WHEN DEDICATION BECOMES OBSESSION: INVESTIGATING WORKAHOLISM AMID EMBEDDED EMPLOYEES IN PAKISTAN'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Samrah Shariq[1], Danish Ahmed Siddiqui[2] & Salman Hameed[3]

[1]Assistant Professor, College of Business Management, IOBM, Karachi, Pakistan
[2]Associate Professor, Karachi University Business School, University of Karachi, Pakistan
[3]Senior Lecturer, Bahira Business School, Bahria University, Karachi Campus, Karachi, Pakistan

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Job Embeddedness, Organizational Embeddedness, Workaholism, Social Identity Theory, Employee Engagement, Community Embeddedness	The study aims to examine whether organizational embeddedness contributes to workaholism among employees in Pakistan's manufacturing sector. While embeddedness enhances retention, commitment, and productivity, its impact on employee well-being remains a concern. Strong workplace attachment can lead to excessive work involvement, blurring boundaries between professional and personal life, ultimately fostering workaholism. To explore relationship, data was collected from 411 employees in the manufacturing organizations in Karachi, Pakistan, using an adopted questionnaire & convenience sampling. The findings indicate that while embeddedness strengthens organizational ties, it also has unintended consequences. The higher level of embeddedness is positively associated with workaholism, suggesting that deeply embedded that employees are likely to overwork, prioritize their jobs over their personal lives and struggle with work-life balance. The results of study have important implications for organizations & managers. To counteract this, organizations should execute plans that balance embeddedness with employees' well-being. Promoting work-life balance, encouraging flexible work arrangements, and setting clear after-hours work boundaries can help prevent workaholism. By adopting a holistic and positive approach, managers can leverage the benefits of embeddedness while ensuring a healthier, more sustainable workforce for desired outcomes.
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Corresponding Author	Salman Hameed: Salmanhameed.bukc@bahria.edu.pk
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INTRODUCTION

Some people love to take the "labor of love" in their office and they get addicted to it and this addiction may be positive or negative. This relationship of employees with their organization is the specific feeling termed as "Workaholic". Oates (1971) coined this term with a negative tinge. If we think of work behaviors as a range of actions, then organizational embeddedness

would be key factor in shaping those behaviors. In this drive, deep engagement of employee, in the organizational process that can lead to this kind of multifaced behavior, identified as workaholism and it is generally an outcome of never-ending dedication towards organization. Thus, several previous research studies findings have found positive relations between work centrality and workaholism (Afota, Robert & Vandenberghe, 2025). Research shows that the concept of job embeddedness has developed significantly over time, starting from informal discussions among faculty and doctoral students to becoming a multidimensional area of the study.

The job embeddedness is defined as the network of connections employees build within their organization and community that encourages them to remain in their jobs (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee & Erez, 2001). The organizational embeddedness refers to on-the-job factors that influence employees to stay, while community embeddedness (CE) relates to off-the-job or community -related factors. Studies have consistently identified job embeddedness as one of the strongest predictors of reducing voluntary turnover as manifests in employees, immersed in their work environments. (Chang & Chen, 2025; Singh, 2016, 2017). The concept of job embeddedness (JE) consists of three dimensions: links, fit, and sacrifice. Links are described as "formal or informal connections individuals establish with others." Fit refers to "level of comfort an employee feels with their environment and their perceived compatibility with it." Finally, sacrifice is defined as "perceived loss of psychological and material benefits that occur when leaving a job." The impact of these factors is examined on the job and off the job (Rahimnia, Nosrati & Eslami, 2022).

This study focuses on organizational embeddedness (OE), sub-dimension of JE. As previously noted, OE primarily relates towards on-the-job factors that influence individuals to remain in organization. It is proposed by existing research to disclose negative aspect of embeddedness. In this linking, the scarce studies are published to assess negative feature of embeddedness and its affiliation with employee professional behaviors (Singh, 2018; Greene, Mero & Werner, 2018). Consequently, to fully understand the impact of embeddedness, it is important to also examine its potential drawbacks or negative aspects may effect employees in manufacturing industry. Moreover, connection between organizational embeddedness and workaholism is explained through the "social identity theory". This theory suggests that individuals develop organizational identification or sense of oneness with the organization. Thus, the stronger this identification, the actively an individual engages the organization. As a result, embeddedness fosters a self-identity that often manifests as workaholism (Adam, Kalagy, Malul & Zalcman, 2025).

While most research focuses on embeddedness as a mediator or moderator, such as reducing turnover (Teng & Chen, 2025) few studies study its consequences, particularly negative ones. This study addresses the gap by treating embeddedness as independent variable and perusing its transformation into workaholism, using the social identity theory (Rahimnia et al., 2022). In Pakistan, where relocation is uncommon, it is more relevant than community embeddedness. Although existing research stresses its positive effects on performance and innovation (Ansari, Siddiqui & Farrukh, 2018; Soltani, Azad, Ashraf, Kooshan & Rastegar, 2025), study highlights

its potential to create feelings of stuckness, leading to the workaholism and deviant behaviors (Harpaz & Snir, 2003; Schmidbauer, 2025; Spence & Robbins, 1992). By finding workaholism as consequence of embeddedness and applying social identity theory, study contributes to the literature.

Research Questions

1. What is the connection between organizational embeddedness and workaholism in the particular context?
2. What is the relationship between embeddedness & workaholism in context of developing country, Pakistan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workaholism

Traditionally the dual nature of organizational embeddedness is linked with positive outcome such as employee engagement and performance (Taufik & Supriadi, 2025). Still, in developing countries like Pakistan, where job mobility is limited, organizational embeddedness can have more significant impact than community embeddedness (Singh, 2017). The study shifts focus to negative aspects of embeddedness, particularly its link to workaholism—harmful behavior categorized by overworking and neglect of well-being, that negatively affects both employees and organizations (Spence & Robbins, 1992; Khana et al., 2021; Chang & Chen, 2025). The workaholism is associated with reduced performance, increased frustration & adverse health outcomes (Kunecka et al., 2025; Harpaz & Snir, 2003; Tahir & Aziz, 2019). While most research treats embeddedness as a mediator or moderator, often accent its role in reducing turnover (Hom et al., 2009), this study addresses a gap by examining embeddedness as an independent variable and its connection to workaholism over lens of social identity theory (Rahimnia et al., 2022).

In contexts like Pakistan, where relocation is uncommon, organizational embeddedness can lead to feelings of "stuckness," fostering workaholism and deviant behaviors (Harpaz & Snir, 2003; Spence & Robbins, 1992). This study contributes to literature by finding workaholism as a potential negative consequence of embeddedness and applying Social Identity Theory to explain this relationship (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The concept of workaholism, introduced by Oates in 1971, carries a negative connotation and is often linked with emotional and physical health issues, high stress, and the work-life conflict (Atroszko et al., 2025; Spence & Robbins, 1992). However, impact of workaholism can vary; while it often leads to negative outcomes, it can also result in increased productivity and job satisfaction in certain contexts (Novianty, Avianty& Fauziyyah, 2025; Johnston, 2005). The manufacturing sector, known for its actually demanding work and deadlines, could exacerbate the tendency toward workaholism. Thus, the research might look into how the structure and demands of this industry contribute to the problem.

Spence and Robbins (1992) defined workaholism through 'workaholic triad,' which includes work involvement, feelings driven to work, and work enjoyment. Workaholics typically score

low on work enjoyment but high on work involvement and drive, leading to higher stress and health issues linked to work enthusiasts. The research might begin by defining workaholism as the compulsive need to work for long hours, often at the expense of personal well-being, relationships, and mental health. Similarly, Scott et al. (1997) as well as Harpaz and Snir (2003) further categorized workaholism into compulsive-dependent, perfectionist, and achievement -oriented types, each with distinct outcomes. This study highlights the potential dark side of organizational embeddedness, particularly in contexts with limited job mobility, where it can foster workaholism and its linked negative consequences. By applying social identity theory, the research provides a deeper understanding that how embeddedness can lead to harmful behaviors, contributing to the broader discourse on the organizational behavior and employee well-being.

Organizational Embeddedness

Mitchell, Holtom, Lee and Erez (2001) introduced the job embeddedness to address gaps in traditional turnover theories, focusing on the forces that compel the individuals to stay in an organization. JE uniquely incorporates both community embeddedness (community fit, links, and sacrifice) and organizational embeddedness (organizational fit, links & sacrifice), offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the employee retention (Gonzalez et al., 2018; Martdianty, Coetzer & Susomrith, 2020; Schmidbauer et al., 2025). The term "embedded" here refers to employees who are deeply involved in roles, often with little separation between their personal lives and professional responsibilities. These employees may feel a strong sense of duty, loyalty, or pressure to perform. Organizational fit refers to compatibility with job and organization, organizational links denote formal or informal connections with coworkers, and sacrifice involves costs of leaving, like psychological and economic benefits (Mitchell et al., 2001).

JE, inspired by Lewin (1951) field theory, captures social, psychological, economic, as well as environmental factors that entangle individuals in their jobs, making it a unique predictor of life satisfaction and retention (Ampofo, Coetzer & Poisat, 2018; Charlier et al., 2016: Huyvetter & Verbruggen, 2025). Organizational embeddedness, a key component of JE, is based on links, fit, and sacrifice, which create "web of connections" that bind employees to their jobs over time (Mitchell et al., 2001; Singh, 2019). This "stickiness inertia" reduces turnover and allied costs but can also lead to frustration and negative behaviors like reactance (Chen et al., 2025; Ng & Feldman, 2011; Singh, 2019). While JE is linked with positive outcomes, research highlights its potential negative effects, such as triggering frustration and adverse behaviors in employees (Huyvetter & Verbruggen, 2025; Greene et al., 2018; Marasi et al., 2016; Singh, 2019). Thus, the OE does not always yield positive impacts and can, in some cases, lead towards detrimental outcomes.

Organizational Embeddedness and Workaholism

The concept of workaholism within the framework of behavioral engagement, emphasizes the role of organizational embeddedness and work centrality. The OE, comprising links, fit, and sacrifice, serves as an underlying dimension of work behaviors (Ebeh, Uzoh& Uhiara, 2025).

When individuals are psychologically deeply engaged in their organization, this can lead to workaholism, particularly when embeddedness becomes excessive and prolonged. The strong attachment to the job (fit) as well as organizational connections (links) are key drivers of this transformation (Harpaz & Snir, 2003). Work centrality, which includes job involvement and job embeddedness, is identified as precursor to workaholism, as it reflects the extent to which work dominates individual's identity and life (Fang et al., 2025). In many industrial cultures, work ethic glorifies hard work, long hours, reinforcing behaviors linked with workaholism (Baker, 2025; Killinger, 1991). Workaholics prioritize work over social, recreational, and family activities, often spending excessive time on work-related tasks (Knoll et al., 2025; Scott et al., 1997).

The incidence of workaholism varies, with estimates ranging from 5% to 25% across different studies and occupations (Atroszko et al., 2025; Griffiths, 2005; 2011). Workaholism is linked to Type A personality traits (competitiveness, achievement orientation), & obsessive-compulsive behaviors, further connecting it to work centrality and organizational identification (Zhao et al., 2025). Study proposes that workaholism can be conceptualized as behavioral addiction, influenced by personal and environmental factors. The components model by Griffiths (2005) highlights status of understanding the work environment, including organizational culture, job characteristics, and social dynamics, in fostering work addiction. Situational factors such as workplace ethos, social facilitation, physical workspace conditions can inspire overwork, potentially leading towards workaholism (Afota et al., 2025; Griffiths, 2011). The continuum of behavioral engagement provides framework for understanding work behaviors, ranging from disengagement (absenteeism) to well engagement (work participation), excessive engagement (workaholism).

Theoretical Lens

Social Exchange Theory (SET) emphasizes mutual obligations and reciprocity in relationships between individuals and organizations, while Social Identity Theory focuses on self-definition through group memberships, where individuals see themselves as part of a collective "we" rather than an individual "I" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, this collective identity motivates individuals to act in group's best interest, fostering behaviors like supporting organization, achieving collective goals, and engaging in both in-role and extra-role activities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; McManus, Dundon & Lavelle, 2025). Still, strong organizational identification can also have downsides, such as resistance to change when the individuals seek to preserve their cherished identity (Sandberg & Löwstedt, 2025; Turner et al., 2003; van Knippenberg et al., 2002).

From a social identity perspective, strong organizational identification reduces job withdrawal for two reasons: (1) individuals' self-concepts are tied to the organization, making turnover or disengagement disruptive to their identity, and (2) acting against the organization's interests (e.g., quitting) conflicts with their identification (Knippenberg et al., 2002; van Knippenberg & Schie, 2000; Mael & Ashforth, 1995). Still, this deep embedding can lead to workaholism, as individuals struggle to disengage from work when their identity is closely linked towards the

organization, resulting in excessive work commitment over time. Thus, while organizational identification promotes loyalty and reduces turnover, it can also have unintended negative consequences, such as fostering workaholic tendencies (Takagi et al., 2025). In this drive, the theoretical foundations discussed above provide the basis for the extraction of the following hypothesis:

H1: The organisational embeddedness is positively related to Workaholism.

Figure 1

Research Framework
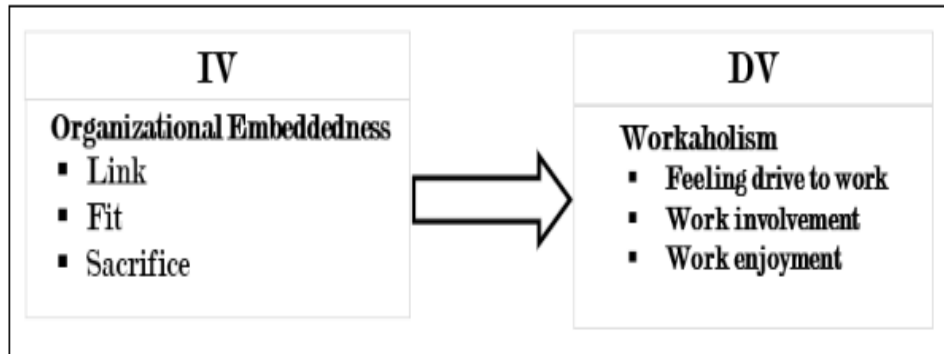
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is explanatory and has a deductive approach in nature. The research is quantitively approached for the exploration of research question. The target population for the study was employees who were employed in various manufacturing organizations in Karachi, Pakistan. Moreover, study was primarily considering employees who had served current organization for the minimum of 1 year as "OE" develops over some time. It is not developed overnight. Convenience sampling technique was used for data collection. The sample size for research was 500. Out of 500, 411 questionnaires were useable. Therefore, the response rate was 82.2%. The instrument that was used for data collection was adapted survey questionnaire' having a five-point Likert scale. Organizational Embeddedness has been adapted from Clinton et al., (2012) and Workaholism from Spence and Robbins (1992). The data for current study has been analyzed using SEM through Smart PLS by checking model reliability and bootstrapping for hypothesis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistic

The survey collected demographic information (Refer to Table 1) as it is useful in identifying the features of the sample in the results. Out of the 411, 61.134% (285) were male and 38.87% (126) were women. Regarding the age range, 44.04 % (181) of respondents were up to the age of 30, 35.77% (147) were between ages of 30 and 40, 16.06% (66) were between the ages of 40 and 4.14% (17) were above ages of 50. Regarding qualifications, 58.80% (242) had a bachelor's degree, 40.53% (167) had a master's degree, and 0.66% (02) had a PhD degree. Regarding work

experience, 39.20 % (96) had work experience of 01 years, 29.90% (138) with 2 to 5 years, 18.60 % (118) with 5 to 10 years, and 12.29 % (59) with above 10 years' experience of respondents of study.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

		Frequency	Percent
Age	Up to 30 years	181	44.04%
	30-40 years	147	35.77%
	40- 50 years	66	16.06%
	Above 50 years	17	4.14%
Gender	Female	126	38.87%
	Male	285	61.13%
Education	Bachelor	242	58.80%
	Masters	167	40.53%
	PhD	2	0.66%
Working Experience	1 year	96	39.20%
	2 to 5 years	138	29.90%
	5 to 10 years	118	18.60%
	Above 10 years	59	12.29%

Measurement Model Assessment

The model meets reliability and validity criteria based on established benchmarks. Cronbach's Alpha values exceed 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), item loadings are above 0.5 (Hulland, 1999), and AVE values surpass 0.5, ensuring CR (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998). Also, rho_A is above 0.7, and CR exceeds 0.6 (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). These measures, confirm the model's consistency for measurement.

Table 2
Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cornbrash's alpha	rho_a	rho_c	(AVE)
OE	0.715	0.717	0.823	0.538
WH	0.801	0.803	0.87	0.626

Table 3
Discriminant Validity-Fornell and Larcker Criterion

	OE	WH
OE	0.848	
WH	0.337	0.795

Table 4
Discriminant Validity - HTMT

	OE	WH
OE		
WH	0.402	

Structural Model

H1: Organizational Embeddedness is positively related to Workaholism.

The first hypothesis evaluates whether OE is positively related to WH. The results revealed that OE has a significant effect on WH (β=0.337, t=7.086, p=0.000). Henceforward, H1 has been supported. In this drive, similar results have been reported by Mvuyana, Nzimakwe and Utete (2025).

Table 5
Direct Relationship Results

	Beta Coefficients	Standard error	T values	P values	Status
H1: OE-> WH	0.337	0.048	7.086	0.000	Accepted

The findings of study support findings of Porter (2001) and Plugmann (2025) which highlight that corporate cultures expecting long hours and personal sacrifices foster workaholism, thus influenced by personality and situational factors. In this linking, the workaholics dedicated to their jobs often excel, whereas obsessive workaholics engage in the ritualized behaviors that hinder productivity and relationship (Porter, 2001). The psychological over-engagement arises from excessive job attachment and organizational ties, with work centrality playing a key role (Sousa & Ferro, 2025). In this connection, the social and cultural workplace contexts shape the workaholism over self-perception, social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and social exchange theories.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses the several theoretical gaps in the literature, particularly in the Pakistani context. Firstly, it explores the consequences of organizational embeddedness, which has often been studied only as mediator or moderator, rather than as an independent variable. Secondly, while previous research in the Pakistan predominantly viewed embeddedness as a driver of positive outcomes, this study reveals its negative aspects, showing that even in the positive organizational climate, embeddedness can yield adverse results. Thirdly, unlike past studies, embeddedness is examined as an independent variable leading to negative outcomes, such as workaholism. Fourth, study fills gap by linking organizational embeddedness to workaholism in Pakistan, highlighting how embeddedness can compel individuals to work excessively, even without enjoyment, leading to significant behavioral changes. This research provides a unique perspective on the dual nature of embeddedness and its potential to drive diverse workaholic tendencies.

Practical Implications

This study holds significant practical importance for organizations in Pakistan. Managers must monitor whether organizational embeddedness is causing employee frustration and manage it effectively to foster a positive work environment. To prevent embeddedness from turning into workaholism, organizations should promote work-life balance over initiatives like mandatory annual leave and discouraging overtime. Counseling sessions should be offered to employees

showing signs of workaholism or frustration to support mental well-being. Workplace deviant behaviors, can be costly and harmful, must be controlled over strict policies and enforcement. Finally, SMEs and large firms in Pakistan can apply findings of this study, as sample includes diverse industries & variables, easily generalizable, enabling positive changes in organizational practices.

Limitations of Study

This study examines organizational embeddedness as a whole, focusing on its components —links, fit, and sacrifice—but future researchers could explore each element separately. Due to resource limitations, the study has a restricted sample size and is confined to organizations in Pakistan. in this linking, expanding the model towards larger datasets, specific industries, or cross-country comparisons could validate and generalize the findings further. Such extensions would help determine the broader applicability and consistency of the results across different contexts.

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