assure them that they did well (Cohen et al, 2007). This was also addressed in the current thesis as the survey ends up with a thank you note and a smile.

A related issue here is that it is considered as unethical for the researcher to be incompetent in the area of research, which may require additional training (Cohen et al., 2007). This issue is also taken into consideration since the researcher has been trained and has worked in the researched area.

4.7Method for analysis: Multiple Regression for Prediction Models

The chosen method for analysis in the current thesis is the multiple regression analysis. This is understandable, since the aim of the study was to examine the relationships between the dependent (predicted) variables and the independent (predictor) variables. Since multiple regression model is applicable to hypotheses proposing relationships between one or more factors of interest (independent variables) and an outcome (dependent) variable (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 2), this type of analysis is the most rational for the current thesis. As it is held, multiple regression analysis is mainly used in:

"…practical prediction problems where the goal is to forecast an outcome based on data that were collected earlier." (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 3)

In other words, Cohen et al. argue that multiple regression model is mainly used to achieve explanation through prediction and forecasting. Similarly, the current thesis aims to predict the desirable outcomes -employee engagement and job satisfaction, based on collected earlier data.

In addition, since it is believed that multiple regression analysis perfectly matches the variety of relationships often observed in the behavioral science, such as several IVs may be expected to influence the DV or the IVs may be also related between each other (Cohen et al, 2003), such relationships are also expected in the current thesis. The authors also point out that when using multiple regression models, the IVs may take different forms such as rating scales or categorical judgments. Bearing this in mind, the researcher of the current thesis uses 5 point Likert Scales to measure the variables, since it has been argued that there are no negative consequences for parameter estimates when using Likert type responses in a regression model if the scale is at least 4 Point Likert Scale and the data distribution is not skewed (Owuor, 2001). Accordingly, since the scale used for the current thesis is 5 Point Likert Scale and the data distribution was not skewed, then this measurement was considered as appropriate for multiple regression analysis.

Additionally, the researcher realizes the critical role of the theory in planning the multiple regression analysis, as well as the importance of developing a strong statistical model that will accurately estimate the relationships among the variables. Then the researcher's task is to use the multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. Since the current hypotheses aim to predict the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent ones, it is claimed that when using multiple regression analysis as a technique, these relationships can be characterized in terms of:

"…how much of the total variation in the dependent variable is produced by or associated with the independent variables we are studying." (Cohen et al, 2003, p.5)

Knowing the goals of the current paper, the researcher finds the standard multiple regression analysis to be the most applicable one since it examines, on one hand, the overall relationship between the independent variables (predictors) and the dependent variable (predicted), and, on the other hand, how much each predictor uniquely contributes to that relationship (Osborn et al, 2002).

5 Analysis

Following the instructions of the SPSS program all the demographic responses were coded under certain categories. In a sequential order, the descriptive frequencies for all the demographics were derived with the help of SPSS Statistics Program. However, due to the small size of the collected data (N= 103), the current thesis could not undertake statistical procedures to investigate differences between sub-groups of flight attendants, depending on demographic factors such as job seniority (job grade), length of service, gender, age or education.

Yet, since the research was mainly focused on testing the hypothesis, based on the close-ended questions measured with 5 point Likert Scale, the study carried out the analysis using standard multiple regression procedures in SPSS, as earlier described in the methods section.

However,before running a statistical test, it is held that several assumptions about the variables, used in the analysis, should be addressed (Osborneand Waters, 2002). It is believed that violation of the assumptions may lead to biased estimation of the regression coefficients in the sample, problems in the data set or use of incorrect regression model (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 117).

5.1 Assumptions for Standard Multiple Linear Regressions

When it comes to the multiple regressions' assumptions, Osborne and Waters (2002) suggest that some assumptions are robust to violation such as normal distribution of errors, and others, such as independence of observations, could be accomplished in the well-developed design of the study. However, the authors argue, that there are several assumptions, which are not robust to violation in the multiple regressions and that is why a researcher should address them carefully, and deal with them if they are violated. Respectively, these assumptions that are not robust to violation are normality, linearity, reliability and homoscedasticity (Osborne and Waters, 2002). Following aforementioned recommendations, the current thesis aims to focus on these four assumptions, which are not robust to violation- normality, linearity, reliability and homoscedasticity.

In addition, after addressing all these four assumptions, the researcher follows Cohen et al's (2003, p. 120) guidelines for the need of examining the normality of residuals before running a regression model.

When it comes to the question, whether visual or mathematical examination, many assumptions focus both on graphical displays and statistical tests for detecting whether the assumptions are met. It is held that the graphical displays can detect a wider variety of problems than statistical tests (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 117). The current study understands the importance of both ways for detecting violation of assumptions underlying multiple regressions and that is why both visual and statistical examination is undertaken.

5.1.1 Assumption 1: Normality of distribution (Skeweness and Kurtosis)

A fundamental assumption for statistical analyses is checking for normality or symmetry of the data distribution(Osborne and Waters, 2002). Normality of distribution could be easily checked through creating histograms and checking if the histogram has a normal shape (a bell shape), where there is more data in the middle and less toward the two ends. Accordingly, the researcher created histograms for all the variables, checking for the normality of distribution. From the observation of the histograms, it appeared that the data is distributed normally and the assumption is reasonable. However, looking only at the normal curve of the histogram, checks only visually the normality of distribution and it does not give precise results.

Moreover, since linear regressions assume that variables have normal distributions, and non-normally distributed variables (highly skewed or Kurtosis variables) could distort relationships and significance tests, normality of the data distribution of the current thesis was tested, measuringboth for Skeweness and Kurtosis. These tests were done running frequency statistics for the all the dependent and independent variables for better observing the data distribution (see table 1a, 1b and 1c).

Table 1a. Frequency statistics (Skewness, Kurtosis and Std Errors)

Statistics

		summated_ scale_EE	summated_ scale_JS	summated_ scale_Empo wer	summated_ scale_LS
N	Valid	103	103	103	103
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Skewness		.048	-.263	-.085	.026
Std. Error of Skewness		.238	.238	.238	.238
Kurtosis		-.694	-.089	-.530	-.640
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.472	.472	.472	.472

The statistical value for skeweness and Kurtosis is represented by the **z** value. It is argued that if either z value exceeds the critical value, then the distribution is not normal and there is no symmetry (Hair et al, 2006, p.83). This current thesis uses critical value $\pm$ 1. 96, which corresponds to 0.05 error level. In other words, if either z value of Skewness or Kurtosis is larger than $\pm$ 1.96, than the distribution of the data is

not normal and the assumption cannot be met. It is claimed that through these tests, a researcher could easily check the level of skeweness and peakedness of distribution (Hair et al., 2006, p.83). Following these suggestions, the current thesis addresses this assumption. The results are presented in the tables below.

Table 1b. Skewness test of all variables

	skewness	N	Z for skewness
summated_scale_EE	.048	103	0.20
summated_scale_JS	-.263	103	-1.09
summated_scale_Empower	-.085	103	-0.35
summated_scale_LS	.026	103	0.11

Table 1c. Kurtosis Test for all variables

	kurtosis	N	Z for kurtosis
summated_scale_EE	-.694	103	-1.44
summated_scale_JS	-.089	103	-0.19
summated_scale_Empower	-.530	103	-1.10
summated_scale_LS	-.640	103	-1.33

From the results above it could be seen that the z values of neither Skewness nor Kurotis is greater than ± 1.96. Referring to the arguments, that since the z value of either Skeweness or Kurtosis is less than ± 1.96, than the data distribution is normal (Hair et al., 2006), and seeing the current z values in the tables above, it is obvious that the distribution is normal. This confirms that the first assumption for normality of the data distribution is met.

Since the first assumption for normality of the data distribution was met, the researcher addressed the second assumption of a multiple linear regression, which is the linear relationship between the dependent variables (DV) and independent variables (IV).

5.1.2 Assumption 2: Linearity

As following the Osborneand Waters (2002) assumptions for standard multiple regressions, it is considered that relationships between dependent and independent variables can only be accurately measured if these relationships are linear. Therefore, linearity test was also used for the current thesis to measure the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables based on the two hypothesized models.

Scatter diagrams were used to graphically represent and compare the two sets of data (dependent and independent variables). This was done to better see if there is any correlation between the independent and dependent variables, which is normally done to provide information about the direction and magnitude of the linear relationship between each predictor and dependent variable (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 115).

Since scatter plot is believed to give a picture of the relationship of the two variables and visually judge about the nature of the relationship (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 115), this procedure was also carried out in the current thesis.If the relationship is linear in the population, the points should be scattered around a straight line (Cohen et al, 2003, p.111).

Following this assumption, it can be seen from the scatter plots below that most of the points of all five figures are clustered around a straights line (see from Figure 4 to Figure 8). The only scatter plot, where the points are not that much clustered is the one measuring the linear relationship between employee engagement and leadership support (see Figure 6)
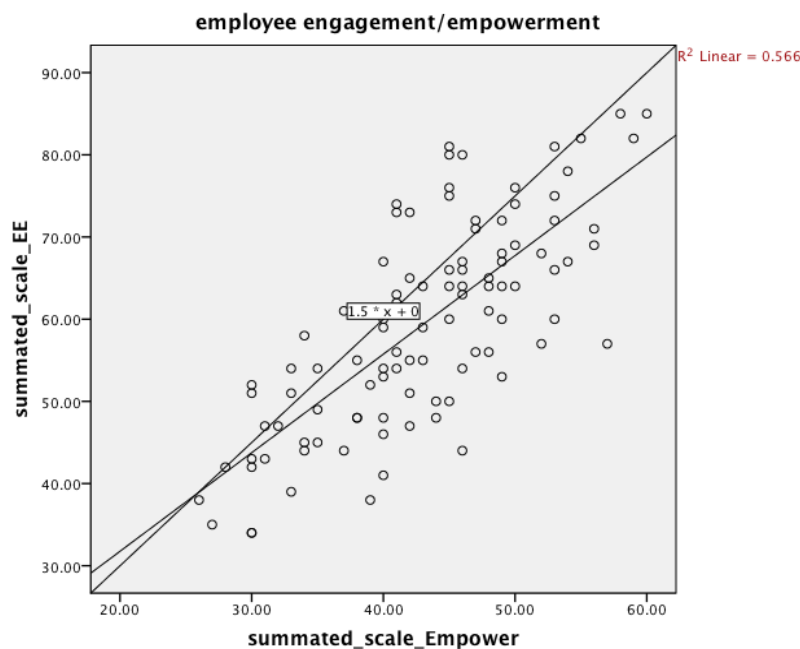
Figure 4 Scatter plot (employee engagement/empowerment)

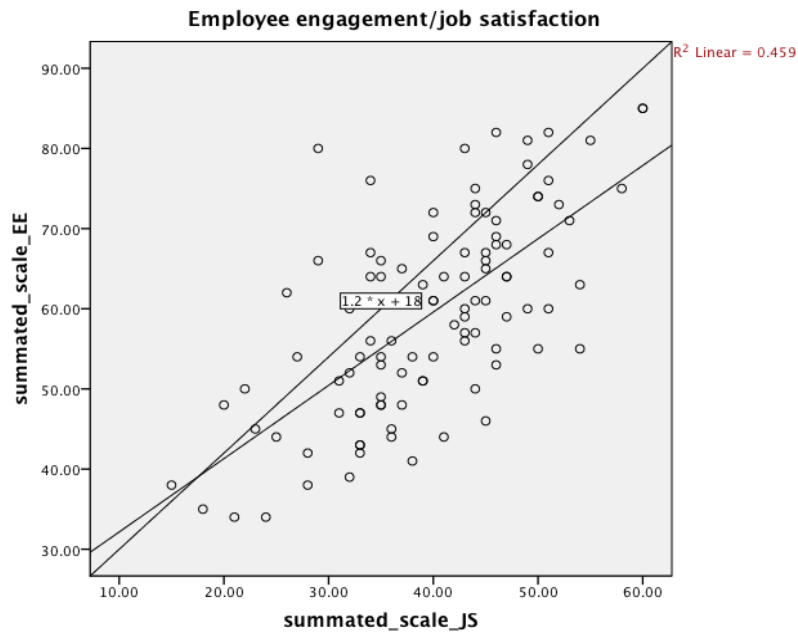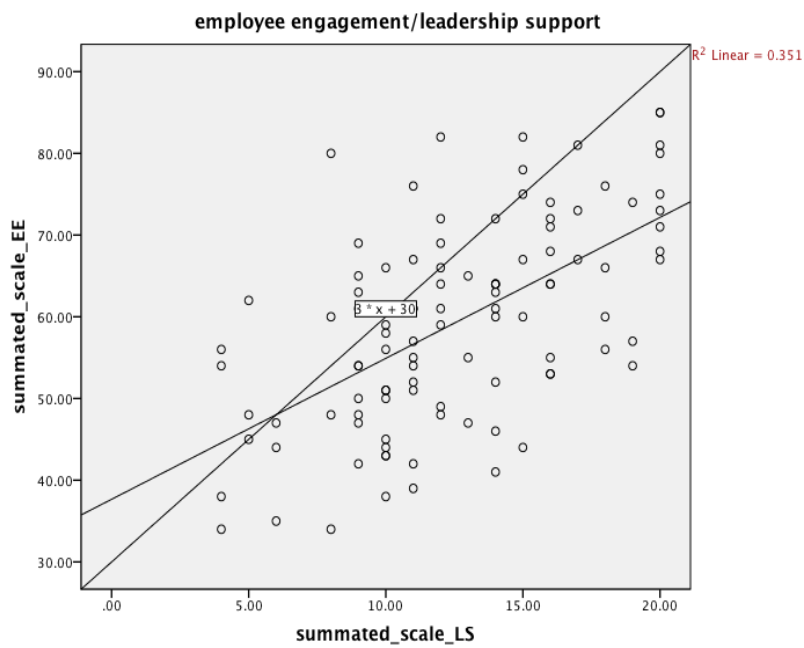**Figure 5 Scatter plot (employee engagement/ job satisfaction)**

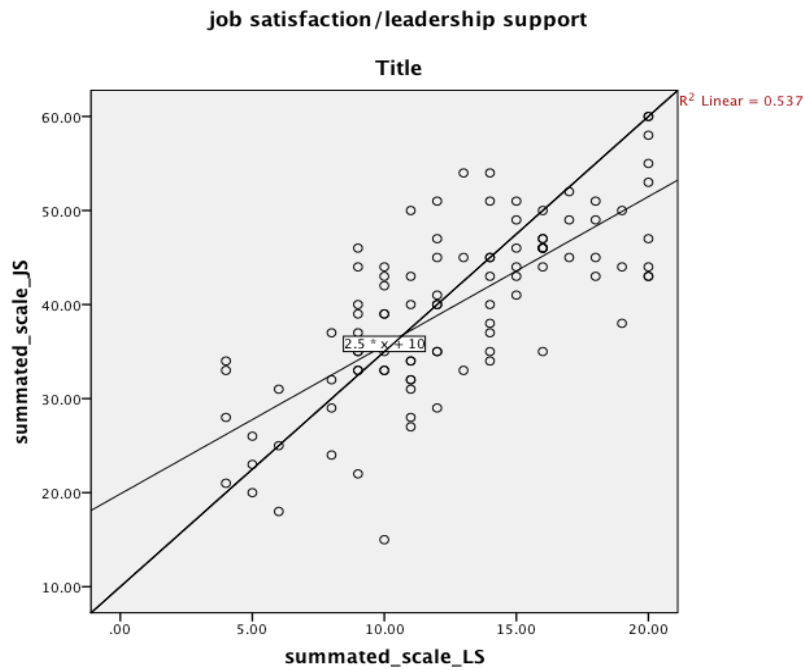**Figure 6 Scatter plot (employee engagement/ leadership)**

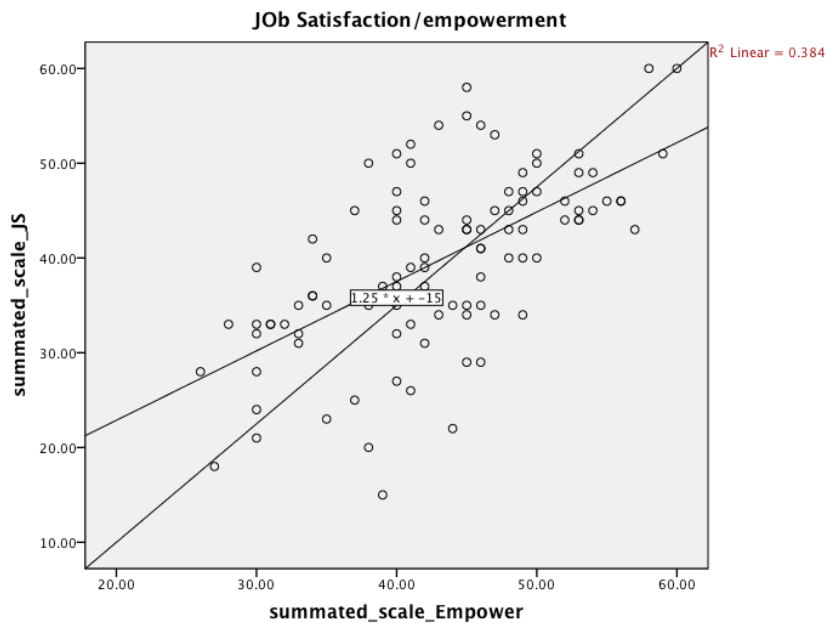**Figure 7 Scatter plot (job satisfaction/leadership support)**

Figure 8 Scatter plot (job satisfaction/ empowerment

From the scatter diagrams above (figure 4 to figure 8) we can conclude that it is likely that there are linear relationships between the tested dependent and independent

variables, since in most of the diagrams the points are clustered around the straight line (regression line).

The scatter plot, where the points are not much clustered around a straight line is Figure 6, which represents the correlation between employee engagement and leadership support. From this is could be assumed that it is not likely to have a strong linear relationship between there two variables.

However, the other four scatter plots show that there is evidence for linear relationships between the other variables, which means that the second assumption is met and the data can be used in linear regression analysis.

5.1.3 Assumption 3: Reliability

Reliability (internal consistency) is another assumption that needs to be addressed before running a multiple regression analysis, since each independent variable in the regression needs to be measured without error (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 119). One of the most commonly used measures of reliability is considered to be coefficient alpha, where coefficient alpha is the mean of correlations between all of the possible splits of the scale into two (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 129). It is widely held that measures of reliability differ in values. Some researchers claim that reliabilities must range from values > .70 to .90 (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 119).

Still, others argue that values between .60 to .70 are considered acceptable and values from .70 to .90 are satisfactory (Hair et al, 2007; Wood, 2007; Harris and Brown, 2010). Following these guidelines, the researcher measured the two hypothesized models for reliability (see table 2, 3)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.793	.841	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
summated_scale_Empower	52.2621	162.078	.639	.409	.717
summated_scale_LS	82.6893	236.648	.726	.555	.759
summated_scale_JS	55.5340	117.310	.738	.601	.642

Table 2 Reliability of hypothesized model 1
(empowerment, leadership support, job satisfaction)

As it can be seen from the results of reliability measurement of hypothesized model 1, including all independent variables empowerment, leadership support and job satisfaction, Cronbach's α= .79. Referring to the guidelines above (α>.60), the model could be assumed as reliable. This means that the assumption for reliability measurement for hypothesized model 1 is met.

When it comes to measuring reliability of the hypothesized model 2, the current research includes the two independent variables empowerment and leadership support, which are believed to predict job satisfaction. In table 3, the reliability results of the model are presented.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.642	.718	2

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
summated_scale_Empower	12.5534	18.387	.560	.314	.
summated_scale_LS	42.9806	61.294	.560	.314	.

Table 3 Reliability of hypothesized model 2(Empowerment and leadership support)

The results of the reliability test, shown in table 3 represent the reliability of the hypothesized model 2 for predicting job satisfaction. It could be seen that the composite reliability value is .64, which according to Harris and Brown (2010) is still considered as acceptable value for reliability. This indicates that the model shows low reliability, but since the Cronbach's α is not less than .60, than it could be accepted as reliable. It is important to notice that there are no values in the column of Cronbach's Alpha if Item deleted. In particular this column indicates how much the α would be if the chosen variable was removed. However, according the reliability measurement guidelines, one reliability test should include at least two variables. Therefore, in this case, if any of these two independent variables is removed, it is impossible to measure Cronbach's α.
After all, the results show that the assumption for reliability of the independent variables is met.

5.1.4 Assumption 4: Homoscedastisity of the residuals

Another important assumption for regression analysis is the homoscedastisity of the residuals or, in other words, the constant variance of the residuals. Cohen et al (2003, p. 119) claims that the conditional variance of the residuals of one variable around the regression line is assumed to be constant. Therefore the constant variance of the residuals around the regression line is known as homoscedastisity.

The researcher of the current study addresses this assumption by creating regression standardizedresiduals in SPSS (see figure 9). When the distribution around the line looks constant and there is no right or left increase of the magnitude as the value of the variable increases, then there is evidence for homoscedastisity (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 130).
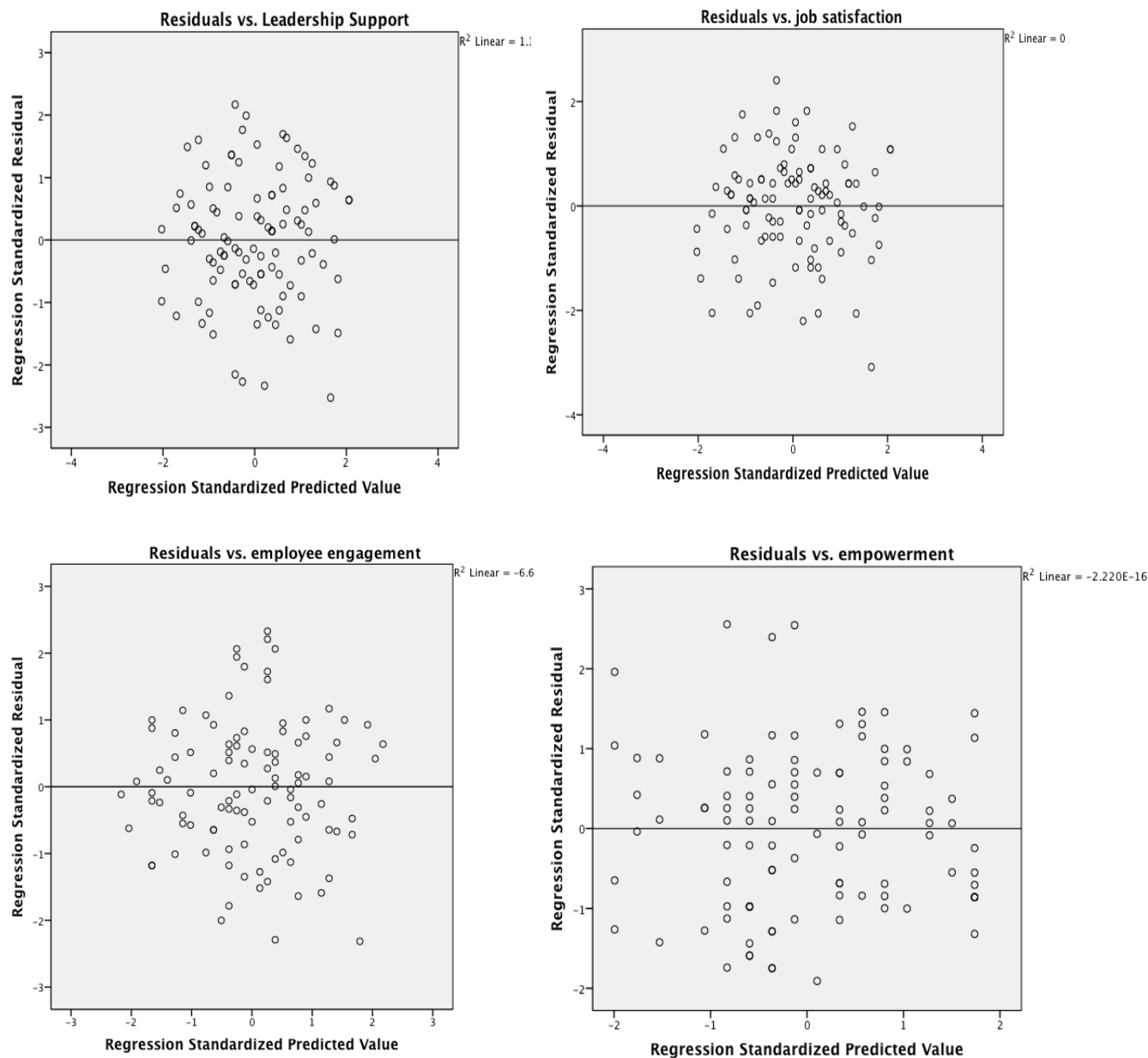

Figure 9. Homoscedastisity of the residuals for all χ and Υ variables

Referring to the guidelines above, these scatter plots from figure 9 suggest that there is no departure from linearity and homoscedastisity exists.

Following Osborne and Waters' (2002) guidelines for addressing the four assumptions, that are not robust to violation, the current research managed to meet all of them, so there was no need for remedial actions.

In addition, as mentioned earlier in this section, the researcher examines also whether the residuals (errors) follow a normal distribution.

5.1.5 Normality of Residuals – normal q-q plot

Closer examination of the normality of residuals can often help identifying problems with regression analysis such as inappropriate regression model (Cohen et al, 2003, p.120). However, violations of normality are not believed to lead to bias in estimates of the regression coefficients or significance tests.

Normality of residuals assumes that for any value of the independent variable, the residuals around the regression line should be normally distributed (Cohen et al, 2003, p.120). There are different methods for providing identification of whether residuals have normal distribution. Some of these methods are graphical using Normal Q-Q Plot measurement, while others are more formal statistical tests of normality such as Shapiro- Wilk or D'Agostino (Cohen et al, 2003, p.140-141). The statistical tests of normality compute the correlations between the value of each residual in order from the lowest to the highest and the value of the residual that would be expected based on a normal distribution and then the obtained correlation is then tested against a population value of 1(Cohen et al, 2003, p.140). While the graphical method known as Normal Q-Q Plot shows a great accuracy when judging whether the plot approximates a straight line. In addition this judgment task is believed to be much easier and trustworthy than the formal statistical normality tests such as Shapiro-Wilk test for normality (Cohen et al, 2003, p.141).

Taking into considerations these guidelines and suggestions, the current thesis undertakes the graphical method, hoping that this would bring more certainty about the normal distribution of the residuals.

Figure 10 displays the normal q-q plots of the residuals, clustered around the straight line for all variables.
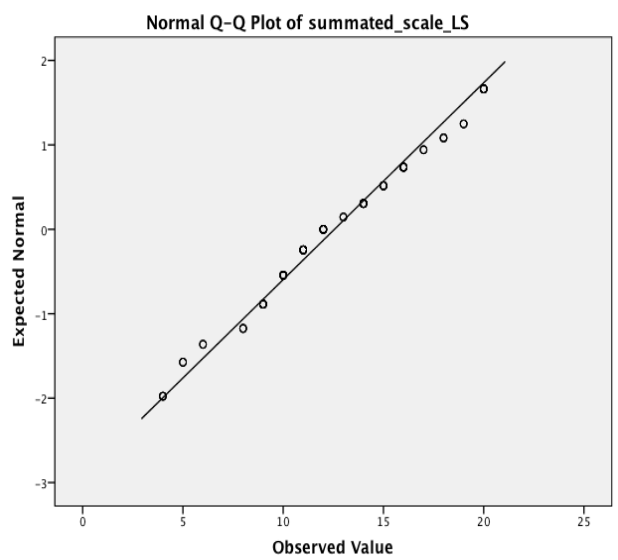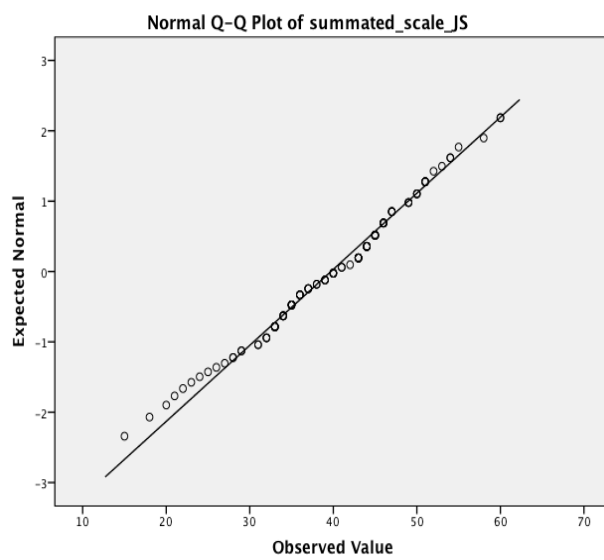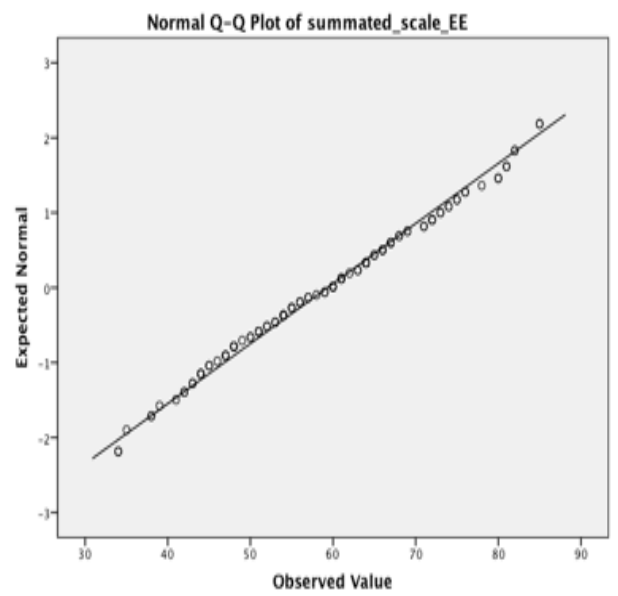
Normal Q-Q Plot of summated_scale_Empower

Normal Q-Q Plot of summated_scale_EE

Normal Q-Q Plot of summated_scale_JS

Normal Q-Q Plot of summated_scale_LS
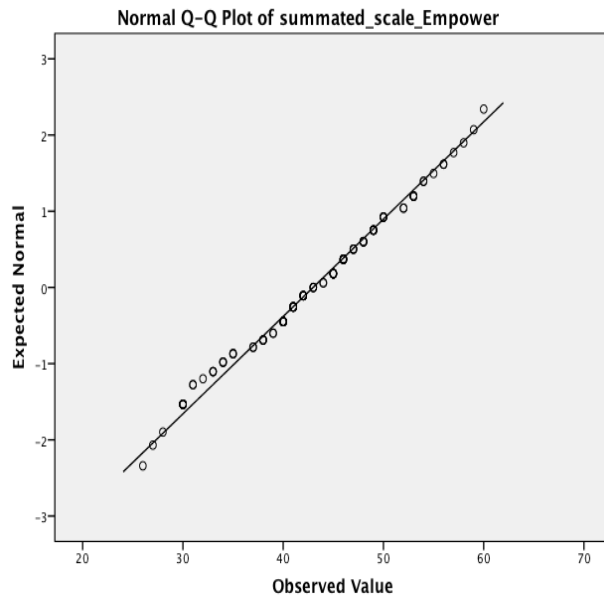
Figure 10. Normal Q-Q Plots for normality of residuals for all four variables

As it can be seen from figure 10, the residuals appear to be close to the straight line, which means that the residuals are normally distributed and the assumption for normality of the data distribution is met.

Although there is an extensive literature on normality testing using formal statistical methods such as Shapiro-Wilk's (1965), it is believed that the experienced data analysts can assess the feasibility of the normal test by using graphical tools such as q-q plots (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 141). Following these guidelines, the current model relies only on this tool for measurement of normality.

Having met all the assumptions for multiple linear regression analysis, the next step of the researcher was to run the multiple regression tests for predicting the two hypothesized models – on one hand, the model predicting employee engagement and on the other hand, the one predicting job satisfaction among cabin crew.

5.2 Multiple Linear Regression for testing hypothesized Model 1

Empowerment, job satisfaction and leadership support were used in a multiple regression analysis to predict employee engagement. The correlations of the variables are shown in Table 4. As it can be seen from the correlation results, all correlations are statistically significant.

Correlations

		summated_s cale_EE	summated_s cale_Empowe r	summated_s cale_LS	summated_s cale_JS
Pearson Correlation	summated_scale_EE	1.000	.752	.592	.677
	summated_scale_Empo wer	.752	1.000	.560	.620
	summated_scale_LS	.592	.560	1.000	.733
	summated_scale_JS	.677	.620	.733	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	summated_scale_EE	.	.000	.000	.000
	summated_scale_Empo wer	.000	.	.000	.000
	summated_scale_LS	.000	.000	.	.000
	summated_scale_JS	.000	.000	.000	.
N	summated_scale_EE	103	103	103	103
	summated_scale_Empo wer	103	103	103	103
	summated_scale_LS	103	103	103	103
	summated_scale_JS	103	103	103	103

Table 4: Correlations between employee engagement, empowerment, job satisfaction and leadership support (Hypothesized Model 1)

Table 5 provides an overview of the results. Of primary interest are the R Square and Adjusted R Square values, which are .642 and .631, respectively. It can be seen from these that the weighted combination of the predictor variables (empowerment, job

satisfaction and leadership support) explained approximately 63% of the variance of employee engagement. Or in other words, about 63% of total variability in employee engagement is explained by empowerment, job satisfaction and leadership support jointly. Using the standard regression procedure where all of the predictors were entered simultaneously into the model, R Square Change went from zero before the model was fitted to the data to .642 when the variable was entered.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.801[a]	.642	.631	7.58637	.642	59.068	3	99	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), summated_scale_JS, summated_scale_Empower, summated_scale_LS

b. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_EE

Table 5. Summary of Model 1 with 3 prediction variables (prediction variables explaining the variance of employee engagement)

The middle table (Table 6) shows the test of significanceof the model using an ANOVA.

With 3 predictors, the Regression effect has 3 degrees of freedom. The Regression effect isstatistically significant, where F (3, 99) = 59.068, p < .05, indicating that prediction of the dependent variable is accomplishedbetter than can be done by chance. The p value (labeled as Sig.) of the F statistics is less than 0.05, demonstrating very strong evidence that the model has a strong explanatory power of prediction. It could be also said that since the F value is significant, then all the three variables jointly influence the dependent variable in the population.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10198.676	3	3399.559	59.068	.000[b]
	Residual	5697.751	99	57.553		
	Total	15896.427	102			

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_EE

b. Predictors: (Constant), summated_scale_JS, summated_scale_Empower, summated_scale_LS

Table 6. Significance test of the model 1 using ANOVA

Table 7 provides the details of the results and describes the relations between the independent and dependent variables. The coefficients are positive and they show that there is a positive relation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In other words, the model predicts that by increasing the independent variables by one unit, the dependent variable will also increase by so many units (or values) showed in the Beta column of the coefficients table. However, if looking at the significance of the three independent variables separately, some interesting results appear.

First looking at the t statistics, when coefficient of t > 1.96 with a significance less than 0.05 (p<0.05), that indicates that the independent variable is a significant predictor of the dependent within the sample. As it can be seen from table 7, two of the t values of independent variables empowerment and job satisfaction have t > 1.96 (t= 6.704 and t= 3.029). This means that they are both effective predictors in the model. However, when looking at the t value of the third independent variable leadership support, it can be seen that it has t= 0.965, which is less than 1.96 and this result suggests that leadership support is not an effective predictor in this model.

In addition, the results show that the p values of two of the independent variables (empowerment and job satisfaction) are less than 0.05 (p<0.05), which also confirms that they are significant and have predictive ability for the dependent variable, or they are both significant predictors for employee engagement. Again, when it comes to the independent variable leadership support, the findings suggest that it is not a significant predictor, since its p value is greater than 0.05 (p= 0.337).

These findings suggest that in combination with the other predictors (empowerment and job satisfaction), leadership support is not a significant predictor in the multiple regression model. The reason is that its predictive work is being accomplished by the other variables in the analysis. Which also means that leadership support is not contributing to the prediction of employee engagement, as hypothesized previously.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.728	4.350		1.087	.280					
	summated_scale_Empower	.836	.125	.525	6.704	.000	.752	.559	.403	.591	1.691
	summated_scale_LS	.253	.263	.087	.965	.337	.592	.097	.058	.445	2.249
	summated_scale_JS	.389	.129	.288	3.029	.003	.677	.291	.182	.399	2.505

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_EE

Table 7 Coefficients of Model1 (Standardized Coefficients, Significance, VIFs)

Prior to accepting the findings from Model 1, the colliniarity diagnostics are examined to check for problems with multicollinearity between independent variables. Multicollinearity exists when one of the independent variables (in our case this is the leadership support) is highly correlated with the other independent variables

in the regression equation, so this independent variable may lose its unique information, which can contribute to the prediction of the dependent variable (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 419). In other words, the shared variance in the multiple regressions may decrease the predictive role of some of the predictors due to increased correlation between these predictors. This problem in regression analysis, when the IVs become highly correlated and it can result in incorrectly estimation of regression coefficients (Hair et al., 2006: p.228). This might be the case with the independent variables in the current thesis, since the correlation between some of the IVs is very high (for example correlation between LS and JS, where r = 0.733, See table 2). This high correlation may suggest some potential multicollinearity between the independent variables job satisfaction and leadership support. That is why the researcher of the current study aims find out if this is the problem for that model and if so, how to deal with it moving forward.

There are different procedures to assess multicollinearity and the current thesis uses the collinearity diagnostics while running the multiple regression model in SPSS (see table 7, 8). The multicollinearity in the current model is measured through VIF (variance inflation factor) and the condition index, even though the criteria for the thresholds vary, depending on the rules of thumb for the multicollinearity (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 424).

Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	Variance Proportions summated_scale_Empower	summated_scale_LS	summated_scale_JS
1	1	3.914	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.057	8.273	.18	.02	.46	.00
	3	.016	15.767	.41	.02	.54	.75
	4	.013	17.315	.40	.96	.00	.25

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_EE

Table 8 Multicollinearity of Model 1 (independent variables: empowerment, job satisfaction, leadership support)

Regarding the variance inflation factor (VIF), there are different guidelines and the current thesis uses the criteria, which states that VIF value > 4 indicates a problem (Garson, 2012). Some studies suggest that correlations between predictors that produce VIFs $\geq$ 10 might cause serious problem regarding multicollinearity (Hair et al, 2006, p. 230), however, it is believed that this rule of thumb guideline might be too high for the behavioral science applications (Cohen et al, 2003, p.423).Therefore, following Garson's guidelines, the current regression model including all three independent variables (empowerment, job satisfaction and leadership support) has no VIF value greater that >4 (E= 1.691; LS= 2. 249; JS= 2.505) (See table 5).

While, when it comes to the condition index, Cohen et al. (2003, p. 424) claims condition index values that exceed 30 ($\kappa \geq$ 30), indicate high problems of multicolinearity. Garson (2012) agrees that when condition index is greater than 30, there is an indication for serious problems regarding multicollinearity, however he

argues that even condition indexes greater than 15 ($\kappa \geq 15$) indicate possible collinearity issues.

Bearing this guideline in mind, the current model indicates that the condition index of empowerment has value of 8.273, which is < 15, the condition index of job satisfaction is slightly above 15 ($\kappa = 15.767$), while the condition index of leadership support is higher still at $\kappa = 17.315$. Accepting Garson's (2012) guidelines and seeing the results of the current regression model, it could be assumed that there might be a high correlation between job satisfaction and leadership support ($r = 0.733$) and that multicolinearity may cause a problem to the hypothesized Model 1 when interpreting the results.

Cohen et al (2003) suggests some possible remedies for addressing multicollinearity in such cases as the current one. The remedial action, considered by the current researcher as the most appropriate for this study, is the dropping one or more independent variables from the regression model (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 430). The only possible risk when removing one IV from the equation is that there may be some loss of information, however if this independent variable does not contribute to the prediction of the dependent one, then there is no such loss (Cohen et al, 2003, p. 433). Following these guidelines, and seeing the current findings that leadership support did not have a statistically significant relationship with employee engagement, the researcher of the current thesis removed the independent variable leadership support from Model 1.

As a result of removing leadership support from the initially hypothesized Model 1, which had 3 IVs (independent variables), some interesting findings were observed (see table 9a, b, c, d).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.799[a]	.638	.631	7.58374	.638	88.198	2	100	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), summated_scale_Empower, summated_scale_JS

Table 9a Summary of Model 1 when dropping leadership support (independent variables: empowerment and job satisfaction)

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10145.113	2	5072.557	88.198	.000[b]
	Residual	5751.314	100	57.513		
	Total	15896.427	102			

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_EE

b. Predictors: (Constant), summated_scale_Empower, summated_scale_JS

Table 9b Significance test of Model 1 when dropping leadership support

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.961	4.275		.927	.356					
	summated_scale_JS	.463	.103	.343	4.474	.000	.677	.408	.269	.616	1.624
	summated_scale_Empower	.860	.122	.540	7.038	.000	.752	.576	.423	.616	1.624

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_EE

Table 9c Coefficients of Model 1 when dropping leadership support (independent variables: empowerment and job satisfaction)

Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions		
				(Constant)	summated_scale_JS	summated_scale_Empower
1	1	2.961	1.000	.00	.00	.00
	2	.026	10.706	.58	.62	.00
	3	.013	15.061	.42	.37	1.00

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_EE

Table 9d Model 1 Regression results when dropping leadership support (Model Summary, ANOVA, Coefficients, Collinearity Diagnostics)

Looking at the findings from table 9a, it could be noticed that even when dropping leadership support, the prediction variance of the model is still the same (Adjusted R Square = 0.631), and p< 0.05, which means that about 63 percent of the of the variance of employee engagement can be accounted for by the linear combination of empowerment and job satisfaction scores. This again confirms that in the 3 IVs model, leadership support was not a contributor to the prediction of the dependent variable, which suggests that it a better idea to keep the model with only two of the hypothesized predictors- empowerment and job satisfaction.

It is also very important to note that when dropping leadership support from the model, the Beta Coefficients of job satisfaction increase from 0.288 to 0.343 (see table 9c), which suggests that this deflation of Beta coefficients may have happened as a result of multicollinearity issues in the 3 IV model (before excluding leadership support).

However, when suggesting tochange Model 1 from 3 IVs to 2 IVs, it could be observed that there are no collinearity issues (see tables 9c and 9d), since the two VIF values of the independent variables are much below 4 (E= 1.624 and JS=1.624), which is in line with Garson's (2012) guidelines. Moreover, looking at the condition index values (table 9), it is observed the condition index of job satisfaction is less (κ =15.061), which is only marginally above Garson's (2012) criteria for the thresholds, where if $\kappa > 15$, there is some possibility of multicollinearity issues. However, since the result is so close to the threshold, then it could be agreed that it does not indicate any collinearity problems.

All these findings suggest that it is a good idea to drop the independent variable leadership support from Model 1, since it has proven in this research that it is not a significant predictor of employee engagement (p= 0.337 >0.05) and it causes some deflation of the regression coefficients of the other independent variables, due to multicollinearity issues. Therefore, the researcher suggests that hypothesized Model 1 should have only two independent variables– empowerment and job satisfaction.

Multiple Regression Results and Conclusions on Model 1 (for predicting employee engagement)

Initially, empowerment, job satisfaction and leadership support were used in a standard multiple regression analysis to predict employee engagement. As can be seen, all correlations, except for the one between leadership support and employee engagement, were statistically significant. Even though the whole prediction model was statistically significant ($F_{(3, 99)} = 59.068$, p < .05), it was discovered that there is very high correlation (r = 0.733) between two of the independent variables (JS and LS), which helped the researcher to find some multicollinearity issues (condition index of LS= 17.315) in Model 1. For addressing this issue, the researcher ran the same regression model for predicting employee engagement, however without leadership support this time. As a result of this remedial action, no multicollinearity issues were indicated, since all VIFs (E= 1.624, JS=1.64) and condition indexes (E= 10.706, JS= 15.061) were in line with the proposed guidelines. Therefore, the prediction model 1 was changed from three independent variables to two independent variables.

The new prediction model was statistically significant and the linear combination of empowerment and job satisfaction was significantly related to employee engagement, $F_{(2, 100)} = 88.198$, p< 0.05. The multiple regression coefficient was .63 (0.638), indicating that approximately 63% (Adjusted R2= 0.631) of the variance of employee engagement can be accounted for by the linear combination of empowerment and job satisfaction. Empowerment received the strongest weight (Beta= 0.540) in the model followed by job satisfaction (Beta=0.343). All these findings helped the researcher to reject hypothesis 1 and to accept hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3, which also suggested that hypothesized Model 1 for predicting cabin crew engagement should include only empowerment and job satisfaction as significant predictors.

5.3 Multiple linear regressions for testing hypothesized Model 2

After meeting all the assumptions for multiple linear regressions, discussed in details in the assumptions section, hypothesized model 2 for predicting job satisfaction was also subjected to regression analysis. Respectively, empowerment and leadership support were used in a multiple regression analysis to predict job satisfaction. The correlations between the dependent variable, job satisfaction, and the two independent variables, empowerment and leadership supportare shown in Table 10. As it can be seen from the results below, all correlations between the variables are statistically significant, which gives the researcher confidence for strong relationships between the IVs and the DV.

Correlations

		summated_scale_JS	summated_scale_Empower	summated_scale_LS
Pearson Correlation	summated_scale_JS	1.000	.620	.733
	summated_scale_Empower	.620	1.000	.560
	summated_scale_LS	.733	.560	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	summated_scale_JS	.	.000	.000
	summated_scale_Empower	.000	.	.000
	summated_scale_LS	.000	.000	.
N	summated_scale_JS	103	103	103
	summated_scale_Empower	103	103	103
	summated_scale_LS	103	103	103

Table 10. Correlations of Model 2 (job satisfaction, empowerment, leadership support)

Table 11shows the results for the multiple linear regression of hypothesized model 2. It seems that the R Square and Adjusted R Square values are high (R Square= .601 and Adjusted R Square= .593). It can be seen from these that the weighted combination of the predictor variables (empowerment, job satisfaction and leadership support) explained approximately 59% of the variance of job satisfaction. Or in other words, about 59% of total variability in employee engagement is explained by empowerment and leadership support jointly.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.775[a]	.601	.593	5.90235	.601	75.256	2	100	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), summated_scale_LS, summated_scale_Empower

b. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_JS

Table 11. Summary Model 2 (jointly prediction of job satisfaction by empowerment and leadership support)

Table 12reports an ANOVA that assesses the overall significance of the model. In the current case, one should look at the significance of model 2 labeled as Sig., the degrees of freedom for the effect (df) and the F value = (df effect, df error).

The results evidence that the regression effect has 2 degrees of freedom. The Regression effect isstatistically significant, where F $(2,100)$ = 75.256, p < .05, indicating that prediction of the dependent variable is accomplishedbetter than can be done by chance. The p value < 0.05, which shows that the model has a strong significance and explanatory power of prediction. From this it could be also assumed that both independent variables (empowerment and leadership support) contribute jointly to the prediction of job satisfaction.

However, the standard multiple regression model does not only look at the jointly prediction, but it also aims to show how much each predictor (independent variable) contribute to the prediction model Osborneand Waters (2002).

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5243.493	2	2621.747	75.256	.000[b]
	Residual	3483.769	100	34.838		
	Total	8727.262	102			

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_JS
b. Predictors: (Constant), summated_scale_LS, summated_scale_Empower

Table 12 Significance test of model 2 using ANOVA

The influence of each predictor could be seen from the standardized coefficients (Beta) of each predictor shown in coefficient table (see table 13).To begin with, both t values are > 1.96 (t=3.99 and t=7.36), which means that there is an effect of prediction of the dependent variable by both independent ones.In addition, it could be noticed that both coefficients (in Beta column) are positive and they show that there is a positive relation between the independent variables and the dependent variable, which means that if the independent variables increase, the dependent variable will also increase. However, the most important, when reporting coefficients, are the weight of the standardized coefficients and the significance level of each predictor. In this respect, the results in the table bellow show that when job satisfaction was predicted, it was found that empowerment (Beta = .305, p < 0.05) and leadership support (Beta=. 562, p< 0.05) were both significant predictors.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	9.002	3.262		2.759	.007					
	summated_scale_Empower	.360	.090	.305	3.999	.000	.620	.371	.253	.686	1.458
	summated_scale_LS	1.212	.165	.562	7.364	.000	.733	.593	.465	.686	1.458

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_JS

Even though regression model 2 showed good estimation with both predictive variables being significant and both having a great influence on the prediction of the dependent variable, the researcher approached the multicolinearity diagnostics in order to test the possible relationship between the independent variables and to confirm the goodness of the model.

Table 13 and 14 show the statistical results for multicolinearity when testing model 2. Referring to the guidelines from Garson (2012) regarding the variance inflation factor (VIF), the results for model 2 indicate that both VIF have values less than 4 (E= 1.458; LS=1.458) (see table 11, column VIF).

While reporting the condition index of both predictors (see table 14) and referring again to Garson's (2012) guidelines, it is obvious that both values are less than 15 (E= 7.195; LS=14.661).

Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	summated_scale_Empower	summated_scale_LS
					Variance Proportions	
1	1	2.930	1.000	.00	.00	.01
	2	.057	7.195	.18	.02	.80
	3	.014	14.661	.82	.98	.20

a. Dependent Variable: summated_scale_JS

Table 14. Multicolinearity test of Model 2

Bearing in mind all the guidelines and referring to the results of the current model, it could be assumed that it is unlikely to consider any issues of multicolinnearity in the predicted model 2. Which means that even if there is some correlation between the two independent variables, there is no need to worry about deflation of the prediction weights.

Multiple Regression Results and Conclusions on Model 2 (for predicting job satisfaction)

Using the standard multiple linear regression method, Model 2 for predicting job satisfaction emerged as significant, where – F (2,100)= 75.256, p< 0.05, Adjusted R square = .593 and significant predictor variables – empowerment (Beta=. 305, p< 0.05) and leadership support (Beta=. 562, p<0.05).

The prediction model 2 was statistically significant and the linear combination of empowerment and leadership support was related to job satisfaction. The model indicated that approximately 59%of the variance of job satisfactioncould be explained by the linear combination of empowerment and leadership support. Job satisfaction was primarily predicted by leadership support and to a lesser extent by empowerment,

since leadership support was the predictor that received the strongest weight in the model followed by empowerment.

The results from the regression analysis were enough evidence for the researcher to accept hypothesized Model 2 (including H4 and H5) for predicting job satisfaction, which means that both empowerment and leadership support predict job satisfaction.
In the long run, the findings from all the above-mentioned statistical tests have broadly answered the research questions. The next step of the researcher is to go on to discuss the implications of these findings, comparing them to findings from previous relevant studies and finally to suggest some new understandings for further research.

6 Discussions and implications

The main aims of this study were to examine the extent to which (i) employee engagement is predicted by empowerment, leadership support and job satisfaction; and (ii) job satisfaction is predicted by empowerment and leadership support.

As the first goal of the study was to evaluate the extent to which employee engagement is predicted by: (a) empowerment; (b) job satisfaction; and (c) leadership support, the initial results of the current thesis demonstrated that empowerment and job satisfaction are both good predictors of employee engagement, where both had p values less than 0.05 and regression coefficients (E=0.525; JS=0.288). However, leadership support did not show the expected significant relation with employee engagement ($p = 0.337 > 0.05$). These results and the encountered multicollinearity issues between leadership support and job satisfaction helped the researcher to argue that by removing leadership support from the prediction model, the regression coefficients of job satisfaction and empowerment would have better effect size (JS Beta weight jumps to 0.343; E Beta weight becomes 0.540). Thus, the researcher rejected H1 and accepted H2 and H3 and answered research question one, proposing that approximately 63% (Adjusted $R2= 0.631$) of the variance of employee engagement can be accounted for by the linear combination of empowerment and job satisfaction.

When it comes to the second goal for predicting job satisfaction, the findings of this study suggested that job satisfaction is positively predicted by both leadership support (Beta =0.562 and $p < 0.05$) and empowerment (Beta= .305, $p<0.05$). These findings justified the acceptance of H4 and H5 and also answered the second research question by suggesting that 59% (Adjusted $R2=0.593$) of the variance of job satisfactioncould be explained by the linear combination of empowerment and leadership support.

6.1 Predicting employee engagement

Leadership support as a predictor

An initial examination of the correlation between leadership support and employee engagement suggest that there is a positive relation between the two constructs, which could be in line with a number of supportive theories (Karatepe and Olubade, 2009; Demerouti et al., 2001).

However, even though based on well-developed, valid and reliable scales for measuring employee engagement (17- Item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale by Schaufeli et. al, 2002) and leadership support (the four items scale by Beehr et. al, 1990), the findings of this study yielded interesting and unexpected results, which were in contrast with the afore-mentioned theories about the predictive relationship between these two constructs. Indeed, the results showed that in combination with other predictors, such as empowerment and job satisfaction, leadership support is not a significant predictor. In other words, although leadership support was positively correlated to employee engagement, it failed to produce significant results in the final regression model after controlling for other variables, including empowerment and job satisfaction. The correlation findings, even though consistent with previous research studies, that investigated the influence of leadership support on employee engagement (Karatepe and Olubade, 2009; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2006), suggested that leadership support might not be predictive of employee engagement among cabin crew.

The results of this paper, revealing the lack of a significant predictive relationship between leadership support and employee engagement were in line with Saks' (2006) theory reporting the same results.

Similarly, the current research found that by increasing leadership support, it does not necessarily mean that the employees in the researched population would be more engaged when doing their job. These findings could be explained by Hochschild's (1983) theory about cabin crew job, claiming that human resources may be unstable, because the employees may collectively resist management instructions, especially in sectors where the commersionalization of feelings is part of the job such as air stewardesses.

Future investigation on the relationship between employee engagement and leadership support, in the context of cabin crew job, may shed some more light on this interesting finding and may help the unstable human resources in this area (Hochschild, 1983), since it is believed that because of the distinctive job characteristics of flight attendants, support from immediate supervisors is considered as a very important resource that helps to restore lots of insufficient resources such as personal growth, development and feeling of belongingness(Chen and Chen, 2012). As organizations need engaged employees who feel vigor, dedicated and absorbed by their work (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008), it seems essential for the leadership to realize what needs to be done to have more of these engaged cabin crew. This paradox is the only unexpected finding in the current thesis and further research is required in order to investigate the potential causes and remedies for the non-significant predictive relation.

In this relation, the current researcher suggests some possible ways to reduce this non-efficacy of the leadership towards employee engagement, since the disengagement of

the cabin crew, which is positively related to turnover intentions, can have significant negative financial implications for airline businesses (Chen and Chen, 2012).

Even though the airline's leadership realizes that the success of the airline is due to their employees, who are encouraged in teamwork, loyalty and commitment (as claimed in the airline's website), the results show that cabin crew engagement is not influenced by the leadership to any extent. This suggests that the leadership practices of the airline and managerial strategies to encourage cabin crew's commitment and dedication might not be effective and perhaps that is why there is a high turnover in this sector (as observed by the researcher while working for the same airline).

As claimed by Vinnicombe (1984), cabin crew members are away from their base most of the time because when they fly, they pass by the base for a very short period of time, between arrival at the briefing room and departure from the gate, and thus they don't have much opportunity to meet their supervisors who need to be in their offices in order to be more accessible for everyone. Since most of the time the communication between cabin crew and their supervisors is via mails or phone calls, and due to the fact that the cabin crew's working schedule is 24/7 while the supervisors' working hours are from 9am to 5pm only on weekdays, these two groups may not have enough chances to meet in order to get to know each other better and to strengthen a sense of commitment and loyalty.

Another factor that seems to affect the positive relation between leadership support and employee engagement might be the fact that the organization has about 15,000 cabin crew and the supervisors are not that many, so often they do not have the opportunity to meet personally every cabin crew member that they supervise, which respectively could negatively relate to the encouragement of the employees and thus to their engagement at work.

Some studies suggest that the best remedy for retaining high- quality workforce is the intense commitment and involvement of the leadership, which is known as transformational leadership (Avolio and Bass, 2002). The authors propose a case study, where Southwest airline shows best results in the US airline industry, due to the CEO's commitment to maintain a quality workforce, where he often becomes involved in helping out employees personally and getting to know people better, so they will understand what he truly values. According to Avolio and Bass (2002), this case shows how the leader of the airline has been honored as the most admired, by his employees, CEO in USA, which explains the lowest turnover rate in the US airline industry. Avolio and Bass (2002) describe such leadership behavior as transformational leadership, which encompasses idealized and inspiring leader, who is a role model and demonstrates to its employees clear sense of purpose and commitment, who is individually considerate and intellectually stimulating. Moreover, transformational leaders address each employee's sense of self-worth in order to engage the employee in true commitment and involvement at work (Avolio and Bass, 2002). Seeing the example of southwest airline and bearing in mind Avolio and Bass's (2002) guidelines on how transformational leadership should influence employee engagement, it could be noticed this is not the case with the current findings.

Therefore, the researcher of the current thesis proposes that the examined airline should emphasize more on transformational leadership, which research has shown to be more effective towards engaging employees than just the constructive transaction leadership (Avolio and Bass, 2002), which is active in managing and rewards, but more passive as awaits problems to arise before taking action. Since the results of the current thesis demonstrate that cabin crew do not feel more engaged when they have greater support from their managers, it could be assumed that the type of leadership of the researched airline is more likely to be transactional. Since it is believed that transformational leaders encourage more commitment, loyalty and engagement than transactional leadership, then the airline should really reconsider and rethink its strategies for managing and supervising its workforce. Of course, there could be some barriers when adopting transformational leadership at the airline since the number of cabin crew will be always much greater than the managerial staff and getting to know everyone and talking to them personally will be hard task for the management. If the turnover is high and new people are staring every day, this task of encouraging employees personally may seem impossible. However, closing the gap between the managers and the cabin crew, by initiating some more interactive and less formal meetings between managers and employees, may help the leadership development in terms of being more transactional and thus having more engaged cabin crew.

This example of Southwest airline should be a good example for the other airline organizations, no matter if they are new in the industry (as our case) or they have long years of experience (such as many Western airlines). Being a role model seems to work well towards engaging followers in true commitment in the organization's values and thus supporting new transformational leadership practices pays off in the long run.

Empowerment as a predictor

Consistent with previous research studies and based on well-developed and reliable measures for empowerment (12-item Psychological Empowerment Scale by Spreitzer, 1995) and employee engagement (17- Item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale by Schaufeli et. al, 2002), this study also found a positive relationship between empowerment and employee engagement. These findings suggest that cabin crew, who experience more power and autonomy at work, who feel more flexible when doing their job, are more likely to be dedicated and absorbed in what they do. Which means that the organization's efforts, to ensure that the employees are equipped to do their job well in order to give the customers unique experience (as claimed in the airline website), are efficient. This may explain Lashley's (1999) theory that empowered employee responds more quickly to customer service requests to rectify complaints and is more engaged in service encounters. Similarly, Wirtz et al (2008) agree that cabin crew need to feel empowered in order to make decisions independently about different situations on board and thus to give their best at work.

This may be due to the fact that cabin crew members have indeed great power on board, since their direct managers are not beside them during their work performance, so they can decide by themselves what to do and how to do it. That respectively should make them feel more confident in their job-related tasks and more wiling to adapt to the particular demands of each service encounter.

After all, since cabin crew are more engaged in their work related tasks, when they feel empowered and confident, thus the current researcher suggests that the human resources and management of airlines should support empowerment in a way that employees are not rewarded and empowered only when they achieve something (as advocated by the transactional leadership), but also inspire and motivate them to take a lead and be creative (which is more in line with transformational leadership theory). It could be assumed that having access to opportunities, information and autonomy is critical for cabin crew to feel engaged. However, what if some employees are not motivated to do their job, even though they are empowered? Is there going to be the same predictive influence on employee engagement by empowerment? Future research could examine the role that motivation plays as a mediator for achieving employee engagement through empowerment. Cabin crew that are motivated to do their job could be compared to those who do not care, to see if all would show the same prediction of employee engagement by empowerment. If it turns that empowerment predicts positively employee engagement across all employees, then it would mean that the airline practices are effective, but if the results are different, then the airline should adopt some other techniques for motivation of the employees.

Managerial interventions for enhancing empowerment are given by previous studies, where it is suggested that leadership should focus more on behavioral criteria in evaluating employees, because employees control easier their own behaviors, than they can control the work-related outcomes (Chebat and Kollias, 2000). This could be done in the airline through implementation of various techniques for controlling employees behavioral outcomes such as competitions for best, worst, happiest, laziest crew of the month, where every flight attendant could vote and can write a feedback and thus employees might feel more empowered.

Job satisfaction as a predictor

When it comes to predicting employee engagement by job satisfaction, as previously researched by a number of studies (Hagedorn, 2000; Williams and Anderson, 1991; Laschinger et al., 2006;), the findings of the current thesis also revealed a strong significant prediction of employee engagement, which in other words would mean that the more cabin crew are satisfied with their work, the more engaged they will be. These findings suggest that the employees who are more happy and proud of their work are more immersed in what they do and are more likely to experience feelings of absorption and dedication, which is consistent with Hagedorn's (2000) theory, reporting that a worker who is experiencing job satisfaction, would be more likely to appreciate her or his position in the organization, resulting in high likelihood of job engagement.

The results, reported in the current thesis, suggest that they could be compared with other empirical studies conducted in developed Western countries, which suggests that the researched airline, even though having less experience than the Western airlines, has managed to make their cabin crew satisfied and thus more engaged at work. It can be assumed that, being in line with studies from developed Western countries, the current findings cannot be generalizable only to airlines from the targeted region.

At this point, this study would suggest that further research should be done not only in this direction, where job satisfaction predicts employee engagement, but also the reciprocal relationship, since it is considered that engagement is an effective-motivational indicator of work-related well-being (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007). In addition, future research should emphasize longitudinal designs that examine changes in employee engagement and job satisfaction and the causes for such changes, which may be beneficial for the human resources in the aviation industry. Moreover, longitudinal studies are considered to be in a better position to state causal relationships and to provide stronger tests for these hypothesized relationships (Laschinger et al, 2004).

The currently examined airline should try to keep its flight attendants always proud with what they do and who they work for, by showing them respect and appreciation, not only when they achieve some measurable outcomes, but all the time by giving them rewards, support and understanding. Since it seems that happy and relaxed employees are also more productive and hard working, some studies suggest that the HRM practices should include more energizing and inspiring people techniques, such as the Southwest airline's practices of enhancing sense of humor and friendliness among cabin crew by telling jokes or even singing (Milliman et al, 1999). This may help flight attendants to release the stress, be more happy and relaxed, which would make the organization excellent place to work.

6.2 Predicting job satisfaction

As a second goal of the current study, the researcher examined the relationship between the hypothesized predictors - empowerment and leadership support with the predicted outcome- job satisfaction.

Empowerment as a predictor

It was expected that empowerment would predict job satisfaction among cabin crew, since previous researches have suggested that when employees have control over their work, when they are more involved in the decision-making process and have higher degree of autonomy, which is consistent with empowerment (Kanter, 1979), they will be more satisfied with their job (Irvine and Evans (1995). In the context of our case, the findings suggested that if cabin crew have more autonomy at work, participate in the decision making process and have some freedom of action, then it is likely that they will experience greater levels of job satisfaction. Similarly, previous research studies on the empowerment-job satisfaction relationship have proven that empowered employees have higher levels of job satisfaction, primarily because of their involvement in the goal setting, which may affect their work in general (Blackburn and Rosen, 1993; Ugboro and Obeng, 2001; Laschinger et al., 2006). This seems quite relevant to the current case, since due to the fact that cabin crew have more responsibilities than most front-line employees in the service delivery sector, because they are trained to maintain cabin safety and security and at the same time to provide customer service (Chen and Chen, 2012), they often need to make decisions

on their own in order to make the customer's day (Wirtz et al, 2008). Based on the aforementioned theories and measured with already proved to be valid and reliable measures (12-item Psychological Empowerment Scale by Spreitzer, 1995; GWA by The Gallup Organization, 1992-1999), this research also confirmed the positive predictive relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction, however in the context of cabin crew in a Middle Eastern airline.

Since empowerment is such an important predictor for employee engagement and, accordingly, the researcher proposes that the organization should constantly ensure that the employees feel that they have the opportunities to do their best at work and to know that their opinion is counted. This could be done through involvement of the employees - not only in the service and cabin safety procedures, which are part of their daily routine – but additionally they should be more involved in the strategic planning and vision creation of the organization. Since being involved in the planning and vision creation are elements of empowerment of the employees, this can create positive employee outcomes such as job satisfaction.

For example, the current researcher proposes that when designing a new brand name of the airline, the opinion of the cabin crew should be considered, since they represent the face of the airline. This could be done through surveys or even some interactive practices, where all the cabin crew could express what they think. There might be a risk of not receiving one common opinion, since the organization is constantly growing and it has more than 15,000 cabin crew, however the front-line employees' point of view needs to be considered. This would enhance their feelings of happiness, confidence and sense of meaning in what they do.

Leadership support as a predictor

Another hypothesized relationship in this study, between leadership support and job satisfaction, was also based on previous research studies, suggesting the prediction of job satisfaction by leadership support (Vinnicombe, 1984), and also used the previously tested measurement scales (GWA by The Gallup Organization, 1992-1999; the four items scale by Beehr et. al, 1990) to prove its validity. The current findings suggest that leadership support is a strong predictor for job satisfaction among the examined population, a finding that supports the author's arguments above that enhancing support of the immediate supervisors in aviation industry, often considered as part of the social support (Beehr et. al, 1990), would improve and enhance the well being and satisfaction of the cabin crew (Chen and Chen, 2012). In the context of the current study, Vinnicombe(1984) has found similar results and then has argued that, since the supervisor is responsible for all the administration if the crew such as location of allowances, holidays, and sickness pay, letters containing complains and compliments, leadership support is extremely important influential factor for cabin crew job satisfaction. In addition to the above-mentioned previous and current findings, LMX theory advocates also find positive relationships between leadership support and overall job satisfaction, claiming that supportive actions of the leadership creates a sense of indebtedness with dimensions such as trust, motivation and job satisfaction (Li et al, 2012). Therefore, it could be concluded, having in mind the results of the current study and the previous findings, that leadership support

seems to have a central role in job satisfaction and moreover in cabin crew job satisfaction, which is in line with Vinnicombe's (1984) theory.

These results highlight the importance of the managerial commitment to quality for increasing employee satisfaction as suggested by Chebat and Kollias (2000). Here it could be suggested that the committed manager would help to align all employees toward a common vision and thus to enhance their sense of belongingness and satisfaction. Organization's management should tailor different programs, identifying the needs of the workforce, building on cabin crew's personal experiences and matching employees' goals with the company's vision to ensure enhanced levels of job satisfaction and positive workplace experience.

In this relation, in order to enhance employee job satisfaction through leadership, Avolio and Bass (2002) propose that leaders should be trained in the four components of transformational leadership: idealized leadership, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. All four components have been adopted and tested in different organizations including the aviation industry and it has been demonstrated that transformational leadership can help in enhancing employees' satisfaction with their leader. As suggested by Avolio and Bass (2002), these components could be assessed with the Multifactor leadership Questionnaire, where each supervisor should describe herself or himself as a supervisor and then depending on the results to work and develop better leadership skills. This practice could be also proposed to the management of the examined airline, where leaders should be trained on these four components to become role models, to inspire and arouse team spirit and act as a coach to each employee.

This thesis' findings provide some evidence that the impact of leadership support in employee job satisfaction is worthy for further investigation. In addition, it would be beneficial for investigating not only to what extent leadership support predicts cabin crew satisfaction, but also colleague support as a predictor of job satisfaction, since it is also considered as a component of social support (Beehr et al, 1990). This investigation seems very reasonable, since cabin crew cannot meet their managers quite often due to different circumstances, however they constantly communicate with other cabin crew on flight and this factor may be much more predictive to job satisfaction than leadership support. Moreover, Beehr et al (1990) have proposed that positive communication is form of social support and talking to a colleague about non-work related events is considered as a form of escapism, which could reduce work stress and enhance job satisfaction. In addition, since family support is also a source of social support (Beehr et al, 1990), and due to the nature of work, flight attendants spend most of their time away from home (in the air or on layovers), it could be assumed that family support is also an essential factor for employees' well – being and job satisfaction. Therefore this construct should be also investigated as a possible predictor for cabin crew job satisfaction.

To sum up, the researcher believes that the findings from this thesis could contribute to the research about employee engagement and job satisfaction in the service sector of the aviation industry literature. However, it is essential to mention that the results of the current research cannot be generalized outside the scope of this study, since this is only a single case study, based on a the examined population, which means that future research with different sample of cabin crew may report different results.

7 Limitations

One of the main limitations of the current thesis comes from its limited sample size of 103 respondents, which prevented the researcher from examining differences between sub-groups of flight attendants. This restriction was owing to the low number of respondents in each sub-group compromising the ability to adequately undertake statistical procedures. For example, the researcher was unable to examine differences in cabin crew engagement and job satisfaction according to factors such as job seniority (job grade), length of service, gender, age or education. A larger size investigation is needed to confirm differences and possible tendencies between these demographical factors.

Second, the sample of cabin crew employees utilized in this study was obtained from a single Middle East based airline, which is quite new in the aviation industry. The findings may not be representative of the wider population, as cabin crew engagement and job satisfaction may differ from those working in airlines with more traditions and experience in the market. Future research should investigate sample groups from different airlines from this or other regions, which may lead to different conclusions.

Another limitation is that the study was based on self-ratings of employee engagement, which due to their subjectivity, may be biased. Other research in this area may raise concerns about the objectivity of some constructs such as employee engagement, job performance or self-esteem. To overcome problems with self-report measures, future studies might need to collect supervisory or colleague ratings of employee engagement.

Another limitation of the current study was that the results demonstrated high correlation and multicollinearity issues between job satisfaction and leadership support, which forced the researcher to remove leadership support from the predictive model, in order to gain more accurate regression coefficients. Future research should consider such collinearity issues when designing a prediction model and probably include other predictors of employee engagement and job satisfaction such as peer support, especially in the context of flight attendant job, where teamwork is essential to maintain high quality service. Another strategy to minimize multicollinearity could be to employ different measures for either (or both) job satisfaction and leadership support – i.e. measures that still accurately measure each construct but do not share such a strong correlation.

Finally, due to the aim of the study to examine some prediction models, based on a larger scale of respondents, and also due to the difficulty of the researcher to reach personally the respondents, the method for the current paper was chosen to be only quantitative. Further research should also include qualitative method, based on interviews with cabin crew and their managers. This could be done for three main reasons: (i) in order to better understand the possible gap between cabin crew and managers and thus to have more in depth understanding of the problem; (ii) during quantitative data collection to use triangulations to facilitate validation of the data and

confirm findings; (iii) and as a follow up to quantitative research to suggest strategies for problems highlighted from the data.

8 Conclusions

Many studies have put serious efforts into developing valid and reliable tools for measuring job satisfaction and employee engagement in different sectors such as the service delivery sector, since in recent years many organizations have shown concern about the importance of having engaged and satisfied employees. However, employee engagement and job satisfaction have been under-researched in the service sector of the aviation industry. Moreover, knowledge within this field is mostly focused on Western airlines' employees and there is an apparent lack of research on this population in the Middle East region.

Accordingly, the current thesis has aimed to investigate to what extent cabin crew engagement and job satisfaction could be predicted by empowerment and leadership support, within a sample of flight attendants working in national Middle Eastern carrier.

The thesis has found that that cabin crew engagement is predicted to the highest extent by empowerment, followed by job satisfaction, but to no extent by leadership support. While job satisfaction is significantly predicted by both empowerment and leadership support.

The current findings confirm the prediction of employee engagement by empowerment, as claimed by Lashley (1999), who has found that empowered employees are more engaged in service encounters, since they have the power to make a difference. Being in line with Hagedorn's theory (2000), the current findings also confirm that job satisfaction predicts employee engagement, which again proves the validity of the theoretical concept, used in the current thesis. However, also in line with previous findings supporting the significant prediction of employee engagement by leadership support (Schaufeli et. al, 2002; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2006), the current results demonstrate that cabin crew engagement cannot be predicted by leadership support. Thus, the researcher suggests theoretical and practical implications for enhancing employee engagement through leadership support. In particular, following Avolio and Bass (2002), the researcher suggests adoption of new training programs towards transformational leadership, which aims to inspire, motivate and encourage employees, rater than just awaits problems to arise and then solve them. In addition, less informal and more interactive meetings should be considered between the cabin crew and their managers, since findings suggest that there might be some gap between these two groups.

When it comes to the prediction of job satisfaction, the current findings confirm a number of theories that have previously proven the prediction power of empowerment (Ugboro and Obeng, 2001; Laschinger et al., 2006) and leadership support (Vinnicombe, 1984; Beehr et. al, 1990; Li et al, 2012). Furthermore, the researcher

suggested that in order to enhance job satisfaction by empowerment, management should consider involvement of cabin crew in the branding creation of the airline, by giving them opportunities to express their vision and align it with the vision of the organization, which would make them valued and appreciated and thus more satisfied.

In the long run, the researcher of the current thesis believes that this study could contribute to the little research on cabin crew engagement and job satisfaction in the examined region, since the subject has been neglected over the years. The thesis also aims to raise awareness regarding the non- significant relationship between leadership and employee engagement, demonstrated by the results. It would hopefully drive the management to consider more carefully the leadership training process so that leaders will learn how to inspire, motivate and engage followers and thus to fight competitiveness.

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APPENDIX 1: ONLINE QUESTIONNARIE

LINK TO QUESTIONNARIE:https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DVJ656X

SNAPSHOT OF THE ONLINE QUESTIONNARIE:

(PLEASE NOTE THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO DOWNLOAD THE ORIGINAL QUESTIONNARIE FROM SURVEYMONKEY, SO THIS IS ONLY A SNAPSHOT OF IT!)

APENDIX 2: PAPER QUESTIONNARIE

Hello! Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire ☺

I am a master degree student in Aalborg University (Denmark) and am doing a research project focusing on the factors affecting employee engagement in the aviation industry. I would be very grateful if you could spare 5 minutes on this questionnaire. You don't have to give your name, all answers are for statistical purposes and the information will be kept confidential.All questionnaires will be destroyed after the research. Thank you very much

Do you work in the service sector of the aviation industry? _____

Please rate the following sentences to indicate how much you agree or disagree with these statements. (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Please tick the proper box for you

1. Thinking about your current job, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The work I do is very important to me.					
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.					
The work I do is meaningful to me.					
I am confident about my ability to do my job.					
I am self -assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.					
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.					
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.					
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.					
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.					
My impact on what happens in my department is large.					
I have a great deal of control of what happens in my department.					
I have significant influence over what happens in my department.					
2. How do you feel about your current					

job?					
At my work, I feel bursting with energy.					
At my job I feel strong and vigorous.					
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.					
I can continue working for very long periods at a time.					
At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.					
At my work I always preserve, even when things do not go well.					
I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.					
I am enthusiastic about my job.					
My job inspires me.					
I am proud of the work that I do.					
To me, my job is challenging.					
Time flies when I am working.					
When I am working, I forget everything else around me.					
I feel happy when I am working intensely.					
I am immersed in my work.					
I get carried away when I am working.					
It is difficult to detach myself from my job.					
3.Overall, how satisfied are you with the company you work for?					
I know what is expected from me at work.					
I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.					
At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.					
In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.					
My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.					
There is someone at work who encourages my development.					
At work, my opinion seems to count.					
The mission of my company makes me feel my job is important.					
My associates (fellow employees) are committed to doing quality work.					
I have a best friend at work.					
In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.					

This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.					
4. How well the following statements apply to your supervisor/manager?					
My supervisor is easy to talk to.					
I can depend on my supervisor for help when things get tough at work.					
My supervisor is willing to change my work schedule when I need it.					
My supervisor is willing to listen to my personal problems.					

5. What is your position in the company/organization? _____

6. How long have you worked for the company/organization?

Less than a year: □   From 1 to 3 years: □

From 3 to 5 years: □   6 years or more: □

7. In which age group do you belong to?

From 21 to 30: □   From 31 to 40: □

From 41 to 50: □   From 51to 60: □

8. Nationality: _____

9. Sex: Male □ Female □

10. What is your education level (graduated or studying at the moment)?

High school: □   Professional diploma (high school +2years): □

Bachelor degree: □   Master's degree or above: □

Thank you for your time. ☺