Job Embeddedness and Work Performance : A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

The present study employed systematic review and meta-analytic techniques to examine the literature on job embeddedness and work performance. Work performance was measured in terms of discretionary behaviors (i.e., organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive workplace deviance) and non-discretionary behaviors (i.e., task performance). Product – moment correlation coefficient (r) was the effect size for this study. From the results of 37 studies, statistically significant meta-analytic correlation was found between job embeddedness and organizational citizenship behavior and task performance. No relationship was found between job embeddedness and counterproductive workplace behavior. For heterogeneity, sub-group analysis was conducted. Implications, potential limitations, and future directions were also discussed.

Keywords: job embeddedness, work performance, organizational citizenship behavior, counterproductive workplace deviance, task performance

JEL Classification Codes: 1230, J240, M140

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Ith the evolution of the VUCA world, the gig economy, and the emergence of the inevitable COVID-19 pandemic, organizations face competitive pressure to acquire and retain talented employees. Organizations pay high costs for employee turnover in the form of productivity loss, disruption of ongoing activities, new staffing, training, etc. Individuals also pay high costs for turnover in the form of anxiety of losing their current social network, relocation, adaption to new work culture, impact on work performance, and family commotion (Candan 2016). All these issues have attracted the attention of researchers and academicians as "how organizations can retain their talented employees?" In recent literature, job embeddedness (JE) has emerged as a new construct that is used for obtaining a broad view of the employer – employee relationship (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004). The JE theory emphasizes three kinds of ties that can construct a network of restraining forces and, consequently, impact employees' choice to continue and perform in their present position: links, fit, and sacrifice. Mitchell et al. (2001) explained links as the formal or informal connections of an individual with other people or organizations (such as relationships with co-workers). Fit explains an employee's apparent congruence or comfort

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with an organization and with his/her environment, e.g., a fit between an employee's values and the organization's culture (Andresen, 2015).

Sacrifice depicts the perceived cost of benefits, such as material or psychological, that may be lost by leaving one's job, e.g., wonderful relationships with colleagues or the organization (Andresen, 2015). Lately, researchers have gained interest in the effects of job embeddedness and have started examining the effects of JE on employee behaviors, like performance. Work performance comprises the behaviors that can be regulated by an individual and which can contribute to the organizational goals. Rotundo and Sackett (2002) explained that work performance includes discretionary behaviors and task-related behaviors. Discretionary behaviors include behaviors such as demonstrating organizational citizenship behavior and restraining counterproductive work behavior, and task-related behaviors include behaviors such as task performance (Henderson & Horan, 2021).

Despite this surge in job embeddedness research, there are various gaps in the literature concerning the relationship between job embeddedness and work performance related to diverging effect sizes and sporadic conflicting outcomes. For instance, Karatepe and Ngeche (2012) and Sekiguchi et al. (2008) found a positive correlation between job embeddedness and work performance, while Greene et al. (2018) and Ng and Feldman (2009) reported a negative relationship between job embeddedness and work performance. There could be multiple reasons for these varying effect sizes, such as study design, sample size, or measurement scales used. Therefore, meta-analysis can be helpful for examining the true relationship between the constructs and clarifying the reasons for these discrepancies.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Job Embeddedness and Work Performance

Links, fit, and sacrifice are the three dimensions of job embeddedness. Links are the connections that an employee develops with other people or institutions. Job embeddedness web is composed of communal, psychological, and monetary elements and may include society, non-work friends, and the physical surroundings where one dwells. The stronger the link grows between the individual and his/her surroundings, the more the employee gets professionally and personally tied to the job. Fit is the perception of compatibility with the organization and with his or her environment. Individuals prefer to work in jobs where they perceive value similarity. The better the fit, the less the likelihood that employees will leave the job (Afsar & Badir, 2016). Sacrifice is the benefits (monetary or psychological) that may be forfeited if the employee leaves the job. Leaving a job can likely incur personal losses such as the loss of good colleagues, attractive perks, a safe community, or an easy commute. The more an individual gives up when parting, the more problematic it is to disunite with one's employment.

Work performance can largely be categorized into one of the three discrete groups: organizational citizenship behavior, counterproductive work behavior, and task performance (Henderson & Horan, 2021). As per Robbins and Judge (2013), organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is discretionary behavior that is not part of an employee's formal job description but supports organizational functioning effectively. Counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) are those deliberate behaviors that harm the organization or its employees (O'Boyle et al., 2011), which may include violating the organizational norms, destroying organization property, doing unethical work on the job, hitting colleagues, etc. Task performance (TP) is normally based on the description of the formal job requirements and includes behaviors or activities that are required to perform one's job (Henderson & Horan, 2021). Overall, work performance can be regarded as a voluntary behavior, either it can be related to assisting a co-worker (OCB), abusing or attacking a colleague (CWB), or deciding to perform a task (task performance).

Job Embeddedness and OCB

OCB is regarded as an extra-role behavior that constitutes actions undertaken with no anticipation for rewards or recognition. Such behaviors are neither specified nor demanded but generally contribute to the smooth functioning of an organization. Since OCB is growing in research and theory, it has become an important part of employees' performance evaluation (Lev & Koslowsky, 2012). Individuals who are embedded in their jobs are more likely to exhibit OCB (Lev & Koslowsky, 2012). Researchers have demonstrated that job embeddedness has a positive effect on OCB. Afsar and Badir (2016), in their study on a sample of 804 hotel employees, described that job embeddedness had a significant and positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior. Collins and Mossholder (2017), in their study on 140 employees of a manufacturing firm, also found a significant and positive relationship between JE and OCB. Individuals who are highly embedded in their jobs develop a strong interconnectedness with their co-workers, and they will lose a lot if they sever their employment. These individuals experience "oneness" with their organization (Afsar & Badir, 2016), and therefore, act and perform in a manner that is compatible with the organization's outlook. Thus, the present study argues that the individuals who are embedded within their jobs are more likely to demonstrate citizenship behaviors. In light of the previous discussion and findings, it is hypothesized that:

\$\bigsep\$ **H1:** There is a positive relationship between JE and OCB.

Job Embeddedness and Counterproductive Workplace Behavior

Counterproductive workplace behaviors are intentional behaviors that damage the well-being of an organization (O'Boyle et al., 2011). Job embeddedness can influence one's interpretation of the negative occurrences, shaping their opinion of the work environment. Embedded employees are attached to the organization (Lawler et al., 2000), which provides them the social and cultural capital. Such employees associate with their colleagues and supervisors and thus cherish the positive links developed over a period of time. The emotional bases of JE inspire employees to adopt positive interpersonal behavior (Collins & Mossholder, 2017). Embedded employees demonstrate higher cooperation and a compelling desire to work for the development and growth of the organization (Lawler et al., 2000). Embeddedness is also found to lower the effect of undesirable workplace events (Burton et al., 2010). Researchers have demonstrated that job embeddedness has a negative effect on CWB. Avey et al. (2015), in their study on a sample of 603 employees, found that individuals scoring high on job embeddedness were less likely to engage in workplace deviant behaviors. However, job embeddedness not necessarily always has positive outcomes.

Embeddedness can interrelate with other employee perceptions to proliferate detrimental employee behaviors. Marasi et al. (2016) explained that job embeddedness is regarded as limiting, restricting, or constraining an employee's ability to change or alter their current job situation. Job embeddedness can create hurdles for employees who wish to quit their present job but are obstructed from doing so because of numerous factors (like the inability to find a job with the same benefits in another place) and thus develops frustration in employees, which in turn has damaging effects on the employee as well as the organization. The manner in which embeddedness affects counterproductive workplace behavior is unclear since there are sound arguments sustaining two suppositions, and therefore, the study explores these views by addressing the following hypotheses:

\$\to\$ **H2:** Job embeddedness has a positive effect on counterproductive workplace behavior.

\$\B\$: Job embeddedness has a negative effect on counterproductive workplace behavior.

Job Embeddedness and Task Performance

Task performance concerns the basic required responsibilities of a specific job (Ng & Feldman, 2009). Individuals who feel embedded in their jobs are attached to the people and their tasks. Embedded individuals recognize that their knowledge, skills, and abilities complement the job requirements (Karatepe, 2013). These employees believe that they can utilize their skills in the workplace as they rightly fit in their jobs. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) explained that job embeddedness improves employees' self-rated performance as well as performance as assessed by colleagues and superiors. Safavi and Karatepe (2019) found that employees who are on the higher side of JE show more task performance, have more tendencies to remain within the current organization, and are star performers at work. However, previous research has also posited the dark side of job embeddedness. For instance, Greene et al. (2018), in their study on a sample of 600 workers, found that job embeddedness has a detrimental effect on task performance. The researchers suggested that when embedded individuals do not have emotional or social connections to the organization, the task performance can dwindle as there is no choice to leave. Thus, from this discussion, it is unclear whether job embeddedness affects task performance positively or negatively, and therefore, the study explores these views by addressing the following research hypotheses:

\$\to\$ **H4**: Job embeddedness has a positive effect on task performance.

\$\Bar{\tau}\$ H5: Job embeddedness has a negative effect on task performance.

Methodology

Study Identification and Quality Assessment

SCOPUS, Google Scholar, ProQuest Dissertation & Theses, and EBSCO were searched methodically using numerous search term combinations that were established based on the knowledge acquired through the review of literature, including "job embeddedness," "organization embeddedness," "work performance," "task performance," "organizational citizenship behaviors," "discretionary behaviors," "extra-role behaviors," "counterproductive workplace behavior," and "workplace deviance."

Selection Process

An electronic search from the four databases yielded 2,300 citations for possible inclusion. After removing the books, news articles, duplicates, and press releases, 702 full-text articles were accessed for eligibility. After reviewing the title and abstract, 219 studies were identified. Of these, 27 were qualitative, 21 were case studies, and 11 did not report adequate data. Finally, 37 articles were selected for systematic review and meta-analysis.

The reference lists of the studies were used for identifying additional articles. We pre-screened the four databases separately based on the article's title and the abstract. On the basis of the results of the initial screening, the articles were classified as 'suitable' or 'unsuitable.' All "suitable" articles were then examined for full-text. To establish inter-rater reliability, Cohen's kappa was employed. Concord among the raters was significant (K = .712, p < .001) (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Inclusion Criteria

he articles were selected based on certain inclusion criteria. First, only peer reviews articles from the years 2000 – 2020 were selected. Second, only those studies were selected that were published in the English language. Third,

the studies must have reported a bivariate relationship (e.g., r) so that the effect size can be calculated. Fourth, each effect size must have a unique sample. In studies with multiple samples, each sample was taken as a separate entity. Fifth, the studies were included if they measured two main variables (job embeddedness and work performance) and if the sample was framed with relevance to employees in the workplace.

Meta-Analytic Results

Correlation Between Job Embeddedness and Work Performance

The results of the meta-analysis concerning the relationship between job embeddedness and work performance (organizational citizenship behavior, counterproductive workplace behavior, and task performance) are depicted in Table 1.

Job Embeddedness and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

From the results of 13 studies, the effect of job embeddedness on organizational citizenship behavior varies from r = .12 to r = .42. Weighted average correlation obtained from the random-effect model is r = .28 (p < .001, N = 4,000; 95 % C.I. [.21,.35]). The effect size is significant, and therefore, H1 is accepted. The results imply that job embeddedness is positively correlated to organizational citizenship behavior.

Job Embeddedness and Counterproductive Workplace Behavior

From the results of 10 studies, the effect of job embeddedness on counterproductive workplace behavior varies from r = .01 to r = -.39. Weighted average correlation obtained from the random-effect model is r = -.09 (p > .05, N = 4,004; 95% C.I. [-.23,.05]). The effect size is not significant, and therefore, H2 and H3 are rejected. The results suggested that job embeddedness is not related to workplace deviance behavior.

Job Embeddedness and Task Performance

From the results of 14 studies, the effect of job embeddedness on task performance varies from r = -.02 to r = .49. Weighted average correlation obtained from the random-effect model is r = .20 (p < .001, N = 6,599; 95 % C.I. [.11,.29]). The effect size is significant, and therefore, H4 is accepted and H5 is rejected. The results suggest that job embeddedness is positively related to task performance

Table 1. Meta-Analysis Results: Job Embeddedness and OCB, CWB, and TP

| Variables | К | N | R | 95 % CI | | Q | I ² (%) |
|--|----|------|--------|---------|-------|-----------|--------------------|
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | |
| Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) | 13 | 4000 | .28*** | .210 | .351 | 55.51*** | 78.38 |
| Counterproductive workplace behavior (CWB) | 10 | 4004 | 09 | 231 | .052 | 143.06*** | 93.71 |
| Task performance (TP) | 14 | 6599 | .20*** | .112 | .291 | 151.97*** | 91.45 |

Note. Effect size calculation based on the random effects model; $k = \text{number of studies included in the analysis; } N = \text{total sample size; } r = \text{weighted average correlation; 95 % CI = 95 % confidence interval; } Q = \text{Cochran's measure of homogeneity; } I^2 = \text{percentage of true heterogeneity.}$

Note. **p* < .05:** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001.

Moderators

Homogeneity analysis was conducted to examine the heterogeneity in the overall effect size. From the results of Table 1, it can be seen that the overall effect size is statistically significant in organizational citizenship behavior (I^2 = 78.38%, Q= 55.51, p<.001), counterproductive workplace behavior (I^2 = 93.71%, Q= 143.06, p<.001), and task performance (I^2 = 91.45%, Q= 151.97, p<.001). Since the heterogeneity is significant among studies, therefore, moderation analysis is conducted using sub-group analysis. The sample size and measurement scale used for independent and dependent variables are examined to explain the heterogeneity in the effect sizes. Studies in the past have conducted a meta-analysis using sample size and measurement scale as moderating variables (Allan et al., 2019).

Table 2. Sub-Group Analysis by Sample Size and Measurement Scale

| Category | Moderators | Classification | К | R | 95 % CI | | $Q_{\scriptscriptstyle b}$ | I ² (%) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-----|---------|-------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | |
| Organizational | Sample Size | >=330 | | .28 | .081 | .462 | 0.30 | 87.01 |
| Citizenship | | <330 | 9 | .29 | .192 | .373 | | 59.54 |
| Behavior | Measurement scale (JE) | Crossley et al. (2007) | 4 | .31 | .071 | .512 | 6.99* | 86.46 |
| | | Mitchell et al. (2001) | 4 | .35 | .322 | .381 | | 0.00 |
| | | Others | 5 | .21 | .071 | .342 | | 69.32 |
| | Measurement scale (OCB) | Van Dyne and LePine (1998) | 2 | .29 | 824 | .941 | 9.71* | 85.22 |
| | | Williams and Anderson (1991) | 2 | .23 | 802 | .922 | | 72.29 |
| | | Lee and Allen (2002) | 2 | .41 | .101 | .654 | | 0.00 |
| | | Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1997) | 2 | .26 | 742 | .900 | | 72.76 |
| | | Others | 5 | .26 | .090 | .411 | | 76.00 |
| Counterproductive Sample Size | | >=400 | 5 | 12 | 263 | .020 | .15 | 57.45 |
| Workplace Behavior | | <400 | 5 | 07 | 074 | 391 | | 96.97 |
| Measurement scale (JE) | | Crossley et al. (2007) | 7 | 14 | 272 | 011 | .76 | 84.58 |
| | | Others | 3 | .01 | 641 | .654 | | 97.26 |
| Measurement scale (CWB) | | Bennett and Robinson (2000) | 4 | .03 | 292 | .351 | 3.87 | 95.26 |
| | | Stewart et al. (2009) | 2 | 13 | 824 | .721 | | 48.94 |
| | | Others | 4 | 21 | 272 | .044 | | 87.02 |
| Task Performance | Sample Size | >=350 | 6 | .24 | .041 | .412 | .56 | 96.07 |
| | | <350 | 8 | .17 | .050 | .293 | | 70.30 |
| | Measurement scale (JE) | Crossley et al. (2007) | 6 | .19 | .021 | .34 | 2.96 | 89.23 |
| | | Mitchell et al. (2001) | 5 | .14 | 010 | 0.271 | | 68.73 |
| | | Others | 3 | .33 | 142 | .673 | | 92.07 |
| | Measurement scale (TP) | Williams and Anderson (1991) | 6 | .14 | 021 | .283 | 6.33* | 85.72 |
| | | Babin and Boles (1998) | 2 | .30 | 162 | .660 | | 0.00 |
| | | Others | 6 | .24 | .042 | .341 | | 90.91 |

Note. k: number of studies; 95 % CI = 95 % confidence interval; Q_b : Q between groups; ; I^2 = percentage of true heterogeneity **Note.***p < .05:*** p < .01; **** p < .001.

Table 2 presents the results of moderation analysis using sub-groups. For organizational citizenship behavior, the sample size is not a significant moderator. The measurement scale used for the independent variable and dependent variable are significant moderators. The effect size is larger and statistically significant when the independent variable (i.e., job embeddedness) is measured with Mitchell et al.'s (2001) scale $[r=.35, (Q_b=6.99, df=2, p<.05)]$. The effect size is higher and statistically significant when the dependent variable (i.e., organizational citizenship behavior) is measured using the instrument of Lee and Allen (2002) $[r=.41, (Q_b=9.71, df=4, p<.05)]$. For counterproductive workplace behavior, none of the moderators are significant. For task performance, sample size and measurement scale used for the independent variable are not significant moderators. However, the measurement used for the dependent variable (i.e., task performance) is a significant moderator. The effect size is larger and statistically significant when task performance is measured with the scale of Babin and Boles (1998) $[r=.30, (Q_b=6.33, df=2, p<.05)]$.

Publication Bias

Publication bias in the studies is tested using two methods, that is, Egger's regression test and Orwin's fail-safe N. Egger's test establishes the asymmetry in the funnel plot (Sutton, 2005, p. 183), and Orwin's fail-safe N summarizes the number of unpublished studies needed to reduce the overall cumulated effect across studies to the point of non-significance (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001, p. 166). For organizational citizenship behavior, the value of the Egger's regression test demonstrates evenness in the funnel plot (t=-.66, df=11, p=.530). In addition, Orwin fail-safe N suggests that additional 1,444 studies need to be appended to the present meta-analysis for rejecting the results ($N_R=1,444>75$; $N_R>5$ K + 10, $N_R=1,544>10$ number of additional studies; $N_R=1,544>10$ number of studies). For counterproductive workplace behavior, the value of Egger's regression test demonstrates evenness in the funnel plot (t=-.25, t=-.25, t=-.25). Furthermore, Orwin fail-safe t=-.25 suggests that additional 1,544 studies need to be appended to the present meta-analysis to reject the results (t=-.25). For task performance, the value of the Egger's regression test demonstrates evenness in the funnel plot (t=-.25, t=-.25). Furthermore, Orwin fail-safe t=-.250 suggests that additional 1,777 studies need to be appended to the present meta-analysis to reject the results (t=-.25).

Discussion

The present meta-analysis quantitatively assesses the relation between job embeddedness and work performance. The results reveal three findings. First, a statistically significant correlation is found between job embeddedness and organizational citizenship behavior. The finding is reliable with previous studies on the relationship between job embeddedness and employees' keen participation in extra-role behaviors (Afsar & Badir, 2016; Lev & Koslowsky, 2012). The results noticeably explain that embedded employees exhibit more OCB compared to less embedded employees. Thus, organizations should constantly strive to embed employees so that they are enmeshed in the organization and reciprocate through OCB. A second key finding is that no significant correlation is seen between job embeddedness and counterproductive workplace behavior.

There is some debate in the literature as to whether the relationship between job embeddedness and counterproductive workplace behavior is positive or negative. However, contrary to the earlier studies, the findings of the current meta-analysis reveal no relation between the two constructs. CWBs can be a result of many other factors such as organizational stressors like financial and social, lack of social support, and lack of trust (Marasi et al., 2016; Singh, 2019) coupled with job confinement. Marasi et al. (2016) explained that embedded employees who lack organizational trust display high workplace deviance engagement. Singh (2019) suggested that lower levels of organizational support and organizational trust can increase the instances of workplace deviance. As a result,

this study suggests that job embeddedness alone is not a determining criterion for workplace deviance. Third, the study's findings reveal a significant and positive correlation between job embeddedness and task performance. Previous research has found both positive and negative effects of job embeddedness on task performance. The findings of the present study suggest a positive relation between job embeddedness and task performance. The findings are supportive of Halbesleben and Wheeler's (2008) observation that job embeddedness improves employees' self-rated performance as well as performance as assessed by colleagues and superiors.

Further, the results of the subgroup analyses provide insights into the reasons for differing results between the studies. Subgroup analysis indicates the strength of association between job embeddedness and organizational citizenship behavior varied by measurement scales used for the independent and dependent variables. The effect size is larger for the studies that adopted the scale of Mitchell et al. (2001) for measuring job embeddedness and for the studies that adopted the scale of Lee and Allen (2002) for measuring organizational citizenship behavior. For the relationship between job embeddedness and task performance, the measurement scale used for the dependent variable (i.e., task performance) is a significant moderator. The effect size is larger and statistically significant for the studies that adopted Babin and Boles's (1998) scale to measure task performance. However, in the relationship between job embeddedness and counterproductive workplace behavior, none of the moderators are significant for explaining the heterogeneity in the effect size.

Implications

The overall results of the present study suggest that job embeddedness and work performance are interrelated, which has some significant practical implications. Organizations interested in employee performance are enthused to reflect on interventions that can embed employees as employee embeddedness appears to have a significant impact on citizenship behavior and task performance. Employee connectedness not only improves employee performance but also can retain employees (Lee et al., 2004). Thus, organizations can employ various methodologies to embed employees, such as activities aimed at linking employees to other people and projects, recruiting and selecting employees based on their fit with the organization, and rewards and benefits tied to longevity (Sekiguchi et al., 2008). Further, organizations should also focus on the skill development of employees via organizing training programs and encouraging employees to participate. Additionally, appraisal practices aimed at continuous feedback for performance improvement should be adopted. These practices can improve embeddedness, and, in turn, improve employee performance.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

This meta-analytic review reveals various limitations and scope for future research. First, extra-role behaviors can be classified on the basis of the object or target of the behavior, like an individual or an organization (OCB-I or OCB-O). OCB directed at individuals or organizations can have different predictors. Thus, future research can further differentiate performance based on the targets to establish if the job embeddedness has a larger impact on behaviors focused on specific individuals or the organization. Second, the performance is measured across three dimensions, that is, OCB, CWB, and TP. Task performance included performance on dimensions like productivity and technical performance. CWB included deviant behaviors aimed at the workplace and individuals. OCB included extra-role behaviors and proactive behaviors. The diversity of performance measures could have impacted the results of the relationship between job embeddedness and work performance. Future research should observe the variations in the type of measures. Lastly, some moderators (such as region of study, time of study, and demographic variables) could not be investigated because of a small number of studies, and therefore, the present study was unable to entirely explain the heterogeneous association. Thus, another meta-analysis can be conducted in the future if more studies are published in this area.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Sakshi Vashisht envisioned the idea and did the groundwork for the study. Dr. Poonam Kaushal extracted quality papers from various reputed publications and conducted an extensive literature study to understand the problem and frame the study's objectives. Data analysis and interpretation were conducted jointly by Dr. Ravi Vashisht and Dr. Sakshi Vashisht. Dr. Poonam Kaushal edited the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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