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### Erratum

A citation was incorrect in the online publication. The in-text citation and reference should appear as: "Trust in the leader was measured by the Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis (2007) 7-item measure."  
Reference Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present, and future. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 344–354. The authors apologize for any inconvenience caused.

## Work Engagement: Trust as a Mediator of the Impact of Organizational Job Embeddedness and Perceived Organizational Support

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### ABSTRACT

This study furthers the research on work engagement, organizational (on-the-job) embeddedness, and perceived organizational support by examining the relationships between these variables through a mediating factor, trust in leadership. Specifically, the study investigates the role of trust as a mediator between organizational job embeddedness and work engagement, and between perceived organizational support and work engagement. In a sample of 318 local county government employees, findings provide support for the hypothesized relationships. Trust in leadership is strongly related to work engagement; trust partially mediates the relationship between organizational job embeddedness and work engagement, and between perceived organizational support and work engagement. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

### KEYWORDS

Embeddedness, engagement, trust, perceived, support

One of the indicators of employee motivation in the workplace is work engagement (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012). Work engagement is a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Langelaan, Bakker, Van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006: 522). Even though different views of work engagement exist in literature, most scholars seem to agree that employees who are engaged tend to exhibit high levels of energy and identify strongly with their work (e.g., Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Several studies have found a significant relationship between work engagement and job resources such as social support, autonomy, and feedback (e.g., Halbesleben, 2010; Halbesleben, Harvey, & Bolino, 2009). In addition to job resources, research has focused on personal resources such as personal goal setting, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and organization-based self-esteem; results have shown that personal resources are also significant antecedents of work engagement (for a review, see Bakker et al., 2008). Considering that engaged workers perform better than nonengaged workers (Bakker, 2008), and also considering that this line of research is still in early phases of development, more evidence on predictors of work engagement is warranted.

Job embeddedness refers to the combination of relationships employees develop with other individuals

on or off the job, perceived fit between employees’ and an employer’s (and the community’s) values, and the sacrifice involved if the employees leave their jobs and communities (Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001). Mitchell et al. (2001) and pursuant extant research on the construct (e.g., Dawley & Andrews, 2012; Wheeler, Harris, & Sablinski, 2012) conceptualize embeddedness as a cumulative resource both on and off the job and describe it as encompassing two dimensions: organizational (on the job) and community (off the job). According to Mitchell et al. (2001), the organizational dimension includes work-related factors such as attachments to work teams or colleagues, while the community dimension consists of non-work-related factors such as family and community connections.

Based on research showing that the work-related nature of organizational job embeddedness predicts outcomes such as job performance (Allen, 2006; Lee et al., 2004; Sekiguchi, Burton, & Sablinski, 2008; Wheeler et al., 2012) better than community job embeddedness predicts them, the focus of this study is kept on the organizational dimension encompassing on-the-job attitudes and how they connect to one’s engagement at work. One assertion of the article is that when employees develop stable relationships and

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connections in the workplace and when they perceive a sense of loss if they leave the organization, they are more likely to engage in their work. The general research question that follows from this assertion is how or what connects organizational job embeddedness to work engagement. Even though several researchers have investigated the relationship between job embeddedness and its outcomes, there is a scarcity of knowledge about the mechanisms through which it affects workplace outcomes.

Perceived organizational support refers to employees' perceptions of the degree to which an organization cares about and values their contributions and is interested in their general well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Since this construct is perceptual, it is based on individuals' experiences within the organization. Scholars have found perceived organizational support to be positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, trust, justice, job involvement, and performance, and negatively associated with turnover (e.g., DeConinck, 2010; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This article contends that perceived organizational support serves as an antecedent to employee work engagement. How much the employees believe that the leader stimulates interest in the organization and shows care about the well-being of employees by coaching and mentoring them is a key function of the construct through which perceived organizational support is likely to have an impact on work engagement.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the dynamics between organizational job embeddedness (OJE), perceived organizational support (POS), and work engagement. The conceptual model guiding the

research is depicted in Figure 1. The study has two major potential contributions to literature. First, we argue that OJE is a predictor of work engagement and that part of this relationship can be explained by trust that employees have in their leaders. Even though previous scholars (see findings of Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001) supported that embeddedness predicts turnover and job performance, even beyond the effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, there is a scarcity of research looking at the connecting mechanism between embeddedness and job attitudes and behaviors. To our knowledge, there also is no research that has specifically examined trust in leadership as an antecedent of work engagement and as an extension of OJE. The second potential contribution of the study addresses the question of how POS impacts work engagement. We argue that trust in leadership accounts for part of the effect of POS on work engagement. The dynamics between POS and engagement is a research area that is relatively uncharted.

### Theoretical background and hypotheses

Over the years, much research has been conducted to identify the specific traits and behaviors of effective, high-performing employees, as well as the situations that call for specific behaviors or certain types of employees. More recently, the focus has shifted from what type of employee one needs to be and what attributes and behaviors are most appropriate for certain situations, to exploring and understanding how employees can perform at their best and become engaged in their work. To that effect, understanding

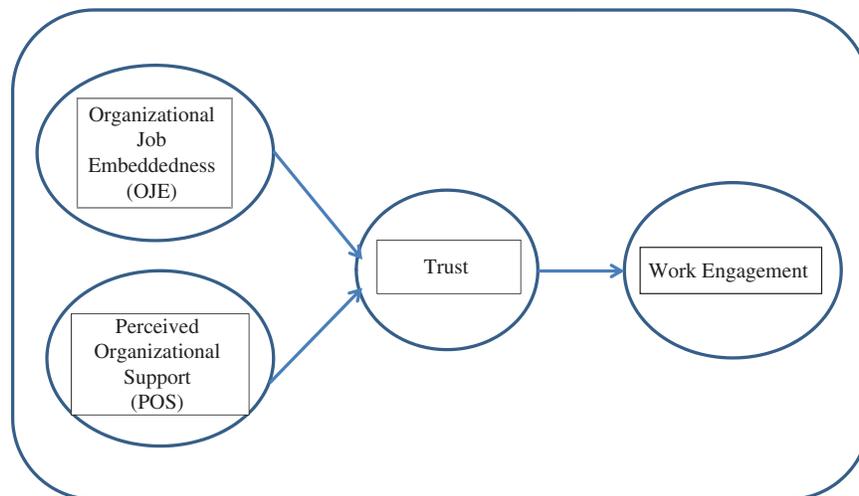


Figure 1. The conceptual model.

how employees' perceptions of support, perceived connections to their jobs, and the level of trust in their leaders can shape their level of engagement at work becomes an interesting avenue to look into because we can then explore ways to improve on-the-job embeddedness, perceived support, and relational trust to positively influence work engagement and performance. In order to better understand the relationships between OJE and engagement and between POS and engagement, we draw upon the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1998) and the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), respectively.

COR is a stress and motivational theory (Hobfoll, 2011) that posits that when organizations fail to provide key resources to employees, the result is lowered productivity. Hobfoll (1988, 1989, 2001) has asserted that individuals are motivated to acquire, accumulate, foster, and invest personal resources that they value. Accordingly, individuals employ resources to manage and regulate their behaviors, their social relations, and their overall fit into the organizational cultural context. Most application and testing of COR theory have been in the area of stress and burnout research (for a meta-analysis see Halbesleben, 2010), and yet it has been widely integrated into organizational research, in particular through the positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Wheeler et al. (2012) have extended the COR theory by viewing job embeddedness as a resource employed at work to respond effectively to job demands. Halbesleben et al. (2009) have integrated the conservation of resources view to work engagement and have argued that higher levels of engagement may deplete resources and lead to higher work interference with family. Their findings support their argument and show evidence that engagement-interference with family relationship is mediated by organizational citizenship behaviors. In parallel, drawing upon COR theory, and following the work of Wheeler and colleagues (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Harris, Wheeler, & Kacmar, 2011; Wheeler, Harris, & Harvey, 2010), it is our contention that OJE represents an abundance of resources that predicts stronger trust in leadership, another individual resource.

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; DeConinck, 2010) further helps us to understand employees' attitudes by focusing on two facets: trust and fairness. Trust is gained or lost through reciprocal exchange between individuals. When employees believe that they are treated fairly in terms of the rewards received and the processes used to determine rewards, they will tend to perceive the organization and management as

more supportive, and also will trust the leader more. The concept of reciprocity is central to social exchange theory. Previous findings show POS to be an antecedent to organizational trust (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson, & Wayne, 2008; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990) in that when employees exchange effort and commitment to the organization with fulfillment of their socioemotional needs such as approval, recognition, or esteem, feelings of trust are more likely to develop.

### ***Trust and work engagement***

Trust refers to an individual's willingness to depend on another person (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Many perspectives of trust have emerged in extant literature (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). For instance, while personality theorists focus on personality differences in terms of propensity to trust, sociologists view trust as within and between organizations (Worchel, 1979). Social psychologists conceptualize trust as a phenomenon that can be created, enhanced, or inhibited by interpersonal relationships within the confines of situational factors. Following the social psychology view of trust, Boon and Holmes (1991) proposed that trust involves positive expectations about another person's motives in situations of risk. We adopt this view in that trust formation is a relational phenomenon.

As an outcome of interpretations of trustworthy behaviors between a leader and an employee in the workplace, relational trust can serve as an individual resource available to employees. Whether leaders are perceived as trustworthy or not by employees (relational trust) has significant implications for interpersonal relationships at organizations (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). For example, when organizational members perceive leaders to be trustworthy, they usually display positive attitudes such as organizational citizenship behaviors and attentiveness to others' needs (McAllister, 1995). They seem to be more willing to participate in decision making (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999) when working with trustworthy leaders. The results mostly are also positive for the organization in terms of improved decision quality and performance (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999; McAllister, 1995). Dirks and Ferrin (2002) provide evidence that trust in leadership is significantly related to several work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), and performance. On the engagement front, considering that there is also

research evidence connecting work engagement positively to job performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Gierveld & Bakker, 2005), we expect that employees who have a trusting relationship with their supervisors will tend to be more engaged in their work.

**Hypothesis 1.** Trust in leader will be positively related to employee work engagement.

### **Organizational job embeddedness, trust, and work engagement**

Mitchell et al. (2001) developed the concept of job embeddedness to explain why employees stay in their organizations. The job embeddedness construct was conceptualized as having three facets: *links*, *fit*, and *sacrifice*, through which people become attached to the workplace and community, leading to their intentions to stay. The *links* facet refers to the connections individuals build with others in the organization and in the community. The *fit* facet emphasizes the fit individuals perceive between themselves and their communities, jobs, and organizations. It is the degree to which employees perceive the job and organization as a match to their own knowledge, skills, and life. Finally, *sacrifice* refers to the loss individuals believe they will suffer if they left the organization and community/area. Loss involves both the tangible resources that people will give up and the psychological benefits that they will lose if they left the area (Murphy, Burton, Henagan, & Briscoe, 2013). These three facets were dichotomized under two dimensions: on-the-job embeddedness (organizational) and off-the-job (community) embeddedness (Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012).

As the central theme of this article is work engagement, we direct our attention specifically to the organizational (on-the-job) dimension of embeddedness. Similarly, Sekiguchi et al. (2008) and Burton, Holtom, Sablinski, Mitchell, and Lee (2010) focused only on on-the-job embeddedness in their studies predicting task performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. In addition, there is evidence showing that on-the-job embeddedness is more related to performance and organizational citizenship behaviors than off-the-job embeddedness (Lee et al., 2004). The primary rationale for this reasoning is that since the OJE dimension has a work-specific focus, it should better explain work-related outcomes like job performance due to their sharing the same work context (Wheeler et al., 2012). Allen (2006), Sekiguchi

et al. (2008), and later Wheeler et al. (2012) assert that community dimension “could influence work-related outcomes if the work context spills over into the home context” (Wheeler et al., 2012, p. 245). As the main interest in our study is how job embeddedness impacts employee trust in leadership and work engagement, we contend that organizational job embeddedness would impact these work-related variables more so than off-the-job embeddedness (Lee et al., 2004; Sekiguchi et al., 2008).

Hobfoll (2011) defines the first principle of COR theory as the *primacy of resource loss* in that “resource loss is disproportionately more salient than resource gain” (Hobfoll, 2011, p. 117). Accordingly, resources can include object resources (e.g., tools for work), condition resources (e.g., positive team dynamics), personal resources (e.g., personality traits), and energy resources (e.g., knowledge). The *fit* facet of OJE describes a person–job and person–organization alignment resource, while the *links* facet represents a person to person relationship resource. OJE’s *sacrifice* facet represents the primacy of resource loss in that it explicates how much individuals stand to lose by leaving their jobs. Organizational settings can create conditions that foster and support engagement and resilience and protect individual resources (Hobfoll, 2011). Hobfoll (2010), extending the COR theory, introduced the concept of *resource caravan* to refer to environmental conditions that either foster or impoverish individuals’ resources. Relational trust, as a personal resource condition, develops over time based on information from within the relationship between the trustor and the trustee (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Trust is initiated, built, enhanced, or destroyed through interpersonal transactions that take place under the umbrella of organization structure, culture, processes, and policies that together represent a resource caravan.

Good person–organization fit exists when the employees’ values, career aspirations, and knowledge and skills are perceived as compatible with the organizational culture and the demands of the job (Zhang, Fried, & Griffeth, 2012). Individuals who are high on OJE believe that their skills, knowledge, and work values match the values, needs, and culture of their organization. In turn, these employees will be more likely to engage in high-quality relationships with their supervisors (Harris et al., 2011; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Leader–member exchange (LMX) literature in particular provides support for the relationship between organizational fit (JE) and trust. LMX theory is based on the quality of relationships between

the leader and employees, and the outcomes of these relationships for the follower and the organization (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). A high LMX relationship involves mutual trust and loyalty. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) and Harris et al. (2011) found empirical support for embeddedness being an accumulation of resources (connections, fit, sense of belonging) that ties employees to the organization. Harris et al. (2011) also found evidence that LMX precedes OJE and that OJE acts as a mediator between LMX and work attitudes such as satisfaction. Benefits as resources emanating from high-quality exchanges between employees and leader, between employees and the organization, and the sacrifice the employees will make if they lose these benefits together create an integrative mechanism of a resource caravan. Employees utilizing and sustaining such resource ecologies are more likely to develop a trusting relationship with their leaders and also more likely to be willing to put in the extra effort and work above and beyond what is required by the job perceiving the leader as trustworthy. Hence, part of the effect of OJE on work engagement is likely due to its effect on trust in leadership.

**Hypothesis 2a.** Organizational job embeddedness will be positively related to trust in the leader.

**Hypothesis 2b.** Trust in the leader will mediate the relationship between organizational job embeddedness and work engagement.

### ***Perceived organizational support, trust, and work engagement***

Perceived organizational support (POS) is an indicator of positive employee attitudes and behaviors (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson and Sowa (1986, p. 501) defined it as “the extent to which employees perceive that their contributions are valued by their organization and that the firm cares about their well-being.” Social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964) forms the basis of both POS and trust. The norm of reciprocity, central to social exchange theory and POS, explains that employees form perceptions about how much the organization values their contributions and takes an interest in their well-being (DeConinck, 2010) and that they exchange their effort and commitment to the organization with benefits (financial, psychological, or social) they receive in turn. Feelings of trust develop as employees and the leader become invested in reciprocal obligations (DeConinck, 2010; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

One argument in support of the POS–trust relationship is that perceived organizational support would lead employees to trust the leader and the organization to fulfill obligations to reward the employee (Eisenberger et al., 1990). There is evidence supporting this argument in that Dulac et al. (2008) report that POS is a significant predictor of trust. Also, in a meta-analytic study, Dirks and Ferrin (2002) report a significant correlation between POS and trust. Individuals then are more likely to put their trust in the leader when they believe their organization supports their efforts and rewards them accordingly. POS validates employees’ self-concept and improves self-esteem when they perceive that they are receiving benefits from the organization (Tyler & Blader, 2003). When individuals perceive self-validating benefits, they are more likely to trust the leader and the organization. Further, stronger POS is likely to result in higher level of work engagement as employees exchange effort, engagement, and performance with perceived support from the organization (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Collectively, this literature suggests that trust represents an intermediary process that leads from POS to work engagement in that part of the effect of POS on engagement passes through trust in leadership.

**Hypothesis 3a.** Perceived organizational support will be positively related to trust in the leader.

**Hypothesis 3b.** Trust in the leader will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and work engagement.

## **Methods**

### ***Participants, procedure, and measures***

Participants were 318 employees working at a local county government organization in the eastern United States. After securing institutional review board (IRB) approval, survey questions were administered online using Qualtrics software. All participants read and checked an informed consent form before taking the surveys. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Sample included field, staff, supervisory, and nonsupervisory positions. Average age was 48 years with a standard deviation of 10.98. Fifty-nine percent of the sample was male. Average organizational tenure was 12.07 years ( $SD = 9.37$ ).

OJE was measured by the organizational dimension items of the job embeddedness scale developed

by Mitchell et al. (2001). Consistent with Crossley, Bennett, Jex, and Burnfield (2007) and Wheeler et al. (2012), this study operationalized OJE as a formative measure consisting of three second-order measures corresponding to components of Fit, Sacrifice, and Links. A 7-point Likert scale was used, with 1 meaning *strongly disagree* and 7 meaning *strongly agree*. Six items were used for the Fit component and nine items were used for the Sacrifice component. A sample item for the Fit component states: "I feel like I am a good match for this organization." A sample item for the Sacrifice component states: "I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job." Cronbach's alpha reliability was .86 for the Fit component and 0.79 for the Sacrifice component.

The Links component of the OJE measure was measured by using the items "How long have you worked in this industry?" and "How long have you worked in your current organization?" Consistent with JE measurement research (Mitchell et al., 2001; Wheeler et al., 2012), we transformed the two Links component items into  $z$  scores to standardize the scores for analysis. The Cronbach's alpha reliability was .80. Subsequently, following Mitchell et al. (2001), we created an aggregate measure of OJE by computing the mean of the three components and creating a score of a mean of the means. Hence, the composite score equally weighted the effect of the three components. Because OJE is a higher order variable consisting of three second-order variables, it is not appropriate to compute Cronbach's alpha for the overall OJE variable.

Perceived organizational support was measured using a 7-point *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* scale by the eight-item POS scale of Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, and Lynch (1997). Cronbach's alpha was .95. In order to measure employee engagement, this study used Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova's (2006) shortened work engagement questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. There were nine items in this scale. Cronbach's alpha was .90. Trust in the leader was measured by the Mayer et al. (1995) 7-item measure. All scale response ranges are from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha was .85.

## Analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlational analyses were run using SPSS version 21.0. Model testing was conducted using MPlus version 7.0 (Muthén &

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations ( $N = 318$ ).

Variable	Mean	SD	OJE	POS	Trust	Engagement
OJE*	2.96	.75	–			
POS*	4.32	1.44	.58	.95		
Trust	4.41	1.16	.60	.52	.85	
Engagement	4.74	1.12	.62	.48	.56	.90

Note. Correlations  $\geq .15$  are significant at  $p < .01$  (two-tailed). Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are shown along the diagonal. OJE: organizational job embeddedness. POS: perceived organizational support.

Muthén, 2012). A path analysis model was specified to test for mediation hypotheses.

## Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among variables in the study. Table 1 also provides the Cronbach alpha reliabilities on the diagonal. All reliabilities were acceptable, above .85.

Hypothesis 1 states that trust will be positively related to work engagement. As shown in Table 1, the two variables were statistically significant and positively related ( $r = .56, p < .01$ ). Further, the path coefficient between these two variables still remained positive and significant when the entire model was estimated and supported ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1 was fully supported.

Table 2 provides the results of mediation analysis for trust mediating the OJE–engagement relationship for testing of hypotheses 2a and 2b. Table 2 shows the standardized estimate of a path analysis testing for the hypothesized mediation. The total effect of OJE to engagement was significant ( $\beta = .39, p < .00$ ). Both direct effects were significant, as well as the indirect effect of OJE on engagement via trust ( $\beta = .04, p < .05$ ). The direct effect from OJE to trust was significant ( $\beta = .32, p < .01$ ), providing support for hypothesis 2a. When trust was entered, the indirect effect of OJE to engagement dropped to .04 but remained significant, providing support for partial mediation. Thus, hypothesis 2b was supported.

Table 3 shows the path analysis results of mediation testing for hypothesis 3b. As shown in the table, direct effect of POS on trust was significant ( $\beta = .36, p < .001$ ),

**Table 2.** Mediation model estimates using bootstrapping method for standardized coefficients for Model 1 ( $N = 318$ ).

Coefficient	Model 1 (partial mediation): embeddedness $\rightarrow$ trust $\rightarrow$ work engagement	
	Estimate	$p$ Value
Total effect (OJE – ENG*)	.39	.00
Direct effect (OJE – TRUST)	.32	.00
Direct effect (TRUST – ENG)	.20	.00
Indirect effect (OJE – ENG via TRUST)	.04	.03

Note. OJE: organizational job embeddedness. POS: perceived organizational support. ENG: engagement.

**Table 3.** Mediation model estimates using bootstrapping method for standardized coefficients for Model 2 ( $N = 318$ ).

Coefficient	Model 2 (partial mediation): POS → trust → work engagement	
	Estimate	<i>p</i> Value
Total effect (POS – ENG)	.25	.00
Direct effect (POS – TRUST)	.36	.00
Direct effect (TRUST – ENG)	.20	.00
Indirect effect (POS – ENG via TRUST)	.09	.00

Note. POS: perceived organizational support. ENG: engagement.

providing support for hypothesis 3a. The direct effect from trust to engagement was also significant ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The indirect effect of POS on engagement through trust was significant ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and reduced. These findings provided evidence to support a partial mediation effect. Thus, hypothesis 3b was supported.

## Discussion

Building on job embeddedness and perceived organizational support research streams, this study investigated the antecedents of work engagement. Work engagement research is still in its infancy and there is a need to identify its predictors as well as related concepts (Bakker et al., 2008). In this study, findings showed that POS and OJE both significantly influence work engagement through supervisory trust. Specifically, OJE impacts work engagement, and part of this impact can be explained by employees' trust in the leader. As job embeddedness has two dimensions, this study focused on only the organizational dimension of the construct, OJE, which is more applicable to work engagement. OJE measures employees' perceived fit with respect to their knowledge, skills, and values to the organization, their connections to the organization, and the perceived sacrifice they will make if they leave the organization. In parallel, study findings showed that POS impacts employee work engagement, and part of this impact can be explained by employee trust in the leader. Trust in the leader was significantly related to work engagement. Trust was also significantly related to both OJE and POS. In summary, when employees perceive that the organization as a whole values their contributions and is looking out for their general well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2001), they are also more likely to view their supervisors as trustworthy, and to be engaged in their work. When employees believe that they have built connections at work and that their skills, knowledge, and values align with the culture of the organization such that they perceive leaving the

organization to be a loss, they are more likely to trust their leaders and actively engage in their work.

The results of this study have several contributions to research and practice. First, we expand the findings on work engagement from prior research. Previous studies show that job resources such as co-worker support, performance feedback, autonomy, and learning opportunities are positively related to work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Bakker et al., 2008; Shaufeli & Salanova, 2007). According to Bakker et al. (2008, p. 191), job resources “refer to those physical, social, and organizational aspects of the job that may 1) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; 2) be functional in achieving work goals; or 3) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development.” This study provides evidence that perceived OJE, POS, and perceived supervisory trust are key job resources pertaining to work engagement. Perceived OJE is functional in the achievement of employee work goals facilitating progress, as less time is spent on conflict resolution and more trust is placed on the leader when there is a match between the employee and the organization in values and knowledge and skills needed. Likewise, POS reduces uncertainty and psychological costs that may accompany beliefs that the organization does not care about or value individual contributions. Another contribution is that this is the first study exploring trust in leader as a connecting mechanism between work attitudes of perceived OJE, POS, and work engagement. Our findings show that part of the impact of OJE on engagement and part of the impact of POS on engagement is due to their influences on trust in leadership.

## Directions for future research

Where do we go from here? It is important for future research to (a) identify factors that impact employee perceptions of fit and connections in the organization and (b) delineate clearly what influences employees' perceptions of organizational support. How do we create an organizational environment and company culture that are nurturing to employee needs? How can leaders transform organizational culture to create structures, settings, and situations (resource caravans) that facilitate positive individual and organizational outcomes? To this end, transformational leadership literature may offer interesting insights. Research shows that transformational leadership is positively associated with employee job satisfaction, task performance, and organizational performance (Judge

& Piccolo, 2004). Even though transformational leadership behaviors lead to discrete constructs such as organizational citizenship behaviors, trust in the leader, and leadership effectiveness, research has largely neglected the role of fit between followers' individual characteristics, core values, skills and knowledge, and transformational leader behaviors. Future research could investigate connections between transformational leadership and perceived organizational fit, perceived organizational support, and perceptions of trust in the leader.

Extant literature supports that work engagement is related to job performance (Bakker et al., 2008). There are several reasons why engaged workers perform better. First, engaged employees experience more positive emotions, broader viewpoints, and better health, leading them to fully utilize their mental and physical resources. Second, engaged employees can create their own job and personal resources and as a result are better able to manage job demands and challenges and achieve their goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Even though, to date, research is generally supportive of a direct relationship between engagement and performance, there is still a need for more studies looking at the outcomes of engagement. Further, beyond simple causes and consequences, there is a need for longitudinal research exploring the impact of new management procedures and new leadership practices on work engagement.

Prior research has shown that greater trust is related to higher job satisfaction, commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, withdrawal behaviors, and transformational and transactional leadership (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). This study finds that trust also leads to higher work engagement. In addition, when we consider the support for an engagement–performance relationship, understanding the reasons that employees develop trust in their leaders and how they develop this trust becomes very important for organizations. Future research should explore other antecedents of trust formation that may be pertinent to work engagement and job performance and extend the conservation of resources theory (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015).

There is value in incorporating macro elements into research on job embeddedness and POS, and in exploring how variables such as organizational structure or culture or group dynamics affect employee perceptions of fit and support. What can organizations do to initiate and enhance trustworthy behaviors from individuals in leadership positions? What types of training and development programs would encourage transformational leadership, potentially strengthening employees' perceptions of organizational fit and

organizational support? Research is clearly needed on contextual factors that may have an impact on employees' perceptions of trust, fit, and support, as well as on work outcomes.

One area of future research might be to develop a better scale for job embeddedness such that we can use structural equations modeling to estimate model fit taking into account measurement errors. Currently, organizational job embeddedness (OJE) is a formative measure of three second-order dimensions: OJE fit, OJE sacrifice, and OJE links. The dimensions include both dichotomous and continuous scale items, making scoring difficult without transformation. One dimension (sacrifice) contains nine items, which is quite long, making structural equations modeling at the item level difficult to achieve with good model fit. The dimensions of the current OJE scale leave open the possibility of a reflective model of the construct. As currently conceptualized, the formative model of OJE assumes that the causal effect goes from the three dimensions of OJE to the overall OJE construct. With a reflective model of OJE, the causal effect goes from the OJE construct to the OJE dimensions. If different dimensions of OJE have different effects on the overall OJE construct (e.g., if an increase in overall OJE does not change the status of OJE sacrifice if leaving the organization or OJE links to community), then the formative model of OJE is supported. If not, then a reflective model of OJE is needed. Zhang et al. (2012) also noted several conceptualization and measurement issues of the embeddedness scale. This is a much-needed area of future research.

### **Practical implications**

Organizational decision makers could provide training and development opportunities in areas such as participative decision making, delegation, effective time and resource management, or communication, which could be integral to creating a nurturing and supportive work environment for personal and job resources. Courses or training can be made available and accessible for all organizational members, inclusive of all employees and managers, who are interested in improving their knowledge and skills in relevant areas to close any gap between individual competencies and organizational needs.

Our study showed that OJE and trust are two antecedents of work engagement. We extended previous research (e.g., Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010) in examining trust as a proximal antecedent of engagement in addition to POS and OJE as more distal antecedents. One practical implication of this finding is

that in order to increase employee engagement levels, organizational decision makers must focus on improving perceived trust levels between employees and those in leadership positions. Given the documented finding that engaged employees have a higher level of internal and external motivation levels, resulting in higher task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Rich et al., 2010), it is beneficial for all involved to invest in engaged employees through cultivating trust. One way to do this is to promote an honest and open organizational culture through empowered employees.

Our study also extended research in job embeddedness in the following way. We showed that the dimension of organizational job embeddedness had a significant relationship with trust and engagement. This suggests to managers that in order to increase engagement of employees, they need to improve employees' perceptions of link, fit, and sacrifice to organization. One way to achieve this is to select based on person-organization fit in addition to person – job fit. Future research should replicate our study and look at outcome variables of engagement such as performance and voluntary turnover to expand our model. It is our conjecture that whereas community embeddedness might predict continuance commitment (Burton et al., 2010), organizational embeddedness is likely to positively predict affective commitment, which in turn will positively affect employee job performance.

### Limitations

Although our study was the first in examining the mechanism through which embeddedness and perceived organizational support influence employee engagement, it was not without limitations. The first limitation is the self-report nature of the data collected in this study. This raises the possibility of common method variance that might have inflated the relationships among variables in the study. In fact, the correlations among variables in this study were quite high, as shown in Table 1, with a mean correlation of .56. We suspect that these correlations might have been biased upward due to common method variance as shown in prior research (e.g., Doty & Glick, 1998). Recently, using bifactor modeling, Biderman and colleagues showed that the self-reported personality data such as the Big Five inflated the substantive factor correlations with outcome variables (Biderman, Nguyen, Cunningham, & Nima, 2011).

The second limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the study. The lack of a time lag between the independent variables (OJE and POS) and the mediator

(trust) and the dependent variable (engagement) limits the causal inferences made about the mediational effect of trust. Our design does not allow for testing the causal ordering of our variables.

### Conclusion

This study found that trust was an antecedent of work engagement and that organizational job embeddedness and perceived organizational support were antecedents to trust. Findings further showed that trust was an explanatory mechanism that mediated the relationship between organizational job embeddedness and work engagement and between perceived organizational support and work engagement. These findings are important, as few studies have explored the attitudinal outcomes of job embeddedness and perceived organizational support. The study contributes to literature by showing how organizational job embeddedness and perceived organizational support affect work outcomes. It is our hope that future research will extend our study and further investigate the links between job embeddedness and work engagement, as well as between perceived organizational support and work engagement.

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