

## **THE BUFFERING EFFECTS OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS ON NEGATIVE SHOCKS**

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## **THE BUFFERING EFFECTS OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS ON NEGATIVE SHOCKS**

### **Abstract**

Unpleasant events are a fact of organizational life. The way in which people respond to such events, however, varies. In the present study, we hypothesized and found that some individuals choose to respond to negative events in ways that helped the organization. Instead of withdrawing in an attempt to “get even” by reducing work outputs, these individuals improved their in-role and extra-role performance. The study examined the role that job embeddedness plays in creating this work enhancement reaction. Specifically, we discovered that on-the-job embeddedness helps reduce the impact of negative shocks on organizational citizenship and overall job performance. The findings of this study have important implications for both theory and practice.

## **THE BUFFERING EFFECTS OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS ON NEGATIVE SHOCKS**

It has long been established that when someone experiences an event they perceive as negative, that person is motivated to remedy the situation (e.g., Adams, 1965). This motivation can be manifested in negative acts such as workplace aggression (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), quitting an organization (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998), increasing absenteeism (Gellatly, 1995), as well as lowering performance (Williams, 1999) and/or organizational citizenship behaviors (Moorman, 1991). However, this motivation to remedy a negative situation or respond to negative events does not apply equally to all individuals (Kamdar, McAllister, & Turban, 2006). Others may try to remedy the situation by working harder or smarter or by being interpersonally more pleasant. In this paper, we utilize two constructs, shocks (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) and job embeddedness (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001), to explain why individuals do not respond uniformly to negative events.

Shocks represent a “push force” on an individual to think about leaving an organization, while job embeddedness represents a “pull force” on a person to remain. While the ideas of shocks and job embeddedness were initially developed to explain why people leave and why people stay in organizations (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mitchell et al., 2001), more recently they have been expanded to explain why people perform and participate within organizations (Sekiguchi, Burton, & Sablinski, 2008; Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004). We propose that a person’s level of job embeddedness influences how one responds to a perceived negative event. We argue that job embeddedness buffers the negative effect of these events on a person’s performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). By integrating forces that “push” someone to think about leaving and those that “pull” people to stay, we hope to extend and inform the theory and research on job embeddedness and shocks.

## **CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESES**

## **Unfolding Model**

In 1994, Lee and Mitchell developed an alternative theory to explain how and why people leave organizations, which they call the “unfolding model of turnover.” One of the major components of this model is the notion of shocks. As defined by Lee and Mitchell (1994: 51), “A shock is a particular, jarring event that initiates the psychological analyses involved in quitting a job.” In other words, shocks are events that cause a person to begin to think about leaving. Many events happen on the job, and some of them may be positive, but a given event does not cause everyone to think about leaving. Instead, Lee and Mitchell (1994) argue that an event causes some people to consider leaving an organization when the event matches some pre-existing plan for leaving (e.g., if my wife gets promoted, I will leave my job) or violates a person’s values or interferes with goal attainment (e.g., unfairly passed over for promotion).

Although Lee and Mitchell indicate that shocks can be construed as positive or negative events, for the purposes of this research and to control for confounding effects, we focused our attention only on events that are rated as negative by the participants. This helps control for the fact that many individuals may report experiencing the same event (e.g., a takeover), but some may view it as positive, while some may view it as negative. In addition, research has clearly indicated that negative events are much more salient to individuals in organizations than positive events (e.g., Oishi, Diener, Choi, Kim-Prieto, & Choi, 2007).

When an individual experiences a shock that violates his/her values or perception of fairness, it is likely to influence subsequent attitudes and behaviors. In the case where the individual experiences some discomfort, has thoughts of leaving, but does not leave the organization, the impact of the shock may be manifest in other workplace outcomes, such as performance or OCBs. Research by Hulin and his associates (e.g., Hanisch & Hulin, 1990; Hulin, 1991; Hanisch, Hulin, & Roznowski, 1998) has demonstrated that individuals often

withdraw from unfavorable work situations in multiple ways. Rather than quitting an organization, individuals may increase their tardiness, absenteeism, or lower their work effort. In addition, Chen, Hui, and Sego (1998) demonstrated that OCBs can also be one form of work withdrawal. In fact, they argue that OCBs may be an excellent indicator of work withdrawal because individuals may believe they will be punished for reducing their effort on the job (i.e., in-role performance), but they are unlikely to believe they can be punished for reducing extra-role performance (i.e., OCBs). In this case, individuals see reducing their OCBs as one method to alleviate discomfort when dealing with an unfavorable situation while maintaining their organizational membership. Therefore, one may expect that when individuals experience a negative event that causes them to think about leaving, but they remain at the organization, this may negatively influence their performance and OCBs.

In addition, research on distributive justice and Equity Theory demonstrates that when someone experiences an injustice, including some of the events which Lee and Mitchell (1994) describe as negative shocks, this can lead to distress (Greenberg, 2004). In fact, research has shown that when individuals experience a negative event, such as finding out when they are being paid less than their coworkers, the associated feelings of distress can lead to emotional exhaustion, health complaints, increased absenteeism (Taris, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2002), as well as feelings of anxiety and depression (Tepper, 2001). In addition, feelings of injustice, such as being underpaid, have been shown to be related to lower performance and lower OCBs (Greenberg, 1990). Given the long history of research associating negative events with a variety of negative individual and organizational outcomes, in this study we do not focus on the direct effects of negative events. Instead, we seek to understand how job embeddedness moderates the relationship between a negative event, the associated thoughts of leaving, and the subsequent performance and OCBs by the employee.

## **Job Embeddedness**

In 2001, Mitchell et al. introduced the job embeddedness concept. It is focused on the broad array of factors that influence a person's staying in a job. The key aspects of job embeddedness are the links an employee has to other people or groups in the organization or community, how he or she fits in the organization or community and, lastly, what the employee would sacrifice upon leaving the organization, both on and off the job. These three dimensions are called links, fit and sacrifice. They are important in both the organization and the community.

Since the theory was first published, a number of studies have confirmed its predictive capacity. Across two samples, Mitchell et al. (2001) found job embeddedness significantly predicted subsequent voluntary turnover after controlling for gender, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job search and perceived alternatives. Additional research has demonstrated the utility of job embeddedness as a predictor of voluntary turnover (Allen, 2006; Crossley, Bennett, Jex & Burnfield, 2007; Trevor & Nyberg, 2008; Felps, Hekman, Mitchell, Lee, Harman, & Holtom, 2009).

Although the initial focus of research on job embeddedness was examining its relationship to voluntary turnover, more recent studies have expanded its predictive nature to other important organizational outcomes. For example, Lee et al. (2004) extended the theory and research on job embeddedness from turnover to other organizationally relevant employee behaviors such as absenteeism, OCBs, and performance. First, they disaggregated job embeddedness into its two major sub-dimensions (organization and community). Their analyses showed that off-the-job embeddedness was a significant predictor of employee turnover and volitional absences. Interestingly, on-the-job embeddedness predicted both in-role and extra-role performance. More recently, Sekiguchi, Burton, and Sablinski (2008) demonstrated that on-the-

job embeddedness is an important intervening variable between perceptions of leader-member exchange and subsequent employee performance and OCBs.

In sum, there is accumulating evidence that job embeddedness explains significant variance in turnover, absenteeism, job performance and OCBs. What is less clear currently is how job embeddedness may interact with the effects of shocks in predicting a variety of organizational outcomes. Because we are especially interested in understanding those factors over which organizations have control, we focus only on the on-the-job aspects of job embeddedness. Past research has demonstrated that on-the-job embeddedness was more predictive of performance and OCBs than off-the-job embeddedness (Lee et al., 2004). In addition, in this study we are interested in examining how factors related to the workplace (i.e., perceived negative events on the job) interact with job embeddedness to predict performance and OCBs. On-the-job embeddedness, determined by work-related fit, sacrifice, and links, should interact more strongly, than off-the-job embeddedness, with other work-related events.

### **The Buffering Effect of Job Embeddedness on Negative Shocks**

Although we expect there are direct effects among embeddedness, shocks, performance, and OCBs, we feel it is more important to examine the interaction of these variables. According to Mitchell and Lee (2001), the occurrence of a negative event may prompt an individual to think about leaving, but the effect of that shock on subsequent employee performance and OCBs should decrease the more one is job embedded (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Cognitive dissonance theory, specifically the forced compliance model (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959), provides one view of how this might occur. Under the forced compliance model, when one experiences a negative event, but makes the decision to stay due to their high level of job embeddedness, that individual will justify such a decision in at least two ways. First, they will become more concerned with trying to stay in the organization. Thus, they will try to avoid situations where

their performance is questioned, they get passed over for promotion, or earn less than a comparable coworker. In other words, they may increase their level of performance and/or OCBs to avoid these types of negative events in the future. Second, since they have withstood one level of a “force to leave” (i.e., the shock) it will take an even stronger negative event to make them consider leaving in the future.

A complementary theoretical perspective comes from the escalation of commitment literature (Brockner, 1992; Staw, 1981). Put differently, when highly embedded individuals seek to achieve a goal or set of goals, they will continue to exert effort, perhaps even increasing their effort to cement their relationship with the organization even in the face of negative feedback or a shock along the way.

In addition, a shock is an event that generates information and prompts an evaluation of one’s job. An employee’s interpretation of the shock depends on the social and cognitive context that surrounds the shock experience (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Inderrieden, 2005). Whether the shock eventually results in turnover or other actions depends on this interpretive process. Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Eberly (2008) recently argued that when someone experiences a shock, but chooses to remain with the organization, the individual is likely to interpret and experience future events differently (e.g., not view them so negatively, etc.).

The degree to which one is embedded in a job or organization is likely to influence or provide part of the context in which one interprets a shocks. Individuals who are highly embedded are also highly involved with their organizations, or at least have high expectations for future interactions with individuals and groups in their organizations (Sekiguchi et al., 2008). Highly embedded individuals have a high degree of fit with their organization (i.e., their values match), they have a high degree of interconnectedness with their peers (i.e., links), and they would give up a lot if they quit their organization (i.e., outcome involvement or sacrifice).

According to Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall (1965), individuals who are highly involved in a situation are more resistant to outside influences. In fact, Johnson and Eagly (1989) found in a meta-analysis that individuals who are highly involved are more closed-minded and less reactive to stimuli that are inconsistent with their preconceived notions. In addition, Fairness Heuristic Theory (e.g., Lind, 2001; Van den Bos, Lind, & Wilke, 2001) argues that when individuals identify with or expect a high level of future interaction with a group or organization (like someone who is highly embedded), their fairness judgments are activated early in the relationship and are resistant to change, even when experiencing negative events that are counter to their preconceived perceptions of justice. For these reasons, we believe that individuals with high levels of job embeddedness are not as likely to be influenced by shocks that are perceived as negative.

*Hypothesis 1: A person's level of on-the-job embeddedness will moderate the relationship between a negative shock (the combination of a negative event and thoughts of leaving) and performance such that individuals with high levels of embeddedness will be affected less by the shock than individuals with low levels of job embeddedness.*

*Hypothesis 2: A person's level of on-the-job embeddedness will moderate the relationship between a negative shock (the combination of a negative event and thoughts of leaving) and OCBs such that individuals with high levels of embeddedness will be affected less by the shock than individuals with low levels of job embeddedness.*

## METHODS

### Procedures and Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from a regional operational center of a large international financial institution.<sup>1</sup> One of the authors of the present study was present during the course of three days when the employees were granted time to complete the survey onsite. All

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<sup>1</sup> The data collected in this paper were part of a larger study of job embeddedness. None of the analyses reported in this paper have been published elsewhere.

surveys were returned to the researcher. In addition, a few weeks later, supervisors of the employees were asked to complete a survey measuring the performance and OCBs of each of their employees. Participants provided their name so that we could match the various surveys.

For this study, 814 employees (49.3% response rate) provided their consent to agree to participate in the study and completed the survey. Of these 814 employees, we received 623 responses (76.5% response rate) from supervisors where we were able to match the supervisor survey with the employee survey. Seventy-six percent of the employees were female. The employees' average age was 34.3 ( $SD = 9.74$ ) and they averaged 6.52 ( $SD = 5.15$ ) years with their employer.

## Measures

*Job embeddedness in the organization.* Participants rated their perceived level of embeddedness in the organization with 9 items (Felps et al., 2009). Sample items include, "I feel like I am a good match for my organization" and "I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job" (1 to 5 scale). To be consistent with past research on this scale, we created our composite measure by averaging the various sub-dimensions (mean = 2.27,  $SD = .56$ ). This approach allows us to equally weight the influence of the different dimensions of on-the-job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Because individual job embeddedness is a formative (or indicator) construct, high internal consistency (e.g., coefficient alpha) or unidimensionality (e.g., one factor model) are not the standards by which the construct validity should be judged (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). However, for descriptive purposes we calculated a composite reliability that does not assume equal item loadings (e.g., MacKenzie, Posdakoff, & Jarvis, 2005; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The composite reliability is .77, indicating appropriate scale reliability.

*Negative Events.* Through focus groups and interviews with supervisors and the

organization, the researchers generated a list of events that employees had indicated that they had experienced at the organization and had caused them to consider leaving (e.g., unexpected negative performance evaluation, lower-than-expected raise, passed over for promotion, and learning about what your coworkers were being paid). Although there are undoubtedly other events the participants experienced, the events included in the survey were commonly mentioned as reasons for thinking about leaving. In addition, these events were chosen because they have a common underlying theme (e.g., perceived unfair treatment) and because these were clearly classified as negative by the focus groups. Participants of this study indicated whether they experienced one of the four events or not (coded as 1 or 0). In addition, since some individuals in the study may view some of the events as positive (e.g., they did not want to get promoted, etc.), if the participant indicated they had experienced the event, they were also asked to rate the event as positive, neutral, or negative. As stated earlier, for this study we only included the response if the participant indicated they experienced the event and rated it negatively. To create our negative event measure, we summed the total number of negative events that the participants had experienced in the four categories listed above (mean = 2.03, SD = .92).

*Thoughts of Leaving.* When participants in this study indicated that they experienced the negative event, they also indicated how much the particular event caused them to think about leaving (1 = none; 2 = some; 3 = a lot). To create our thoughts of leaving construct, we summed the ratings of the extent to which the participants thought about leaving after experiencing the four negative events listed earlier (mean = 4.84, SD = 2.82). By summing the amount each participant thought about leaving after experiencing the negative events, we are able to capture the collective effects of the events on a person's thoughts of leaving.

*Performance and OCBs.* Supervisors of the employees who participated in the sample provided performance and OCB ratings. Performance was measured with six items (1 = never; 5

= always) adapted from Williams and Anderson (1991). Principal axis factor analysis with Varimax rotation revealed one factor. The six items were averaged to form our composite of performance (mean = 4.08, SD = .64, alpha = .91). Organizational citizenship behaviors were measured with eight items (1 = never; 5 = always) adapted from VanDyne and LePine (1998). Factor analysis with Varimax rotation revealed one factor. The eight items were averaged to form our measure of OCBs (mean = 3.08, SD = .88, alpha = .94).

*Control Variables.* In order to account for alternative explanations to our findings, we controlled for the participants' perceived job alternatives and organizational tenure. Perceived job alternatives may be an alternative explanation to our findings because people who have no alternatives may work harder when they experience a shock because they know they cannot leave. In addition, it is likely that a person's tenure with the organization will be related to supervisor-rated performance and OCBs (Sturman, 2003). *Perceived job alternatives* were measured using two items developed by Griffeth & Hom (1988). On the basis of our focus groups with the organization prior to administering the survey, we noted that relatively few comparable jobs were available in this geographic region. For this reason, we created three additional items to capture the possibility of individuals considering leaving for non-work options as well as the desirability of the available alternative jobs (e.g. "If you received a job offer today, to what extent would you consider accepting it?"). The five items demonstrated acceptable reliability (mean = 3.05, SD = .77, alpha = .72). *Organizational tenure* was measured with one fill-in-the-blank item (mean = 6.52 years, SD = 5.15).

Finally, it is important to note the timing of the measurements and their meaning. In this study, when people rate the negative events and the associated thoughts of leaving, these are events that happened in the past. However, the questions that measure job embeddedness refer to the present (i.e., how embedded they are at the moment). In addition, supervisor ratings of job

performance and OCBs were made subsequent to the gathering of job embeddedness (although not by a long time). The sequence of events represented by this measurement process is the experience of past negative events → past thoughts of leaving but make the decision to stay → assessment of current job embeddedness → assessment of job performance and OCBs.

## RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix for the variables in this study are presented in Table 1. In addition, all analyses were checked for violations of the assumptions of the normal error regression model (e.g., linear function, homogeneity of variance, etc.).

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Please insert Table 1 about here  
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Hypotheses 1 and 2 indicate that individuals with high levels of job embeddedness would be less likely to have decreases in performance and OCBs in response to perceived shocks (i.e., experience of a negative event and the associated thoughts of leaving) than people with low levels of job embeddedness. Given that we expect a negative event to influence thoughts of leaving and this effect to be moderated by job embeddedness, we conducted a moderated-mediation regression analysis<sup>2</sup>. To demonstrate moderated-mediation, three models must be analyzed (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005):

1.  $Y = \beta_1 + \beta_2(\text{Negative Events}) + \beta_3(\text{Embeddedness}) + \beta_4(\text{Negative Events} \times \text{Embeddedness})$
2.  $\text{Thoughts of Leaving} = \beta_5 + \beta_6(\text{Negative Events}) + \beta_7(\text{Embeddedness}) + \beta_8(\text{Negative Events} \times \text{Embeddedness})$
3.  $Y = \beta_9 + \beta_{10}(\text{Negative Events}) + \beta_{11}(\text{Embeddedness}) + \beta_{12}(\text{Negative Events} \times \text{Embeddedness}) + \beta_{13}(\text{Thoughts of Leaving}) + \beta_{14}(\text{Thoughts of Leaving} \times \text{Embeddedness})$ .

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<sup>2</sup> We also conducted simple moderated regression by creating a variable that combined a negative event and the associated thoughts of leaving and then examined the influence of job embeddedness had on the relationship between the shock and job performance and OCBs. The results using this approach were very similar to the moderated-mediation analyses.

Based on the hypothesized model, we expect the interaction between thoughts of leaving (our mediator) and embeddedness (our moderator) to be significant in equation 3. We would also expect to see an overall effect of our negative events on thoughts of leaving (i.e.,  $\beta_6$  is significant) in equation 2. Please note that we would also expect that  $\beta_2$  is significant while  $\beta_4$  in equation 1 is not significant. However, there is some disagreement whether  $\beta_2$  needs to be significant, especially when there is a theoretically distal effect between two variables and the distal relationship between these variables is likely influenced by one or more intervening processes (e.g., Shrout & Bolger, 2002). If we find that the interaction between thoughts of leaving and embeddedness in equation 3 ( $\beta_{14}$ ) and negative events significantly predicts thoughts of leaving in equation 2, then this indicates prototypical moderated-mediation (Muller et al., 2005).

When conducting the moderated-mediation analyses, all predictor variables were centered to avoid problems with multicollinearity when examining interactions (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen, 1978). When examining the results (Table 2), we found a significant moderation-mediation effect for performance and OCBs after controlling for the participants' perceptions of job alternatives and length of organizational tenure. Specifically, negative events were marginally significantly related to performance ( $b = -.07$ ,  $t = -1.35$ ,  $p < .10$ ) and OCBs ( $b = -.07$ ,  $t = -1.42$ ,  $p < .10$ ) in equation 1. In addition, the results indicate a significant interaction among the mediator and moderator for both performance (Change in  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $F = 2.91$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and OCBs (Change in  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $F = 3.68$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in equation 3 and a significant effect of negative events on thoughts of leaving ( $b = .72$ ,  $t = 27.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in equation 2.

To further examine these significant interactions, we utilized the approach suggested by Aiken and West (1991). As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 high levels of job embeddedness

appear to buffer the effect of thoughts of leaving associated with negative events. In fact, it appears that when someone experiences a negative event and thinks about leaving, but they are highly embedded, they perform slightly better and engage in more OCBs.

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Please insert Table 2 and Figures 1-2 about here

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## DISCUSSION

Job-related negative shocks are unpleasant events in the organizational life of an employee. However, not everyone reacts to these events in the same way. In the present study, we found that some individuals who experienced negative events and thought about leaving but were highly embedded chose to invest their energies in ways that may help the organization. Instead of withdrawing in an attempt to “get even” by reducing work outputs, these individuals re-focus their efforts, perform well and contribute to the overall health of the organization via OCBs. Thus, it is important to understand why some individuals are resilient to shocks and why they bolster their efforts in the face of negative events. Our study suggested that job embeddedness plays a role in creating this buffering effect. Specifically, we discovered that on-the-job embeddedness helps reduce the impact of shocks (thoughts of leaving linked to on-the-job negative events) on organizational citizenship and overall job performance. The findings of this study have several implications for both theory and practice.

### Implications for Theory

Although our study did not specifically focus on justice violations, our measurement of negative events included items that can be thought of as justice violations. As management scholars continue to examine shocks (Griffeth, Hom, Allen, Morse, & Weinhardt, 2008), job embeddedness and performance (Sekiguchi et al., 2008), and what employees assess when

making justice judgments (Choi, 2008), our study provides one possible insight into reasons why some individuals react to perceived injustices in positive ways. By examining shocks and the moderating influence of job embeddedness on in-role and extra-role performance, we signal a path for theoretical and empirical integration. More specifically, the results provide insight into how forces operating to push people to quit and to pull people to stay may occur simultaneously. Thus, using the two theories in combination provides clarity for both researchers and practitioners. Future research should explore more specifically the relationship between justice violations and job embeddedness on a variety of organizational outcomes.

Following the call of Johns (2006) and others (e.g., Steel, 2002), our study brings more contextual factors into research on job embeddedness and shocks. The present study incorporates time as an important foundation in this process. The data were collected in such a fashion to capture individuals' retrospective self-reported on-the-job negative event information and thoughts of leaving occurring prior to reporting their current level of job embeddedness. In addition, the supervisor-rated job performance and OCBs were collected after the job embeddedness data were collected. Thus, we have prior negative events and associated thoughts of leaving followed by one's present level of job embeddedness followed by supervisor-rated job performance and OCBs. This timing component is important in understanding the importance of job embeddedness in the process of ameliorating the negative effects of shocks on performance and OCBs.

### **Practical Implications**

Our study's focus on negative on-the-job shocks and job embeddedness in the organization has important implications for HR practitioners. Clearly, organizations can benefit from attempting to improve the level of on-the-job embeddedness for their employees. Mitchell, Lee and colleagues (2001, 2004) have provided a foundation of empirical evidence to highlight

the positive contributions of embeddedness related to turnover, absenteeism, performance, and OCBs. Thus, organizations should attempt to create organizational cultures where fit, links and sacrifice can be enhanced (Holtom, Mitchell, & Lee, 2006). For example, work by Mossholder, Settoon, and Henagan (2005) and Krackhardt and Hanson (1993) can help us understand how “network centrality” and informal networks can help dampen the effect of perceived shocks. These factors help employees by giving them avenues for bolstering their interconnectedness and allowing for social support and advice sharing (especially in the face of negative feedback) to buffer shocks. In addition, assessing employee levels of job embeddedness on a periodic basis can also allow managers to be better prepared for managing the delivery of bad news (Holtom, et al., 2005). For example, performance appraisal and promotion cycles can be carefully monitored and managers can be prepared to intervene, especially when an employee’s job embeddedness is thought to be low.

Organizations must continue to strive to socialize new employees and provide them with ways to become more embedded in the organization. Based upon the findings of the present study and from research examining the unfolding model (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) and shocks (Griffeth et al., 2008), the fact remains that negative shocks do occur – even in “good” organizations. This unpleasant side of organizational life is rarely highlighted by HR managers, however, their negative effects can be reduced by emphasizing job embeddedness and being prepared for the reality that shocks do occur and will continue in the future.

## **Limitations**

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, information was not recorded regarding the details surrounding the various shocks, how negative they were, if they occurred once or more than once, and the organizational context. Second, other constructs that might also explain reactions to negative events were not assessed (e.g., equity sensitivity: O’Neill & Mone,

1998). Also, as highlighted by Allen (2006) and Trevor and Nyberg (2008), information regarding the company's HR practices and socialization approaches during the time of our study would have been helpful to understand as well. Having objective measures of the actual events as well as the organizational practices would provide clear background for understanding employee perceptions of the events and subsequent reactions.

In addition, we report a relatively small change in R-square in our findings and some of the results were only marginally significant (i.e.,  $p < .10$ ). However, considering we only studied negative shocks and focused our attention on one major sub-dimension of job embeddedness (i.e., on-the-job embeddedness) we found support for our theorized relationships. That is, our focus in this research was fairly narrow. In addition, given that the supervisor-rated performance and OCBs were very high in this sample, we were limited by restricted variance. A more thorough study is needed that examines other types of events in more detail, broader measures of embeddedness and other behavioral outcomes.

### **Future research**

The results of this study highlight many avenues for future research. For example, the link between job embeddedness and organizational justice can be explored for relationships with other key employee attitudes (e.g., commitment) and behaviors (e.g., absenteeism). Managers may also wish to examine the various shocks that are occurring in their own organizations via exit interviews and surveys and consider acknowledging them during the early socialization phase of an employee's career. By incorporating a "realistic shock preview" into a traditional realistic job preview, HR managers can help frame such events to reduce negative perceptions of procedural, distributive and interactional justice in their organizations.

In addition, future research may want to explore how various individual difference and situational variables may influence job embeddedness and how the individual reacts to negative

events, such as shocks. For example, positive and negative affectivity (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) may influence one's level of embeddedness and their response to shocks. Someone with high levels of positive affectivity may be more likely to become embedded via links with other coworkers and perceptions of fit than someone with high levels of negative affectivity. In addition, it may be that someone with high levels of negative affectivity may be more likely than someone with positive affectivity to rate some event as negative and react negatively to it. Other constructs, such as organization-based self-esteem (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989), coping style (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989), perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), or social learning (Bandura, 1973) from coworkers or supervisors may have similar effects.

In closing, our results suggest that the buffering effects of job embeddedness on shocks are instructive on both the theoretical and practical level. When individuals face what they believe to be negative situations, organizations may be able to influence how their employees respond. This knowledge provides a fruitful direction for both scholars and practitioners alike.

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**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations<sup>a, b</sup>**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Job Embeddedness	2.27	.56	(.77)					
2. Negative Events	2.03	.92	-.13***					
3. Thoughts of Leaving <sup>c</sup>	4.84	2.82	-.28***	.80***				
4. Performance	4.08	.65	.08*	.01	.05	(.91)		
5. OCBs	3.07	.88	.16***	-.01	.04	.61***	(.94)	
6. Job Alternatives	3.05	.77	-.38***	.17***	.34***	.04	.03	(.72)
7. Org. Tenure	6.52	5.15	-.02	.27***	.30***	.25***	.20***	.04

<sup>a</sup> \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

<sup>b</sup> Numbers in parentheses are coefficient alpha, except for job embeddedness which reports a composite alpha.

<sup>c</sup> Thoughts of Leaving = Thoughts of leaving associated with the experience of a negative event

**Table 2 - Results of Moderated-Mediation Regression Analyses<sup>a,b</sup>****Performance as Dependent Variable**

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2 (TAL<sup>c</sup>)</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Job Alternatives	.09 <sup>+</sup>	.17****	.08
Org. Tenure	.27***	.10***	.25***
Negative Event	-.07 <sup>+</sup>	.72***	-.10
Embeddedness-Org <sup>e</sup>	.11*	-.12***	.12**
N.E. x Emb-Org <sup>f</sup>	-.04	-.02	-.13*
Thoughts of Leaving	--	--	.06
TAL x Emb-Org	--	--	.13*
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.08	.70	.09
Change in R <sup>2g</sup>	.00	.00	.01*

**OCBs<sup>d</sup> as Dependent Variable**

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2 (TAL<sup>c</sup>)</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Job Alternatives	.11*	.17****	.10 <sup>+</sup>
Org. Tenure	.22***	.10***	.20***
Negative Event	-.07 <sup>+</sup>	.72***	-.16*
Embeddedness-Org <sup>e</sup>	.20***	-.12***	.22***
N.E. x Emb-Org <sup>f</sup>	-.05	-.02	-.16*
Thoughts of Leaving	--	--	.13 <sup>+</sup>
TAL x Emb-Org	--	--	.14*
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.08	.70	.10
Change in R <sup>2g</sup>	.00	.00	.01*

<sup>a</sup> \*\*\* p < .001, \*\* p < .01, \*p < .05, + p < .10 (Note: For our control variables, we used 2-tailed tests since no direction is predicted. For the hypotheses, we used 1-tailed tests given the predicted directionality.)

<sup>b</sup> Standardized betas are reported from the final regression equation. All variables were centered prior to the analyses.

<sup>c</sup> TAL = Thoughts of leaving associated with the experience of a negative event

<sup>d</sup> OCBs = Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

<sup>e</sup> Embeddedness-Org. = Embeddedness in Organization

<sup>f</sup> N.E. x Emb-Org = The interaction of Negative Event with Embeddedness in Organization

<sup>g</sup> Change in R<sup>2</sup> for the addition of the interaction to the regression equation.

**Figure 1: Interaction of Thoughts of Leaving and Embeddedness-Organization on Performance**

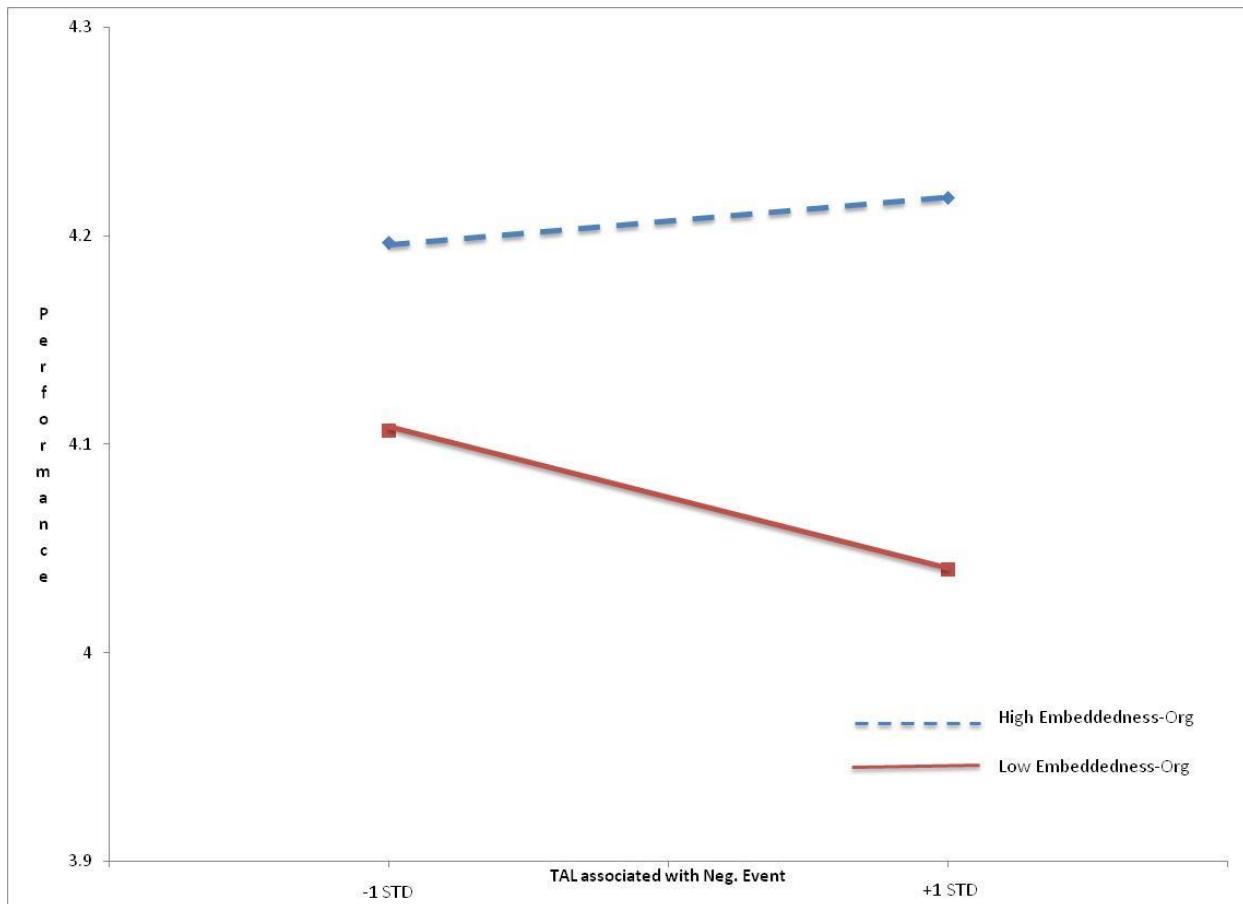


Figure 2: Interaction of Thoughts of Leaving and Embeddedness-Organization on OCBs

