

An Integrated Employee Retention Model for Performance

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Abstract

Understanding the dynamics of employee retention has long been a focus of organizational research, with diverse theories exploring why employees choose to stay or leave. Traditional models highlight factors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment as primary influences. However, modern frameworks like the unfolding model and job embeddedness offer fresh perspectives. Job embeddedness emphasizes connections, alignment, and sacrifices that anchor individuals to their organizations and communities. This study employs a narrative literature review to synthesize key theories and models on employee retention, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job embeddedness. The study identifies emerging trends and gaps by analyzing peer-reviewed research, theoretical frameworks, and industry reports, offering a comprehensive perspective on retention strategies for enhanced organizational performance. Integration of these frameworks has emerged as a promising approach to comprehensively understanding employee retention for performance. The proposed integrated model underscores how embedded, satisfied, and committed employees exhibit stronger retention tendencies, enhancing individual and organizational performance. Combining embeddedness with traditional determinants enhances insights into retention strategies for performance.

Keywords: Turnover intention, job embeddedness, employee retention, job satisfaction, job performance

Introduction

A range of theories has been developed to explain why employees choose to stay with or leave their organization. Many researchers acknowledge that understanding employee turnover is challenging and multifaceted (Hom et al., 2019; Rubenstein et al., 2018; Shafique et al., 2024; Yuan et al., 2024). High turnover rates can significantly affect an organization's performance (Fortunato & Calvosa, 2024; Hancock et al., 2017), undermining both productivity and the quality of services delivered (Moon et al., 2023a; Walumbwa et al., 2019). Traditional approaches have emphasized elements, e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the availability of alternative employment opportunities, as primary determinants of employee retention. However, more recent theories provide a different perspective. For instance, the unfolding model suggests that employees leave their organization in response to a "shock" event, while the job embeddedness framework posits that individuals remain in their jobs due to the connections (links), alignment (fit), and sacrifices associated with their roles in both the organization and the broader community.

Even with the insights presented by these frameworks, researchers highlight the necessity to integrate contemporary theories with traditional models to develop a more comprehensive understanding of employee retention. While investigating the relationship between employee task performance and turnover, Allen and Griffeth (1999) noted that the ease of movement to a new job and the attractiveness of the offer must be considered for developing the turnover model. Furthermore, their study stressed the need to integrate the contemporary approach to further improve understanding in this area. Likewise, Joseph et al. (2007) also emphasize how recent theories like the unfolding model and job embeddedness model can supplement more classic designs like the organizational equilibrium theory of March and Simon (1958). They recommended bringing these perspectives together to yield new insights into withdrawal cognitions and suggesting new lines of future research on employee retention.

This study implemented a narrative literature review approach to observe the key theories, models, and empirical studies related to employee retention, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job embeddedness. A narrative literature review is appropriate for synthesizing existing research and allows for an all-inclusive, flexible, and contextually rich discussion of relevant literature. It identifies theoretical advancements, emerging trends, and research gaps.

To form a logical and comprehensible narrative, literature was selected based on relevance, theoretical contribution, and value addition to the emerging picture of employee retention. The greater part of the literature for the

study encompassed peer-reviewed articles from journals, seminal studies, empirical research, and case studies. Literature was obtained from high-impact journals and academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR to ensure academic rigor. Efforts were made to include diverse perspectives to enrich the discussion.

The literature was examined with a thematic approach, which grouped studies into central research areas that describe employee retention knowledge. The themes were developed through an iterative process to ensure that various theoretical viewpoints were integrated. The categorization includes classical, contemporary, and other employee retention perspectives. This study comparatively analyzes these models and their implications for organizations.

Early Attempts at Model Integration

Employee retention is problematic in organizations with high turnover, adversely influencing service quality and productivity (Shafique et al., 2024; Yuan et al., 2024). From all classical perspectives, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are the core constructs that explain turnover. These were not network-based variables; job embeddedness and the unfolding model captured the situation and dynamic factors that decide whether the employee will stay or leave the organization. The existing literature also endorses integrating traditional and contemporary models to understand employee retention deeply. An integrated model that comprehensively captures is missing in the literature, thus limiting our capability to predict and design employee retention strategies. To address this gap, the current study suggests an integrated employee retention model, which, on one hand, retains classical wisdom and also incorporates the modern perspective also. We believe this will enhance our capacity to accurately predict and thus manage the pivotal issue of employee retention.

Integration of the unfolding voluntary turnover model with job embeddedness is recommended to enrich understanding of the phenomenon (Mitchell & Lee, 2001), ultimately improving organizations' capacity to overcome the problem of employee turnover or improve retention. They also highlighted the need to develop an integrated employee turnover model to mitigate "shocks" that will otherwise deteriorate employees' turnover intentions. Holtom and Inderrieden (2006) connected the key elements of the unfolding framework with job embeddedness. They concluded that the links with the organization, the fit within the work environment, and a feeling of sacrifice while leaving the organization create a buffer against employee turnover. Crossley et al. (2007) extended this research by integrating job

embeddedness with traditional approaches, such as job satisfaction. They posited that job embeddedness not only absorbs shocks but also alleviates dissatisfaction.

Building on these insights, a comprehensive, integrated employee retention model that encompasses both traditional and contemporary approaches is needed. This model should explore the interaction of various antecedents of employee retention within new contexts. The proposed integrated employee retention model is depicted in the Figure.

Proposed Integrated Model

An integrative model of employee retention determinants is proposed, combining conventional and contemporary approaches. The model highlights the interaction of three main factors: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job embeddedness. The model suggests that organizational commitment, job embeddedness, and job satisfaction collectively impact performance by promoting retention. Highly embedded, satisfied, and committed employees exhibit reduced job search behaviors, stronger intentions to stay, and longer tenure within the organization. Consequently, both individual and organizational performances are enhanced.

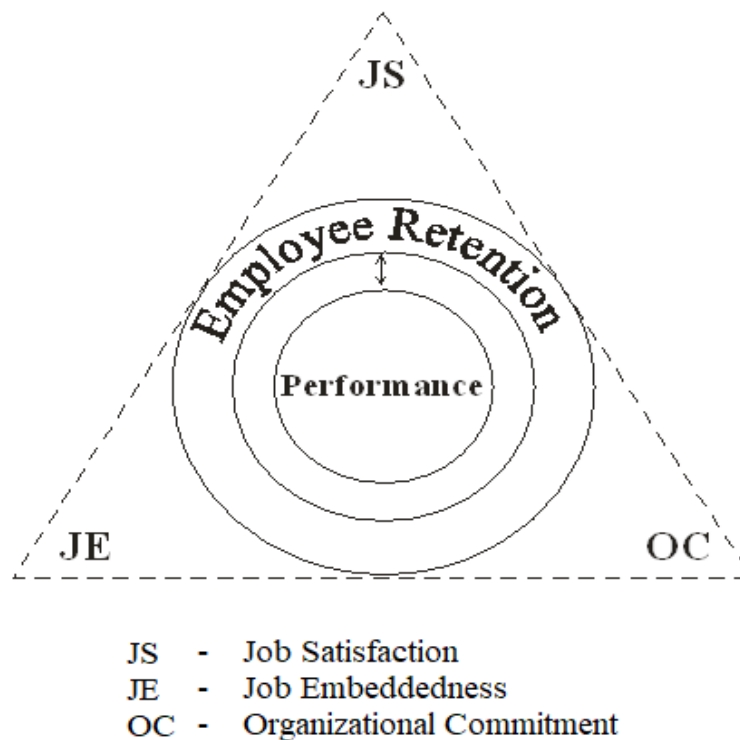


Figure 1. *Integrated Model of Employee Retention for Performance*

Main Determinants of Employee Retention

The first determining factor of employee retention is job satisfaction, which refers to an individual's emotional orientation toward their job (Price, 2001). Within traditional frameworks, job satisfaction is among the most commonly cited precursors to employee retention. Numerous empirical studies highlight its role as a reliable predictor of an employee's determination to stay in an organization, their intention to stay, or their job performance (Ahn et al., 2015; Anis et al., 2011; Bharadwaj et al., 2022; Harrington et al., 2001; Kabungaidze et al., 2013; Kanchana & Jayathilaka, 2023; Klenke-Hamel & Mathieu, 1990; Lacity et al., 2008; Manlove & Guzell, 1997; Meyer, 1993; Oktay, 1992; Osuji et al., 2014; Sasso et al., 2019; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Skelton et al., 2020; Tett & Jaros, 1997; Tzeng, 2002; Umamaheswari & Krishnan, 2015; Zopiatis et al., 2018). Studies showed that job satisfaction significantly impacts turnover intentions (Skelton et al., 2020).

Various studies reported job satisfaction as a mediator for employee retention (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022; Churintr, 2010; Dickin et al., 2010; Geremias et al., 2025; He et al., 2023). According to a recent study, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention (Pulungan & Tiarapuspa, 2025). Overall, there is widespread empirical evidence that job satisfaction is vital in translating the personal and organizational factors and employees' decision to stay in an organization. Job satisfaction's direct and indirect impact on employee turnover and performance is well established.

Organizational commitment, i.e., the psychological bond individuals form with their organization, is the second key determinant and well-established antecedent of employee retention. This attachment is exhibited through individuals' goal alignment with their organization, making high efforts, and maintaining organizational membership (Porter et al., 1974). Organizational commitment has been conceptualized through three distinct dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Previous research confirms the positive impact of organizational commitment on employee retention (Cowden & Cummings, 2015; Thanigaiyarasu et al., 2023), employee engagement, performance (Metin & Asli, 2018; Sharma & Dhar, 2016), and the negative impact on employee turnover (Ahn et al., 2015).

Job satisfaction is a well-established predictor of organizational commitment (Ćulibrk et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2010; Srivastava, 2013; Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). Gunlu et al. (2010) reported that job satisfaction significantly influences normative and affective commitment. However, it does not have a notable impact on continuance commitment among managers of large-scale hotels. Several studies discussed the association between the two variables. Literature depicts that job satisfaction and

organizational commitment have a positive association (Khan et al., 2021; Pratama et al., 2022; Veličković et al., 2014).

Numerous studies reported organizational commitment as a mediator for employee retention or turnover intention (Abbas et al., 2025; Galletta et al., 2016; Han et al., 2015; Peachey et al., 2014). Naz et al. (2020) also reported that organizational commitment mediates between a supportive work environment and retention. The HR climate significantly influences faculty retention, with organizational commitment functioning mediating this dynamic (Verma & Kaur, 2024).

Affective commitment reflects an emotional connection to the organization where individuals deeply identify with its goals and strongly desire to remain part of it. According to Allen et al. (2016), affective commitment reflects an individual's current sense of pride in his/her organization and readiness to put in effort for its success. Continuance commitment comprises a calculated evaluation of the costs associated with leaving versus the benefits of staying (Powell & Meyer, 2004; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Continuance commitment is how employees continue a job and do not exit an organization to avoid prospective economic losses (e.g., forfeited pension benefits) and social costs (e.g., losing workplace friendships). The final normative dimension of organizational commitment stems from a sense of moral obligation, where individuals feel obligated to stay with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The three facets of organizational commitment comprehensively cover the important aspects of organizational attitudes, encompassing emotional attachment (affective), a sense of perceived costs (continuance), and obligatory feelings (normative) (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002). Research consistently demonstrates that these components, whether considered individually or together, serve as reliable predictors of employee retention, intention to stay, and performance outcomes (Bishop et al., 2000; Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006; Chan, 2001; Jaramillo et al., 2005; Khatri & Fern, 2001; Lachmann & Aranya, 1986; Lum et al., 1998; Meyer et al., 2002; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Trimble, 2006). Murray and Holmes (2021) described in their study that affective commitment and normative commitment were found to influence an employee's intention to leave their organization significantly negatively. Continuance commitment, on the contrary, did not impact intention to leave significantly. Affective commitment mediates job security and employee retention (Oraibi et al., 2025). Indra et al. (2023) noted that affective commitment mediates the relationship between supervisor support and turnover intention.

A vital predictor of employee retention continued to be highlighted by several researchers (see, for example, Bolt et al., 2022; Charlier et al., 2016), over and above the predictive effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job embeddedness encompasses three second-order concepts: link, fit, and sacrifices.

Resistance to leaving the organization is a function of job embeddedness, such that a higher embeddedness will lower the leave intention (Jiang et al., 2012; Kiazad et al., 2015). Research has consistently shown the impact of job embeddedness on turnover intention. (Aman-Ullah et al., 2025; Ko & Kim, 2016; Nicholas et al., 2016; Skelton et al., 2020).

Embeddedness emphasizes the accumulated factors from the past that may lead an employee to feel “stuck” in their position (Allen et al., 2016). However, it extends beyond a sense of attachment driven by “lack of options” or “forfeited investments” in the organization, instead encompassing a broader perception of connection to the workplace (Rubenstein et al., 2019). As Mitchell and Lee (2001, p. 213) describe, “it [inertia] is the force that keeps us from thinking about leaving.” Job embeddedness is typically categorized into two primary dimensions: on-the-job embeddedness (or organizational embeddedness) and off-the-job embeddedness (or community embeddedness). Empirical studies consistently show that one or both dimensions strongly influence employees’ intentions to stay, their withdrawal thoughts, or actual retention (Crossley et al., 2007; Cunningham et al., 2005; Holtom & O’Neill, 2004; Mallol et al., 2007; Mitchell & Lee, 2001; Tanova, 2006; Tanova & Holtom, 2008). The aspects of embeddedness act as barriers that limit an individual’s ability to make voluntary decisions about leaving an organization (Fang et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001).

Literature also suggests that job embeddedness directly impacts job satisfaction (Mashudi & Erdiansyah, 2023). Nalband and Otaibi (2022) point out in their study that job embeddedness showed more association with and impact on job satisfaction than other job attitudes like work engagement. Many studies found out that job satisfaction acts as a mediator for job embeddedness as well (Khan et al., 2021; Mashudi & Erdiansyah, 2023). Moreover, literature also suggests that job embeddedness also mediates job satisfaction (Stewart & Wiener, 2021).

Various studies discussed the interaction of organizational commitment and job embeddedness (Chang et al., 2023; Nugroho & Afifah, 2021; Philip & Medina-Craven, 2022; Teng et al., 2024). On-the-job embeddedness positively impacts affective commitment (Philip & Medina-Craven, 2022). The study of Ampofo and Karatepe (2022) showed that the relationship between job embeddedness and turnover intentions is partly mediated by affective organizational commitment. Another study by Kim and Kang (2015) also reported similar results. They identified that organizational commitment and job embeddedness directly impact turnover intention, and organizational commitment mediates the relationship between job embeddedness and turnover intention. Literature also discussed the mediating impact of job

embeddedness on all three dimensions of organizational commitment, i.e., affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Amoah et al., 2021).

Besides being a strong predictor of turnover intentions, job embeddedness is reported as a significant predictor of organizational citizenship behavior and task performance (Fatima et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2004). Job embeddedness interacts with other personal and situational variables to enhance job performance. For example, evidence from the manufacturing sector suggested that job embeddedness interacts with organization-based self-esteem and leader-member exchange (a three-way interaction) to improve task performance (Sekiguchi et al., 2008). When employees face high inter-role conflict, the chances of leaving intention are higher if off-the-job embeddedness is greater. On the other hand, the strength of on-the-job embeddedness decreases turnover risks (Rubenstein et al., 2020). Employees with low job embeddedness are less likely to resign and vice versa (Ma et al., 2018). Further, job embeddedness is more vital for retention management than job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Ng (2016) found that respect fosters gratitude, which boosts organizational embeddedness and reduces turnover. According to the relevant literature, social capital shapes the relationship between employee performance and turnover intention. (Park & Shaw, 2013; Shaw, 2015).

Job embeddedness is often viewed as a buffer against withdrawal thoughts, fostering longer tenures and improved employee performance. This framework underscores its significance in reducing turnover and enhancing organizational effectiveness. Both facets of Job embeddedness are proposed to be related to employee retention and performance.

Integrated Impact of Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Job Embeddedness

In the turnover literature, there is ongoing debate regarding the structural determining factor of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and how they are related. Since March and Simon's (1958) research work, numerous models have been proposed to explain the factors influencing employee retention. Research varies in its views on the structural determining factor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as their interrelationship. Four key perspectives exist: first, both job satisfaction and organizational commitment are influenced by shared structural determinants (Kim et al., 1996); second, some studies suggest that structural determinants are linked solely to job satisfaction (Williams & Hazer, 1986); third, that distinct structural determinants affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment in different ways (Hom & Griffeth, 1995); and fourth, that while some structural

determinants overlap in their effects, the integration of different retention approaches can enhance understanding (Gaertner, 1999).

Another way to analyze these factors is by examining their causal order. Various theoretical frameworks have been developed to explore these variables' relative influence and order. One perspective is that organizational commitment mediates the effect of job satisfaction on retention-related thoughts and behaviors: affective commitment mediated the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention (A'yunnisa & Saptoto, 2015; Galletta et al., 2016). According to this view, job satisfaction only indirectly influences the decision to stay in an organization. It has been consistently found that job satisfaction indirectly impacts the decision to stay in an organization (This idea has significant empirical backing (Brown & Peterson, 1993; DeConinck & Bachmann, 1994; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990; Lum et al., 1998; Muller et al., 1994).

The second perspective suggests a causal order from organizational commitment to job satisfaction. This perspective proposes that organizational commitment directly affects job-related emotions, which, in turn, determine whether an individual stays with the organization. Commitments influencing job satisfaction can be formed before entering the organization (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1981) or early in the new job (Porter et al., 1976). Pulungan and Tiarapuspa (2025) also suggested that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and employees' turnover intentions. Various studies have supported this view (Vandenberg & Lance, 1992; Anis et al., 2011). It depicts that job satisfaction can mediate between commitment and the decision to stay.

Some research has suggested that satisfaction and commitment may have a reciprocal relationship (Mottaz, 1988; Farkas & Tetrick, 1989), though their effects may not be symmetrical (Dougherty et al., 1985; Lance, 1991). Curry et al. (1986), in their replication of Bateman and Strasser's (1984) study, found no evidence of a causal relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Job embeddedness is a more comprehensive concept that includes work-related and non-work-related factors. Mitchell et al. (2001) noted several similarities to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. For instance, organizational sacrifices (e.g., salary, benefits) are comparable to continuance commitment within organizational commitment, though job embeddedness is more specific, while organizational commitment is broader. Similarly, compensation satisfaction in job satisfaction aligns with compensation and benefits within the composite measure of job embeddedness. Satisfaction with training and development opportunities emerged as the strongest predictor of organizational fit, whereas satisfaction with career

opportunities was the most significant predictor of organizational sacrifice (Van Dyk et al., 2013).

Building on the ideas of causal relationships and the overlap between aspects of job satisfaction, organizational commitment (both are attitudes toward the organization), and job embeddedness, the following *propositions* are presented to examine how the interplay between job satisfaction, organizational commitment (both are attitudes toward the organization), and job embeddedness might collectively influence retention and consequently performance.

- a: Job satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and employee performance.
- b: Job satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between organizational embeddedness and employee performance.
- c: Organizational commitment positively mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance
- d: Organizational commitment positively mediates the relationship between organizational embeddedness and employee performance.
- e: Organizational embeddedness positively mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance.
- f: Organizational embeddedness positively mediates organizational commitment and employee performance.

Directions and Conclusion

To develop employee retention, HR professionals should implement strategies aligning with traditional and contemporary retention models. Integrating job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job embeddedness allows for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to employee retention. Since organizational commitment plays a vital role in retention, organizations should invest in career development programs, mentorship, and training for upskilling and reskilling. This will foster a feeling of career development and reduce turnover intentions. Encouraging a positive work culture, strong peer ties, and a sense of belonging can create an emotional attachment to the firm. Team-building events and inside networking activities can enhance interpersonal relationships.

Expanding on the suggested integrative employee retention model, subsequent studies can identify mechanisms to operationalize this model through

empirical tests. The inclusion of the classical determinants like job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as the newer theories like job embeddedness in the model, provides a reasonable basis for future research and extensions. Taking this model forward requires application across different organizational cultures and environments to establish its generalizability and applicability. One of the potential areas is to investigate the effect of alternative job opportunities on employee retention in various industries and cultures. Past research (Price & Mueller, 1981) stated that the convenience of access to outside career possibilities usually controls intentions to turnover. Family and kinship obligations (Price & Mueller, 1981) are another neglected variable that deserves emphasis. When including these obligations within the model, researchers will gain a clearer picture of how the demands of the personal life intertwine with commitment to the organization. In addition, examining work-family and family-work conflict (Peltokorpi et al., 2023; Rubenstein et al., 2020) might add some qualitative value to how dual-role demands impact an employee's choice to leave or remain.

Professional commitment (Chang et al., 2015) is yet another key variable needing examination. The measure taps into employees' affective and cognitive connections to their profession, irrespective of their organizational ties. Subsequent research might examine how professional commitment intersects with organizational commitment and job satisfaction, primarily in professions high in professional identity, like healthcare, engineering, education, etc. Additionally, personal traits and worker attributes (Ahn et al., 2015; Cowden & Cummings, 2015; Dickin et al., 2010; Feldman et al., 2012; Kim & Hwang, 2011; Moon et al., 2023b; Osuji et al., 2014; Yuan et al., 2024) provide tremendous room for expanding the model's scope and applications.

Recently, scholars have focused on understanding how and when employees with negative personalities (such as Psychopathy and Machiavellianism) meet their performance goals by challenging the traditional negative relationship between dark personalities and performance (Hafeez et al., 2024a,b,c, 2025). The conversation may be advanced further in these directions. Our model does not capture the antecedents of the three forerunners of performance: group-level influences, such as HR implementation level, influence job satisfaction, and affective commitment, which further translates into job performance (Mehmood et al., 2017). Workplace ostracism is another contextual phenomenon that can deteriorate job performance (Abrar et al., 2022); future research may shed further light on this. Another important mechanism at the group/leader level is LMX quality, which can influence job satisfaction, ultimately leading to performance via the mediation job embeddedness (Sadiq & Qadeer, 2017). Likewise, leaders' core self-evaluation (Arshad et al., 2021) and

followers' core self-evaluation (Qadeer & Arshad, 2014) are the precursors of job-related attitudes which can produce superior job performance. Extending the distal predictors of job performance, such as non-work-related domains (Farooqi et al. (2022) by studying the spillover effects from the home domain to the workplace, offers a perfect area for future research.

Considering the above discussion, extending the scope of models to investigate outcomes at the team and organizational level will imply a promising frontier. Subsequent research can close the gap between organizational-level and individual-level phenomena by investigating how retention strategies at the employee level impact collective performance and workplace culture. This multilevel perspective would provide practical implications for organizations integrating retention strategies with overall strategic goals. Thus, there are several potential possibilities to add an outer layer to the integrated model.

The suggested integrative model provides a rich terrain for empirical investigation, mainly induced by variables like alternative work opportunities, personal characteristics, and family obligations. Future research should aim to test and refine this model across various backgrounds, contributing to a profound, more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms that drive employee retention.

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