

Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research

The job embeddedness nomological network in tourism: A meta-analysis of antecedents, outcomes, and boundary conditions

Journal:	<i>Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research</i>
Manuscript ID	JHTR-26-06-691.R1
Manuscript Type:	Quantitative (8000 words)
Keywords:	Job embeddedness, Meta-Analysis < Data & Theory, Antecedents, Outcomes, Boundary conditions, Hospitality
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The job embeddedness nomological network in hospitality: A meta-analysis of antecedents, outcomes, and boundary conditions

Highlights

- This meta-analysis presents the first evidence-based map of what strengthens or undermines job embeddedness in hospitality settings.
- The meta-analysis synthesizes 120 studies from 24 countries involving more than 44,091 employees.
- Organizational practices are the most effective levers for enhancing job embeddedness, which in turn improves engagement, life satisfaction, and innovative behavior while reducing withdrawal tendencies among hospitality employees.
- These insights help hospitality organizations allocate resources toward supportive climates, fair treatment, and relationally rich workplaces rather than relying on demographic or individual traits that show weak effects.

Abstract

Recent systematic reviews show that one in five job embeddedness studies were conducted in hospitality settings. This meta-analysis offers the first quantitative synthesis of job embeddedness in hospitality. Integrating 120 studies ($N = 44,091$), this study maps the antecedents, outcomes, and boundary conditions that explain how job embeddedness develops and what it yields in hospitality contexts. The results indicate that organizational factors—including organizational support, distributive justice, and high-performance work practices—exert the strongest influence on job embeddedness, followed by leadership and job-related characteristics. Job embeddedness demonstrates strong positive associations with key attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, including engagement, life satisfaction, and innovative behavior, alongside moderate negative relationships with withdrawal tendencies. Moderator analyses reveal systematic variation by culture, tenure, gender, measurement type, and publication year. By delineating job embeddedness’s nomological network, this study clarifies its key antecedents and consequences and provides an empirical foundation for workforce sustainability research and practice in hospitality.

Keywords: Job embeddedness (JE); Meta-analysis; Antecedents; Outcomes; Boundary conditions; Hospitality

Introduction

Employee retention remains a persistent challenge in the hospitality sector, where frontline employees directly shape service interaction quality (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021). Despite sustained managerial attention, turnover rates remain high, generating substantial financial and operational strain. Replacing a single hospitality employee can cost between 30 and 60% of annual salary (Actabl and AHLA's Management Company Committee, 2023; Yang et al., 2019), while ongoing departures disrupt service continuity. Retention challenges are particularly acute among younger workers, raising concerns about long-term workforce sustainability in hospitality (Zhou et al., 2021). Although hospitality scholarship has long prioritized explanations for why employees leave (Zhu et al., 2024) classic motivational theory—notably Herzberg's distinction between hygiene factors and motivators—suggests that the reasons employees stay are not simply the inverse of why they quit (Herzberg, 1966). Accordingly, scholars increasingly call for a conceptual shift toward understanding why employees remain embedded in their organizations (Arici et al., 2023; Robinson et al., 2014).

This focus echoes the origins of JE. Mitchell, an influential scholar in turnover research, once joked that his unusually long tenure at the University of Washington made him better suited to explain why people stay. He reflected that he remained because he “fit” the sector, had strong “links,” and would “sacrifice” much if he left, an insight that later evolved into the formal job embeddedness (JE) framework (Lee et al., 2014). Job embeddedness is now viewed as a proactive retention strategy. Empirical evidence further shows that embedded employees benefit multiple domains. At the employee level, JE is associated with positive work attitudes (Yu et al., 2020) and greater overall life satisfaction (Hu & Dang, 2025). At the organizational level, higher embeddedness predicts stronger commitment (Park et al., 2021), improved performance (Karatepe, 2013a), and reduced turnover intentions

(Yang et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings underscore the growing relevance of JE for hospitality organizations confronting chronic labor shortages.

Despite growing scholarly attention (Arici et al., 2023; Majumdarr & Dasgupta, 2024), empirical findings on JE in hospitality remain fragmented and at times contradictory. Many individual studies rely on small or context-specific samples, producing results that are difficult to generalize. For example, while some studies find that age and tenure positively predict JE (Karatepe, 2013b), others report nonsignificant or even negative relationships (Elsaied, 2020; Yang & Wong, 2020). Similar inconsistencies appear for organizational antecedents: some studies show strong effects of organizational support and related practices (Dogantekin et al., 2022), whereas others find much weaker relationships (Afsar & Badir, 2016). Moreover, most hospitality studies examine only a narrow range of JE antecedents and outcomes (e.g., Park et al., 2021), leaving substantial portions of JE’s broader nomological network unexplored.

These inconsistencies complicate theoretical accumulation and generate uncertainty for managers in hospitality settings. Without a cumulative evidence base, scholars struggle to reconcile seemingly contradictory findings, and managers receive little clarity about which organizational levers most effectively enhance embeddedness. A meta-analytic approach offers a systematic solution by correcting for sampling error, measurement unreliability, and other methodological artifacts (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). Meta-analysis can establish robust estimates of JE’s antecedents and outcomes across diverse studies (see Lim & Ok, 2021), while also allowing for an examination of moderators that may explain observed heterogeneity. Emerging evidence suggests that cultural context can shape JE processes (e.g., Chen & Ayoun, 2021), with employees in individualistic cultures potentially embedding through different pathways than those in collectivistic environments. Similarly, demographic characteristics such as gender may influence how employees form and demonstrate embedded

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3 attachments (Stewart & Wiener, 2021). Identifying such boundary conditions is essential for
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5 understanding how JE operates across different workforce groups and contexts.
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8 Existing JE reviews, however, remain limited in scope and depth. Within hospitality,
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10 the only field-specific review is the qualitative assessment by Arici et al. (2023), which—
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12 while informative—lacks quantitative integration and includes studies only up to 2021,
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14 missing the rapid expansion of recent JE research. Outside hospitality, reviews in the general
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16 management literature tend to focus on conceptual development (e.g., Kiazad et al., 2015),
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18 measurement debates (Zhang et al., 2012), or narrow subsets of JE relationships (Jiang et al.,
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20 2012; Wang et al., 2024). To date, no review offers a comprehensive quantitative synthesis of
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22 JE's full nomological network.
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26 To address these gaps, this meta-analysis pursues three objectives. First, it integrates
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28 the full range of empirical evidence on JE within hospitality settings to identify its
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30 antecedents and consequences. Second, it estimates the magnitude and direction of these
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32 relationships using psychometric meta-analytic procedures (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). Third,
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34 it examines theoretically relevant moderators—including contextual, demographic, and
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36 methodological factors—to explain variation in effect sizes.
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40 This study makes several contributions. Drawing on 120 studies involving 44,091
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42 hospitality employees across 24 countries/regions, it provides the most comprehensive
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44 quantitative synthesis of JE to date, representing an 87.5% expansion beyond the coverage of
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46 Arici et al.'s (2023) review. By integrating findings across diverse strands of research, the
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48 meta-analysis clarifies JE's nomological network, resolves inconsistent findings, and
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50 identifies boundary conditions that amplify or weaken key effects. These insights offer
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52 stronger foundations for JE theory and provide hospitality managers with empirically
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54 grounded guidance to enhance embeddedness and support long-term workforce stability.
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2. Literature review

The first two sections introduce the conceptual foundations and dominant measurement approaches of JE, before outlining its key antecedents and outcomes in hospitality research and exploring boundary conditions.

2.1 Job embeddedness

Job embeddedness was introduced by Mitchell et al. (2001) to explain why employees stay beyond traditional attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or job involvement. Whereas job satisfaction reflects employees’ affective evaluations of their jobs, and affective commitment reflects their emotional bond with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997), JE captures the broader forces that bind employees to their jobs and organizations through links, fit, and sacrifice (Mitchell et al., 2001). It reflects not only the wish to stay, but also the feeling of ‘needing to stay’. A degree of overlap is nonetheless expected because employees who perceive strong fit and valuable aspects of their jobs may also evaluate those jobs more positively (Heritage et al., 2016). However, JE extends beyond such evaluations by incorporating relational ties and perceived losses associated with leaving, which can mean that employees remain embedded even when satisfaction is modest (Mitchell et al., 2001). This distinction remains empirically debated: Heritage et al. (2016) found substantial shared variance between JE and job satisfaction, whereas prior evidence supports their discriminant validity (Clinton et al., 2012) and shows that JE predicts turnover beyond established job attitudes (Crossley et al., 2007; Jiang et al., 2012). Unlike job involvement, which concerns psychological identification with work (Kanungo, 1982), JE therefore reflects a broader form of attachment and constraint within one’s job and organization.

Job embeddedness is particularly salient in hospitality. Links are especially important in hotel and food-and-beverage operations, where high-quality service depends on tightly coordinated, cross-departmental routines that make employees’ relational ties highly

consequential (Bui et al., 2025). Fit is equally critical, as service roles require emotional labor, prosocial motivation, and value alignment with the organization's hospitality ethos; employees who experience this congruence are more willing to sustain the discretionary, customer-focused behaviors that differentiate service brands (Park et al., 2021). From the organization's perspective, strengthening employees' sense of sacrifice is essential because hospitality service relies on tacit knowledge, guest familiarity, and team-based coordination that are costly to rebuild once lost (Ferreira et al., 2017). Together, these hospitality-specific dynamics make JE a particularly powerful lens for understanding workforce stability and service continuity in the sector.

2.2 Conceptualizations and measurements of job embeddedness

Mitchell et al. (2001) conceptualized JE as the extent to which employees are connected to their work and life contexts through *links*, *fit*, and *sacrifice* across two domains: on-the-job (organizational) and off-the-job (community). In the hospitality context, links may include strong relationships with coworkers or regular customers that create a sense of belonging (Bui et al., 2025); fit reflects the compatibility between an employee's skills or career calling and the culture of the organization or local community (Park et al., 2024); and sacrifice refers to the valued benefits or career opportunities that would be lost if the employee were to leave the organization or the local community. Their original 40-item measure operationalized these facets, offering a detailed view of the mechanisms that anchor employees.

Building on this foundation, Crossley et al. (2007) developed a seven-item global JE scale that captures employees' overall sense of being "stuck" or "enmeshed." This measure focuses on the psychological experience of embeddedness rather than its structural components, offering a shorter, and more parsimonious assessment with strong reliability and predictive validity (Zhang et al., 2012). The items in the global scale primarily capture

employees’ perceived entrenchment within their organization, for example, feeling caught up in, tied to, or unable to leave their job—indicating that the measure primarily reflects on-the-job embeddedness rather than community-related forces. However, this global approach is less diagnostic for identifying which specific links, fits, or sacrifices contribute to retention, potentially limiting its usefulness for targeted managerial interventions (Clinton et al., 2012).

Following Crossley et al. (2007), this meta-analysis focuses on on-the-job JE. This scope is appropriate for three reasons. First, on-the-job JE aligns more directly with organizational behavior and HRM constructs such as leadership, climate, and HR practices, and avoids confounding factors outside managerial control (Park et al., 2021). Second, community embeddedness is more context-dependent and presents particular conceptual and measurement challenges across geographical and cultural settings (Zhang et al., 2012). Third, the embeddedness literature has expanded beyond the organizational and community domains to include other forms of attachment, such as family embeddedness (Lee et al., 2014) and occupational embeddedness (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Incorporating these broader nonorganizational domains would substantially widen the conceptual scope of the review beyond workplace embeddedness.

2.3 Antecedents and outcomes of job embeddedness

Antecedents

Drawing on prior hospitality research and its theoretical foundations, JE antecedents can be organized into four categories representing distinct loci of influence on embeddedness: individual characteristics (e.g., Alola et al., 2019), job-related factors (e.g., Karatepe, 2016), organizational characteristics (e.g., Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017), and leadership influences (e.g., Zia et al., 2021). Together, these categories capture how personal attributes, work

experiences, organizational systems, and supervisory relationships shape employees' embeddedness in hospitality settings.

Individual characteristics influence how employees develop embeddedness over time. Drawing on career development theory (Super, 1957, 1980), age and tenure are generally associated with higher JE, as longer-tenured hospitality employees accumulate experience and relational ties within their organizations (Khorakian et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2022). Education may have competing effects on JE. Higher education enhances human capital and external career opportunities, potentially reducing dependence on the current organization and weakening JE (Becker, 2009; González et al., 2016). Conversely, it may strengthen career aspirations that, when fulfilled within the organization, enhance fit and perceived sacrifice of leaving, thereby strengthening JE (Zhu et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2001). Psychological resources such as self-efficacy can shape JE by enhancing perceived fit and control, as suggested by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Alola et al., 2019), while service-oriented employees tend to form stronger relational connections with coworkers and guests (Arasli et al., 2017).

Job-related factors shape the daily experiences that anchor employees within their organizations. Supportive relationships, such as coworker support (Karatepe, 2016) can enhance hospitality workers' JE by providing emotional and social resources that foster belonging and stability. From a conservation of resources (COR) perspective (Hobfoll, 2001), such resources protect employees from strain (Karatepe, 2016), whereas burnout represents a loss of key resources that weakens perceived fit and links (Dogantekin et al., 2022). Work overload may have competing implications for JE. Although excessive workload can drain employees' resources and weaken perceived fit (Haldorai et al., 2022), manageable demands may be appraised as challenges that strengthen involvement in the job and reinforce workplace links (Crawford et al., 2010). Work-family conflict can diminish JE. From a job

demands–resources perspective (Bakker et al., 2004), conflict between work and family roles depletes employees’ energy and their ability to maintain workplace relationships (Karatepe, 2013a).

Organizational characteristics reflect structural and contextual features that influence employees’ JE. Career growth opportunities (Mashi et al., 2022) and perceived organizational support (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017) are linked to higher JE. According to social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) and organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), when employees believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, they reciprocate through stronger ties and a greater willingness to remain. Similarly, organizational justice enhances embeddedness by promoting a sense of fairness and trust (Arici et al., 2019). In addition, High-Performance Work Practices (HPWP) contribute to JE by providing developmental opportunities and aligning employee abilities with job demands (Bumrah et al., 2024).

Leadership factors play a pivotal role in shaping hospitality employees’ sense of connection to their work environment. Supportive forms of leadership, such as servant leadership (Zia et al., 2021) and inclusive leadership (Wu et al., 2025), are associated with higher JE. Drawing on social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) and servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1997), leaders who act with integrity, empathy, and a service orientation, create reciprocal trust and emotional bonds. Supportive leaders further strengthen perceived organizational support by acting as agents of the organization, reinforcing employees’ sense of value and belonging. Conversely, abusive supervision weakens embeddedness by violating fairness and relational norms (Teng et al., 2021), eroding employees’ willingness to invest in long-term ties. Given the interpersonal intensity of hospitality work, leadership is expected to have significant influence on employees’ JE.

Outcomes

A body of hospitality research has explored how JE translates into various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in the workplace. These outcomes reflect not only employees' psychological attachment to their jobs, but also the ways in which embeddedness shapes their motivation, performance, and discretionary behaviors. Attitudinally, embedded employees experience stronger feelings of belonging and responsibility, consistent with psychological ownership theory (Pierce et al., 2001), which, in turn, translates into greater commitment (Park et al., 2021). From a COR perspective (Hobfoll, 2001), JE represents a reservoir of valued work-related resources that can enhance employees' satisfaction with both their jobs and their broader lives (Ampofo et al., 2021). Accordingly, JE has been associated with greater job (Yu et al., 2020) and life satisfaction (Ampofo et al., 2021). Behaviorally, JE promotes personal investment and reciprocity. Through psychological ownership and social exchange mechanisms (Pierce et al., 2001; Homans, 1958), embedded employees offer constructive suggestions, demonstrate creativity, and perform better, and engage in fewer counterproductive behaviors (Park et al., 2021; Elshaer & Azazz, 2021).

Taken together, the existing literature has established the conceptual foundations of JE, highlighted different approaches to its conceptualization and measurement (e.g., Crossley et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001), and identified a broad range of antecedents and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in hospitality settings (Arici et al., 2023). Building on this body of work, the present study investigates how JE has been empirically examined in hospitality research and quantitatively synthesizes the key antecedents and outcomes, including the direction, magnitude, and variability of these relationships.

Research Question 1. How has job embeddedness (JE) been conceptualized and examined within hospitality research?

Research Question 2. What are the key antecedents and outcomes of JE in hospitality, and how do the direction, magnitude, and variability of these relationships manifest across empirical studies?

2.4 Moderators

Beyond antecedents and outcomes, this subsection examines moderators that help explain when and for whom JE relationships vary. Specifically, national culture, workforce demographics (i.e., age, gender and tenure), measurement approach, and publication year are considered. These moderators are theory-driven and informed by prior research, yet they have rarely been examined simultaneously in JE research.

National culture

Culture offers an important lens for understanding how employees form and respond to JE. Drawing on Hofstede’s (2001) framework, individualistic societies emphasize autonomy and self-realization, whereas collectivistic and high power-distance contexts stress social harmony and obligation. These differences likely shape JE’s antecedents and outcomes. In individualistic settings, embeddedness may develop through self-chosen investment and personal growth, reflecting self-consistency over tenure (Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). In collectivistic contexts, JE may be more relationally anchored in social expectations rather than individual accumulation (Gustiawan et al., 2023). Affective consequences may also differ: in autonomy-oriented cultures, JE may more strongly enhance satisfaction and well-being (Ng et al., 2009), whereas in collectivistic cultures it may reflect compliance with social norms (Williamson & Holmes, 2015). Thus, it is expected that culture conditions both the formation and impact of embeddedness.

Demographic factors

Age and tenure represent temporal forces shaping how employees experience JE. According to career development theory (Super, 1957,1980), age influences stability motives,

whereas tenure reflects accumulated reciprocity and organizational experience. Older employees may value predictability, whereas younger hospitality workers may prioritize mobility (Zhu et al., 2024). Tenure may reinforce these age-related tendencies by deepening social ties, enhancing role mastery, and strengthening perceptions of mutual investment.

Gender can also shape how JE is expressed. Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) suggests that gendered expectations emphasize more communal and relational orientations for women and more agentic orientations for men (Li & Wei, 2021). These differences may influence how strongly embeddedness translates into workplace behaviors. For example, in male-dominant contexts, citizenship may depend more strongly on employees' JE as a basis for reciprocal exchange, whereas in female-dominant contexts, relational and helping behaviors may be more closely aligned with communal role expectations (Thompson et al., 2020). Together, these highlight that demographic composition subtly influences both the development and expression of embeddedness.

Measurement scale and publication year

Differences in JE measurement reflect distinct theoretical emphases. Mitchell et al.'s (2001) multidimensional model views JE as a web of structural and relational ties—ties, fit, and sacrifice—anchoring employees to their job. In contrast, Crossley et al.'s (2007) global scale captures a broader psychological state of embeddedness that integrates cognitive, affective, and constraint-based elements. These conceptual differences may help explain variations in observed relationships. Multidimensional measures, by assessing contextual ties directly, tend to align more strongly with situational antecedents such as leadership support or fairness (Zhang et al., 2012). Consequently, differences in structural versus psychological measurement likely contribute to effect-size heterogeneity across JE studies.

Over time, shifts in work values and hospitality employment relationships may have influenced how JE connects to its antecedents and outcomes. Earlier psychological contracts

emphasized stability and transactional exchanges, whereby employees exchanged their contributions for relatively concrete organizational inducements such as pay, job security, and career opportunities (Rousseau, 1995; Simons & Enz, 1995). In contrast, the more recent hospitality research illustrates a broader emphasis on intrinsic and self-defining aspects of work. For example, autonomy has emerged as an important self-determination need among frontline hospitality employees (Shulga, 2021), while job crafting enables tourism workers to enhance person–job fit and meaningfulness in their work (Guo & Hou, 2022). Similarly, living a calling illustrates how hospitality employees can experience work as personally meaningful and connected to their sense of self (Kang et al., 2021). Publication year thus may capture these evolving dynamics—as employees integrate belonging into their self-concept and professional identity, the strength and nature of JE’s relationships may likewise change, reflecting broader transformations in employment philosophies.

Research Question 3. To what extent do national culture, workforce demographics, measurement approach, and publication year moderate the relationships between JE and its antecedents and outcomes in hospitality settings?

3. Methodology

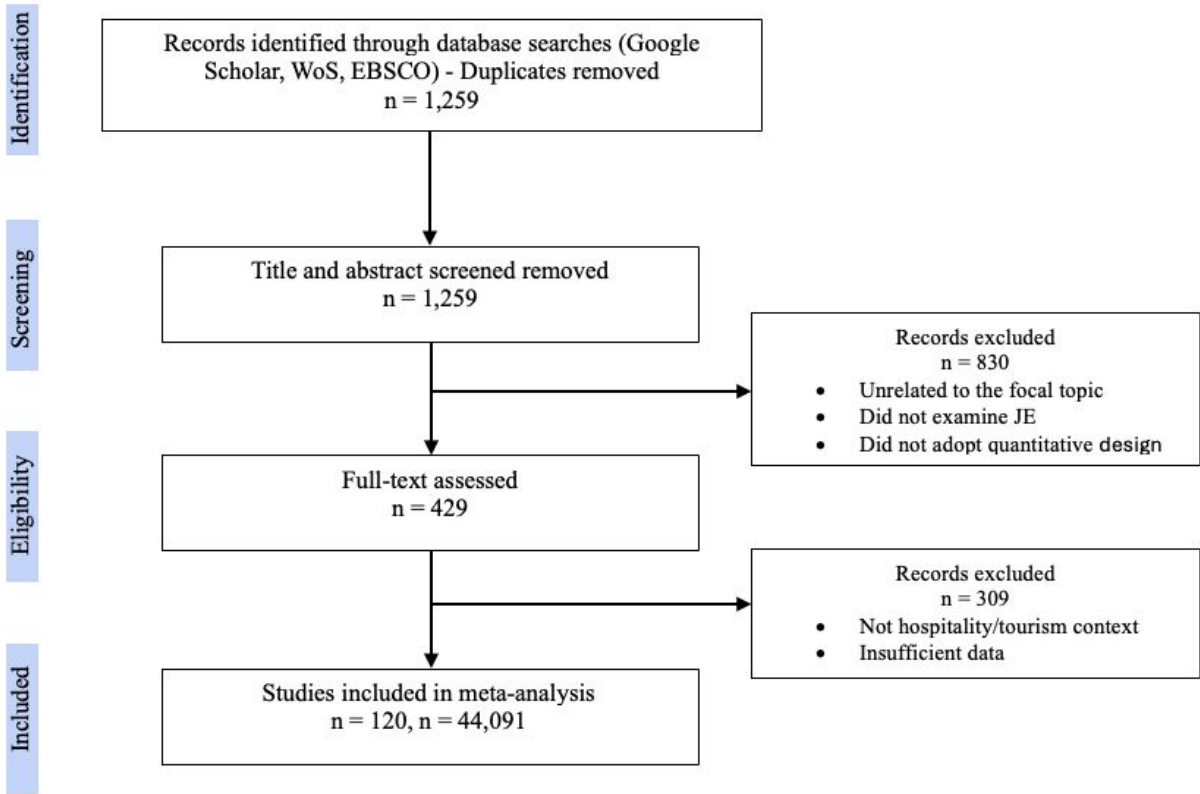
3.1 Literature search and inclusion criteria

The literature search was conducted between March and May 2025, with an updated search performed in August 2026 to ensure that the most recent studies were included. No restrictions were placed on publication year, and all eligible studies published up to August 2026 were considered. Following recent meta-analyses (e.g., Zhu et al., 2023), Google Scholar, Web of Science, and EBSCO Hospitality and Tourism Complete were searched using the keywords “embeddedness,” “job embeddedness,” and “organizational embeddedness” (see Arici et al., 2023). Web of Science was used to identify relevant peer-reviewed studies across disciplines, whereas EBSCO Hospitality and Tourism Complete provided focused coverage of hospitality and tourism publications. Google Scholar was included to capture grey literature and reduce publication bias. For Google Scholar and Web of Science, embeddedness-related terms were combined with hospitality-related keywords (i.e., hospitality, tourism, hotel, restaurant, and travel) (see Zhu et al., 2023). Leading hospitality journals, i.e., *Tourism Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* were also manually searched, and a backward citation search was conducted.

Studies were included if they were empirical, quantitative, focused on hospitality employees’ JE, and reported correlations or convertible effect sizes (e.g., path coefficients, or *t* values) between JE and its antecedents or outcomes, along with sample size. Only English-language studies were retained. Following PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009; see Figure 1), 1,259 records remained after deduplication. Title and abstract screening excluded 830 papers as unrelated (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer, 2011), not measuring employee JE

(e.g., Gibbs & Slevitch, 2019), or qualitative (e.g., Yam et al., 2018). Of the 429 full texts assessed, 309 were excluded for lacking hospitality relevance (e.g., Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008) or sufficient statistical information (e.g., Araslı & Ilgen, 2023). The final sample included 120 studies representing 124 independent samples (see Appendix A).

Figure 1
PRISMA Flow Diagram for Paper Selection



3.2 Coding

Two independent coders—the first author and an academic advisor—conducted the coding of the data. Following established reliability procedures (e.g., Zhang et al., 2014), the first author piloting coding on 30 randomly selected studies ($\approx 25\%$), which were independently recoded by the advisor, yielding 91% agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. The remaining studies were coded by the first author and fully cross-checked by the advisor, resulting in a final agreement rate of 97%.

A predefined coding framework guided the extraction of bibliographic details, statistical information (e.g., sample size, correlations, Cronbach's alpha), and sample characteristics (e.g., country, mean age, gender). Methodological rules included (a) treating all demographic variables as observed, with reliability fixed at 1.00; (b) coding gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and marital status (0 = single, 1 = married) dichotomously, and (c) using Time 1 data from longitudinal studies. When Cronbach's alpha was missing, average values from other included studies were applied. Standardized betas were converted to correlations using Peterson and Brown's (2005) formula, $r = 0.98\beta + 0.05\lambda$ ($\lambda = 1$ when $\beta \geq 0$). When studies reported subdimensions of antecedents or outcomes (e.g., Safavi & Bouzari, 2021), or treated JE as fit, links, and sacrifice (Mitchell et al., 2001), subdimension correlations were combined using Hunter and Schmidt's (2004) procedure. This approach was necessary because most included studies used Crossley et al.'s (2007) global JE scale, which did not permit systematic examination of facet-level effects for fit, links, and sacrifice. Composite reliability was estimated with the Spearman-Brown formula when multiple alphas were available (Peck & Levashina, 2017).

3.3 Data analysis

Psychometric random-effects meta-analysis was conducted following Hunter and Schmidt (2004), to estimate true-score correlations between JE and its antecedents and outcomes. This approach corrects both sampling error and measurement unreliability, providing generalizable estimates across heterogeneous studies. Observed correlations were sample size-weighted and then adjusted for attenuation. For each relationship, the number of studies (k), total sample size (N), mean observed correlation (r), and the sample size-weighted, reliability-corrected correlations (ρ) were reported, along with 95% CIs for significance and 80% CRs and Q statistics for heterogeneity. Wide CRs or significant Q values indicate the potential presence of moderators. Because most primary studies employed

cross-sectional designs, the synthesized relationships were interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

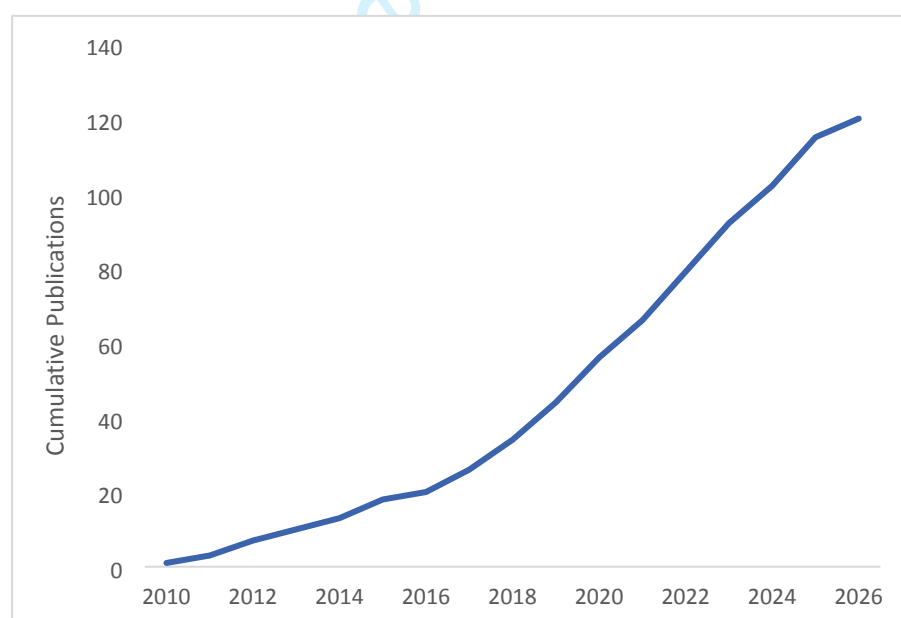
Moderators were examined using subgroup analyses and meta-regressions. Z-tests compared corrected correlations across study features (e.g., Crossley et al., 2007 scale vs. others; Eastern vs. Western samples). National culture was assessed via subgroup Z-tests followed by weighted least squares meta-regressions (Lim & Lu, 2024) using Hofstede’s individualism scores as predictors. In the meta-regression models, Hofstede’s individualism scores were entered as the independent variable to predict effect sizes (dependent variable). Similar meta-regressions tested other study-level covariates (e.g., publication year, mean age, tenure, gender composition). To avoid second-order sampling bias (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004), relationships with fewer than three independent studies were excluded, and meta-regressions were conducted only when ≥ 10 effect sizes were available. Sensitivity analyses were conducted using Harrer et al.’s (2018) outlier-detection method, and publication bias was assessed using fail-safe N (Becker et al., 2005) and Egger’s regression (Egger et al., 1997).

4. Results

4.1 Sample description

The final sample included 120 studies, 124 independent samples, and 44,091 participants. As shown in Figure 2, publications increased steadily, with moderate growth in the early 2010s, sharp expansion in the mid-late 2010s, and continued to rise into the early 2020s.

Figure 2
Cumulative Number of Publications by Year



As shown in Table 1, approximately 61% of studies appeared in leading hospitality journals, including *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (13%), *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (10%), and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* (5%). Another 32% were published in non-hospitality outlets (e.g., *The Service Industries Journal*, *Sustainability*, *Journal of Management & Organization*), and 7% were dissertations.

Table 1
Sample Descriptions

Aspects	No. of studies	Percentages of studies (%)
Journal		
Hospitality	73	61
Non-hospitality	38	32
Dissertation & Thesis	9	7
Sectors		
Hospitality	120	100
Hotel	98	81
Travel	7	6
Airline	2	2
Restaurant	11	9
Unspecified	2	2
Region (24 different countries/regions)		
China	19	16
Turkey	11	9
Ghana	10	8
USA	9	8
Pakistan	8	7
Taiwan	8	7
Iran	8	7
Others	47	38
Frequently used measurement scale		
Crossley et al. (2007)	81	68
Mitchell et al. (2001)	14	11
Robinson et al. (2014)	7	6
Holtom et al. (2006)	7	6
Others	11	9
Frequently used theories (Top 5)		
Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958)	45	38
Job embeddedness theory (Mitchell et al., 2001)	41	34
Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001)	35	29
Job demands-resources theory (Bakker et al., 2004)	8	6
Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)	5	4
Research design		
Cross-sectional	77	64
Time-lagged	41	34
Longitudinal	1	1
Experiment	1	1
Research technique		
SEM	75	62
Regression	44	37
ANOVA	1	1
Study Design Features		
Source Type		
• Multi source	27	22
• Single source	93	73
Data Structure		
• Multi-level	5	4
• Single-level	115	96

Most studies were conducted in the hotel context (81%). An additional 9% were conducted in the restaurant context. The dataset covered 24 countries/regions—most frequently China (16%), Turkey (9%), Ghana (8%), and the United States (8%). Regarding measurement, the global JE scale by Crossley et al. (2007) dominated (68%), followed by multidimensional tools adapted from Mitchell et al. (2001). The main theoretical lenses were social exchange theory (38%), job embeddedness theory (34%), and conservation of resources theory (29%). Methodologically, 64% of studies used cross-sectional designs, and only approximately 2% employed longitudinal or experimental methods. Multi-source and multi-level data were used in a minority of studies (22% and 4% respectively).

4.2 Antecedents and outcomes of job embeddedness

A psychometric meta-analysis was conducted to explore the direction, strength, and homogeneity of the antecedents and outcomes of JE (see Figure 3 and Table 2).

Antecedents

Individual differences. Age ($\rho = .09$), organizational tenure ($\rho = .13$), gender ($\rho = .03$), and marital status ($\rho = .08$) all showed small positive relationships with JE. Education ($\rho = -.01$) and job alternatives ($\rho = -.01$) were nonsignificant as their 95% confidence intervals included zero. Dispositional factors—including service orientation and psychological capital—showed medium positive correlations with JE ($\rho \approx .32-.44$), although they were examined less frequently than demographic variables.

Job-related factors. Coworker support ($\rho = .49$), workplace friendship ($\rho = .44$), and empowerment ($\rho = .35$) were moderate-to-strong positive predictors of JE, whereas work overload showed only a weak positive effect ($\rho = .09$, 95% CI [.04, .15]). Burnout ($\rho = -.31$), workplace mistreatment ($\rho = -.27$), job insecurity ($\rho = -.28$), and work-family conflict ($\rho = -.14$) showed significant negative relationships. Burnout, coworker support, empowerment and job insecurity were the most frequently studied variables in this category.

Organizational characteristics. These variables showed the strongest associations with JE. High-Performance Work Practices ($\rho = .67$), organizational support ($\rho = .57$), and distributive justice ($\rho = .55$) displayed large effects, while training ($\rho = .44$), rewards ($\rho = .45$), career growth ($\rho = .39$), and interactional and procedural justice ($\rho = .38$ and $\rho = 0.37$, respectively) showed moderate effects. All confidence intervals (CIs) excluded zero. Rewards ($k = 10$) and organizational support ($k = 9$) appeared most frequently, whereas HPWP and career growth (each $k = 3$) were less common.

Leadership. Supervisor support showed the strongest positive leadership effect ($\rho = .52$), followed by ethical ($\rho = .36$) and servant leadership ($\rho = .33$). Abusive supervision was negatively related to JE ($\rho = -.22$). Supervisor support and abusive supervision were the most studied leadership variables ($k = 10$ and $k = 9$, respectively).

Across all antecedents, most Q -statistics were significant, indicating substantial heterogeneity and the likelihood of moderation effects.

Table 2
Psychometric Meta-analysis

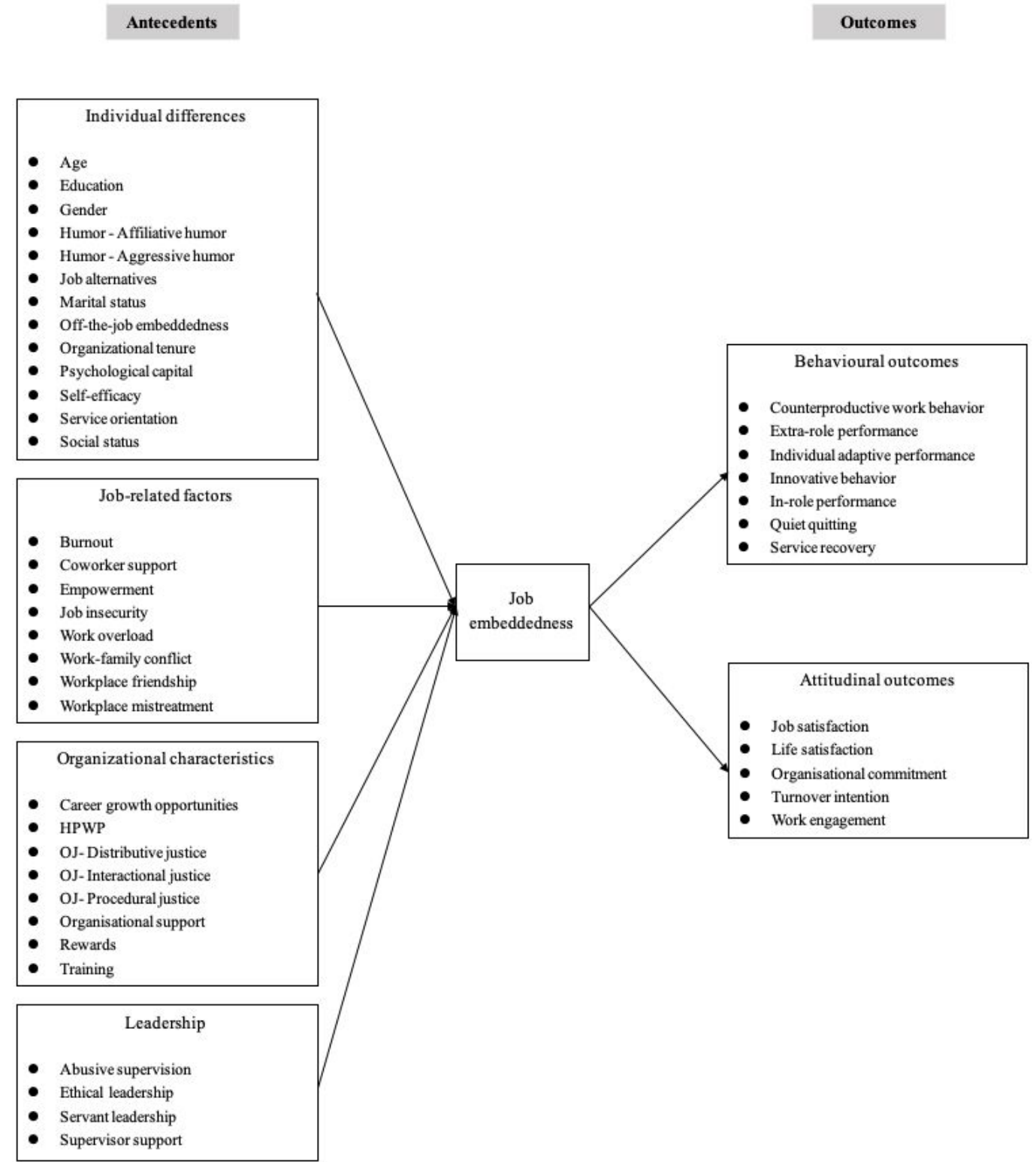
Factors	K	N	r	ρ	SD ρ	95%CI	80% CR	Q
<i>Antecedents</i>								
➤ Individual differences								
Age	46	17,022	0.08	0.09	0.14	[0.06, 0.09]	[-0.09, 0.24]	284***
Education	30	10,168	-0.01	-0.01	0.11	[-0.03, 0.01]	[-0.12, 0.11]	98***
Gender	26	9,652	0.03	0.03	0.08	[0.01, 0.06]	[-0.05, 0.10]	56***
Humor - Affiliative humor	3	983	0.29	0.35	0.08	[0.28, 0.41]	[0.28, 0.42]	5
Humor - Aggressive humor	3	983	-0.11	-0.13	0.04	[-0.20, -0.06]	[-0.13, -0.13]	1
Job alternatives	3	1,071	-0.01	-0.01	0.11	[-0.08, 0.07]	[-0.12, 0.11]	9*
Marital status	10	2,804	0.08	0.08	0.08	[0.04, 0.12]	[0.02, 0.13]	15
Off-the-job embeddedness	8	2,554	0.44	0.51	0.15	[0.48, 0.55]	[0.33, 0.69]	65***
Organizational tenure	41	15,002	0.12	0.13	0.13	[0.11, 0.14]	[-0.03, 0.27]	223***
Psychological capital	6	3,029	0.30	0.32	0.12	[0.29, 0.36]	[0.17, 0.47]	47***
Self-efficacy	4	923	0.32	0.35	0.17	[0.28, 0.41]	[0.14, 0.55]	28***
Service orientation	4	1,131	0.39	0.44	0.27	[0.38, 0.49]	[0.10, 0.77]	91***
Social status	3	558	0.11	0.11	0.08	[0.03, 0.20]	[0.07, 0.15]	3
➤ Job-related factors								
Burnout	9	2,637	-0.27	-0.31	0.23	[-0.35, -0.27]	[-0.61, -0.02]	139***
Coworker support	8	2,308	0.43	0.49	0.18	[0.45, 0.53]	[0.28, 0.71]	81***
Empowerment	6	1,955	0.32	0.35	0.06	[0.31, 0.40]	[0.31, 0.39]	8
Job insecurity	6	2,382	-0.27	-0.28	0.34	[-0.33, -0.25]	[-0.71, 0.15]	278***
Work overload	4	1,547	0.08	0.09	0.17	[0.04, 0.15]	[-0.11, 0.29]	32***
Work-family conflict	3	962	-0.13	-0.14	0.10	[-0.21, -0.07]	[-0.24, -0.04]	8*
Workplace friendship	5	1,136	0.38	0.44	0.20	[0.38, 0.50]	[0.20, 0.68]	43***
Workplace mistreatment	5	1,571	-0.25	-0.27	0.17	[-0.33, -0.22]	[-0.48, -0.07]	41***
➤ Organizational characteristics								
Career growth opportunities	3	908	0.36	0.39	0.13	[0.33, 0.45]	[0.24, 0.55]	17***
HPWP	3	1,067	0.56	0.67	0.30	[0.61, 0.71]	[0.29, 1.00]	139***
OJ- Distributive justice	5	1,363	0.47	0.55	0.16	[0.50, 0.60]	[0.35, 0.74]	40***
OJ- Interactional justice	4	975	0.34	0.38	0.21	[0.32, 0.44]	[0.12, 0.64]	42***

Factors	K	N	r	p	SDp	95%CI	80% CR	Q
OJ- Procedural justice	5	1,355	0.33	0.37	0.14	[0.32, 0.43]	[0.21, 0.53]	25***
Organizational support	9	3,323	0.51	0.57	0.23	[0.53, 0.59]	[0.27, 0.86]	263***
Rewards	10	2,867	0.41	0.45	0.20	[0.42, 0.49]	[0.21, 0.70]	133***
Training	7	1,852	0.38	0.44	0.19	[0.40, 0.49]	[0.22, 0.67]	65***
➤ Leadership								
Abusive supervision	9	3,139	-0.20	-0.22	0.09	[-0.26, -0.19]	[-0.32, -0.13]	25**
Ethical leadership	4	2,758	0.32	0.36	0.09	[0.33, 0.40]	[0.26, 0.47]	22***
Servant leadership	4	1,200	0.31	0.33	0.21	[0.27, 0.38]	[0.06, 0.59]	59***
Supervisor support	10	3,796	0.46	0.52	0.17	[0.49, 0.55]	[0.31, 0.73]	139***
Outcomes								
➤ Attitudinal outcomes								
Job satisfaction	16	5,942	0.52	0.59	0.23	[0.57, 0.61]	[0.30, 0.88]	454***
Life satisfaction	6	1,321	0.44	0.52	0.35	[0.48, 0.58]	[0.11, 1.00]	180***
Organizational commitment	23	8,735	0.47	0.53	0.27	[0.51, 0.55]	[0.18, 0.87]	839***
Turnover intention	47	16,283	-0.27	-0.32	0.32	[-0.34, -0.30]	[-0.72, 0.08]	1,457***
Work engagement	20	6,989	0.38	0.44	0.19	[0.41, 0.46]	[0.20, 0.67]	263***
➤ Behavioral outcomes								
Counterproductive work behavior	6	2,591	-0.18	-0.19	0.28	[-0.24, -0.15]	[-0.54, 0.17]	180***
Extra-role performance	24	7,605	0.40	0.44	0.16	[0.42, 0.46]	[0.25, 0.63]	214***
Individual adaptive performance	3	1,102	0.48	0.51	0.17	[0.46, 0.56]	[0.30, 0.72]	46***
Innovative behavior	6	2,206	0.53	0.61	0.20	[0.57, 0.63]	[0.36, 0.85]	123***
In-role performance	12	2,649	0.34	0.39	0.17	[0.35, 0.43]	[0.20, 0.59]	70***
Quiet quitting	4	1,668	-0.20	-0.21	0.26	[-0.26, -0.16]	[-0.54, 0.12]	105***
Service recovery	6	1,290	0.26	0.30	0.17	[0.24, 0.36]	[0.10, 0.50]	33***

Note. HPWP = High-performance work practices; OJ = Organizational justice; Gender (Male = 0, Female = 1); Marital status (Single = 0, Married/In a relationship = 1).

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Figure 3
Antecedents and Outcomes of Job Embeddedness



Note. HPWP = High-performance work practices; OJ = Organizational justice. Each variable has a *k* value greater than 3.

Outcomes

Attitudinal outcomes. Job embeddedness showed strong positive correlations with job satisfaction ($\rho = .59, k = 16$) and organizational commitment ($\rho = .53, k = 23$). Work engagement was also frequently examined ($k = 20$) and demonstrated a moderate positive effect ($\rho = .44$). Job embeddedness showed a strong but less frequently studied relationship with life satisfaction ($\rho = .52, k = 6$), and its negative association with turnover intention was the most examined ($k = 47$), yet moderate in size ($\rho = -.32$).

Behavioral outcomes. Extra-role performance showed a moderate-to-strong positive link with JE ($\rho = .44, k = 24$), followed by in-role performance ($\rho = .39, k = 12$), and service recovery ($\rho = .30, k = 6$). Job embeddedness also showed a strong positive effect ($\rho = .61$) on innovative behavior, although this was based on fewer studies ($k = 6$). It was negatively related to counterproductive behavior ($\rho = -.19, k = 6$) and quiet quitting ($\rho = -.21, k = 4$).

Across outcomes, all Q -statistics were significant, indicating substantial heterogeneity and the likelihood of moderators.

Publication bias and sensitivity analyses

To assess robustness, publication bias and sensitivity checks were conducted. Fail-safe N values for all major relationships far exceeded the $5k + 10$ threshold (Rosenthal, 1979). Egger's regression tests were non-significant for nearly all effects ($p > .05$), indicating minimal publication bias. Following Harrer et al. (2018), outlier analyses identified studies with non-overlapping confidence intervals; removing these outliers produced only negligible changes in corrected correlations. Full outlier and bias results are presented in Appendix B.

However, several relationships were based on fewer than 10 independent studies. With a limited number of studies, meta-analytic estimates may be more susceptible to second-order sampling error, which means that the estimated mean effect and between-study variability

may be less stable (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). These findings should therefore be interpreted with greater caution until a larger evidence base becomes available.

4.3 Moderators

National culture

Subgroup analyses showed significant cross-cultural differences (Table 3). The correlation between tenure and JE was stronger in Western samples ($p = .19$) than in Eastern samples ($\rho = .12$), $Z = -1.97$, $p < .05$. Similarly, JE's association with job satisfaction was higher in Western ($\rho = .67$) than in Eastern contexts ($\rho = .53$), $Z = -1.99$, $p < .05$. Meta-regressions using Hofstede's (2001) individualism scores (Table 4) corroborated these findings: individualism strengthened the tenure–JE link ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$) and increased the JE–job satisfaction relationship ($\beta = .34$, $p < .10$), indicating stronger effects in more individualistic cultures.

Table 3
The Moderating Role of National Culture: Z -test

Outcomes	K	N	r	ρ	SD ρ	95%CI	80% CR	Z
Antecedents								
➤ Individual differences								
Age								-1.40
○ Eastern	43	15,697	0.07	0.07	0.14	[0.05, 0.09]	[-0.09, 0.23]	
○ Western	3	1,325	0.15	0.16	0.11	[0.10, 0.22]	[0.04, 0.28]	
Off-the-job embeddedness								0.46
○ Eastern	4	1,211	0.42	0.51	0.21	[0.45, 0.56]	[0.25, 0.76]	
○ Western	3	803	0.40	0.46	0.08	[0.39, 0.52]	[0.39, 0.53]	
Organizational tenure								-1.97*
○ Eastern	37	13,443	0.11	0.12	0.13	[0.10, 0.13]	[-0.04, 0.27]	
○ Western	4	1,559	0.17	0.19	0.08	[0.14, 0.24]	[0.12, 0.26]	
➤ Leadership								
Supervisor support								-1.02
○ Eastern	6	2,579	0.44	0.49	0.19	[0.46, 0.53]	[0.25, 0.73]	
○ Western	3	677	0.44	0.49	0.09	[0.42, 0.56]	[0.40, 0.58]	
Outcomes								
➤ Attitudinal outcomes								
Job satisfaction								-1.99*
○ Eastern	12	3,670	0.47	0.53	0.28	[0.51, 0.56]	[0.19, 0.88]	
○ Western	4	2,272	0.60	0.67	0.09	[0.65, 0.70]	[0.57, 0.78]	
Organizational commitment								0.07
○ Eastern	20	7,678	0.46	0.52	0.27	[0.50, 0.54]	[0.18, 0.87]	
○ Western	3	1,057	0.50	0.57	0.33	[0.52, 0.63]	[0.15, 0.99]	
Turnover intention								-0.15
○ Eastern	38	12,200	-0.29	-0.33	0.28	[-0.35, -0.32]	[-0.69, 0.02]	
○ Western	9	4,083	-0.24	-0.26	0.42	[-0.31, -0.24]	[-0.79, 0.27]	

Note. * $p < 0.05$

Table 4
The Moderating Role of National Culture: Meta-regression

Relationships	K	N	B	SE	β	p-value
Antecedents						
➤ Individual differences						
Organizational tenure → Job embeddedness	41	15,002	0.001	0.001	0.200	0.019*
Outcomes						
➤ Attitudinal outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Job satisfaction	16	5,942	0.004	0.003	0.344	0.095⁺

Note. K = number of studies; N = cumulative sample size; B = unstandardized coefficient;
SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.

⁺ $p < 0.10$

Demographic factors

Meta-regressions also tested demographic moderators. Age did not significantly moderate any JE relationships (Table 5). However, tenure significantly moderated the age–JE relationship ($\beta = .39, p < .05$; Table 6), with larger effects observed in samples with longer average tenure. Gender composition moderated the JE–extra-role performance relationship (Table 7), with stronger correlations in samples with more male employees ($\beta = .54, p < .01$).

Table 5
The Moderating Role of Age: Meta-regression

Relationships	K	N	B	SE	β	<i>p</i> -value
Antecedents						
➤ Individual differences						
Education → Job embeddedness	14	5,409	-0.002	0.007	-0.075	0.770
Gender → Job embeddedness	12	5,431	-0.001	0.004	-0.092	0.774
Organizational tenure → Job embeddedness	21	8,947	0.002	0.007	0.066	0.792
Outcomes						
➤ Attitudinal outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Organizational commitment	12	5,001	0.008	0.017	0.151	0.618
Job embeddedness → Turnover intention	20	7,561	0.007	0.009	0.180	0.448
Job embeddedness → Extra-role performance	10	3,534	-0.012	0.008	-0.430	0.136

Note. K = number of studies; N = cumulative sample size; B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.

Table 6
The Moderating Role of tenure: Meta-regression

Relationships	K	N	B	SE	β	<i>p</i> -value
Antecedents						
➤ Individual differences						
Age → Job embeddedness	17	7,870	0.001	0.001	0.388	0.034*
Gender → Job embeddedness	13	5,632	-0.001	0.001	-0.060	0.841
Education → Job embeddedness	12	4,649	0.001	0.001	-0.195	0.845
Outcomes						
➤ Attitudinal outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Turnover intention	11	3,817	-0.001	0.003	-0.062	0.857
➤ Behavioral outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Extra-role performance	10	3,050	0.001	0.002	0.061	0.850

Note. K = number of studies; N = cumulative sample size; B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.
** $p < 0.01$

Table 7

The Moderating Role of Gender: Meta-regression

Relationships	K	N	B	SE	β	p-value
Antecedents						
➤ Individual differences						
Age → Job embeddedness	44	16,266	-0.002	0.001	-0.196	0.188
Education → Job embeddedness	28	9,412	0.002	0.001	0.291	0.113
Marital status → Job embeddedness	10	2,804	0.002	0.002	0.377	0.257
Organizational tenure → Job embeddedness	40	14,610	-0.001	0.001	-0.110	0.535
➤ Organizational characteristics						
Rewards → Job embeddedness	10	2,867	0.001	0.006	0.050	0.892
➤ Leadership						
Supervisor support → Job embeddedness	10	3,796	0.001	0.004	0.009	0.980
Outcomes						
➤ Attitudinal outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Job satisfaction	15	5,832	-0.005	0.006	-0.220	0.374
Job embeddedness → Organizational commitment	20	7,948	0.005	0.005	0.203	0.391
Job embeddedness → Turnover intention	44	15,941	-0.003	0.003	-0.164	0.297
Job embeddedness → Work engagement	20	6,989	0.001	0.004	0.054	0.828
➤ Behavioral outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Extra-role performance	24	7,605	0.007	0.002	0.543	0.004**
Job embeddedness → In-role performance	12	2,649	0.001	0.004	0.066	0.837

Note. K = number of studies; N = cumulative sample size; B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.
** $p < 0.01$

Measurement scale and publication year

Subgroup analyses showed that measurement scale (Crossley et al., 2007 vs. others) moderated several effects (Table 8). Supervisor support had a stronger correlation with JE when multidimensional measures were used ($\rho = .62$) than when using the Crossley global scale ($\rho = .48$), $Z = -2.60, p < .01$. Abusive supervision was also marginally more negative with multidimensional measures ($\rho = -.27$ vs. $-.21$), $Z = 1.70, p < .10$.

Table 8
The Moderating Role of Measurement Scale (Crossley vs. Others): Z-test

Outcomes	K	N	r	ρ	SD ρ	95%CI	80% CR	Z
Antecedents								
➤ Individual differences								
Age								0.55
○ Crossley	33	11,242	0.08	0.08	0.16	[0.06, 0.10]	[-0.11, 0.28]	
○ Others	13	5,780	0.06	0.06	0.06	[0.04, 0.09]	[0.01, 0.11]	
Education								0.26
○ Crossley	23	8,039	-0.01	-0.01	0.11	[-0.03, 0.01]	[-0.13, 0.11]	
○ Others	7	2,129	0.01	0.01	0.11	[-0.04, 0.05]	[-0.11, 0.12]	
Gender								-1.69
○ Crossley	22	6,858	0.01	0.01	0.09	[-0.02, 0.04]	[-0.07, 0.09]	
○ Others	4	2,794	0.07	0.07	0.04	[0.03, 0.11]	[0.07, 0.08]	
Marital status								1.14
○ Crossley	6	1,418	0.10	0.11	0.07	[0.06, 0.17]	[0.11, 0.11]	
○ Others	4	1,386	0.05	0.05	0.08	[-0.01, 0.11]	[-0.03, 0.12]	
Organizational tenure								-0.81
○ Crossley	32	10,649	0.12	0.13	0.14	[0.11, 0.15]	[-0.04, 0.30]	
○ Others	9	4,353	0.10	0.11	0.08	[0.08, 0.14]	[0.02, 0.20]	
➤ Organizational characteristics								
Training								-0.12
○ Crossley	3	394	0.37	0.41	0.24	[0.31, 0.50]	[0.12, 0.70]	
○ Others	4	1,458	0.38	0.46	0.19	[0.40, 0.50]	[0.22, 0.69]	
➤ Leadership								
Abusive supervision								1.70 ⁺
○ Crossley	6	2,033	-0.19	-0.21	0.11	[-0.25, -0.16]	[-0.32, -0.09]	
○ Others	3	1,106	-0.24	-0.27	0.03	[-0.33, -0.21]	[-0.27, -0.27]	
Supervisor support								-2.60 ^{**}
○ Crossley	7	2,813	0.43	0.48	0.18	[0.45, 0.52]	[0.26, 0.71]	
○ Others	3	983	0.56	0.62	0.08	[0.57, 0.67]	[0.53, 0.71]	
Outcomes								
➤ Attitudinal outcomes								
Job satisfaction								-0.04
○ Crossley	9	4,035	0.52	0.58	0.23	[0.55, 0.61]	[0.28, 0.87]	
○ Others	7	1,907	0.51	0.61	0.25	[0.57, 0.64]	[0.29, 0.92]	
Organizational commitment								-1.65
○ Crossley	13	5,308	0.40	0.45	0.26	[0.42, 0.47]	[0.12, 0.78]	
○ Others	10	3,427	0.57	0.65	0.26	[0.63, 0.68]	[0.32, 0.98]	
Turnover intention								0.45
○ Crossley	26	8,795	-0.24	-0.28	0.37	[-0.30, -0.25]	[-0.74, 0.19]	
○ Others	21	7,488	-0.32	-0.37	0.24	[-0.40, -0.35]	[-0.67, -0.06]	
Work engagement								1.29
○ Crossley	14	5,096	0.39	0.45	0.22	[0.43, 0.48]	[0.18, 0.72]	
○ Others	6	1,893	0.33	0.38	0.09	[0.33, 0.43]	[0.29, 0.47]	

Note. ^{**} $p < 0.01$, ⁺ $p < 0.10$

Meta-regressions tested publication year as a moderator (Table 9). The negative education–JE relationship strengthened over time ($\beta = -.49, p < .01$). However, the positive rewards–JE link weakened ($\beta = -.63, p < .05$), indicating a declining influence of extrinsic rewards. The JE–in-role performance association became stronger in more recent studies ($\beta = .64, p < .01$).

Table 9
The Moderating Role of Publication Year: Meta-regression

Relationships	K	N	B	SE	β	p-value
Antecedents						
➤ Individual differences						
Age → Job embeddedness	46	17,022	-0.007	0.005	-0.201	0.172
Education → Job embeddedness	30	10,168	-0.013	0.004	-0.486	0.003**
Gender → Job embeddedness	26	9,652	-0.003	0.004	-0.173	0.365
Marital status → Job embeddedness	10	2,804	-0.007	0.005	-0.429	0.198
Organizational tenure → Job embeddedness	41	15,002	0.001	0.005	0.003	0.985
➤ Organizational characteristics						
Rewards → Job embeddedness	10	2,867	-0.030	0.014	-0.632	0.036*
➤ Leadership						
Supervisor support → Job embeddedness	10	3,796	0.005	0.018	0.107	0.784
Outcomes						
➤ Attitudinal outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Job satisfaction	16	5,942	-0.006	0.027	-0.046	0.839
Job embeddedness → Organizational commitment	23	8,735	-0.015	0.020	-0.159	0.455
Job embeddedness → Turnover intention	47	16,283	0.004	0.011	0.052	0.728
Job embeddedness → Work engagement	20	6,989	-0.009	0.017	-0.129	0.598
➤ Behavioral outcomes						
Job embeddedness → Extra-role performance	24	7,605	-0.004	0.008	-0.091	0.662
Job embeddedness → In-role performance	12	2,649	0.027	0.010	0.638	0.008**

Note. K = number of studies; N = cumulative sample size; B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.
** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical implications

This meta-analysis is the first systematic and quantitative integration of the fragmented job embeddedness literature within hospitality. Whereas prior work—such as Arici et al.'s (2023) bibliometric review—documented publication trends without synthesizing effect sizes, this study meta-analyzes 120 studies (124 independent samples; > 40,000 employees) and provides robust estimates for 33 antecedents and 12 outcomes. Even beyond hospitality, JE meta-analyses remain rare and typically focus on isolated relationships, such as JE–turnover or JE–performance (Nafei, 2015; Jiang et al., 2012). By integrating individual, job-related, organizational, and leadership antecedents with attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, this study establishes the most comprehensive nomological network to date, explaining how hospitality employees become embedded and what embeddedness means for organizations.

The findings also sharpen conceptual clarity surrounding JE. Although some scholars have argued that JE overlaps substantially with job satisfaction or organizational commitment (Heritage et al., 2016), the observed moderate correlations ($< .60$) indicate that JE remains related but conceptually distinct. Rather than reflecting a purely affective attachment, JE captures a contextualized form of connection that integrates affective, relational, and structural ties to the work environment. Building on this clarity, the findings empirically validate multiple theoretical frameworks previously applied in isolation within hospitality research. Whereas earlier reviews (Arici et al., 2023; Majumdarr & Dasgupta, 2024) catalogued theories conceptually, this meta-analysis provides empirical support for Social Exchange, Conservation of Resources, Organizational support, and Psychological ownership theories, clarifying how JE functions across diverse antecedents and outcomes.

This meta-analysis also helps reconcile previously mixed findings regarding JE’s antecedents and outcomes. Education showed a near-zero association with JE, consistent with the competing mechanisms outlined earlier: higher education may expand external career opportunities while also strengthening valued career investments within the current organization. A similar pattern was reported in Solomon et al.’s (2022) meta-analysis, which found an almost null relationship between education and job satisfaction, and highlighted the competing implications associated with higher educational attainment. Work overload exhibited a small positive association with JE, diverging from prior hospitality evidence that linked work overload to resource depletion and lower JE (Karatepe, 2013a). One possible explanation is that workload can sometimes be appraised as a challenge demand, allowing employees to demonstrate competence and become more invested in their work (Crawford et al., 2010). More broadly, organizational factors exerted stronger effects than individual, job-related, or leadership predictors, underscoring the contextual foundations of JE. Structural and relational features—HPWP, support, and justice—shape embeddedness through climate-based signals of investment, trust, and fairness (Eisenberger et al., 1986), making them more influential than personal traits or task characteristics.

Moreover, JE showed stronger associations with positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes than with negative associations such as turnover intention or quiet quitting. This asymmetry likely reflects its inherently positive, resource-based nature. Consistent with prior meta-analytic evidence and similar to other motivational states (e.g., thriving; Kleine et al., 2019), JE appears to energize constructive engagement, creativity, and citizenship more than it suppresses avoidance-oriented behavior. Thus, embeddedness may function primarily as a promoter of “approach” behaviors by sustaining psychological connectedness and role investment, rather than as a deterrent of withdrawal alone.

The moderation results show that the tenure–JE and JE–job satisfaction relationships were significantly stronger in Western than Eastern contexts, a pattern also supported by meta-regressions using Hofstede’s individualism scores. From Hofstede’s cultural perspective (Hofstede, 2001), individualistic contexts emphasize personal choice and self-evaluation, whereas collectivistic contexts place greater weight on group norms, relational expectations, and social obligations. Consistent with this distinction, Williamson and Holmes (2015) also found that JE was more strongly related to organizational commitment among employees with low levels, rather than high levels of collectivism. This may be because collectivism itself provides strong relational ties, reducing the additional influence of embeddedness. Ng et al. (2009) similarly found stronger relationships in individualistic cultures, where personal attitudes are more likely to shape work responses as employees tend to rely more on their own discretion and preferences. When this cultural pattern is considered in relation to the findings, JE may translate more strongly into job satisfaction in individualistic contexts because employees’ own experiences and preferences carry greater evaluative weight; longer tenure may likewise be more readily experienced as accumulated personal investment, strengthening its association with JE. Taken together, these findings suggest that individualism strengthens the personal meaning of embeddedness, making it more closely rooted in employees’ accumulated investment and more consequential for how they evaluate their jobs.

Tenure also strengthened the age–JE relationship, indicating that age-related preferences for stability become more strongly translated into embeddedness as employees accumulate organizational experience. This pattern parallels Ng and Feldman’s (2010) meta-analysis, which showed that tenure strengthened several relationships between age and favorable job attitudes. Their explanation highlights two complementary processes: as employees age, they increasingly seek socially and emotionally meaningful work environments, whereas longer tenure reflects a winnowing process through which employees

with poorer fit or less favorable attitudes are more likely to leave. The current findings extend this logic to JE. Consistent with the career development perspective (Super, 1957), older employees may place greater value on stability and established work relationships, while longer tenure gives these age-related preferences greater opportunity to become embedded through stronger social ties, trust, identification, and organization-specific investments (Dobrev & Merluzzi, 2018). At the same time, those who remain longer are increasingly selected for fit. Thus, age appears to matter more for JE when employees have stayed long enough to both build meaningful organizational ties and to demonstrate sustained fit with the organization.

Gender also moderated the JE–citizenship relationship, with a slightly stronger association in male-dominant samples. This finding aligns with Thompson et al. (2020), who found that organizational support was more strongly associated with citizenship behavior among men. Drawing on gender-role theory (Eagly, 1987), Thompson et al. (2020) attributed this pattern to gendered social expectations, whereby women are traditionally expected to adopt more communal and other-oriented roles, and men are more strongly associated with agentic roles and may respond more strongly to organizational relationships that signal reciprocal exchange. This explanation may be particularly relevant in hospitality, where service workplaces place considerable emphasis on caring, responsiveness, and interpersonal interaction (Poulston, 2015). Accordingly, these relational behaviors may be relatively more normative in female-dominant settings; in male-dominant settings, the organizational ties and valued benefits associated with JE may provide a stronger basis for employees to reciprocate through citizenship behavior. Thus, the finding adds nuance to gender-role theory by suggesting that the behavioral relevance of embeddedness may differ across gender contexts in hospitality.

Measurement and temporal moderators further clarify JE dynamics. The stronger effects obtained with the multidimensional scale (Mitchell et al., 2001) indicate that explicitly assessing links, fit, and sacrifice better captures structural and relational mechanisms such as supervisor support and abusive supervision. The global scale (Crossley et al., 2007), by comparison, reflects a broad psychological state and therefore yields weaker associations, consistent with Zhang et al.'s (2012) argument that multidimensional tools more accurately represent JE's situational foundations. The findings extend the measurement debate by providing meta-analytic evidence that operationalization is not merely a methodological choice, but can systematically shape the magnitude of observed JE relationships. In this sense, some heterogeneity across JE studies may reflect differences in the theoretical content captured by alternative measures rather than contextual differences alone. More broadly, these findings underscore the importance of how JE is conceptualized and measured, as these choices shape the conclusions drawn about the construct.

Publication-year moderation further suggests that the basis of JE may be temporally contingent. The declining reward–JE relationship indicates that concrete organizational inducements have become less central to employees' embeddedness over time. This pattern is consistent with broader shifts from transactional employment expectations (Rousseau, 1995) toward more purpose-driven forms of embeddedness, characterized by greater emphasis on autonomy, meaningfulness, value congruence, and self-definition in hospitality work (Shulga, 2021; Guo & Hou, 2022; Kang et al., 2021); this is also reflected in contemporary sustainable HRM perspectives (Ehnert, 2009). Rather than implying that rewards no longer matter, the finding suggests that the relative weight of rewards in the embedding process may be declining as employment values evolve. Theoretically, this adds a dynamic perspective to JE by showing that the forces that embed employees are themselves historically contingent, shifting in relative weight as broader employment norms evolve.

5.2 Directions for future empirical research

The growing number of JE studies highlights its rising relevance in hospitality, echoing Majumdar and Dasgupta’s (2024) observation that nearly one-fifth of JE research now focuses on this sector. This reflects a broader shift from reactive turnover control toward proactive retention. Most studies used Crossley et al.’s (2007) global scale, which is brief and captures only overall attachment, potentially overlooking contextual anchors central to hospitality work. By contrast, Mitchell et al.’s (2001) multidimensional model may better capture how employees embed through concrete social and structural ties. Comparing effects across both scales using field data could clarify whether the multidimensional approach yields stronger validity. Future research may also benefit from developing a hospitality-specific JE measure that captures unique relational forces such as guest bonds and team interdependence.

Future hospitality research can also build on the strongest predictors identified in this study—service orientation, coworker support, workplace friendship, organizational support, and HPWP—all of which provide a solid foundation for theoretical refinement. In contrast, weak or inconsistent effects of individual differences imply the presence of moderating processes. Integrating interactions between personal and contextual factors may clarify these dynamics; for example, career growth opportunities may amplify the self-efficacy–JE link by converting personal competence into perceived organizational investment (Bashir et al., 2020).

Several potentially relevant antecedents could not be meta-analyzed due to insufficient study counts ($k < 3$), underscoring the need for broader empirical coverage. Future work could examine personality-based drivers—such as Big Five traits, ambition, and prosocial motivation—to illuminate dispositional pathways to JE. Technological adaptation constitutes another emerging area; AI is redefining how employees experience fit and links (Liu et al., 2025), for instance, when automation alters teamwork patterns or changes the value of

existing skills. Environmental and family-related factors also remain understudied. Drawing on spillover theory (Staines, 1980), family support may enhance JE by expanding external resource reservoirs; for example, Karatepe (2016) showed that family support strengthened the JE of hospitality employees by reinforcing energy and concentration at work. Future research could explore how such extra-organizational resources interact with workplace conditions to sustain embeddedness.

Most existing studies emphasize JE's positive effects, yet a *"too much of a good thing"* perspective (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013) suggests that excessive embeddedness may lead to rigidity or stress. Marasi et al. (2016) found that when organizational trust was low, highly embedded employees were more prone to deviant behavior, indicating that strong ties can backfire when psychological contracts are violated. Uppal (2017) similarly revealed the curvilinear effects of tenure on performance, showing that continued accumulation of "side bets" can reduce motivation and learning. These findings imply that JE may enhance outcomes only up to an optimal point; future research could test nonlinear and boundary-conditioned effects on both positive and negative outcomes.

Methodologically, JE research still lacks strong longitudinal evidence. Time-lagged designs exist, but rarely trace how JE forms or evolves, even though longitudinal approaches are essential for establishing temporal order, reducing method bias, and identifying reciprocal or delayed effects. Ng and Feldman's (2012) three-wave design illustrates this by showing that excessive JE can later erode social capital and heighten work-family conflict—variables often treated as antecedents in hospitality studies. Future work should therefore model JE as a dynamic process, including nonlinear and reciprocal pathways. Moreover, JE is inherently social, yet most studies remain at individual-level. Evidence that collective JE predicts individual turnover intentions (Felps et al., 2009) highlights the need for multilevel designs that capture team- and organization-level embeddedness.

Finally, the moderation results indicate that JE’s antecedents and outcomes may vary by culture, gender, tenure, and publication year. However, with nearly 80% of studies conducted in hotel settings, the analysis could not determine whether industry type moderates these relationships. Recent research suggests that external job availability affects hotels, restaurants, and airlines differently, reflecting important differences in labor-market structures across hospitality sectors (Sharma et al., 2025). Because external job opportunities are not equally accessible across sectors, employees may differ in how they evaluate alternative employment opportunities and maintain organizational ties. Future research could therefore extend JE research to restaurants, tour operations, airlines, and other tourism contexts to determine whether the relationships identified in the present study generalize across different sectors.

5.3 Practical implications

This study provides several practical insights for hospitality managers seeking to strengthen JE and improve retention. First, the evidence shows that JE functions as a strategic HR lever: its strong positive links with satisfaction, commitment, and extra-role performance—and its moderate negative associations with turnover intention and quiet quitting—indicate that fostering JE yields both psychological and performance benefits while reducing withdrawal risks. Accordingly, JE should be treated not only as an outcome of HR practices, but as a resource that can be intentionally developed. The findings also underscore the value of measuring JE through regular employee surveys. The global scale (Crossley et al., 2007) enables efficient monitoring, whereas multidimensional measures (Mitchell et al., 2001) offer diagnostic insight into specific retention challenges, such as weak fit or limited coworker and supervisor ties.

By clarifying the relative strength of JE’s antecedents, this meta-analysis provides organizations with a clearer roadmap for improving retention. Not all drivers exert equal

influence: organizational factors—such as perceived support, distributive justice, and high-performance work practices—demonstrate the strongest and most actionable effects. Strengthening distributive justice requires transparent rewards and clear communication (Im & Chung, 2023). Managers can support this by regularly reviewing pay and promotion decisions, clearly explaining criteria, and providing timely performance feedback. Fairness should also be enacted through everyday practices, such as balancing workloads, inviting employee input, and acknowledging contributions after demanding service periods. Small but genuine actions, including public recognition or transparent explanations of bonus allocations, may further reinforce perceptions of fairness and belonging (Abuelhassan & AlGassim, 2022).

At the meso level, job-related factors offer additional levers for strengthening JE. Beyond coworker support and empowerment, workplace friendship emerges as a particularly strong predictor, aligning with evidence that harmonious peer relationships foster belonging and trust in hospitality settings (Bui et al., 2025). Managers can facilitate such ties by creating informal social opportunities—such as shared meals, interest groups, or peer mentoring—that allow employees to connect beyond task requirements (Zhuang et al., 2020). For part-time or casual workers, role or departmental rotations can broaden social networks and reinforce relational attachment. At the same time, the meta-analysis identifies burnout, work–family conflict, workplace mistreatment, and abusive supervision as major detractors of JE, with mistreatment and abusive supervision posing particular risks in high-contact service environments. Organizations should therefore move beyond the “*customer is always right*” norm by implementing customer conduct policies that allow refusal of service to repeat aggressors (Jiang et al., 2023), alongside training supervisors to manage difficult guest interactions in ways that safeguard staff dignity. To prevent abusive supervision, HR practices

such as screening supervisory candidates for emotional stability and empathy (Li et al., 2023) and implementing regular upward feedback mechanisms are especially important.

At the micro level, the findings indicate that demographics characteristics—including gender, age, marital status, and tenure—exert only weak effects on JE, suggesting that such background characteristics alone are insufficient to explain why employees become embedded. Instead, personality-linked dispositions, particularly service orientation, play a more meaningful role. Because service orientation reflects intrinsic motivation to deliver high-quality service, managers can enhance this aspect through targeted socialization practices, customer-perspective role-plays, and storytelling that emphasizes the emotional and social rewards of service work (Huang et al., 2026). The positive association between servant leadership and JE further underscores the importance of “serving internal customers,” as servant leadership behaviors foster the relational climate required by employees to feel valued and embedded.

The moderation findings offer further actionable guidance. The stronger tenure–JE association in Western contexts suggests that employees in individualistic cultures are more likely to remain because they wish to, whereas those in collectivistic cultures may stay because they feel they ought to (Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). Managers can respond to these cultural differences by tailoring retention practices accordingly. For example, they could offer more individualized role arrangements and personalized career discussions in more individualistic settings, while emphasizing shared service goals and celebrating team achievements in more collectivistic settings. The stronger age–JE relationship among longer-tenured employees suggests that retention practices should consider age and tenure jointly rather than in isolation. For older, longer-tenured employees, managers could maintain valued continuity in their roles, while offering “career refresh” opportunities, such as

mentoring, project leadership, or knowledge-transfer responsibilities that make continued tenure appear developmental rather than stagnant (Lin & Chen, 2020).

Gender-wise, the slightly stronger JE-extra-role performance link in male-dominant samples suggests that attachment may manifest differently. Recognition systems should value both visible achievements and relational contributions. Performance dashboards could include peer-nominated “team support” or “guest empathy” awards alongside sales and efficiency metrics. During appraisal, supervisors could record concrete examples of collaboration or mentoring, not just task output, to ensure that relational contributions—often emphasized by female employees—are valued equally (Estiri et al., 2017). Over time, the weakening influence of rewards on JE reflects a shift toward purpose-driven attachment (Lee et al., 2022). To embed meaning, hospitality firms could showcase staff service-impact stories, co-design departmental goals tied to shared values, and grant small discretionary moments of autonomy, translating “career calling” into daily practice and sustained commitment.

5.4 Limitations

This meta-analysis has several limitations. First, the existing evidence base remains dominated by cross-sectional studies, limiting the ability to establish temporal ordering and infer causal relationships. Consistent with previous hospitality meta-analyses (e.g., Park & Min, 2020), variables in the present study were categorized as antecedents or outcomes based on prevailing theoretical frameworks and their treatment in prior hospitality research. Accordingly, the reported effect sizes should be interpreted as reflecting patterns of association rather than definitive causal pathways. Furthermore, the extensive reliance on single-source self-report measures raises the possibility of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Although fail-safe N and Egger’s tests indicated minimal publication bias, it cannot be entirely ruled out; incorporating more unpublished and non-English studies would improve coverage.

Mediation processes were not examined here. Future reviews could code full correlation matrices and apply MASEM to clarify how JE links contextual factors with behavioral outcomes. In addition, the predominance of the global JE scale (Crossley et al., 2007) left insufficient evidence to meta-analyze fit, links, and sacrifice separately, meaning that the pooled estimates may obscure facet-specific patterns. Similarly, the concentration of evidence in hotel settings ($\approx 80\%$) precluded a meaningful test of the sector as a moderator, leaving uncertainty as to whether the pooled relationships would extend equally to other hospitality and tourism sectors. Broader measurement and industry diversity would enhance generalizability. Finally, this review synthesized only quantitative evidence; mixed-method approaches could offer deeper insight into how JE develops over time and across contexts.

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