

JOB EMBEDDEDNESS AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AS PREDICTORS OF JOB PERFORMANCE

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Abstract *World economy is becoming increasingly knowledge driven, and human capital is now considered as a valuable resource, which can provide organisations a competitive advantage. Employee job performance is recognised as vital for the health of an organisation which results in increased interest in other related variables, such as job embeddedness and work engagement that may influence employee job performance.*

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between job embeddedness, work engagement, and employee job performance. The study has been conducted on a sample of 365 IT professionals. The study provides useful insights on how job embeddedness and work engagement influence employee job performance.

Correlational analyses revealed significant relationships between job embeddedness, work engagement and employee job performance. Multiple regression analyses revealed that job performance was significantly predicted by job embeddedness and work engagement.

When designing human resource strategies, management and human resource practitioners need to recognise how job embeddedness and work engagement foster the employee job performance. These findings contribute valuable understanding that can lead to high job performance of employees.

Keywords: *Job Embeddedness, Work Engagement, Job Performance*

INTRODUCTION

The influence of human capital on the success and growth of any organisation is significant and cannot be overlooked in the present business world. The pre-requisite to increased organisational performance and effectiveness is undoubtedly a talented and dedicated workforce, and is recognised as vital for the overall health of an organisation. Though human resources are considered the most important assets of an organisation, a growing area of concern reveals that a very few organisations are able to fully harness its potential (Ahmed & Schroeder, 2003). Additionally, in the light of severe competition, rapid pace of technological shifts, and increasing demands of knowledge workers, effective management of human capital is more challenging than ever before. Another major difficulty is prodigious expectation of organisations from their employees, like to be proactive, innovative and committed towards work and the organisation. These challenges require organisations to build new capabilities and to create an environment where talent can bloom (Bhal, 2002).

Job embeddedness is the construct, recently developed by Mitchell, Holtom, and Lee (2001) which explains why people want to stay. Job embeddedness emphasises on the process of retention or why people persist at their present job. Researches have revealed that job embeddedness predicts voluntary turnover and intentions to quit above and beyond job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). Since job embeddedness is considered to prevent employee withdrawal in a broader sense and consequently, enhance opportunities for the exhibition of in-role and extra-role behaviours, job embeddedness should also be related to employee performance. A less number of studies (Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004) have explored the role of job embeddedness on employee performance and reported that job embeddedness predicts employee performance. Thus, this study looks at the influence of job embeddedness on employee job performance.

For the purpose of this study, employee performance has been analysed in terms of task performance or job performance.

Job performance or task performance or “in-role” are behaviours which are based on the formal job requirements (e.g. behaviours that produce a good or deliver a service, or that support an organisation’s core processes), whereas organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) or “extra-role” behaviours or discretionary behaviours go beyond formal job requirements and promote the effective functioning of the organisation.

Work engagement (WE) is a positive behaviour of the employee toward their work. Work engagement is indicated as having high levels of energy, being enthusiastic about their job, inspired by the job and hardly detaching from the work itself. When an employee has a high work engagement, they will absorb in their jobs and their roles as a member of an organisation. Work engagement also explains why employee works hard and stays on their job and influence the job performance and turnover intention in an organisation.

Keeping this in view, the present study focuses on the role of job embeddedness and work engagement on employee job performance. The present study tests the relationship of key components of job Embeddedness (link, fit, sacrifice), work engagement (vigour, dedication & absorption) and employee job performance in a sample of Indian working population of IT industry.

The study proposes job Embeddedness and work engagement as independent variables and employee job performance as dependent variable. The result of this research might help companies to minimise employee turnover and maximise the work engagement and employee job performance to accomplish the desired goals.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF VARIABLES

Job Embeddedness

Mitchell *et al.* (2001) first conceptualised job embeddedness as “the combined forces that keep a person from leaving his or her job” (Yao, Lee, Mitchell, Burton & Sablinski, 2004, p.159). Mitchell *et al.* (2001) defined job embeddedness as including one’s formal and informal links on the job, compatibility between person’s ability and job requirement, which is called fit and the sacrifices cost involved in leaving the job. According to Burton, Holtom, Sablinski, Mitchell, and Lee (2010), “job embeddedness benefits minimise the impact of negative shocks that cause a person to start thinking about leaving an organisation.”

Links, fit, and sacrifice are the three dimensions of job embeddedness. Links refer to formal or informal connections between a person and institutions or other people; fit refers to an employee’s perceived compatibility or comfort with an organisation and with his or her environment; and sacrifice

refers to the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving a job (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001, pp. 1104-1105). Extremely embedded employees exhibit more job performance than their counterparts.

Work Engagement

Kahn (1990) has pioneered the academic research on engagement using a framework of personal engagement and personal disengagement. Kahn (1990, p. 694) defined work engagement as the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. According to Kahn (1990), engagement reflects a high level of psychological presence when occupying and performing an organisational role. Work engagement has been described as a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Engaged employees are not only more likely to devote physical effort in their work, but because they experience increased meaningfulness in their work, they are also more likely to be cognitively and emotionally attached to their work (Kahn, 1990).

Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) characterised vigour as having high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties (p. 74). The positive state of mind assists employees more willingly take the daily hindrances and challenges of work and invest extra effort to get work done. They characterised dedication as having a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge in one’s work duties (p. 74). The people who have high levels of dedication are not only highly involved in their job duties, but also have a positive affect toward the work they do. Therefore, dedication encompasses a sense of commitment and positive feelings towards one’s assignment. Finally, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) characterised absorption as being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (p. 74). Absorption in one’s work permits one to completely concentrate on his or her task and sifting out what is not appropriate to the work, and absorbed on the essential information to complete the work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Embeddedness

Research related to job embeddedness has mainly inspected the predictive validity of job embeddedness on voluntary turnover, since its conception. For instance, Mitchell *et*

al. (2001) reported empirical support for the usefulness of job embeddedness as an antecedent of voluntary turnover. Mitchell *et al.* (2001) contended that organisations should analyse and understand their employees' lives both on- and off-the job if they want to retain them in the long term. Recently, research on job embeddedness has been extended to include variables other than voluntary turnover. For example, Lee *et al.* (2004) observed further organisational consequences of embedded workforces. They hypothesized that employees who are embedded on-the-job would be more likely to display higher in-role (i.e., job performance) and extra-role (i.e., organisational citizenship behaviour) performance because these individuals are socially enmeshed into the organisation, and consequently are likely to cooperate with and assist coworkers on assignments.

Yao *et al.* (2004) claim that job embeddedness may moderate employee's reaction to procedural injustice such that highly embedded employees who are stuck with the current situation may react more negatively than those with low levels of job embeddedness. Similar argument can be made for LMX instead of procedural justice. That is highly embedded employees may react more negatively than less-embedded employees to the low-quality LMX, which will result in lower employee performance (Sekiguchi, Burton and Sablinski, 2008).

Work Engagement

The topic of work engagement has received enormous attention in the current area of organisational behaviour. It has been found to be associated with several organisational consequences. For instance, Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) conducted a meta-analysis on work engagement by examining 7,939 business units in 36 companies and found that work engagement was significantly and positively related to key outcomes such as customer satisfaction, worker productivity, profit, employee retention, and employee safety. Empirical research on work engagement has recommended that engaged workforces have more positive job attitudes (e.g., Harter *et al.*, 2002), lower turnover (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli 2005), and higher levels of employee performance (e.g., Harter *et al.*, 2002).

RESEARCH GAP AND HYPOTHESIS

The present research is an attempt at examining how these two constructs such as job embeddedness and work engagement affect an employee's job performance. This study contributes to the existing literature in several manners. The concept of job embeddedness is a relatively new concept that has not received much attention. Therefore, the study adds to the small body of literature which exists

on job embeddedness. This structure of job embeddedness has not yet been investigated in the previous literature with similar constructs. In addition to the contributions, this study will delineate useful management implications concerning improvement in performance and retention of employees. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the nature of the relationship between job embeddedness, work engagement and employee job performance.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses proposed for this study are enumerated as follows:

- H1:** Job embeddedness and work engagement are significantly related to job performance.
- H2:** Job embeddedness and work engagement are significant predictors of job performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample for the study consisted of 365 employees working in IT industries of NCR region. Data was collected from the middle level managers through purposive convenience sampling.

Procedure

Written approval was taken from the study organisations, with the assistance of Human Resource department, to collect the data for this research through questionnaires. Questionnaire contained three sections, each pertaining to different variables of the study with a personal information sheet containing the basic information about the respondent like name, age, gender, educational qualification, tenure, designation, marital status etc.

Measures

Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness was measured by a nine-item scale of organisational embeddedness (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). This measure evaluates the fit, links, and sacrifice dimensions of job embeddedness and has worked well in previous studies (Burton *et al.*, 2010; Felps *et al.*, 2009). Sample items include "I feel like, I am a good match for this company" (fit), "I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job" (sacrifice) and "I work closely with my co-workers" (links).

Work Engagement

Work engagement was measured by means of the UWES-9 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), which used a nine-item scale. The scale included all three dimensions of work engagement such as vigour (VI), dedication (DE), and absorption (AB). Responses to items are given on a frequency scale varying from 0 (never) to 6 (always).

Job Performance

A seven-item measure was used to assess job performance, developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). The measure used a seven-point scale, with responses varying from 1 = “Strongly Disagree” to 7 = “Strongly Agree.” The measure assesses how well the individual is doing the job he or she is required to do. A sample item was “Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.”

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 presents the reliability of different scales used in the study. The value of Cronbach alpha for job embeddedness, work engagement, and job performance is 0.81, 0.83, and 0.71 respectively, which clearly indicates that the results are reliable. The reliability indicator shows that it must be more than .7 and these results are visible in this study.

SPSS version 20 was used for data analysis. Study hypotheses were tested through correlation and regression techniques. Multiple regression analysis has been applied as there are more than one independent variables affecting dependent variable.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Scale	Cronbach alpha coefficient	No. of items
Job Embeddedness	.81	9
Work Engagement	.83	9
Job Performance	.71	7

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ORG LINK	12.46	1.65	1								
ORG FIT	11.68	1.76	.34**	1							
ORG SACRIFICE	10.68	2.06	.34**	.56**	1						
ORG JE ALL	34.82	4.31	.68**	.81**	.84**	1					
VIGOUR	15.48	3.34	.23**	.32**	.37**	.40**	1				
DEDICATION	17.42	3.29	.33**	.45**	.46**	.54**	.61**	1			
ABSORPTION	16.97	2.99	.13**	.26**	.20**	.26**	.40**	.48**	1		
WE OVERALL	49.87	7.86	.29**	.42**	.43**	.49**	.83**	.86**	.75**	1	
JOB PERFORMANCE	41.52	4.18	.34**	.26**	.13*	.30**	.29**	.36**	.30**	.39**	1

Source: Author’s own analysis.

Note: **p* < 0.05 level; ** *p* < 0.01.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between job embeddedness and employee performance. To test this notion, correlation is obtained between the sub dimensions of variables. The correlation between job embeddedness and its dimensions that is link, fit sacrifice with job performance is calculated. The r value of job embeddedness and job performance is found (*r*=.30, *p*<0.01) significantly correlated and it states that JE helps individuals to attain the high job performance. Result signifies that higher JE associated with enhanced job performance. In addition, correlation matrix suggests positive correlation between JE and job performance.

Table 2 also explains that there is a significant relationship between work engagement and employee performance. To test this hypothesis, correlation is obtained between the sub dimensions of variables. The correlation between WE and its dimensions (vigour, dedication, absorption) with job performance has been measured. The r value of WE and JP is found (*r*=.39, *p*<0.01) significantly correlated and it states that WE helps individual to attain the high job performance. The correlation value between the sub-dimensions of variables is also showing a significant relationship as shown in correlation matrix.

Table 3: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Job Performance as Dependent Variable with the Dimensions of Job Embeddedness and Work Engagement as Independent Variables

Independent Variables	R	R ²	SEm	F	DF	β
Model1.DV: JP						
OL	.34	.11	3.92	48.82	363	0.34
OL, OF	.37	.14	3.87	29.83	362	0.28, 0.16
OL, OF, OS	.38	.14	3.87	20.61	361	0.30, 0.20, 0.18
Model2. DV: JP						
VI	.30	.08	3.99	34.86	363	0.29
VI, DE	.37	.13	3.88	28.84	362	0.12, 0.28
VI, DE, AB	.39	.15	3.86	21.61	361	0.10, 0.22, 0.14

Source: Authors analysis

Note: JP: job performance, OL: organisation link, OF: organisation fit, OS: organisation sacrifice, VI: vigour, DE: dedication, AB: absorption

To find the best predictor of job performance, multiple regression analysis has been used. This was done with the help of stepwise multiple regression technique. The dimensions of job embeddedness were entered for the stepwise multiple regression analysis which reveals that the dimensions of job embeddedness and work engagement were significant predictors of job performance.

As seen in model 1 of Table 3, the result of stepwise multiple regression reveals that among all the dimensions of job embeddedness, organisational link predicted job performance with multiple R as 0.34 ($F=48.82^{**}$, $p<0.01$, $\beta=0.34$, $R^2=.11$); organisational fit predicted job performance with multiple R as 0.37 ($F=29.83^{**}$, $p<0.01$, $\beta=0.16$, $R^2=.14$); organisational sacrifice predicted job performance with multiple R as 0.38 ($F=20.61^{**}$, $p<0.01$, $\beta=0.18$, $R^2=.14$). Accordingly, organisational link has been found as the strongest predictor of job performance with the calculated β value as .34.

Moreover, model 2 of Table 3 reveals that among all the dimensions of work engagement, vigour predicted job performance with multiple R as 0.30 ($F=34.86^{**}$, $p<0.01$, $\beta=0.29$, $R^2=.08$); dedication predicted job performance with multiple R as 0.37 ($F=28.84^{**}$, $p<0.01$, $\beta=0.28$, $R^2=.13$); absorption predicted job performance with multiple R as 0.39 ($F=21.61^{**}$, $p<0.01$, $\beta=0.14$, $R^2=.15$). Consequently vigour has been found as the strongest predictor of job performance with the calculated β value as .29. As a whole job embeddedness found as the strongest predictor of job performance.

Regression model represents that the significant independent predictors of employee performance were job embeddedness and work engagement (Table 3). The overall model F (66.84), $P<.001$ accounted for .266 of the variance of employee performance, which means job embeddedness and

work engagement have moderate contribution in predicting employee performance.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of the outcomes of the study, it can be recommended that there is a significant relationship between key study variables. The findings indicate that job embeddedness and work engagement lead to better job performance. All hypotheses outlined at the beginning of the article were supported. Lee *et al.* (2004) examined additional organisational outcomes of embedded workforces. They hypothesized that employees who are embedded on-the-job would be more likely to display higher in-role (i.e., job performance) and extra-role (i.e., organisational citizenship behaviour) performance because these individuals are socially enmeshed into the organisation, and therefore are likely to cooperate with and assist coworkers on assignments. In line with the theory, the positive relationship between job embeddedness and job performance, as predicted by H1, was confirmed.

The paper shows that organisational embeddedness is significantly predicting job performance as predicted by H1. The more employees are able to fit in and to establish links in the organisation and the community and, in consequence, the greater the perceived ties, the stronger job embeddedness will be. The paper suggests that the availability of embeddedness resources allows employees to invest those resources, leading to more successful functioning in different roles as employees, thus to better performance behaviours.

In conformance with empirical research on work engagement which suggested that engaged workforces have more positive job attitudes (e.g., Harter *et al.*, 2002), lower turnover (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli 2005), and higher levels of employee performance (e.g., Harter *et al.*, 2002), H2 proposed that work engagement is significantly related to job performance and work engagement significantly predicts job performance.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of practical implications of these findings. In order to obtain the benefits of organisational job embeddedness and work engagement for enhanced job performance, practicing managers should attempt to increase the level of organisational job embeddedness in an effort to maintain positive attitudes of employees. Moreover, professional involvement in community-based social or professional organisations could be encouraged (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). Suggestions to increase organisational job embeddedness include granting supervisor or organisational support, tailoring benefits to meet expatriates' needs and enhance work-life balance abroad (Giosan *et al.*, 2005),

helping employees build links at work and engaging them in long-term projects. The paper also suggests to enhance work engagement as engaged workforces have more positive job attitudes (e.g., Harter *et al.*, 2002), lower turnover (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005), and higher levels of employee job performance.

CONCLUSION

The present research can lead to the better understanding of the study variables and their relationships. The findings will be important, as few studies have examined these constructs simultaneously, consequently the result of the study would help the organisations to understand the influence of organisational job embeddedness and work engagement on employee job performance. This would facilitate the organisations to create working environment conducive for enhanced employee job performance. The present study would give answers a number of questions and makes a contribution to the existent literature.

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