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# Self-sponsored Training: A Study on Human Capital and Employee's Intention to Leave Vietnam

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## Abstract

This study proposes and empirically validates an integrative framework that explores the interplay between employee-sponsored training (EST), human capital (HC), perceived desirability of movement (PDOM), perceived ease of movement (PEOM), intention to leave (ITL), and perceived organizational support (POS). Grounded in Human Capital Theory, the Theory of Organizational Equilibrium, and Organizational Support Theory, the research examines how employees' self-financed training initiatives contribute to the accumulation of human capital and simultaneously influence turnover intentions through employability-related perceptions. Survey data collected from 234 employees in Vietnam were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results demonstrate that EST significantly enhances human capital. Moreover, human capital is shown to indirectly intensify intention to leave through the sequential mediation of PDOM and PEOM, indicating that increased skills and competencies heighten employees' awareness of external job opportunities and the perceived attractiveness of mobility. Notably, perceived organizational support is found to attenuate the positive relationship between human capital and intention to leave, suggesting a buffering effect that reduces turnover risks among highly skilled employees. The study advances the human resource management and turnover literature by revealing the paradoxical role of employee-sponsored training as both a strategic organizational asset and a catalyst for employee mobility. From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for organizations, particularly in emerging and highly competitive labour markets such as Vietnam, to align retention and support mechanisms with employees' self-directed investments in skill development.

**Keywords:** Employee-Sponsored Training, Human Capital, Intention to Leave, Perceived Desirability of Movement, Perceived Ease of Movement, Perceived Organisational Support.

# Introduction

## Research Background

Human capital (HC) refers to the collective knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise of employees that enhance organizational productivity and competitive advantage (1). Classic human capital theory distinguishes between general HC, which comprises transferable skills applicable across organizations, and firm-specific HC, which includes organization-bound competencies that typically accumulate with tenure (2). Because HC is largely tacit and embedded within organizational routines, it is difficult to imitate and thus represents a key source of sustainable competitive advantage (3). However, high levels of HC may also increase employees' external mobility, heightening the risk of voluntary turnover as skilled workers find it easier to access alternative job opportunities (4). Despite extensive research, scholars and practitioners continue to struggle with understanding the complex relationship between HC and employee turnover (5).

This challenge is increasingly salient as today's workforce shows a greater willingness to invest in employee-sponsored training (EST) to enhance personal skills, knowledge, and employability. While prior studies have largely focused on organizational investments in training, the benefits of HC accumulation, and withdrawal behaviors, limited attention has been given to how EST influences voluntary turnover and how organizations can respond to mitigate employees' intention to leave. Addressing this gap is critical for organizations seeking to retain highly skilled employees in competitive labor markets.

The Theory of Organizational Equilibrium (TOE) provides a useful framework for explaining turnover intentions (TI) (6). TOE posits that turnover decisions are driven by two key factors: perceived desirability of movement (PDOM),



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reflecting dissatisfaction with one's current job, and perceived ease of movement (PEOM), representing the availability of external employment opportunities. When both PDOM and PEOM are high, employees are more likely to leave the organization (7). Conversely, increasing organizational inducements, such as development opportunities and supportive HR practices, can reduce turnover intentions. Accordingly, organizations must implement effective human resource strategies to attract, develop, and retain highly competent employees.

In volatile and competitive labor markets, organizations are increasingly required to adopt HR practices that foster supportive and engaging work environments to retain talent (8). Organizational Support Theory (OST) (9) suggests that employees develop global beliefs regarding the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, conceptualized as perceived organizational support (POS). OST frames the employee–organization relationship as a social exchange governed by reciprocity norms (10). When employees perceive support through fair treatment, supervisory support, and supportive HR practices, they are more likely to feel obligated to reciprocate with higher commitment and reduced withdrawal behaviors (11). Although prior research has examined the antecedents and outcomes of POS extensively, its moderating role in the employability–turnover relationship remains underexplored (12).

Accordingly, this study develops an integrative model examining the impact of HC on TI, with employability factors (PDOM and PEOM) as mediators and POS as a moderator. Specifically, the study addresses three research questions: (a) Does employee-sponsored training enhance organizational HC? (b) How does HC influence employability and turnover intention? and (c) How does POS moderate the relationship between employability and TI? This research contributes to the HR literature by empirically examining the organizational effects of EST, clarifying the mechanisms linking HC and turnover through employability, and identifying POS as a key buffering factor. Moreover, by focusing on Vietnam, a developing economy with distinct labor market characteristics, this study extends turnover research beyond its predominantly Western context and enriches cross-cultural HRM scholarship.

## Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory (HCT) emerged in the 1960s as organizations recognized that labour, not just physical capital, land, or management, was a critical driver of economic productivity (2). Becker's seminal work conceptualised HC as the aggregate of individual attributes, such as knowledge, skills, and cognitive capabilities, that contribute to enhanced performance at both individual and organisational levels. These attributes, according to past study (2), are not innate but rather acquired through education, training, and experience, making them subject to investment, accumulation, and depreciation over time. The foundational premise of HCT is that investment in human capital yields measurable economic returns, both for the individuals who acquire the skills and for the organisations that leverage them to drive innovation and productivity (13). Building on this foundation, subsequent research has expanded the conceptual boundaries of human capital. For instance, HC is highlighted as the stock of competencies, both tacit and explicit, that employees bring into the organisation to enhance its strategic outcomes (14). Additionally, education, experience, knowledge, skills, attitudes, creativity, and leadership were also identified as components of human capital (15). At its core, HCT underscores the economic returns of investing in human resources, arguing that expenditures on education and training yield long-term productivity gains that outweigh initial costs (13). This perspective has profoundly influenced human resource management (HRM), positioning training and development as strategic tools to foster workforce competence and competitive advantage (4).

However, in the context of evolving labour market dynamics, this model has undergone a significant shift. Recent studies indicate that organisational reliance on fully funded training models is diminishing as firms seek to optimise costs and increase employee accountability for career development (16). This has led to the rise of employee-sponsored training (EST), where individuals independently invest in their education and upskilling to remain competitive and achieve personal career goals. Such investments reflect a growing trend toward self-

directed development, especially among professionals in high-tech, education, and digital sectors, where adaptability and continuous learning are prerequisites for success (17).

Moreover, the emergence of protean and boundaryless career paradigms has further intensified this trend, encouraging employees to take ownership of their learning journeys as a pathway to career mobility and self-actualisation (18). Employees engaging in EST are often motivated by internal drivers such as goal orientation, perceived marketability, and psychological success, rather than relying solely on external rewards or organisational mandates. This shift implies a new interpretation of HCT in which employees are not just recipients of training but active investors in their human capital development.

From a theoretical and practical perspective, this evolution invites a re-evaluation of how HC is built and sustained. It raises important questions for HRM, including how organisations can strategically support self-motivated learners and integrate EST into talent development frameworks. Based on the above explanation, this study proposes:

Hypothesis H1: EST will positively affect HC.

## Theory of Organizational Equilibrium (TOE)

TOE, originally proposed by researchers in the past (6), remains a foundational framework in understanding employee turnover. TOE posits that employees decide to remain with or leave an organization based on a psychological comparison between their contributions to the organization and the returns they receive in exchange. If employees perceive their contributions exceed the organizational inducements, such as compensation, development, or recognition, they may consider leaving (19). Central to TOE are two psychological constructs: PDOM and PEOM. These are seen as critical antecedents of ITL (20, 21).

PEOM is defined as the perception and ability to identify the availability of alternative jobs and the ability to move to another job (22). PEOM reflects on the employee's evaluation of how easy it is to find employment in another organisation (23). On the other hand, PDOM reflects employees' evaluation and attitude toward their jobs, mainly job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (21). PDOM depends on the employees' compatibility with their different roles at the workplace, the conformity of the job with their self-image, and the predictability of their relationship at work (24).

The turnover literature suggested a strong presence of PEOM and PDOM in the relationship between HC and TI. As noted in past study (25), employees' perceptions of mobility are influenced not only by broader labour market conditions but also by their own human capital, particularly the depth of their knowledge, experience, and competencies. Individuals possessing higher levels of human capital are generally regarded as more valuable in the external labour market, which increases their attractiveness to rival organisations. As a result, such employees are more likely to perceive greater ease of movement, which in turn elevates their intention to leave their current organisation (26). Employees with high HC are more willing to invest in expanding their knowledge, skills, and experiences and thus develop more TI (27). This is also the primary concern of many organisations: whether investing in employees will lead to potential employee turnover. Particularly, when HC mainly comes from employee-sponsor training, the external marketability and employment opportunities are even higher. With the new trend of the "protean career," employees tend to analyse the characteristics of the labour market in order to determine the training content, namely the skills and knowledge to acquire (16). Unlike employer-provided training, where organisations focus on firm-specific training, employees are now keener on general-skill training, which is easily transferable to other organisations. A study was conducted in Taiwan and agreed that employees possessing high levels of general human capital are more likely to encounter a wider range of external employment opportunities, which in turn increases their intention to leave their current organisation (28).

Moreover, turnover theory discusses the interrelationship between HC, PDOM, and ITL. Employees with higher expertise might have higher intentions to leave the organisation. This perception is also in line with the HCT which claimed that employees with high HC will have a higher demand for better working conditions and environment (29). One minor negative feature can lead to high job dissatisfaction and enhance the intention to leave the organisation. In this

situation, dissatisfaction will increase when employees do not receive sufficient career training opportunities and have to self-invest in their HC (30). In the hospitality sector, it is observed that employees with higher levels of competence tend to respond negatively to inadequate compensation, irregular work schedules, and demanding working conditions, which frequently prompts them to consider leaving their positions (31). Consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, employees with advanced capabilities are argued to pursue higher-level psychological needs, including esteem and self-actualization (32). When these are not satisfied, the perceived desirability of leaving increases. Thus, TOE provides a robust lens through which to understand the mediating role of PDOM and PEOM in the relationship between HC and ITL. Based on the above explanation, this study proposes:

Hypothesis H2: PDOM and PEOM will serially mediate the relationship between HC and ITL.

## Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

POS is a foundational concept within TOS, which posits that employees form global beliefs about the extent to which their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (33). These perceptions are critical in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviours toward their employer, particularly concerning organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and ITL. It has been stated that POS serves as an effective tool for understanding the employee–employer relationship from the employee perspective, fostering positive connections with employees, and motivating higher levels of performance (34). Researchers have shown a great interest in understanding the theory and the concept of POS. For instance, positive POS has been confirmed to result from HRM practices, including training and development, performance evaluation, and compensation (26). Another study suggested that management style and leadership skills might affect how employees perceive the organisation's value of their contributions (35). Furthermore, workplace factors such as organisational justice, supervisory support, and a collegial work environment contribute meaningfully to the development of POS (36).

Beyond its direct benefits, POS has been recognised for its moderating role in the relationship between employee attributes and behavioural outcomes. Specifically, studies have demonstrated that POS can buffer the effects of negative work experiences or high job demands, thereby reducing ITL. It has been indicated that employees are less likely to consider leaving their organization when they perceive that their well-being is valued and their contributions are recognized, even in the presence of external employment opportunities (12, 37). When employees have to self-sponsor the training, there is a lack of employee commitment and a weak employee-employer relationship. This is particularly relevant in the context of high HC employees who, due to their skills, knowledge, and experience, are more mobile and more attractive to competing organisations.

However, when employees with high HC perceive a lack of organisational support, especially in terms of insufficient training or development opportunities, they may experience weakened affective commitment and an increased ITL. This is further exacerbated when training is self-funded, indicating a lack of employer investment in the employee's professional growth, leading to deteriorated relational ties and heightened turnover risk (29, 32). Conversely, organisational efforts to acknowledge and invest in their employees' development may signal long-term commitment, thereby fostering loyalty and reducing ITL among high-value talent (38).

Hypothesis H3: POS negatively moderates the relationship between HC and ITL, and this relationship becomes weaker for employees who perceive a high level of organisational support.

The proposed framework is presented in Figure 1.

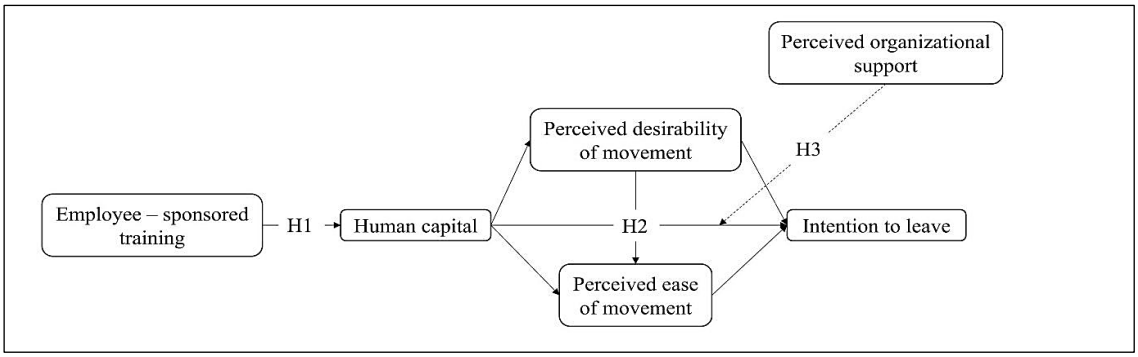


**Figure 1:** The Proposed Framework

## Methodology

This study operationalised six core research constructs along with respondents' demographic characteristics based on established literature. All measurement items were assessed using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The EST construct was measured using five items from past study (39) while HC was captured through twelve items adapted from another study (2). PEOM was assessed using five indicators, whereas PDOM was measured with four items adapted from past studies (40, 41). The ITL was operationalised using four items adopted from another study (42). Finally, POS was measured with seven items based on the past study (43).

Data were gathered using an online questionnaire. The survey instrument was originally prepared in English and later translated into Vietnamese to enhance clarity and ensure accurate understanding among respondents. To assess the wording and relevance of the items, a pilot test was conducted with six university lecturers in Vietnam. Feedback from this preliminary study informed minor refinements, after which the questionnaire was finalised for full data collection. Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling approach and were informed that completion of the questionnaire would require approximately ten minutes. After five months, the study received 267 questionnaire responses; however, 23 were eliminated because the participants had never been employed, and ten never sponsored their training. Thus, only 234 were usable.

In this study, the sample consisted of 234 respondents, with a slightly higher proportion of females (55.56%) than males (44.44%). Participants were predominantly young to middle-aged adults, with the largest groups aged 25–34 (33.33%) and 35–44 (29.49%). Most respondents held a college or university degree (61.97%), followed by those with a master's degree (18.37%), while only 4.70% held doctorates. The participants represented diverse occupational sectors, with the service industry (22.22%), high-tech (15.39%), and business (14.53%) being the most common. In terms of monthly disposable income, the majority earned between USD 400-650 (31.62%) or USD 651-900 (26.07%). Work tenure varied, with most respondents having 1-3 years (29.49%) or 3-6 years of experience (24.78%), indicating a relatively young workforce.

The study adopted PLS-SEM as the principal analytical approach, using SmartPLS 4.0 for model estimation. PLS-SEM was selected over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) because the proposed research model is complex, incorporating multiple latent constructs as well as mediation and moderation effects, and the study aims to explain and predict key endogenous variables, particularly turnover intention. Unlike CB-SEM, which primarily emphasizes model fit and confirmatory theory testing, PLS-SEM follows a causal-predictive orientation, focusing on maximizing explained variance and predictive accuracy. In addition, PLS-SEM does not require strict assumptions of multivariate normality and is well suited to survey-based research with moderate sample sizes, making it an appropriate method for the present study.

The data analysis followed a two-stage procedure within the PLS-SEM framework. First, the measurement model was evaluated to assess indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using established criteria. Second, the structural model was assessed by examining path coefficients, coefficients of determination ($R^2$), effect sizes ($f^2$), and predictive relevance ($Q^2$). The statistical significance of the hypothesized

relationships was tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, providing robust estimates of standard errors and confidence intervals. In addition, variance inflation factor (VIF) value within the PLS-SEM framework is suggested to provide an effective diagnostic tool for detecting common method variance (44). Overall, these procedures ensured the robustness and reliability of the empirical results.

# Results

## Evaluation of the Measurement Model

To assess the dimensionality and internal consistency of the measurement model, several diagnostic procedures were conducted, including the examination of factor loadings, eigenvalues, cumulative explained variance, item-to-total correlations, and Cronbach's alpha (α). Following the guidelines proposed in a past study (45), acceptable measurement quality requires factor loadings greater than 0.60, eigenvalues exceeding 1.00, cumulative variance explained above 0.60, item-to-total correlations above 0.50, and Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70. All measurement items satisfied these criteria and were therefore retained for subsequent analyses.

In addition, the reliability and validity of the measurement model were further evaluated using three key indicators. First, average variance extracted (AVE) values were required to exceed 0.50 to establish adequate convergent validity. Second, composite reliability (CR) values above 0.70 were used to confirm the reliability of the latent constructs. Third, Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.60 were considered indicative of acceptable internal consistency. As reported in Table 1, all constructs met these thresholds, confirming the adequacy of the measurement model and allowing the analysis to proceed to the structural model assessment.

**Table 1:** Measurement Model Assessment

| Construct | AVE | Composite Reliability | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|
| EST | 0.628 | 0.894 | 0.852 |
| HC | 0.779 | 0.977 | 0.974 |
| PEOM | 0.774 | 0.945 | 0.927 |
| PDOM | 0.741 | 0.919 | 0.881 |
| POS | 0.790 | 0.963 | 0.956 |
| ITL | 0.674 | 0.892 | 0.837 |

## Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity reflects the extent to which latent variables are empirically distinguishable from one another and indicates how well each construct captures a unique concept relative to theoretically related variables. To assess discriminant validity, this study employed the approach (46), which compares the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct with its correlations with other latent constructs. As shown in Table 2, the square roots of the AVE values for all constructs are greater than their corresponding inter-construct correlations, thereby confirming satisfactory discriminant validity and clear construct separation within the measurement model.

On the other hand, prior studies have reported that the Fornell–Larcker technique lacks sufficient sensitivity in identifying discriminant validity problems (47). Instead, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio was suggested as a more reliable method to process the model. It has been confirmed that discriminant validity is established when HTMT values are lower than 0.90, and the study can therefore be processed further (48). A detailed summary of the results is reported in Table 3.

**Table 2:** Fornell and Larcker's Criterion

| | PEOM | EST | HC | ITL | PDOM | POS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PEOM | **0.880** | | | | | |
| EST | 0.334 | **0.793** | | | | |
| HC | 0.489 | 0.582 | **0.883** | | | |
| ITL | 0.764 | 0.376 | 0.519 | **0.821** | | |
| PDOM | 0.575 | 0.453 | 0.557 | 0.634 | **0.861** | |
| POS | 0.202 | 0.007 | -0.07 | 0.278 | 0.061 | **0.889** |

**Table 3:** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

| | PEOM | EST | HC | ITL | PDOM | POS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PEOM | | | | | | |
| EST | 0.374 | | | | | |
| HC | 0.513 | 0.636 | | | | |
| ITL | 0.867 | 0.447 | 0.572 | | | |
| PDOM | 0.634 | 0.522 | 0.601 | 0.739 | | |
| POS | 0.214 | 0.068 | 0.075 | 0.312 | 0.069 | |

**Table 4:** Evaluation of Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

| Hypo | Relationship | Beta | t values | p values | CIs | | Discussion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 2.50% | 97.50% | |
| 1 | EST → HC | 0.582 | 12.669 | *** | 0.490 | 0.669 | Supported |
| 2 | HC → ITL | 0.531 | 11.474 | *** | 0.435 | 0.613 | Supported |
| | HC → PDOM → ITL | 0.136 | 3.726 | *** | 0.073 | 0.217 | Supported |
| | HC → PEOM → ITL | 0.119 | 3.113 | *** | 0.049 | 0.200 | Supported |
| | HC → PDOM → PEOM → ITL | 0.119 | 5.38 | *** | 0.077 | 0.164 | Supported |
| 3 | POS*HC → ITL | -0.109 | 3.561 | *** | -0.165 | -0.046 | Supported |

## Structural Model Assessment

The study formulated three hypotheses and tested them using data collected from 234 respondents. To assess the statistical significance of the hypothesised relationships, a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was conducted within the PLS-SEM framework, enabling robust estimation of the path coefficients. Further details are provided in Table 4.

The results show that when employees sponsor their training course, it will create HC contributing to the organisation, confirming H1. The findings also confirm H2 that PDOM and PEOM will serially mediate the relationship between EST and HC. Finally, the study indicates that POS negatively moderates the relationship between HC and ITL, confirming H3.

Furthermore, this study used the full Collinearity assessment approach to detect the Common method bias (CMB). According to past study (44), the model has no collinearity issue when the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) values are lower than the 3.3 threshold. Table 5 shows that all VIF values are lower than 3.3 and confirms that the model is free from CMB.

**Table 5:** Common Method Bias

| | PEOM | EST | HC | ITL | PDOM | POS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PEOM | | | | 1.746 | | |
| EST | | | 1.000 | | | |
| HC | 1.449 | | | 1.615 | 1.000 | |
| ITL | | | | | | |
| PDOM | 1.449 | | | 1.756 | | |
| POS | | | | 1.085 | | |

**Table 6:** The f-square Values

| | PEOM | EST | HC | ITL | HC*POS | PDOM | POS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PEOM | | | | 0.444 | | | |
| EST | | | 0.512 | | | | |
| HC | 0.066 | | | 0.050 | | 0.449 | |
| ITL | | | | | | | |
| HC*POS | | | | 0.062 | | | |
| PDOM | 0.211 | | | 0.110 | | | |
| POS | | | | 0.088 | | | |

This study also used the $f^2$ statistic to examine the effect size of each construct of the model. It has been argued that the effect size ($f^2$) should be interpreted at three levels—large (> 0.350), medium (0.150–0.350), and small (0.020–0.150) (49). Data from Table 6 showed that all the $f^2$

values are higher than 0.020 and confirm the significant effect on the constructs and validity of the model.

Finally, the predictive power of the construct was calculated through predictive relevance $R^2$ and $Q^2$. It has been suggested that endogenous latent variables are considered substantial, moderate, or weak when $R^2$ values reach 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25, respectively (45), and that predictive relevance is confirmed when $Q^2$ values exceed zero (48). Findings from Table 7 reveal that $R^2$ and $Q^2$ values satisfy the relevance of dependent endogenous latent variables.

**Table 7:** Predictive Relevance

| | $R^2$ | $Q^2$ |
|---|---|---|
| PEOM | 0.372 | 0.281 |
| HC | 0.339 | 0.261 |
| ITL | 0.692 | 0.458 |
| PDOM | 0.31 | 0.224 |

# Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to develop and empirically validate a comprehensive model examining the interrelationships among EST, HC, PDOM, PEOM, and ITL. Additionally, this research explored the moderating role of POS in the relationship between HC and ITL. Taken together, the study provides nuanced insights into turnover dynamics, particularly within contemporary labour markets where employees increasingly invest independently in their own skills.

This study contributes to turnover literature by foregrounding employee-sponsored training, a dimension that has remained underexplored in recent research. Although the benefits of HC investment are widely acknowledged in HRM scholarship (26), the source of that investment carries important implications. Drawing from Human Capital Theory (HCT), employees' knowledge, skills, experience, and other productive attributes are assets that enhance organizational performance and thus are considered worthy of investment (13). However, this study highlights that HC development is not exclusively driven by organizations. A growing number of employees, particularly younger workers, increasingly pursue self-funded training to improve employability and career mobility (16, 29).

A key contribution of this study lies in clarifying the longstanding debate regarding whether employees with high HC exhibit greater ITL. By examining the serial mediating effects of PDOM and PEOM, the findings show that employees with higher qualifications, broader experience, and more advanced competencies are more likely to perceive attractive alternatives and express stronger intentions to leave. This aligns with prior studies indicating that workers who view themselves as competitive in the labour market are more susceptible to turnover (27, 38).

Importantly, this study distinguishes between employer-sponsored and employee-sponsored training within the turnover process. Previous research often links employer investments in training with enhanced employee loyalty and longer tenure (4, 50). However, the present findings reveal that employee-sponsored training may produce opposite outcomes. When individuals invest their own financial and personal resources in skill development, they may expect greater recognition or career advancement. If such expectations are not met, dissatisfaction may increase, reducing organizational commitment and ultimately heightening ITL (51). This insight challenges the assumption that training universally serves as a retention tool and shows that training can backfire when perceived as an unreciprocated effort.

The study also underscores the buffering effect of POS in the HC-ITL relationship. When employees perceive strong organizational support, expressed through fairness, recognition, and care for employee well-being, the negative implications of high HC on ITL diminish substantially (52). This finding aligns with past researchers (12, 37), who suggest that POS strengthens affective commitment and discourages turnover even among highly skilled workers. Although HC empowers employees to pursue external opportunities, POS serves as a counterbalancing

force, reinforcing organizational attachment and reducing voluntary turnover (38, 53).

These findings are especially relevant in today's workplace, where protean career orientations and self-directed learning are increasingly common (18). While organizations may benefit from employees' proactive upskilling, they also risk losing top talent if such efforts are not supported by meaningful career pathways and recognition. Thus, the study highlights the need for HR practitioners to reevaluate training strategies and develop supportive systems that align with evolving employee expectations (17).

In conclusion, this study advances the understanding of turnover by emphasizing the role of employee-sponsored training and identifying the psychological mechanisms that shape the HC-ITL relationship. By acknowledging the growing importance of self-directed development and organizational support, organizations can implement more targeted and effective retention strategies.

# Conclusion

The findings underscore the growing importance of EST in contemporary organizations. Unlike traditional employer-driven training models, employees, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors such as education, technology, and digital services, are increasingly proactive in investing in their own skill development to remain competitive in a rapidly changing labor market. This shift presents both opportunities and challenges for managers.

On the one hand, EST enhances workforce quality, adaptability, and innovation without imposing direct training costs on organizations. Employees who upgrade their skills through self-initiated learning can contribute more effectively to organizational performance and agility. On the other hand, EST also increases employees' external employability, which may heighten turnover intentions if internal career opportunities are limited. This dual effect highlights the need for HRM systems that capitalize on the benefits of EST while mitigating its associated retention risks.

A key managerial response is to formally recognize and reward employee-initiated learning. Recognition through promotions, job enrichment, bonuses, or public acknowledgment signals organizational appreciation for initiative and professional growth. At the same time, HRM policies should avoid redundant or generic training for employees capable of self-directed learning, thereby enhancing efficiency and respecting employee autonomy. Aligning talent management practices with employees' newly acquired skills is equally critical. Integrating EST outcomes into performance appraisal, succession planning, and role assignment helps ensure that employees perceive tangible returns on their self-investment, strengthening commitment and organizational attachment.

Fostering a continuous learning environment further amplifies the value of EST. Organizations can encourage knowledge sharing through mentorship programs, peer learning, cross-functional training, and internal workshops where employees disseminate newly acquired competencies. In addition, perceived organizational support (POS) plays a central buffering role by reducing the likelihood that enhanced human capital translates into turnover intentions. Managers should embed EST into evaluation and compensation systems, offer flexible career pathways, and communicate transparently how self-development aligns with organizational priorities.

In sum, to leverage EST as a source of enhanced performance and commitment, rather than a trigger for turnover, organizations must adopt a balanced HRM approach that supports individual learning ambitions while reinforcing strong relational ties through recognition, opportunity, and organizational support.

## Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations, which are also opportunities for future research. First, this study tries to answer whether HC will lead to ITL, focusing on EST. Future researchers can conduct other studies to compare the effects of employee-sponsored and employer-sponsored training and examine whether the model will still be valid. Convenient sampling might be another problem because results can not represent all populations. The sample size is 234, which is also a small number. Future researchers can survey with a larger sample size. Next, this study collected data from all industries that might not apply to every job. Therefore, future researchers can focus on one industry with distinct characteristics for a more reliable result. Finally, to better understand how

organisations reduce ITL, future studies can also investigate factors such as working environment, relationship with supervisor, and human resource management practices for a more comprehensive view.

## Abbreviations

AVE: average variance extracted, CR: composite reliability, EST: employee-sponsored training, HC: human capital, PDOM: perceived desirability of movement, PEOM: perceived ease of movement, ITL: intention to leave, PLS-SEM: Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, POS: perceived organisational support, TOE: theory of organizational equilibrium.

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## Author Contributions

All authors equally contributed to the study in the Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing, Resources. All authors collaborated closely to produce a comprehensive and insightful study.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

## Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The authors declare that they did not use AI assisted tools (ChatGPT, OpenAI) during the writing process.

## Ethics Approval

Not applicable.

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