

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Are embedded employees active or passive? The roles of learning goal orientation and preferences for wide task boundaries and job mobility in the embeddedness–voice link

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Does embedding employees in their organizations turn them into active organizational members who are increasingly interested in improvement, or passive members who increasingly lose interest in improvement? Addressing this embeddedness dilemma, this study aims to examine why and when perceived organizational embeddedness relates to the psychological orientation toward improvement that in turn relates to such improvement-oriented behavior as voice. First, based on the future time perspective, we posit that increasingly embedded employees anticipate that their futures will be intertwined with that of their organizations, thereby motivating them to demonstrate increased learning goal orientation, which in turn promotes voice behavior. Second, this mediating relationship is less likely to occur for those who experience stronger increases in preferences for wide task boundaries and preferences for job mobility. Such preferences create a short-term future time perspective in an employment relationship that is not aligned with the long-term future time perspective inherent in increased embeddedness. Longitudinal data collected from 267 Italian employees over an eight-month period provide empirical support for the proposed moderated mediation relationships.

KEYWORDS

embeddedness, job mobility, learning goal orientation, moderated mediation, voice

1 | INTRODUCTION

Employee retention has long been one of the most important concerns among HR practitioners (Chang, Wang, & Huang, 2013; Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009; Soltis, Agneessens, Sasovova, & Labianca, 2013). One effective retention strategy that has been widely advocated is to make employees feel embedded (Allen & Shannock, 2013; Tanova & Holtom, 2008). Perceived organizational embeddedness (POE), or the extent to which employees feel they are enmeshed in their organizations, in fact, leads to lower employee turnover (Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012; Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001). However, an unresolved question in this area of research is whether increased POE enhances or stifles employees' interest in improvement. For HR practitioners, this is an especially important question to resolve because employees' interest in improvement and learning can directly determine an organization's overall learning capacity (Camps, Oltra, Aldas-Manzano, Buenaventura-Vera, &

Torres-Carballo, 2016; Simonin & Ozsomer, 2009), thereby affecting organizational performance in the long run.

The most favorable HR scenario is that increasingly embedded employees become increasingly interested in skill improvement and knowledge enhancement. These employees have identified their workplace as one with which they feel comfortable developing a long-term relationship, and feel increasingly motivated to help improve the performance of the firm, the fate of which is now intertwined with theirs. A highly unfavorable HR scenario, however, is also plausible. This occurs when increasingly embedded employees become increasingly passive and gradually lose interest in improving their skills and knowledge, as their stable work setting may discourage them from setting ambitious goals (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

To understand which HR scenario is more likely to occur, we propose two ways in which the foregoing contradictory views about embedded employees' interests in improvement (which we hereafter call “the embeddedness dilemma”) can be resolved. First, HR

practitioners must understand whether and why increased POE is related to an increased orientation toward improvement. Direct evidence that increased POE is related to the growth of such a psychological tendency could dispel negative views. The first goal of the current study, then, is to examine whether increases in POE are related to increases in learning goal orientation (LGO). These increases are in turn linked to voice, which can be viewed as an improvement-oriented behavior intended to help the organization. LGO is the extent to which one is motivated to master new skills and knowledge (Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Seijts, Latham, Tasa, & Latham, 2004), and has attracted growing attention from HR practitioners (De Clercq, Rahman, & Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Jones, Davis, & Thomas, 2017; London & Sessa, 2007). LGO precisely captures employees' interest in long-term improvement. Other constructs, such as organizational commitment and work engagement, do not capture long-term improvement orientation.

Second, HR practitioners must understand the conditions that lead employees to react to increased POE with increased proactivity, and those that lead to increased passivity. A key reason for the emergence of the embeddedness dilemma is that increased POE lengthens an employee's anticipated relationship with a firm, which may be appealing to some but not others. The two main factors that determine whether people react positively or negatively to the anticipation of a long-term employment relationship with one employer are preferences for wide task boundaries (PWTB) and preferences for job mobility (PJM). These preferences represent a desire to go beyond one's comfort zone and extend work experiences to include new tasks, colleagues, and organizations. These diverse experiences are especially useful for increasing one's employability in today's labor market (Ellig, 1998; Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006).

We argue that these two factors can alter the effects of POE on LGO. Although increased POE lengthens an employee's anticipated relationship with the firm and therefore increases their learning orientation, increased PWTB and PJM might turn employees' attention to outside opportunities. For instance, Rodrigues, Guest, Oliveira, and Alfes (2015) found that employees who reported greater PWTB had lower affective commitment. When employees adopt a short-term perspective in an employment relationship, it counteracts the effects of POE on employees' LGO. Thus, PWTB and PJM attenuate the POE-LGO-voice sequence.

This study contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, it is important that we help HR practitioners to resolve the embeddedness dilemma, as mixed evidence of reactions to POE has been produced (e.g., Bambacas & Kulik, 2013; Marasi, Cox, & Bennett, 2016). These mixed results might increase HR practitioners' doubts about the effectiveness of an embeddedness HR strategy, which has been widely advocated by academics (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). We need to resolve these mixed findings or perspectives to show the utility of this retention strategy to HR practitioners. For instance, if increasingly embedded employees gradually lose interest in making improvements, their organizations suffer, as workers become increasingly passive contributors who are unlikely to leave. In that scenario, the hidden cost of an embeddedness HR strategy could be much higher than first presumed.

Theoretically speaking, this study also extends Ng and Feldman's (2013) study. These authors test the direct relationship between POE and voice without demonstrating any mediating or moderating mechanisms. Moreover, they test the relationship with a U.S. sample, like much of the research on embeddedness. This study was conducted in Italy, a country that has a different cultural profile than the United States (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Ramesh and Gelfand (2010) also call for more research on the influences of POE in other nations. More importantly, Italy is an especially interesting context in which to examine the embeddedness dilemma because of the recent concern about its low labor productivity (Lucidi & Kleinknecht, 2010). An attempt to understand whether embedded Italian workers are more or less interested in improvement-oriented behavior might help clarify why the productivity of Italian workers has decreased.

In addition, this study also contributes to the voice literature. Examining LGO as a predictor of voice helps identify a knowledge-enhancement motive of such behavior, which has been largely neglected in the current research on voice (Chamberlin, Newton, & LePine, in press). We argue that there are a variety of reasons why learning-oriented employees are more likely to engage in voice for the sake of improvement; for instance, they may see voice as a way to strengthen their knowledge of work processes.

This article is structured in the following way. First, we address the nature of POE. Next, we examine the mediating effects of LGO in the POE-voice relationship. Then, we consider the moderating effects of PWTB and PJM. Finally, we discuss our empirical findings. We focus on *changes* in variables throughout the study, as the POE-voice relationship is likely to fluctuate over time (Morrison, 2011; Ng & Feldman, 2012, 2013). For the sake of simplicity, our theoretical focus is on *increases* in the study constructs over time, but this perspective can be easily reversed to reflect *decreases*.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 | The nature of POE

Retaining employees in a labor market characterized by a strengthened norm of job mobility is a growing HR challenge (Deckop, Konrad, Perlmutter, & Freely, 2006; Hausknecht et al., 2009). As a result, the embeddedness HR strategy has attracted the attention of both researchers and practitioners in recent years (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). Job embeddedness consists of three primary forces (fit, links, and sacrifice) that enmesh employees in their organizations (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001). Employees also formulate perceptions of that embeddedness (Crossley, Bennett, Jex, & Burnfield, 2007), and Ng and Feldman (2010, 2012, 2013) extend this perceptual approach to examine the POE construct.

This study uses the perceptual approach for two reasons. First, it examines whether employees *react* to embeddedness with an increased interest in improvement, a research question that requires us to examine the subjective perceptions of embeddedness. If employees do not *feel* they are embedded, then it is not meaningful to address how they react to that embeddedness. Second, as is subsequently explained, increased embeddedness affects employees by

affecting their future time perspectives; examining subjective feelings of embeddedness theoretically matches our focus on subjective feelings about time.

2.2 | POE, LGO, and voice

In this section, we address the mediating effects of LGO in the POE–voice link. The proposed model is summarized in Figure 1.

2.2.1 | The nature of LGO

Promoting employee learning is an important HR component (Bednall, & Sanders, in press; Tannebaum, 1997), although its effectiveness may depend heavily on employees' goal orientation. LGO captures employees' motivation to master new skills and knowledge (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Learning goal-oriented individuals appreciate challenges and view failures as constructive feedback (VandeWalle, Cron, & Slocum, 2001). Although there are individual differences in LGO, some researchers have considered it a psychological state that fluctuates over time and across task contexts (Converse et al., 2013; DeShon & Gillespie, 2005; Dragoni, 2005). Bell and Kozlowski (2008) observe that state LGO is an important linchpin between an employee's trait LGO and learning effectiveness. Payne, Youngcourt, and Beaubien (2007) find evidence that state LGO has a stronger effect on outcomes than trait LGO.

It is important to point out that LGO focuses on learning new skills and knowledge in general, not learning about the organizational environment per se. Despite this generic focus, LGO is still highly relevant to organizations because more skilled and knowledgeable employees benefit the organization through enhanced job performance (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, & Bravo, 2011; Sung & Choi, 2014). It is also noteworthy that another type of goal orientation, *performance goal orientation*, is not examined here; it captures one's motivation to demonstrate competence to gain favorable judgment (Elliot & Dweck, 1988), making it irrelevant to solving the embeddedness dilemma surrounding embedded employees' changing psychological orientation toward genuine improvement.

2.2.2 | POE and LGO

It is possible that increasingly embedded individuals lose interest in career development and work improvement after they have become embedded and attained stability. Ng and Feldman (2010) argue that because embeddedness can be viewed as a sign of career success and job security, it may lower employees' motivation to improve themselves and reduce the intensity of their investments in both human and social capital development activities, especially as such developmental activities are usually costly. Thus, an increasing level of POE may allow employees to justify lowering their career goals. Ng and Feldman (2012, 2014) have further shown that embedded employees might experience more work-to-family conflict, negative moods, and insomnia. Increasingly embedded employees struggling with these issues may become less interested in improvement.

However, future time perspective (FTP) research leads us to expect a positive relationship between increases in POE and LGO. FTP research suggests that some individuals see the future as full of opportunities, whereas others see it as full of limitations (Cate & John, 2007). These contrasting perspectives explain why the embeddedness dilemma emerges; whether increasingly embedded employees become active or passive members might be a function of whether they interpret their embeddedness status as a source of opportunities or as a limitation in their future employment relationship. When embeddedness is seen as an opportunity (a constraint), motivation is likely to increase (decrease). Are increasingly embedded employees likely to see increasing opportunities or limitations?

FTP refers to the anticipation of future goals (Husman & Lens, 1999; Lewin, 1939; Seijts, 1998). As time passes, individuals' perceptions of time horizons change from expansive to limited (Carstensen, 1991). Thus, the difference between a long-term and short-term FTP is expressed in a focus on opportunities versus limitations (Cate & John, 2007; Strough et al., 2016). When individuals adopt a long-term FTP, they believe that many opportunities lie in the years ahead (Husman & Lens, 1999; Zacher & Frese, 2009). They are thus likely to set more goals for themselves and to persist in spite of setbacks because they perceive abundant opportunities to pursue their goals (De Volder & Lens, 1982). In contrast, those with short-term FTPs are unmotivated

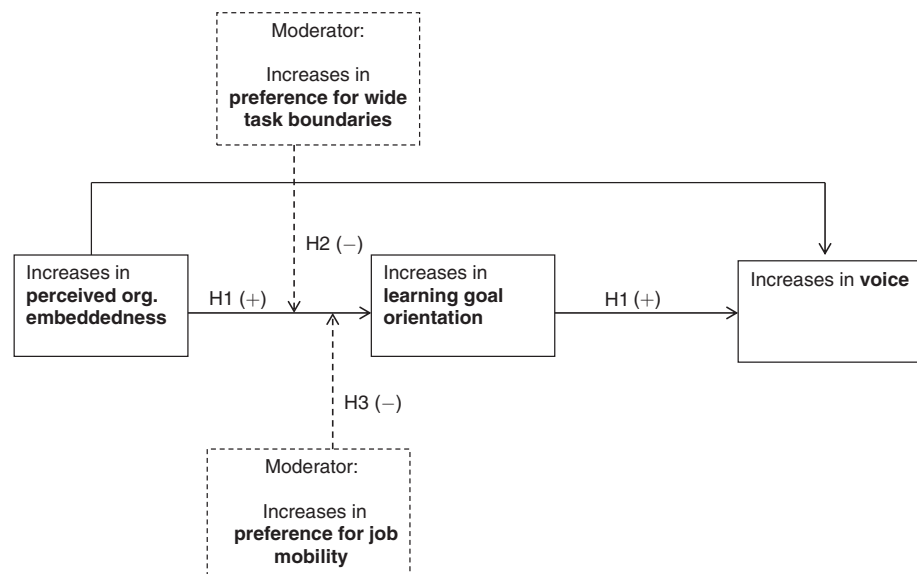


FIGURE 1 Proposed theoretical model

to set many or ambitious goals because they are cognizant of future constraints (Kooij, Bal, & Kanfer, 2014; Seijts, 1998). Thus, long-term FTPs enhance their belief in the effort-outcome link (Husman & Lens, 1999; Milfont, Wilson, & Diniz, 2012), whereas short-term FTPs undermine that belief by drawing people's attention to future limitations.

In an organizational context, FTP can be specifically conceptualized as an employee's anticipation of his/her future with an employer. Guided by FTP research, this study proposes that increases in employees' POE are related to increases in their LGO for the following reasons. First, as increasingly embedded employees anticipate staying with an employer for a long time, they are likely to adopt a long-term FTP, which, as mentioned above, draws people's attention to opportunities. Consequently, they will be increasingly motivated to set learning goals for improvement in their skills and knowledge, as they see many opportunities for career growth in the employment relationship and feel comfortable with learning via the trial-and-error approach.

Second, as increasingly embedded employees anticipate that they will stay with the organization for a long time, they see themselves as core members of the organization and expect to receive more resources. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) similarly emphasize that increases in embeddedness are associated with increases in resources. As increasingly embedded employees expect to receive resources to aid their career development, they might be increasingly motivated to set learning goals related to self-improvement.

Third, when a long-term FTP is developed as a result of increased POE, an employee might feel greater responsibility to improve the organization by constantly improving their own skills and knowledge. By pursuing these learning-oriented goals, employees help to ensure that the organizations in which they have become increasingly embedded and with which they now share a future will continue to thrive and survive. Indeed, individuals spend more efforts on activities that validate and reinforce their salient group memberships (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Callero, 1985; Leary, Wheelers, & Jenkins, 1986; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). By expending greater efforts on improvement-oriented goals, increasingly embedded employees can enhance the well-being of the organization for which they feel responsible.

Finally, there is evidence that a secured attachment to an entity facilitates the pursuit of learning goals, supporting the argument that increases in POE nourish a long-term FTP that enhances LGO growth. Researchers have observed that being attached comfortably and safely to a figure provides a "secure base from which to explore and learn" (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991, p. 2), and that subjects are more likely to engage in exploratory activities when primed with descriptions of secure attachment (Green & Campbell, 2000). Previous studies have also found a greater interest in learning activities in students who are attached to caregivers (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005). Rusk and Rothbaum (2010) conclude that a secure and familiar social exchange encourages the development of learning goals. For all of these reasons, the long-term FTPs inherent in increased POE should promote increases in LGO.

2.2.3 | LGO and voice

Voice is constructive, change-oriented communication intended to advance an organization's interest (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), such

as pointing out potential problems to a supervisor or proposing a new cost-saving plan (Burriss, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008). Voice is improvement-oriented in nature, enhancing an organization's well-being by improving its system process (Organ, 1988). However, unlike other kinds of citizenship behavior, voice is risky, as it may disrupt the present equilibrium and upset colleagues.

We propose that increases in employee LGO bring increases in voice. First, individuals with increased LGO are generally motivated workers who are willing to exert more effort in a variety of job activities as a means of learning (VandeWalle, Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1999). For instance, Porter (2005) finds that LGO is positively associated with supportive behavior toward other employees, perhaps because learning-oriented employees see these extra-role activities as opportunities to expand their skills and knowledge. Similarly, workers who experience increases in LGO may be increasingly likely to make constructive suggestions.

A second reason for the correlation is that suggesting changes requires a great deal of confidence (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). A lack of confidence may prevent employees from speaking out, either out of concern that their colleagues will not accept their suggestions (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003) or the fear of retaliation from those who desire to preserve the status quo (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003). These social concerns are unlikely to threaten those with increased LGO, as they are confident about the value of their suggestions and recognize the voice process as a learning process. Indeed, Gong and Fan (2006) find that LGO is related to greater social competence. Not surprisingly, superiors listen to those with increased LGO more seriously, as they tend to be well liked and trusted (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004). Therefore, over time, increases in LGO should be positively related to increases in voice.

Finally, LGO is associated with seeking feedback (Janssen & Prins, 2007; Park, Schmidt, Scheu, & DeShon, 2007). VandeWalle and Cummings (1997) argue for this association because individuals with increased LGO tend to see more benefits than risks in seeking feedback on their performance. They feel that feedback can help them to learn and grow. Extending this line of reasoning to voice, we believe individuals with increased LGO are also likely to increase their voice, as they see this as an opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge. Such people tend to focus on the potential benefits of speaking out rather than dwelling on the dangers of speaking out. In fact, individuals with stronger LGO generally perceive fewer barriers to their goal-directed endeavors (Klein, Noe, & Wang, 2006). The preceding discussion of POE, LGO, and voice leads to the prediction that:

Hypothesis 1: *Increases in LGO mediate the relationships between increases in POE and voice over time.*

2.3 | The moderating effects of PWTB and PJM in the POE-LGO link

2.3.1 | PWTB as a moderator

In seeking ways to enhance career growth, many employees today look for mobility across jobs, as a way to garner a wider range of job experiences (Hamori & Kakarika, 2009; Pazzaglia, Flynn, & Sonpar,

2012). PWTB refers to an employee's attitude toward working across traditional job and organizational boundaries (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006). Employees who experience increased PWTB desire tasks involving collaborations outside their own teams, departments, or organizations. They are enthusiastic about taking on different assignments and often think about how they can use their skills in different jobs or organizations (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). PWTB is likely to change over time, such as when employees start to see their careers as dull or plateaued and thus increasingly hope to expand their task boundaries. Longitudinal studies have also shown that job mobility goals do change as careers progress and mature (Hyvonen, Feldt, Kinnunen, & Tolvanen, 2011).

It is important to point out that POE and PWTB are largely independent. The PWTB construct emphasizes gaining different task experiences and exposure by working in different work environments both inside and outside the organization. Thus, increases in PWTB may motivate individuals to look beyond their current organizations in an effort to expand their task boundaries. Consistent with this conjecture, in the current study, we observe that (increased) POE and (increased) PWTB are not correlated, suggesting that the pursuit of wider task experiences does not necessarily limit an employee to one organization.

Increased PWTB represents an orientation toward having more fluidity (rather than rigidity) in one's career, propelling one to be psychologically ready for job and career changes in the years ahead. This psychological mobility enables an individual to adapt quickly and successfully to different task situations (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). As employees with increased PWTB are likely to look around for new task opportunities offered both within and outside their current organization, they are increasingly likely to adopt a short-term FTP in their current relationships with their employers. Rodrigues et al. (2015), for instance, found that PWTB is negatively associated with affective organizational commitment, suggesting that PWTB does create a short-term rather than a long-term focus. With this short-term mentality, employees might become more interested in learning in general, as they can become more marketable and mobile in the external labor market if they have more knowledge and skills.

However, we argue that the influences of PWTB on learning must be considered jointly with their POE. That is, POE and PWTB interact to affect LGO. On the one hand, the effects of increased POE on increased LGO are likely to be weaker when PWTB is greater, as the anticipatory long-term FTP associated with increased POE (as discussed earlier) does not match the anticipatory short-term FTP associated with increased PWTB. This makes employees more hesitant about setting learning goals, as effective learning often takes place over a long time horizon in a stable environment (Rusk & Rothbaum, 2010). On the other hand, the effects of increased PWTB on increased LGO are also likely to be weaker when POE increases. Although individuals who prefer wider task boundaries are interested in learning, their increasing embeddedness casts doubt on whether they are likely to actually enjoy a high level of external mobility in the near future; therefore, they see less utility in learning new skills and knowledge.

Hypothesis 2: *The mediating relationship between increases in POE, LGO, and voice is stronger for*

employees who experience low (vs. high) increases in PWTB.

2.3.2 | PJM as a moderator

An embeddedness HR strategy may be less effective for employees who prefer *not* to stay with an organization for a long period. PJM is the degree of interest a person has in remaining with a single employer (Briscoe et al., 2006). Individuals with increased preferences for stability seek lifelong employment in one employer due to the security and predictability this delivers (Schein, 1990). In contrast, those with increased PJM hope to have more experiences with different employers and expect that each employment relationship is short term. PJM is likely to change, such as when employees see that the economy is booming and thus become eager to change employers to identify better opportunities. In addition, PJM and PWTB are likely to be positively correlated, as they both capture a preference for wider work experiences; whereas PJM focuses on experiences gathered across employers, PWTB focuses on experiences gathered across tasks, though it also implies transcending organizational boundaries.

POE and PJM are independent, although they are likely to be negatively correlated, as increased POE implies a lack of future movement across employers, and increased PJM implies frequent future changes of employers. At the same time, increased POE and increased PJM can still occur simultaneously. For instance, some people may feel increasingly embedded in an employer because they do not want to give up their sacrifices, and yet their genuine preference is to gather more and newer experiences from different employers. Thus, if POE is driven by the perception of sacrifices, it is likely to be independent from or even positively correlated with PJM. However, if POE is driven by the perception of the fit and links between employee and employer, then the increasingly embedded employee is likely to report decreases in PJM, as the fit and links keep them attached to the current employers. Thus, depending on how POE emerges, its relationship with PJM may be positive, negative, or neutral.

Individuals who experience increases in POE are likely to expect long-term future relationships with their current employers, as discussed before. However, those who experience increases in PJM would rather take short-term FTPs on their relationships with their current employers due to their growing preference for working for multiple employers in their careers. These short-term FTPs interfere with the effects of increased POE on increased LGO; increasingly embedded employees become hesitant to set learning goals for improvement because they increasingly hope to leave for other employers someday. Put another way, although increasingly embedded employees may perceive that they are lengthening their futures with employers and therefore feel comfortable with setting more learning goals, those employees who increasingly prefer to work for more employers may perceive much shorter term FTPs with their current employers, resulting in a mismatch in FTP. The effects of increased POE on increased LGO may thus be diluted, as employees become doubtful about setting learning-oriented goals, which often take time and a stable relationship to accomplish.

Hypothesis 3: *The mediating relationship between increases in POE, LGO, and voice is stronger for employees who experience low (vs. high) increases in PJM.*

2.4 | Alternative models

To understand the interrelationships between the study constructs, we also examine four alternative and theoretically plausible models. These models are depicted in Figure 2.

2.4.1 | Model 1: Reverse causation

Is it possible that LGO precedes POE? For example, managers may view those employees with increased LGO as more valuable employees who deserve to be granted more resources and retained. Therefore, in our Alternative Model 1, we examine a main-effect model in which the (increases in) LGO → POE → voice sequence is posited, instead of the (increases in) POE → LGO → voice sequence of the original model.

2.4.2 | Model 2: Cross-lagged effects

Alternative Model 2 is a variant of the previous model. It represents a cross-lagged effect model in which POE, LGO, and voice at an earlier time are posited to relate to those of a later time. Cross-lagged effect models help to understand reciprocal effects (Kenny & Harackiewicz, 1979). In our case, it helps to disentangle the causal relationships among the three core constructs of POE, LGO, and voice.

2.4.3 | Model 3: Full moderation

In Alternative Model 3, we examine whether PWTB and PJM moderate the relationships between POE and voice and between LGO and voice. First, increases in PWTB or PJM may weaken any effects of increases in POE on employees due to the different FTPs involved. Thus, they may weaken the direct, positive relationships between POE and voice. We have also argued that increases in LGO promote increases in voice. That relationship may be weaker for employees with increased PWTB and PJM, as they prefer to spend their resources on other activities outside of their task or organizational boundaries rather than on activities related to their jobs, such as making suggestions to colleagues.

2.4.4 | Model 4: PJM as a predictor

In Alternative Model 4, we examine whether PJM acts as a predictor of POE rather than a moderator. Those who experience greater increases in PJM may limit their psychological attachment to any employers and are therefore less likely to experience increases in POE. An increase in PJM may therefore negatively predict increases in POE. The main-effect model is therefore expanded to test the PJM-POE-LGO-voice sequence.

3 | METHOD

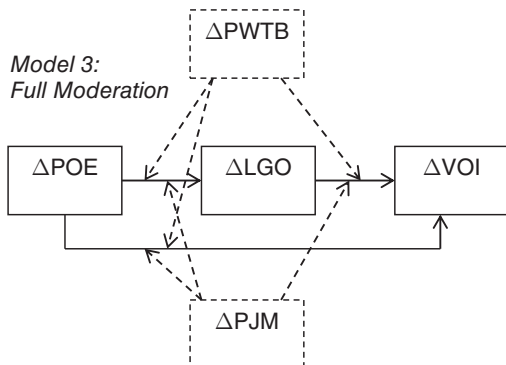
3.1 | Research design

This study used a within-person design. Within-person designs show “the extent to which domains covary over time within an individual.

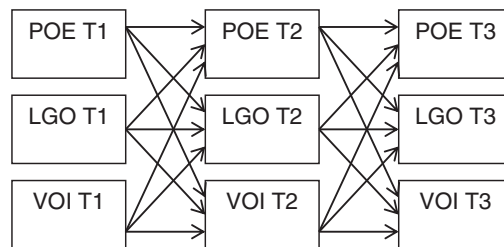
Model 1: Reverse Causation



Model 3: Full Moderation



Model 2: Cross-Lagged Effects



Model 4: PJM as a Predictor

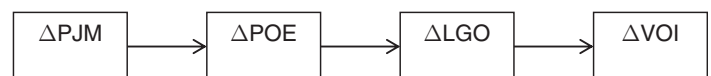


FIGURE 2 Alternative models

Notes: Dotted lines represent moderating effects; Δ = increases over time; LGO = learning goal orientation; PJM = preferences for job mobility; POE = perceived organizational embeddedness; PWTB = preference for wide task boundaries; T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2; T3 = Time 3; VOI = voice

... That is, on a given occasion, if a person scores high on one domain, relative to his or her usual level, does that person also score high on another domain, again relative to his or her usual level?" (Hoffman, 2007, p. 610). Ployhart and Vandenberg (2010) pointed out that within-person designs that analyze changes are able to more robustly test proposed theories. In fact, employee behavior "has been shown to be discrete and episodic, and hence temporally dynamic" (Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, & Hulin, 2009, p. 1052) and "many, perhaps even most, research questions in psychology and micro-organizational behavior are in reality within-person questions" (Dalal, Bhawe, & Fiset, 2014, p. 1399). Failure to account for these within-person variations is problematic, because "only under very strict conditions—which are hardly obtained in real psychological processes—can a generalization be made from a structure of interindividual variation to the analogous structure of intraindividual variation" (Molenaar, 2004, p. 201).

We collected data from 60 organizations in Italy at three points over an eight-month period. The same surveys were administered at Times 1, 2 (four months after Time 1), and 3 (four months after Time 2). The use of four-month intervals was consistent with previous studies showing that employees' attitudes and behavior could change significantly over a few months (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009; Lance, Vandenberg, & Self, 2000).

The 60 organizations came from several sectors, including manufacturing, banking and finance, information technology, and the nonprofit sector. A majority of the firms (78%) were small and medium sized, with fewer than 500 employees. They were particularly suitable for this investigation, as internal rotation or transfer opportunities were limited, accentuating the incompatibility among POE, PWTB, and PJM. We contacted the managers (who were from the authors' personal networks) and invited them to distribute surveys to their employees.

3.2 | Sample

Of the 350 employees invited to participate at Time 1, 303 employees responded (response rate = 87%). The Time 2 survey was sent to the same 303 respondents. Those who had changed employers were excluded from further involvement, as they would have used different referents in their subsequent survey responses. We used the same data collection methodology at Times 2 and 3, resulting in 281 usable surveys at Time 2 (response rate = 93%) and 267 usable surveys at Time 3 (response rate = 95%).

The average age of the sample was 39 years (range = 20 to 66, SD = 10). Of the total respondents, 38% were female, 55% were married, 73% were high school graduates, and the remaining 23% had college degrees or more advanced qualifications. The average organizational tenure was 11 years, and the average job tenure was 9 years. Moreover, 97% of the respondents identified themselves as nonmanagers. We did not find any significant differences in the sociodemographic variables between the respondents and nonrespondents.

3.3 | Measures

All of the survey items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1" (strongly disagree) to "5" (strongly agree). The items were translated into Italian by the second author, who is fluent in both

English and Italian. As explained in the following, some of the original scales were shortened to minimize the problem of respondent fatigue.

POE was measured with six of the seven items created by Crossley et al. (2007) ($\alpha = .86$ at Time 1, $.89$ at Time 2, $.89$ at Time 3): (1) I feel attached to this organization; (2) It would be difficult for me to leave this organization; (3) I am too caught up in this organization to leave; (4) I feel tied to this organization; (5) I simply could not leave this organization; (6) I am tightly connected to this organization. The item "It would be easy for me to leave this organization" in the original scale was excluded from the survey because it was reverse coded. As noted by Spector, Van Katwyk, Brannick, and Chen (1997), the combination of positively and negatively worded items into a single measure can artifactually produce two factors.

LGO was measured using eight items from Van Yperen and Janssen's (2002) 11-item scale ($\alpha = .92$ at Time 1, $.92$ at Time 2, $.90$ at Time 3): I feel most successful in my job when (1) I improve on particular aspects; (2) I feel I am improving; (3) I learn something that motivates me to continue; (4) I acquire new knowledge or learn a new skill by trying hard; (5) I get the maximum out of myself; (6) I learn something new that is fun to do; (7) I learn something that makes me want to practice more; (8) I master new knowledge or a new skill. The item "I feel most successful in my job when I acquire new knowledge or master a new skill that was difficult for me in the past" was excluded from the survey because it was similar to item (8). The items "I feel most successful when I do my very best" and "I feel most successful when I perform to my potential" were excluded from the survey because they might have captured general work ethics and job motivation rather than a specific orientation toward learning and improvement. We collected a convenience sample of 99 employees from our personal networks and observed that this eight-item scale had an acceptable alpha of $.92$.

Voice was measured using the six-item scale created by Burris (2012) ($\alpha = .87$ at Time 1, $.88$ at Time 2, $.85$ at Time 3). The respondents were asked to evaluate their voice in the past four months. The six items were: (1) I kept well informed about issues where my opinion might be useful to the organization; (2) I got involved in issues that affected the quality of work life here in this organization; (3) I spoke up and encouraged others to get involved in issues that affected the organization; (4) I challenged my supervisor to deal with problems around here; (5) I gave suggestions to my supervisor about how to make this organization better, even if others disagreed; (6) I spoke up to my supervisor with ideas to address employees' needs and concerns.

We were unable to obtain non-self-report measures of voice, as requiring coworkers or supervisors to commit to three waves of surveys was not feasible in our data collection design. Self-ratings of voice are defensible from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. In theory, it can be argued that employees may be more aware of the subtleties of their suggestions or opinions than others and thus better able to judge whether their voice is fundamentally or incrementally useful. Janssen (2001) similarly argues that self-ratings of job behavior are useful because employees' cognitive representation and reports of their behavior consider the idiosyncratic historical and contextual factors embedded in their own work activities.

Second, employees should have accurate knowledge of how much voice they have engaged in, as coworkers and leaders hear only

suggestions that are specifically voiced to them and not suggestions employees have made to others (e.g., mentors, members of other teams, managers from other departments). Janssen (2001) similarly argues that self-ratings of job behavior are especially useful when there is reason to expect that supervisors may overlook genuine work activities and capture only those activities that are intended to impress them.

Third, recent meta-analyses comparing self-reports and others' reports of job behavior have empirically discovered that the findings generated from self-report data have not been substantially inflated (Berry, Carpenter, & Barratt, 2012; Carpenter, Berry, & Houston, 2014). These results suggest that the respondents' self-ratings of voice were not necessarily biased. Perhaps for these reasons, Chamberlin et al. (in press) collapsed self-ratings and non-self-report measures of voice into a single category in their recent meta-analysis of the voice literature.

PWTB was measured with six of the eight items developed by Briscoe et al. (2006) ($\alpha = .89$ at Time 1, $.89$ at Time 2, $.90$ at Time 3). These six items were: (1) I enjoy working with people outside of my organization; (2) I enjoy jobs that require me to interact with people in many different organizations; (3) I enjoy job assignments that require me to work outside of the organization; (4) I like tasks at work that require me to work beyond my own department; (5) I enjoy working on projects with people from across many organizations; (6) I have sought opportunities in the past that allow me to work outside the organization. The items "I am energized in new experiences and situations" and "I seek job assignments that allow me to learn something new," which have the weakest factor loadings in the study by Briscoe et al. (2006), were excluded from the survey. In addition, these two items seemed to capture a generic openness to new experiences rather than specific interests in expanding task boundaries. In the aforementioned convenience sample of 99 employees, this six-item scale's alpha was $.87$.

PJM was measured based on five items developed by Briscoe et al. (2006) ($\alpha = .87$ at Time 1, $.88$ at Time 2, $.89$ at Time 3). All items in this scale were reversed coded. These five items were: (1) If my organization provided lifetime employment, I would never desire to seek work in other organizations; (2) In my ideal career, I would work for only one organization; (3) I would feel very lost if I couldn't work for my current organization; (4) I like the predictability that comes with working continuously for the same organization; (5) I prefer to stay in an organization I am familiar with rather than look for employment elsewhere.

3.3.1 | Control variables

We controlled for *age*, *job tenure*, *organizational tenure* (all measured in years), and *job level* (1 = nonmanagerial employee; 2 = first-line supervisor or middle manager; 3 = senior manager). We controlled for these variables because the respondents with greater work experience (captured by their age, job tenure, and organizational tenure) and greater job responsibilities (captured by job level) might have had more opportunities to exercise their voice. We also controlled for *gender* (0 = male, 1 = female), *education level* (1 = high school to 6 = postgraduate degree), and *marital status* (0 = single, divorced, or

widowed; 1 = married or partnered) because the male employees, educated employees, and individuals without family duties might have been more achievement oriented and therefore possessed greater LGO. In addition, we controlled for the initial status of POE and LGO in mediational analyses to rule out the effects of baseline individual differences in these variables at Time 1.

Finally, we controlled for the effect of performance goal orientation, as it is quite frequently compared with LGO (Seijts et al., 2004). Instead of emphasizing self-improvement, performance goal orientation measures the motivation to do better than others (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). It was also measured using eight items given in Van Yperen and Janssen (2002) ($\alpha = .90$ at Time 1, $.91$ at Time 2, $.92$ at Time 3). The following is an example item: "I feel most successful in my job when I accomplish something where others failed."

3.4 | Confirmatory factor analyses

We specified all of the latent variables in confirmatory factor analyses and then assessed the model fit. The model was evaluated based on five fit indices: the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), Bollen's fit index (BL89), the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR).

We observed that at each of the three times, the overall measurement model that contained all of the study variables had a largely acceptable fit. At Time 1, the TLI, BL89, and CFI were each $.93$, the RMSEA was $.07$, and the SRMR was $.07$. At Time 2, the TLI, BL89, and CFI were each $.95$, the RMSEA was $.07$, and the SRMR was $.06$. At Time 3, the TLI was $.95$, the BL89 and CFI were each $.96$, the RMSEA was $.07$, and the SRMR was $.06$.

We then examined a four-factor model by specifying the PTWB and PJM items to load on one common latent construct. We wanted to see if the respondents were able to distinguish these two constructs. Using the Time 1 data, we found that the fit was worse than that of the original five-factor model; the TLI was $.86$, the BL89 and CFI were each $.87$, the RMSEA was $.10$, and the SRMR was $.13$. These results suggest that PWTB and PJM were distinctive to our respondents. As the same scales were used at multiple times, we also examined whether the scales displayed longitudinal measurement invariance. We found that only one item out of six in the PWTB scale and only one item out of six in the voice scale had significantly different factor loadings over the three times. Measurement invariance was observed for all of the remaining items, suggesting that the psychometric properties of our scales were stable.

3.5 | Examining the effects of common method variance

We had substantive reasons to use self-ratings; employees themselves have the best knowledge of their POE, LGO, PWTB, and PJM. It is hard to argue that a coworker, a supervisor, or a spouse could accurately infer these constructs for an employee, as they capture subjective circumstances, psychological orientations, and personal preferences. We also had reasons to use self-ratings of voice, as explained in the Measures section. Despite these reasons for using

self-ratings, we proactively attempted to minimize the effect of common method variance in the study design, an important attempt in any empirical study (Conway & Lance, 2010). First, we shortened the measures (as explained in the Measures section) to lower respondent fatigue. Second, following the recommendation by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), we asked managers to help reduce respondents' evaluation apprehension by encouraging honest responses and assuring confidentiality.

Third, we performed post-hoc tests of the degree of common method variance in the data set using two approaches frequently adopted by researchers (Podsakoff et al., 2003). First, we ran a single-factor test in which all of the items were specified to load on one factor using the Time 1 data. We found that the fit was much worse; the TLI was .67, the BL89 and CFI were each .69, and the RMSEA and SRMR were each .16. These results suggest that the respondents were able to distinguish the items (and the underlying constructs). Second, we specified items to load onto the constructs they supposedly measure *and* onto a latent common method factor. If the patterns of the significant (vs. nonsignificant) factor loadings that occur after the inclusion of the latent common method factor exhibit major changes, common method variance may exist.

A common method factor was added to a CFA model containing all of the variables measured at Time 1. The model had a good fit (TLI = .94, BL89 = .95, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .05), which is not surprising, as the degree of freedom was smaller after this latent common method factor was added. More importantly, we found that the pattern of significant factor loadings remained unchanged. All of the factor loadings were statistically significant in the expected direction, even after controlling for the effect of the latent common method factor and after fixing the correlations between the substantive constructs to the values of those obtained in the original CFA model. The procedures were repeated for the data at Times 2 and 3, and led to the same conclusion. Thus, common method variance did not appear to be a major threat to the quality of the data collected.

We also examined a structural model in which POE at Time 1 was specified as being related to LGO at Time 2, which was in turn specified as being related to voice at Time 3. Next, a latent common method factor was specified, which affected all of the observed items, following the aforementioned procedures. This allowed us to see whether the use of self-reported data in our tests of the proposed POE–LGO–voice sequence would result in the common method bias. We found that the positive effect of POE at Time 1 on LGO at Time 2 remained significant, and the positive effect of LGO at Time 2 on voice at Time 3 also remained significant after controlling for the influence of the latent common method factor at the item level. These results suggest that the proposed relationships among POE, LGO, and voice were robust.

3.6 | Analysis techniques

We modeled the longitudinal changes in each study variable by adopting the latent growth modeling (LGM) technique. LGM permits the assessment of latent slope factors for every variable measured across times. A latent slope factor represents the average rate of

change in a measure over time. The intercept factor represents the average initial status of individuals on a measure. Next, we followed the bootstrapping approach outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008) for testing the proposed mediation relationship (Hypothesis 1). A mediation relationship was concluded when the confidence intervals for the indirect effects did not include zero. To test the proposed moderated mediation relationships (Hypotheses 2 and 3), we adopted the bootstrapping approach outlined by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007).

4 | RESULTS

All of the study variables manifest significant changes over time, as demonstrated by the significant estimates of variance components. First, the *intercept factor variances* for all five study constructs are statistically significant, indicating that there were already significant individual differences in these variables at Time 1. Furthermore, the *slope (increase) factor variances* for all five variables are statistically significant, indicating that there were also individual differences in the increase rate in these five variables. Finally, the *factor covariance* between the intercept and slope (increase) factors for all five variables is significantly and negatively related. This finding suggests that the respondents who had higher mean levels of the five variables at Time 1 experienced weaker increases in these variables in the subsequent eight months on average. Overall, we observe that (a) 48% of respondents reported a decrease in POE, 1% reported no change, and 51% reported an increase; (b) 50% of the respondents reported a decrease in LGO, 1% reported no change, and 49% reported an increase; (c) 41% of respondents reported a decrease in voice, and 59% reported an increase; (d) 48% of respondents reported a decrease in PWTB, 2% reported no change, and 50% reported an increase; and (e) 27% of respondents reported a decrease in PJM, 1% reported no change, and 72% reported an increase.

4.1 | Examining mediation effects

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables are provided in Table 1. The implied mediational model is depicted in Figure 3. This model has a marginally acceptable fit, approaching the cutoffs suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999), except for the RMSEA. The TLI is .93, the BL89 and CFI are .94, the RMSEA is .10, and the SRMR is .07. As shown in Figure 3, the slope factor of POE is significantly, positively, and directly related to that of voice ($\beta = .20, p < .01$). The estimates reported as follows control for this direct effect.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that increases in LGO mediate the relationships between increased POE and increased voice over time. As shown in Figure 3, the slope factor of POE is positively related to that of LGO ($\beta = .36, p < .01$), whereas the slope factor of LGO is positively related to that of voice ($\beta = .33, p < .01$). Overall, this mediation model accounts for 13% of the variance in changes in LGO and 20% of the variance in changes in voice. Next, we formally test this mediation relationship using Preacher and Hayes's (2008) approach, and the detailed results are presented in Table 2. The estimated

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables ($N = 267$)

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. POE (Time 1) | (.86) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. POE (Time 2) | .62** | (.89) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. POE (Time 3) | .63** | .77** | (.89) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. LGO (Time 1) | .44** | .28** | .29** | (.92) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. LGO (Time 2) | .30** | .46** | .37** | .54** | (.92) | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. LGO (Time 3) | .33** | .37** | .45** | .52** | .66** | (.90) | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. VOI (Time 1) | .39** | .32** | .30** | .38** | .33** | .32** | (.87) | | | | | | | | |
| 8. VOI (Time 2) | .25** | .38** | .30** | .29** | .42** | .28** | .62** | (.88) | | | | | | | |
| 9. VOI (Time 3) | .24** | .33** | .36** | .23** | .29** | .40** | .60** | .72** | (.85) | | | | | | |
| 10. PWTB (Time 1) | .05 | -.04 | .05 | .14* | .05 | .09 | .24** | .15* | .17** | (.89) | | | | | |
| 11. PWTB (Time 2) | -.05 | .03 | .05 | .14* | .22** | .22** | .22** | .21** | .21** | .46** | (.89) | | | | |
| 12. PWTB (Time 3) | .01 | .08 | .11 | .12* | .22** | .29** | .16** | .21** | .24** | .53** | .77** | (.90) | | | |
| 13. PJM (Time 1) | -.44** | -.38** | -.40** | -.21* | -.26** | -.23** | -.12 | -.09 | -.09 | .21** | .17** | .16* | (.87) | | |
| 14. PJM (Time 2) | -.34** | -.52** | -.40** | -.16* | -.32** | -.23** | -.12* | -.22** | -.14* | .20** | .14* | .10 | .63** | (.88) | |
| 15. PJM (Time 3) | -.37** | -.47** | -.50** | -.16* | -.31** | -.30** | -.12 | -.19** | -.17** | .16** | .09 | .05 | .71** | .83** | (.89) |
| Mean | 3.54 | 3.39 | 3.44 | 3.85 | 3.70 | 3.72 | 3.40 | 3.26 | 3.28 | 3.54 | 3.50 | 3.49 | 2.74 | 2.83 | 2.87 |
| SD | 0.82 | 0.86 | 0.82 | 0.69 | 0.71 | 0.67 | 0.74 | 0.75 | 0.73 | 0.88 | 0.78 | 0.79 | 0.98 | 0.95 | 0.93 |

Notes: LGO = learning goal orientation; PJM = preference for job mobility; POE = preference for organizational embeddedness; PWTB = preference for wide task boundaries; VOI = voice.

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

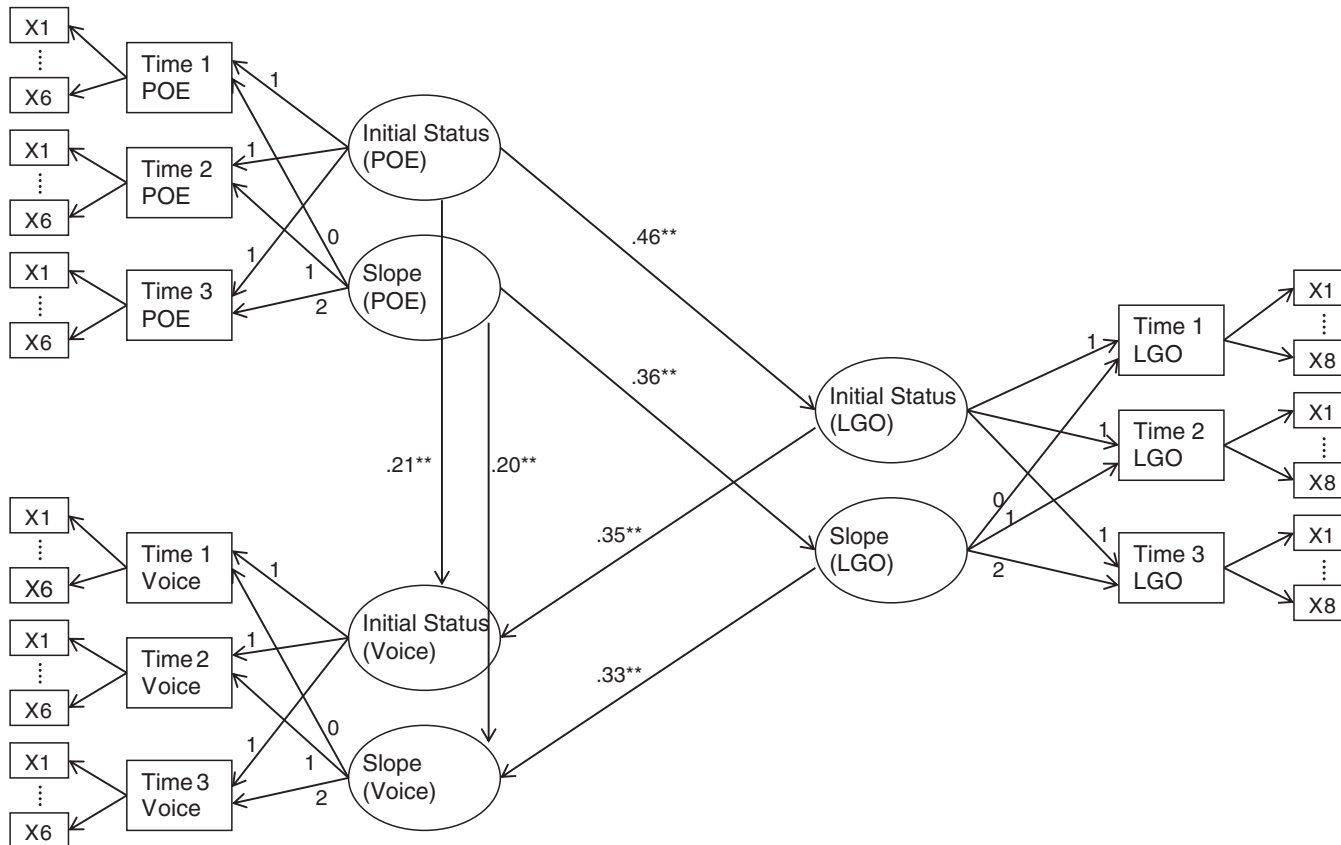


FIGURE 3 Parameter estimates in the mediating effect model
 Notes: ** $p < .01$. POE = perceived organizational embeddedness; LGO = learning goal orientation

indirect effect is .05 (bootstrapping confidence intervals = .01, .11), suggesting that the indirect relationship is nonzero in value (in the presence of a significant direct relationship). These findings support Hypothesis 1.

4.2 | Examining the moderated mediation effects

Hypothesis 2 predicts that the mediating relationship between increases in POE, LGO, and voice is stronger for individuals who report low (vs. high) increases in PWTB. We provide the results in Table 3 (the upper panel). The interaction between increases in POE and PWTB is negatively associated with increases in LGO ($\beta = -.41, p < .01$).

This interaction effect is plotted in Figure 4, which shows that increases in POE are positively associated with increases in LGO for those reporting low (1 SD below the mean) increases in PWTB. In contrast, for those reporting high (1 SD above the mean) increases in PWTB, the slope of the effects of POE on LGO is less steep. Post-hoc slope analyses using Dawson and Richter's (2006) test reveal that the two slopes are significantly different ($p < .01$). These results suggest a moderation relationship in the expected direction. The estimated indirect effect of increased POE on increased voice via increased LGO is .09 (confidence intervals excluding 0) when the increases in PWTB are 1 SD below the mean, .06 (confidence intervals excluding 0) when the increases are at the mean, and .02 (confidence intervals including 0) when the increases are 1 SD above the mean. In other words, there are mediation relationships between the

increases in POE, LGO, and voice when the increase in PWTB is low or medium (but not high). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that the mediating relationship between changes in POE, LGO, and voice is stronger for those who report low (vs. high) increases in PJM. Table 3 (the lower panel) shows that the interaction between increases in POE and PJM is negatively associated with increases in LGO ($\beta = -.28, p < .01$). This interaction relationship is plotted in Figure 5, indicating that increases in POE are positively associated with increases in LGO for the respondents who reported low (1 SD below the mean) increases in PJM and for those who reported high (1 SD above the mean) increases. However, the value of the relationship for the low-increase group is more distant from zero. Post-hoc slope analyses using Dawson and Richter's (2006) approach show that the two slopes are significantly different ($p < .01$). The estimated indirect effects when the increases in PJM are 1 SD below the mean, at the mean, and 1 SD above the mean are .07 (confidence intervals excluding 0), .06 (confidence intervals excluding 0), and .04 (confidence intervals including 0), respectively. The indirect effect of increased POE on increased voice via increased LGO is thus significant only when increases in PJM are low or medium (but not high). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

4.3 | Supplementary analyses

We exclude performance goal orientation from the proposed model because it does not capture the improvement orientation of

TABLE 2 Testing the proposed mediation effects

| | Step 1 CV = Increases in voice | Step 2 CV = Increases in LGO | Step 3 CV = Increases in voice |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Control variables:</i> | | | |
| Age | -.00 | -.00 | .00 |
| Female | .02 | -.01 | .02 |
| Married | -.01 | .03 | -.01 |
| Education level | .00 | .04 | -.00 |
| Job tenure | .01 | -.00 | .01 |
| Organizational tenure | -.01 | .00 | -.01 |
| Job level | .06 | .00 | .06 |
| Initial status of POE | .01 | .11** | -.01 |
| Initial status of LGO | -.07* | -.27** | -.01 |
| Increases in PO | .09** | .07 | .08* |
| R ² | .08* | .30** | .08* |
| <i>Predictor variables:</i> | | | |
| Increases in POE | .22** | .29** | .17** |
| Increases in LGO | — | — | .17** |
| ΔR ² | .05** | .08** | .07** |

The indirect effect of increases in POE on increases in voice through increases in LGO is .05 (confidence intervals are .01 and .11).

Notes: CV = criterion variable; LGO = learning goal orientation; PO = performance orientation; POE = perceived organizational embeddedness.

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

increasingly embedded employees. Here, we perform additional analyses to determine its relevance to this study. We subject its measurement to analyses similar to the preceding, using increased performance goal orientation as the mediator instead of increased LGO. We find that (a) increased POE is *unrelated* to increased performance goal orientation, (b) increased performance goal orientation is significantly and positively *related* to increased voice, (c) the interaction between increased POE and increased PTWB is *unrelated* to increases in performance goal orientation, and (d) the interaction between increased POE and increased PJM is *unrelated* to increases in performance goal orientation. These results suggest that the theoretical rationales we have offered thus far are largely unique to LGO.

In addition, the voice measure we use can be divided into two subtypes: supportive and challenging voice (Burriss, 2012). We retest our hypotheses by separating the two components into subsamples. First, we observe that the mediating model in Figure 3 is fully supported with either measure of voice. The model fit is acceptable and the increases in POE are positively related to increases in LGO, which in turn is positively related to supportive voice ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$) and challenging voice ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$). However, when we examine the proposed mediation and moderated mediation effects, we find stronger results for challenging voice. Increases in LGO mediate the relationship between increases in POE and increases in challenging voice (indirect effect = .08, confidence intervals exclude zero). Additionally, increases in POE and increases in PWTB or PJM interact to affect increases in LGO, which in turn are positively associated with increases in challenging voice (conditional indirect effects are .13, .08, and .03 at low, medium, and high levels of increases in PWTB, respectively, and .11, .08, .05 at low, medium, and high levels of increases in PJM, respectively). No similar results are found for supportive voice.

TABLE 3 Testing the proposed moderated mediation effects

| | Step 1 CV = Increases in LGO | Step 2 CV = Increases in VOI |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Control variables:</i> | | |
| Age | -.00 | -.00 |
| Female | -.06 | .02 |
| Married | .04 | -.01 |
| Education level | .03 | -.01 |
| Job tenure | .00 | .01 |
| Organizational tenure | -.00 | -.01 |
| Job level | .02 | .04 |
| Increases in PO | .07* | .08* |
| Increases in LGO × Increases in PWTB | — | .07 |
| R ² | .07* | .06* |
| <i>Predictor variables:</i> | | |
| Increases in POE | .23** | .18** |
| Increases in PWTB | .14** | .08 |
| Increases in POE × Increases in PWTB | -.41** | — |
| Increases in LGO | — | .17** |
| ΔR ² | .13** | .09** |
| <i>Control variables:</i> | | |
| Age | -.00 | -.00 |
| Female | -.05 | .02 |
| Married | .04 | -.01 |
| Education level | .03 | -.01 |
| Job tenure | .00 | .01 |
| Organizational tenure | -.00 | -.01 |
| Job level | .03 | .05 |
| Increases in PO | .07* | .08* |
| Increases in LGO × Increases in PJM | -- | .18 |
| R ² | .07* | .08* |
| <i>Predictor variables:</i> | | |
| Increases in POE | .29** | .18** |
| Increases in PJM | -.09 | .01 |
| Increases in POE × Increases in PJM | -.28** | — |
| Increases in LGO | — | .15* |
| ΔR ² | .09** | .07** |

The indirect effect of increases in POE on increases in VOI through increases in LGO when increases in PWTB are 1 SD below the mean is .09 (confidence intervals are .03 and .17); when increases in PWTB are at the mean is .06 (confidence intervals are .02 and .11); and when increases in PWTB are 1 SD above the mean is .02 (confidence intervals are -.02 and .07).

The indirect effect of increases in POE on increases in VOI through increases in LGO when increases in PJM are 1 SD below the mean is .07 (confidence intervals are .02 and .14); when increases in PJM are at the mean is .06 (confidence intervals are .01 and .11); and when increases in PJM are 1 SD above the mean is .04 (confidence intervals are -.01 and .10).

Notes: CV = criterion variable; LGO = learning goal orientation; PO = performance orientation; POE = perceived organizational embeddedness; PJM = preference for job mobility; PWTB = preference of wide task boundaries; VOI = voice. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Overall, although increases in LGO relate to both supportive and challenging voice, they appear to more strongly motivate people to engage in challenging voice, perhaps because it stimulates improvement. In contrast, supportive voice reinforces existing thinking and may be less effective for promoting new knowledge acquisition.

4.4 | Alternative specifications

4.4.1 | Reverse causation

Alternative Model 1 has a marginally acceptable fit. The TLI is .93, the BL89 and CFI are each .94, the RMSEA is .10, and the SRMR is .08. The chi-square (χ^2) value, which indicates badness of fit, increases by 6.46 at the same degree of freedom as in the original model, suggesting the originally proposed POE \rightarrow LGO \rightarrow voice sequence fits the data better than the LGO \rightarrow POE \rightarrow voice sequence. In addition, we consider the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), as it is particularly helpful in model comparisons (Kubokawa & Srivastava, 2012). Although the AIC does not test for significant differences per se, researchers have often considered models with a lower AIC to exhibit a better fit (Rust, Lee, & Valente, 1995). We indeed find that the AIC for Alternative Model 1 is larger than the AIC for the original model (6320.29 vs. 6301.66).

4.4.2 | Cross-lagged effects

Alternative Model 2 has largely acceptable fit; the TLI, BL89, and CFI are each .96, and the RMSEA is .06, although the SRMR is .16. The χ^2 value is significantly smaller ($p < .01$), but whereas some fit indices show improvements, the SRMR shows declines. Of the three variables (POE, LGO, and voice), only POE has cross-lagged effects on other variables; LGO and voice do not.

4.4.3 | Full moderation

Alternative Model 3 shows increases in PWTB or PJM being specified as moderators in all of the structural paths, including the POE-LGO

(as originally proposed), POE-voice, and LGO-voice paths. We find that increases in PWTB and PJM moderate the POE-LGO path as expected, but not the other two paths.

4.4.4 | PJM as a predictor

In Alternative Model 4, the PJM-POE-LGO-voice sequence is tested. The increase in χ^2 value is significant ($p < .01$), suggesting a poorer fit than the original model. However, the other fit indices demonstrate a marginally acceptable fit. The TLI, BL89, and CFI are each .94, the RMSEA is .09, and the SRMR is .07. The parameter estimates show that increases in PJM significantly and negatively predict increases in POE ($\beta = -.39, p < .01$). Other structural paths remain significant, as found in the original model.

4.5 | Summary

The results of Alternative Model 1 suggest that increases in POE preceding increases in LGO fit the data better than a reverse relationship, justifying our treatment of POE as a predictor of LGO. The results of Alternative Model 2 further reinforce this conclusion by showing that POE has cross-lagged effects on LGO and voice, but not the other way around. These results also support the flow direction proposed in Figure 1. The null results seen in Alternative Model 3 suggest that PWTB and PJM act as moderators only in the POE-LGO path in the process model, also as originally proposed. Finally, the acceptable fit for Alternative Model 4 reveals that PJM also plays a "predictor" role in the nomological network of POE. That is, increases in PJM mitigate the increases in POE in addition to weakening the relationship between increases in POE and LGO.

5 | DISCUSSION

HR professionals have been searching for different means of successfully retaining employees (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009). Although

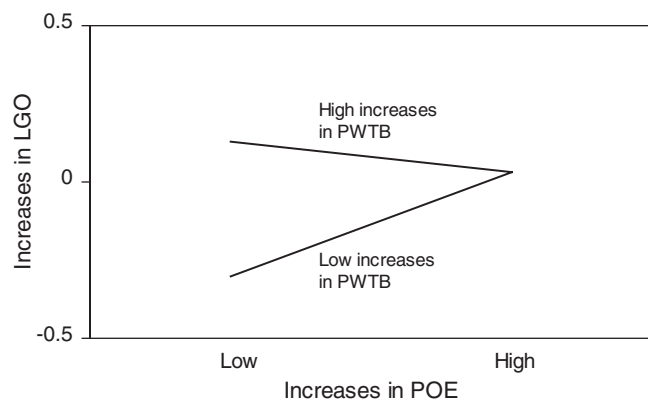


FIGURE 4 Interaction effects of increases in perceived organizational embeddedness and increases in preference for wide task boundaries on increases in learning goal orientation
Notes: LGO = learning goal orientation; POE = perceived organizational embeddedness; PWTB = preference for wide task boundaries. Both the vertical and horizontal axes indicate units of change. For example, -0.5 indicates a 50% decrease in the variable over the 8-month period and 0.5 indicates a 50% increase in the variable over the same period

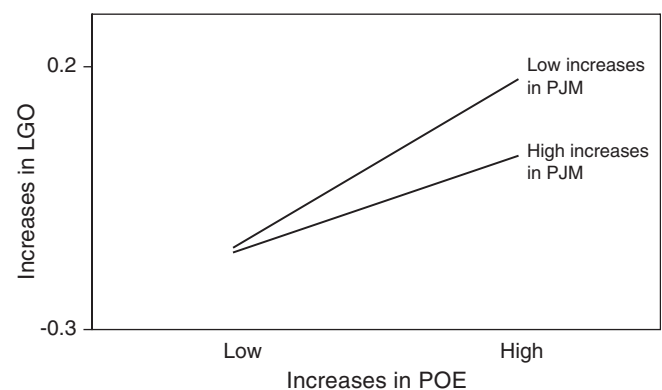


FIGURE 5 Interaction effects of increases in perceived organizational embeddedness and increases in preference for job mobility on increases in learning goal orientation
Notes: LGO = learning goal orientation; PJM = preference for job mobility; POE = perceived organizational embeddedness. Both the vertical and horizontal axes indicate units of change. For example, -0.5 indicates a 50% decrease in the variable over the 8-month period and 0.5 indicates a 50% increase in the variable over the same period

embeddedness HR strategies have been advocated (Holtom, Mitchell, & Lee, 2006), the long-term effectiveness of such strategies are questionable if they undermine employee interest in skill and knowledge enhancement. This study aims to understand why and when increasingly embedded employees become increasingly interested in improvement and thereby resolve the embeddedness dilemma. Guided by FTP theory, we argue that increased POE should lengthen employees' FTPs on their employment relationships in which they feel comfortable with setting learning goals. Thus, increased LGO is a core mechanism that explains why increasingly embedded employees are likely to engage in improvement-oriented behavior such as voice. Furthermore, increased POE is particularly likely to relate to increased voice (via increased LGO) when the long-term FTP inherent in increased POE is congruent with the FTP resulting from their changing preferences for mobility or stability. Longitudinal data collected from 267 Italian employees over an 8-month period provide support for the aforementioned moderated mediation relationships.

5.1 | Implications for theory development

Before we address the specific findings, it is important to acknowledge the broader implications of this study for management research. The main finding emerging from this study is that increased POE promotes an interest in improvement. As POE captures a global feeling of attachment to an organization with many causes, it can be argued that our results are relevant to other more specific forms of psychological attachment to an organization, including organizational commitment, trust, and identification. Our findings suggest that when employees are increasingly attached to their employers (whatever the motives and reasons), they become increasingly oriented toward making improvements.

Several specific findings help us to resolve the embeddedness dilemma. First, we show that increased POE is related to increased LGO. Researchers indeed need direct evidence that increased POE is related to a changing psychological orientation toward improvement, and LGO is such an orientation. Examining the POE-LGO-voice sequence also extends Ng and Feldman's (2013) suggestion about why POE relates to voice; none of the mechanisms they discuss (obligations, prevention, and capability) help to discern whether increasingly embedded employees are interested in improvement. In fact, the obligation and prevention mechanisms portray increasingly embedded employees as rather passive members. Our FTP-based theoretical explanation and empirical findings clarify why an apparently stable career status can still increase one's interest in improvement over time.

The second way we resolve the embeddedness dilemma is by examining moderators. The embeddedness dilemma has emerged partly because researchers have not identified the conditions that are likely to make increasingly embedded employees feel positive or negative toward an anticipatory long-term employment relationship. When the long-term FTP inherent in increased POE is matched with the long-term FTP associated with low increases (or even decreases) in PWTB and PJM, employees feel comfortable and secure about pursuing learning-oriented goals. These findings resolve the embeddedness dilemma by identifying a situation in which increasingly embedded employees are particularly likely to become increasingly interested in improvement.

This attempt also extends Ng and Feldman's (2013) study, which does not identify any conditions that alter the effects of increased POE.

To further understand the embeddedness dilemma, it is important that researchers consider the relationship between PWTB and LGO in greater detail in future theory building. As shown in Table 1, PWTB was *positively* correlated with LGO, similar to the relationship that Kaspi-Baruch (2016) observe. In other words, individuals with stronger preferences for wider task boundaries also reported greater LGO, in part because individuals who are interested in learning goals are generally more inclined to prefer wider task boundaries so that they can attain greater learning. In part, this is because individuals who hope to garner more diverse work experiences might want to engage in more learning to improve their external marketability in the labor market. This positive relationship, however, might not occur for those who are increasingly embedded in their organizations. Despite the increases in PWTB, employees who experience increasing embeddedness might feel uncertain about whether they will really leave the organization in the future, casting doubt on whether trying to increase their marketability through learning new skills and knowledge is necessary. We have indeed offered evidence to support such an attenuating interaction effect of POE and PWTB. Thus, it is apparent that whether learning increases or not depends a great deal on *both* POE and PWTB.

The relationship between POE and PJM also deserves more attention in future management studies. In our alternative model testing (cf. Alternative Model 4), we find that increases in PJM negatively predict increases in POE. This result suggests that when an employee has a low increase in PJM, he or she is likely to feel increasingly embedded. At the same time, we find in our hypothesis testing that the positive effects of increased POE on LGO are more pronounced when PJM is at a low level of increase. Thus, increased PJM can act as both an antecedent and a moderator, doubling the effects of increased POE on outcomes. We therefore suggest that PJM should be incorporated into, or at least theoretically considered in, future studies of POE, as the two are closely related and PJM determines the extent to which POE (and the anticipatory long-term employment relationship) is interpreted positively. For instance, employees who experience increases in both POE and PJM at the same time face a very distinctive situation that deserves more future attention.

This study also identifies other ways in which the voice research can be extended. Voice is a risky type of discretionary behavior that can backfire, as it may upset the status quo (Detert & Burris, 2007). Previous studies have attempted to identify the conditions that prompt speaking out despite the risks (e.g., Burris, 2012; Burris et al., 2008). Promoting the growth of POE seems helpful; encouraging increased POE may prompt employees to engage in voice despite the risks, as they may see the relationship as long term, comfortable, and secured enough to set their own learning goals (especially when they prefer stability), in turn enabling them to focus on the benefits rather than risks of speaking up. Our study therefore highlights a psychological mechanism significant to future studies of voice: increased POE and LGO collectively help to explain why increases in a sense of psychological attachment to an organization make some employees increasingly prone to speak out, even when doing so is socially risky.

Finally, the current study also highlights the usefulness of the FTP framework for understanding the effects of increased POE on employees. Although this study does not directly measure FTPs, the theoretical insights inherent in this theory seem to match embeddedness research. FTP research addresses changes in individuals' motivation and behavior when temporal resources are perceived to change (Carstensen, 1991; Lewin, 1939). Similarly, as employees becoming increasingly embedded, they view their relationships with their employers through a lengthened time frame. Thus, POE research and FTP research are closely linked. To further expand the usefulness of FTP research to POE research, researchers should not only measure FTP, but should also consider the other roles FTP might play in explaining the effects of increased POE. For instance, future studies could consider the reverse perspective that focuses on employees' perceptions of future limitations and whether FTP precedes POE and LGO. That is, whether employees with long-term FTP are attracted to organizations that offer more internal opportunities for career advancement, promoting increases in their POE and LGO.

5.2 | Limitations of this study

It is important to consider the following methodological constraints when interpreting our findings. First, we focus on increased LGO as the study mediator because it captures whether one is increasingly oriented toward learning and improvement. However, future research may examine other mediators. Second, we cannot infer causality from our data, as our research design is not experimental in nature. Third, although the significant moderated mediation results indicate that the proposed theoretical model is supported by empirical data, there are certainly other ways of specifying the study variables. The alternative model testing fortunately shows that our original specification is largely robust. Fourth, this study does not present comparative data related to the perceptual and three-component composite measures, as used by Mitchell et al. (2001). As noted before, although the perceptual approach is a better fit with the scope of this study, it has limitations. For example, the risk of common method variance may increase when POE is measured along with other self-reported variables. The problem is fortunately not serious in this study, as shown in our data analyses.

Fifth, in this study, voice is measured by self-ratings. As noted in the Method section, self-ratings have some benefits. In addition, as our predominant focus is on within-person changes, it can be argued that the use of self-ratings of voice is not problematic because the focus is not on whether an employee has a higher level of voice than others, but on whether an employee has increased their voice over time. Thus, any inflation or deflation biases contained in self-ratings should be stable over time and should not substantially affect the observed changes.

Sixth, although one of the authors is fluent in English and Italian and translated the scales, using a more rigorous back-translation procedure might have resulted in better cross-cultural comparisons of the findings. However, the acceptable fit of measurement models observed earlier suggests that the scales we used have robust psychometric properties. Seventh, POE theoretically overlaps with other organization-directed attitudes such as organizational commitment.

We do not control for these organization-directed attitudes in our analyses, as we hoped to minimize the survey length by including only the most relevant variables.

Eighth, as we relied on our personal networks to recruit them, the respondents in this study represent a convenience sample. Although this may limit the generalizability of our findings, managers strongly encouraged their subordinates to participate as a result, which contributed to the high response rates. We compare our study to another that also samples Italian employees from mixed industries (Barbaranelli, Petitta, & Probst, 2015) and observe similar demographics. Our sampling method thus does not appear to result in an idiosyncratic sample.

Finally, Italian culture is relatively individualistic (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). It is possible that the effects of increased POE on employees observed here are more pervasive and robust in such a culture, as how they should feel and behave is largely governed by their individual preferences rather than by shared norms and consensus in the society (Earley, 1989; Earley & Gibson, 1998). As our model is derived from FTP theory and monitoring time ahead is a universal human tendency, we expect that the ways in which increased POE affects employees in different cultures are not substantially different. However, direct cross-cultural comparison would be useful to discern the roles of cultures in the nomological network of POE.

5.3 | Practical implications

Resolving the embeddedness dilemma has important managerial implications. Many organizations today endeavor to embed their employees more deeply to decrease turnover rates (Holtom, Mitchell, & Lee, 2006; Holtom et al., 2008). The goal is to increase employees' feelings of psychological attachment to their employers and thereby decrease the likelihood of employees leaving. However, such embeddedness HR strategies are costly, as organizations need to spend extra resources to promote fit, links, sacrifice, or other idiosyncratic factors that enhance employee POE. The returns on such investments are likely to be positive if such strategies lower turnover and strengthen employees' interest in improvement. However, if such HR strategies eventually undermine employees' interest in improvement, the organization suffers in terms of not only declining productivity and competitiveness, but also weakening morale and increased withdrawal behavior. Thus, managers need a better understanding of how to improve the design of their embeddedness HR strategies.

The results of this study demonstrate to managers *why* increased embeddedness makes members more active or passive and *when* it happens. More specifically, we illustrate why increased POE makes organizational members increasingly interested in improvement by showing that increased LGO is a mediator in the increased POE-voice relationship. This finding has important managerial implications, as it shows that the strategy of embedding employees in organizations is very likely to generate positive returns for the organizations, at least in terms of increasing the motivation of increasingly embedded employees for self-improvement. To that end, managers need to ensure that their organizations can meet the expectations of the increasingly embedded employees. If embedded employees, who are increasingly learning oriented, are not satisfied by the organization's

learning opportunities, they may still choose to exit the organization for developmental options offered by other firms.

The boundary conditions created by increased PWTB and PJM are also illustrated to managers. Whether increasingly embedded employees become increasingly interested in learning goals depends on whether they increasingly prefer to have wider task boundaries and greater job mobility. There is indeed evidence that employees react positively to HR practices that enhance employees' job exposure and skill enhancement (Herrbach, Mignonac, Vandenberghe, & Negrini, 2009), highlighting why employees increasingly prefer both within-organization and interorganizational mobility and why such preferences are the key to resolving the embeddedness dilemma. Specifically, we observe that increased LGO mediates the positive effects of increased POE on increased voice, but does so only for employees who report low increases in their PWTB and PJM. We find no relationship between increases in POE, LGO, and voice for those employees who report high increases in PWTB and PJM. It is therefore important that managers determine their employees' latest preferences for task boundaries and mobility goals through open and continuous communication, as these preferences change over time and can strongly determine their degree of positivity toward being increasingly embedded.

Many HR systems encourage employee voice (Conway, Fu, Monks, Alfes, & Bailey, 2016; Wilkinson & Fay, 2011). The current study reveals that voice and LGO are closely linked. Voice certainly helps to improve an organization, but employees may also use voice to improve themselves, as making constructive suggestions may push employees to adopt different perspectives and broader mentalities, so that their suggestions are truly value adding. The feedback received may also be an important source of knowledge about their task, social, and organizational environments. This study shows managers that an important way to promote voice is to cultivate a learning-oriented atmosphere at work, as employees who experience increases in their LGO are increasingly likely to speak up. In summary, HR strategies that cultivate embeddedness, that enhance employee learning and job exposure, and that promote voice should not be devised independently but instead should be aligned, as the current study shows that POE, LGO, employee voice, and employee mobility preferences are all closely linked and are the key to resolving the embeddedness dilemma.

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