

Turnover Intention of Gen Z Employees in China's Hotel Industry

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ABSTRACT

With the growing presence of Generation Z (Gen Z) in the hospitality workforce, this cohort also drives the highest turnover rates, imposing huge challenges and operational disruptions, however, research on this cohort remains insufficiently examined. This study examines the direct and indirect effects of perceived organizational support (POS) and self-efficacy (SE) on turnover intention (TI), with affective commitment (AC) as a mediator. Data collected from 348 Chinese Gen Z employees were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results supported all seven hypothesized relationships and revealed generational-specific dynamics. Both POS and SE significantly enhanced AC and directly reduced TI; SE demonstrated the strongest total effect on TI. In addition, AC only partially mediated the relationships between POS, SE, and TI and demonstrated the weakest effect on TI, which contrasted with established patterns found in previous studies of older generations. As Gen Z is gradually becoming the dominant workforce across industries worldwide, findings generated from this study highlight that retention strategies must prioritize personal competence building and career pathway design alongside supportive environments to effectively mitigate turnover intentions among this generational cohort.

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KEYWORDS:

Generation Z

Perceive organizational support

Self-efficacy

Affective commitment

Turnover intention

CITATION:

Lina, D., Johanudin, L., & Wang, J. (2026). Turnover Intention of Gen Z Employees in China's Hotel Industry. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 11(2), e003830. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v11i2.3830>

Contribution/Originality: This study provides novel insights into the psychological resources of Generation Z, challenging established paradigms of employee turnover intention. By identifying the mediating role of AC, the study refines existing organizational behavior theories, arguing that affective bonding is a less potent retention mechanism for this cohort than previously understood.

1. Introduction

Individuals born between 1995 and 2009 are commonly referred to as Generation Z (Gen Z) (Goh & Lee, 2018), and estimated to account for 30% of the global labour force by 2030. In China, Gen Z represents about 17% of the country's entire population (Statista, 2025), also takes up 44.46% of the hospitality workforce (Ministry of Culture and Tourism PRC, 2023), yet drives the sector's highest rate in turnover. High levels of employee turnover have been a persistent challenge in the hospitality industry (Dogru et al., 2023). In China, with a turnover rate at 18.5% in 2023, the hospitality industry ranked the 2nd highest and was much higher than in other industries, and far exceeding the national average (Yicai Global, 2025). The far-reaching consequential effects ripple across organizations, teams, and even industries, and these effects go beyond immediate financial costs and destabilize operational, cultural, and strategic foundations, also posing huge challenges for human resource management practice. Particularly, when skilled and productive employees leave, the organization not only loses their skills and expertise but also the potential contributions they could have made to the organization's growth, it therefore significantly impairs overall organizational effectiveness and success (Xu et al., 2022). It also considerably undermines the organization's competitive advantage, since replacing employees requires reinvestment in recruitment and development, which, to a large degree, impacts employee stability and the development of corporate strategies (Shi et al., 2021).

The perceived organizational support (POS) system, which has its roots in social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), is focused on employees' attitudes and beliefs about how much the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2020). The exchange relationship between the employee and employer is largely dependent on the degree to which workers feel valued, supported, and cared for (Jung et al., 2021). Compared to older generations, Gen Z distinguishes themselves in the professional arena by possessing unique priorities such as self-development, and expects workplaces to align with their personal values (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018), career growth, and psychological and social well-being (Deloitte, 2025). While prior hospitality research has demonstrated that POS is negatively associated with turnover intention (TI) and positively related to organizational commitment (Li et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2021), existing studies have largely focused on earlier generational cohorts, research on Gen Z remains insufficiently examined despite their growing dominance and being the highest turnover group in the hospitality industry (Goh & Okumus, 2020).

Self-efficacy (SE), presents a person's strong belief in their capabilities in conducting and completing their work duties and achieving desired outcomes (Bandura, 1986). For Gen Z, their ambition (Deloitte, 2025) and strong personal judgment (Yang et al., 2020) are the best reflection of SE, which functions as a drive for them to secure new competencies, personal growth, career development, and social interactions (Yang et al., 2020). For this cohort, commitment is linked to their personal growth, employee recognition, and career path (Goh & Okumus, 2020). Therefore, Gen Z employees are especially reluctant to engage in long-term relationships with the hotel industry, particularly because of limited career opportunities (Goh & Okumus, 2020; Goh & Lee, 2018). The lack of perceived investment in their future can diminish their commitment and prompt them to leave for organizations that offer better growth prospects. Although SE has been widely recognized as a critical psychological resource influencing employees' motivation, performance, and career-related decisions, empirical research

examining its role in hospitality settings remains understudied, particularly among Gen Z employees (Toboso-Gómez et al., 2025).

To address these gaps, this study proposes and tests a dual-path conceptual framework to examine how POS and SE, as parallel antecedents, influence affective commitment (AC) and TI among Gen Z employees in China's hotel industry. Specifically, the study examines: (1) the direct effects of POS and SE on AC and TI; and (2) the indirect effects of POS and SE on TI through AC, which serves as a mediating mechanism.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Perceived Organizational Support

The POS literature proposes that employees generally believe that their employer appreciates their contributions, fairly rewards their efforts contributed to the work, cares about their well-being, and provides the necessary support when it is needed (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to Meira and Hancer's (2021), SET serves as the foundation for the relationship between employees and their employer, and organizational support fosters psychological empowerment, which in turn results in higher engagement and increased service-oriented behaviors towards high organizational performance. For employees, their perception of support signifies that the organization is committed to building not only a purely transactional relationship but also genuine care for their well-being and recognition of their contributions (Chernyak-Hai et al., 2024). By fostering this relational dynamic, the organization cultivates a norm of reciprocity, inviting employees to reciprocate, which is particularly important for Gen Z.

Prior studies have demonstrated that support from the organization is a key predictor of AC and TI (Yang & Zhou, 2022; To & Yu, 2024). According to Kurtessis et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis, evidence confirms the important role POS played in fostering affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Empirical studies across a variety of organizational settings also consistently demonstrate that that POS is positively associated with employees' commitment to the working organization (Havidz & Yandi, 2020). Eisenberger et al. (2020) contend that a high level of organizational support facilitates employee-employer identification by satisfying such individual socioemotional needs as those related to approval, esteem, and affiliation, therefore, motivates employees to go extra distance contributing to the organizational success; not only do workers feel the obligation to do so, they also feel positively and affectively attached to the organization. By contrast, a low level of POS is often related to job dissatisfaction, decreased organizational commitment, and increased intention of leaving (Thin et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Abou Hashish, 2017). Considering the complex exchange relationship between the organization and its employees, when reciprocation is compromised, TI increases (Tang & Xu, 2021). Therefore, the following two hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Perceived organizational support is positively related to affective commitment.

H4: Perceived organizational support is negatively related to turnover intention.

2.2. Self-efficacy

SE stems from the social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura,1986). As a critical personal factor, it relates to the worker's beliefs in their capabilities and competencies in executing required actions to successfully implement and complete their work duties to achieve designated outcomes (Bandura, 1986). In the form of generalized SE, according to Schwarzer et al. (1997), this refers to a general confidence that an individual holds in his or her coping capability across a wide array of challenging or unexpected situations. Efficacy beliefs heavily influence people's thoughts, feelings, and actions; efficacy feelings relate to individuals' motivation, confidence, and desire in exercising self-control to achieve desired outcomes (Musenze et al., 2022). SE also determines the degree of motivation, cognition, and emotion in the learning process (Wang, 2021), and plays a very important role in determining their work behaviour and job performance (Ding & Jiang, 2023).

SE and AC are two crucial factors that significantly influence employee attitudes and behavior within an organization (Mondo et al., 2022). Highly efficacious employees are more likely to play their role with confidence, persistence, and a willingness to execute control in challenging situations. With positive mindset, employees will have increased productivity, better job performance, and a higher sense of accomplishment. A high level of SE helps workers focus on job requirements, motivates them with a powerful personal cognition of competences, and leads to greater engagement and organizational commitment (Han & Wang, 2021; Hameli & Ordun, 2021; Musenze et. al., 2022). Employees' commitment towards the organization represents the psychological bond that links together workers and their organization of employ, therefore, employees who believe in their abilities and competencies are more likely to maintenance the employee-organization relationship. SE has been shown as an important ingredient that stirs greater AC (Opolot et al., 2023). Albrecht and Marty's (2020) empirical study further provides insights that SE is strongly and positively associated AC. It is generally believed that with the support of efficacy beliefs, employees will be inclined to stay since they can create a conducive environment good for performance (Opolot et al., 2023). Thus, highly efficacious employees will be less likely to report intentions to leave. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Self-efficacy is positively related to affective commitment.

H5: Self-efficacy is negatively related to turnover intention.

2.3. Affective Commitment

In the three-component approach of organizational commitment proposed by Allen and Meyer (1996), each dimension contributes to a psychological state that plays a very important role in shaping employees' relationship with the organization as well as their decision to either stay or leave (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Among the three dimensions, AC is the most widely recognized employee psychological attachment to their organization (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), it functions as a form of "psychological contract", signifying the embodiment of employees' emotional link with the organization (Lu et al., 2023).

AC refers to an employee's enjoyment of being part of an organization and the desire to continue working there. This emotional attachment towards the organization reflects

how much an employee likes the organization and feels a sense of belonging to it. Therefore, employees with high emotional link with the organization exhibit high inclination of stay and low level of leaving (Lu et al., 2023). As a powerful inner force, affective connection has a significant positive impact on employees' attitude toward their work as well as their performance on the job (Yang & Zhou, 2022), it also serves as a significant factor determining the degree of dedication and loyalty toward the organization (Koo et al., 2020), and drives employees to give their best, not just for the paycheck, but for the emotional attachment, the sense of belonging, and the shared mission (Wu & Chen, 2018). When employees are committed, they become the organization's most valuable asset, fueling its growth and success (Mowday et al., 1979; Abet et al., 2024).

TI reflects employees' wanting to end employment with an organization; it is a deliberate, voluntary mindset that occurs before an employee reaches the final withdrawal decision state (Jung et al., 2021). Prior research has demonstrated employees' intention of leaving one organization for another is very often strongly associated with AC, job satisfaction, work engagement and even self-belief of efficacy (Al Halbusi et al., 2023; Albrecht & Marty, 2020; De Simone et al., 2018). It has been found that employees with a high level of AC appear to have stronger desires for attending work and more positive attitudes toward their organization (Abet et al., 2024). When workers do not feel the commitment to the organization, their discontent and enhanced predispositions to want to leave the business and find another job will grow (Ozyilmaz et al., 2018; Rhoades et al., 2001). Highly committed employees are less likely to terminate the employment relationship with their business or organization as compared to weaker bonded individuals (Hsiao et al., 2020). Research suggests that AC and TI are inversely associated, generally, the relationships are very strong. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H3. Affective commitment is negatively related to turnover intention.

Reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations can be built through mutual trust. In addition, employees' AC and job performance can also be strengthened via these reciprocation processes. In other words, if employees perceive that their employers recognize their contributions and care for their well-being, they tend to be more affectively connected and stay longer (Astuty & Udin, 2020). In line with this proposition, Dikbas Çavuş et al. (2025) highlighted the mediating role of AC as a psychological and relational mechanism between organizational factors such as support signals and TI based on data collected from 615 employees working in the Turkish hotel industry. Empirical studies also find that the more support that is received, the more employees feel obligated to reciprocate and the more they will work to enhance the performance of themselves, their departments, and the entire organization (Abdulaziz et al., 2022). Sartori et al.'s (2023) study indicate that a high level of POS is related to heightened job motivation as well as affective and normative commitment. These factors, in turn, exhibit a negative relationship with intentions to leave. The significant correlations identified among these variables indicate that when employees perceive strong support from their organization, they are more likely to develop a sense of commitment to the organization and, subsequently, have lower TIs (Ampofo & Karatepe, 2021). Employees who feel themselves as part of the organization and feel to be supported by it are less likely to leave the organization voluntarily (Mondo et al., 2020). Employee commitment plays a very important role in the relationship between POS and

the intention to leave: as commitment increases, intention to leave decreases (To & Yu, 2024). Accordingly, it is hypothesized that:

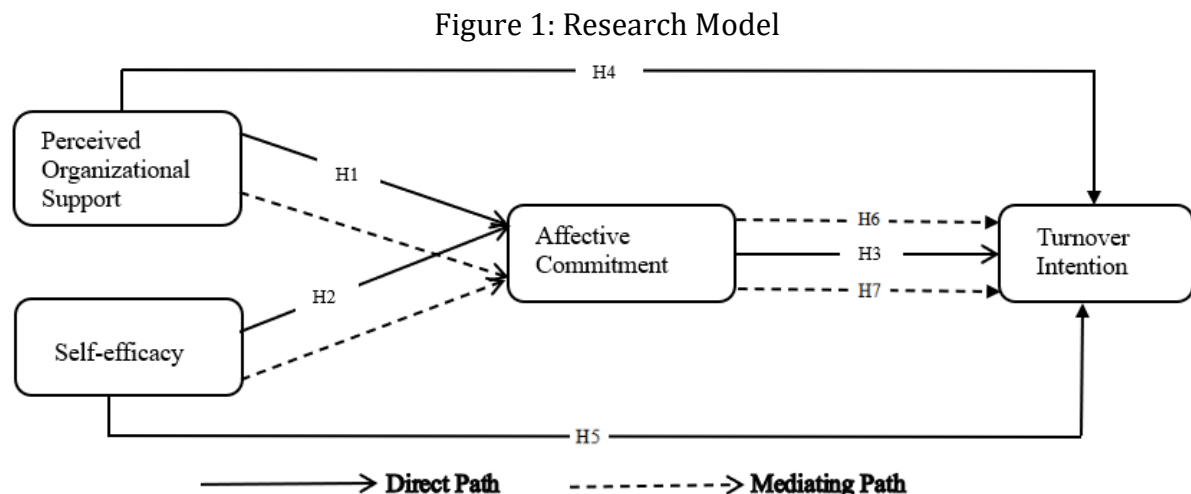
H6: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and turnover intention.

In exploring the mediating role of AC in the relationship between SE and TI, Park and Jung's (2015) study demonstrate that SE impacted TI through worker's sense of commitment; they argued that an indirect relationship occurred due to employees' strong belief in their competencies, resulting in good job performance and subsequently, more commitment to their current job with less TI. Studies confirm the mediation role played by AC in the relation between the organizational practices of competences development and TI. With regards to the relationship between employees' SE and AC, research findings of Albrecht and Marty (2020) reveal that the two constructs are significantly and positively related, and AC had a strong inverse association with TI, they also highlight the importance of SE in leading to employee's commitment via engagement. Thus, we assume that:

H7: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and turnover intention.

3. Material and Methods

Based on the literature review, a research model was proposed incorporating perceived organizational support, self-efficacy, affective commitment and turnover intention (Figure 1). The model examines (1) the direct effects of POS and SE on AC and TI; and (2) the indirect effects of POS and SE on TI, with AC serving as a mediator. This dual-pathway model provides a more nuanced mechanism of TI (see Figure 1).



A web-based survey questionnaire was utilized for data collection with cross-sectional approach and Gen Z employees working full-time in China's hotel industry were targeted as the population. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Section A was designed to capture respondents' general background information, including their gender, age, educational level, department, tenure and monthly income. Adapted from previous studies, Section B was developed logically to reflect the measurement of sources, Likert-scale, containing a five-point bipolar scales with categories ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was employed in this part. POS was assessed using items

that capture employees' perceptions of organizational care and support, such as recognition of contribution, personal well-being, training opportunities, personal development, and feedback. The seven-item measurement was adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1986), Paré et al. (2000), Santos and Stuart (2003). The SE measure was adapted from the work of Schwarzer et al. (1997); through questions, employees' confidence in their ability to perform job-related tasks was evaluated. AC was measured with a 4-item measurement instrument adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). A five-item scale was employed from Boshoff and Allen (2000), Crossley et al. (2007) and Wayne et al. (1997) to assess employees' likelihood of leaving their current job.

In this study, both the measurement and structural models were tested by Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using Smart PLS (V4.0) software. In the evaluation, criteria such as internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity (using the Fornell–Larcker criterion) were applied. For the structural model and hypothesis testing, the results of coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2) and path coefficients (β) with corresponding p-values to reflect the path impacts of exogenous constructions on endogenous constructs were applied.

4. Results

4.1. Respondents Characteristics

A general overview of the respondents in the study is presented in Table 1. Among the total 348 respondents, 213 were female and 135 were male, weighing 61.21% and 38.79% respectively. The significant majority of female employees reflected the gender-based characteristics of the current employee group in the industry. The dominant group was between 22-25 years old, weighing 46.26%, followed by 25.57% of 26-29 years old and 19.5% of 18-21 years old. Together, over 94% were under 30. The survey results showed that respondents with 1-3 years and 3-5 years of work experience took up nearly equal percentages, 26.72% and 26.44% respectively. This was followed by the respondents with 5-8 years of experience (23.28%), and the respondents who had less than one year of experience and 8-12 years of experience took up the same percentage, both at 11.4%.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents (n=348)

Variable	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	38.79	38.79
	Female	213	61.21	100
Age	18-21	79	22.7	22.7
	22-25	161	46.26	68.97
	26-29	89	25.57	94.54
	30	19	5.46	100
Educational Level	Middle School	20	5.75	5.75
	High School	117	33.62	39.37
	Associate Diploma/Certificate	162	46.55	85.92
	Bachelor's Degree	49	14.08	100
Current Tenure	6 months-1 year	41	11.78	11.78
	1--3 years	93	26.72	38.51
	3--5 years	92	26.44	64.94
	5--8 years	81	23.28	88.22
	8--12 years	41	11.78	100

4.2. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the internal consistency and accuracy of the latent constructs and their observed indicators, both Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability's (CR) were used to determine internal consistency. The value for Cronbach's alpha, as suggested by [Hair et al. \(2022\)](#), should be over 0.70 or greater than 0.60 indicate acceptable level. The composite reliability value, on the other hand, should have a threshold value of 0.70, and values of 0.70 to 0.90 are generally considered satisfactory to good ([Hair et al., 2022](#)). As presented in [Table 2](#), all Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.897 to 0.933, far larger than the threshold value of 0.7, and composite reliability's rho values ranged from 0.897 to 0.946, exhibiting great internal consistency and scale reliability.

To ascertain convergent validity, both factor loadings and the average variance extracted (AVE) were used. As shown in [Table 2](#), all factor loadings were above 0.814, which not only met but substantially exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50 ([Hair et al., 2019](#)), confirming that the items effectively represented their respective latent variables. AVE values, as shown, ranged from 0.713 to 0.763, far greater than the recommended threshold of 0.50, providing strong evidence that the average amount of variance in the indicator variables that was well explained by their respective construct ([Fornell & Larcker, 1981](#)).

Table 2: Factor Loadings, Convergent Validity and Reliability

Construct	Indicators	Convergent Validity		Internal Consistency Reliability		
		Factor Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability rho_a	rho_c
POS	POS1	0.843	0.713	0.933	0.934	0.946
	POS2	0.847				
	POS3	0.838				
	POS4	0.854				
	POS5	0.854				
	POS6	0.860				
	POS7	0.814				
SE	SE1	0.855	0.739	0.912	0.917	0.934
	SE2	0.855				
	SE3	0.828				
	SE4	0.889				
	SE5	0.871				
AC	AC1	0.875	0.763	0.897	0.897	0.928
	AC2	0.864				
	AC3	0.889				
	AC4	0.867				
TI	TI1	0.851	0.745	0.915	0.915	0.936
	TI2	0.868				
	TI3	0.871				
	TI4	0.844				
	TI5	0.882				

POS=Perceived Organizational Support, SE=Self-efficacy, AC=Affective Commitment, TI=Turnover Intention

Furthermore, the Fornell–Larcker criterion values were used to determine discriminant validity. According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), the square root of the AVE value of a latent variable should be greater than the correlation coefficient between that latent variable and other latent variables. As presented in Table 3, the square roots of AVEs for POS, SE, AC and TI were 0.844, 0.860, 0.874 and 0.863 respectively, all exceeded their respective highest correlation with other constructs.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Using Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	POS	SE	AC	TI
POS	0.844			
SE	0.442	0.860		
AC	0.383	0.310	0.874	
TI	-0.495	-0.507	-0.393	0.863

POS=Perceived Organizational Support, SE=Self-efficacy, AC=Affective Commitment, TI=Turnover Intention

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

Effect size (f^2) measures the unique contribution of a single independent variable on a dependent latent variable. The R^2 value, or the coefficient of determination, represents the proportion of variance in a dependent (endogenous) construct that is explained by the independent constructs linked to it in the model. As shown in Table 4, the f^2 results in the table showed significant differences in the influence of the various pathways in the model. Based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, both POS \rightarrow AC (0.091), and SE \rightarrow TI (0.122) exhibited small to medium effect sizes. The f^2 values for POS \rightarrow TI (0.069), AC \rightarrow TI (0.023) and SE \rightarrow AC (0.030) was small. Overall, the f^2 values in the table revealed that AC was influence by POS while TI was determined by self-efficacy. Regarding Gen Z employees' AC, the R^2 value of 0.171 suggested that 17.1% of the variance could be attributed to the combined effect of POS and SE. As for Gen Z's TI, 38.5% of the variance was explained by POS, SE and AC together.

Table 4: Effect Size and Coefficient of Determination

	Effect Size (f^2)		Coefficient of Determination (r^2)
	AC	TI	
POS	0.091	0.069	
SE	0.030	0.122	
AC		0.023	0.171
TI			0.385

POS=Perceived Organizational Support, SE=Self-efficacy, AC=Affective Commitment, TI=Turnover Intention

The structural model was estimated using the path weighting scheme. To assess the significance of the path coefficients, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was employed. The standardized path coefficients (β) and corresponding p-values were examined to evaluate the hypothesized relationships. As results shown in Table 5, POS exerted a significant direct effect on AC ($\beta = 0.305$, $p < 0.001$) and TI ($\beta = -0.250$, $p < 0.001$). SE also demonstrated significant direct effects on AC ($\beta = 0.175$, $p = 0.003$) and TI ($\beta = -0.312$, $p < 0.001$), with positive and negative relationships, respectively. In addition, AC had a significant negative effect on TI ($\beta = -0.142$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5: Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Path	Beta/Path	Standard Deviation	t	p	Result
H1	POS -> AC	0.305**	0.058	5.262	0.000	Supported
H2	SE -> AC	0.175**	0.059	2.945	0.003	Supported
H3	AC -> TI	-0.142**	0.039	3.653	0.000	Supported
H4	POS -> TI	-0.250**	0.050	5.004	0.000	Supported
H5	SE -> TI	-0.312**	0.050	6.261	0.000	Supported
H6	POS -> AC -> TI	-0.043**	0.016	2.785	0.005	Supported
H7	SE -> AC -> TI	-0.025*	0.012	2.010	0.045	Supported

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

POS=Perceived Organizational Support, SE=Self-efficacy, AC=Affective Commitment, TI=Turnover Intention

Regarding mediation, as shown in Table 6, AC was found to partially mediate the relationships between POS and TI as well as between SE and TI. The indirect effects were statistically significant, with p-values of 0.005 for the POS→AC→TI pathway and 0.045 for the SE→AC→TI pathway. The variance accounted for (VAF) values indicated relatively weak mediation effects, with AC explaining 14.68% of the total effect in the POS→TI relationship and 7.42% in the SE→TI relationship. Overall, all hypothesized relationships were empirically supported.

Table 6: Mediating Effects

Path	Beta/Path	Standard deviation	t	p	Total effects	Indirect effects	VAF	Result
POS -> TI	-0.250**	0.050	5.004	0.000				Partial Mediation
POS -> AC -> TI	-0.043**	0.016	2.785	0.005	-0.293	-0.043	14.68%	
SE -> TI	-0.312**	0.050	6.261	0.000				Partial Mediation
SE -> AC -> TI	-0.025*	0.012	2.010	0.045	-0.337	-0.025	7.42%	

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

POS=Perceived Organizational Support, SE=Self-efficacy, AC=Affective Commitment, TI=Turnover Intention

5. Discussions

Findings from this study revealed that both POS and SE were directly, positively and significantly related to AC with $\beta = 0.305$ and 0.175 ($p < 0.01$) respectively. The result was in line with prior studies (e.g. To & Yu, 2024; Mondo et al., 2022; Setyono, 2024; Chernyak-Hai et al., 2023) that explored on the same relationship across a variety of organizational settings. The statistically significant and positive path coefficients and P values provided strong evidence that both predictors played significant role in predicting and enhancing AC. POS was a stronger driver in enhancing AC than SE since AC is based more in social exchange processes (Zagenczyk et al., 2020). It confirms the

more Gen Z employees feel they are supported and valued by the organization, the more they tend to develop a stronger emotional attachment (AC) to the organization. As the strongest path to building AC, this aligns with [Yang et al.'s \(2019\)](#) study that in China's hospitality setting, career-related support has the strongest effects on both organizational and occupational embeddedness and the support is the primary fuel for any loyalty that does exist.

Both POS and SE were directly, negatively and significantly related to TI. As predicted, the result was consistent with prior research on the same relationship, that the both constructs could well predict TI, and the magnitude of the correlations were strong ([Liu et al., 2025](#); [Chami-Malaeb, 2022](#)). The negative relationship between organizational support and TI confirms that when organizations understand the generation's pain points and meet their needs, they may become satisfied and tend to stay with the organization longer (Swedish Chamber of Commerce in China, 2024). In comparison, the negative path coefficient of SE to TI ($\beta = -0.312, p=0.000$) generated from this study showed a stronger magnitude of effect than that of POS ($\beta = -0.250, p=0.000$), suggesting that SE was a stronger determinant factor for Gen Z. As an intrinsic motivator, Gen Z's SE is the general confidence in their abilities and competencies shown in mastering tasks, solving problems, and completing work duties. Driven by inner motivation for self-advancement, pursuing continuous professional advancement and better job opportunities, Gen Z constantly seeks to enhance their knowledge, skills, and capabilities ([Zhou et al., 2025](#)). SE beliefs are often derived from enactive mastery experience, vicarious learning experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal ([Bandura, 1994](#)). For Gen Z, a job with continuous learning opportunities that make them feel competent, powerful and skilled is inherently more retainable than one that is merely supportive but offers no personal development. The personal growth is the real reward. Therefore, with the presence of POS, they are more motivated by feeling capable and effective in their role than by feeling cared for by the organization, their personal sense of competence is more critical for their staying than their perception of external support.

The AC-TI pathway showed that Gen Z's AC indeed reduced their intention to quit. However, the relatively modest beta coefficient (-0.142) indicated that this emotional bond, while important, was not the most powerful force keeping them from quitting in comparison to the direct effects of POS and SE. Although, AC has often served as a strong emotional attachment, loyalty, and long-term dedication to a single employer ([Kazemi & Elfstrand Corlin, 2022](#)), Gen Z defines it as commitment linked to their personal growth, employee recognition, and career path ([Goh & Okumus, 2020](#)). Therefore, Gen Z employees are especially reluctant to engage in long-term relationships with the hotel industry, particularly when career opportunities are limited ([Goh & Lee, 2018](#)). As indicated by [Goh and Okumus \(2020\)](#), Gen Z employee expects a positive career pathway and a quick career progress, their nomadic behaviour indicated a low level of organizational identification, implying that long-term loyalty to organizations is not a priority for this cohort ([Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018](#)).

As for the indirect effects through AC (POS \rightarrow AC \rightarrow TI: $\beta = -0.043$; SE \rightarrow AC \rightarrow TI: $\beta = -0.025^*$), while AC did mediate the relationship, it was a weak mechanism and the effects were rather small in both paths with low VAF values of 14.68% and 7.42% respectively, especially in the SE \rightarrow AC \rightarrow TI path with minimal mediation. As discussed earlier, support and confidence did contribute to the building of loyalty, which in turn, helped

with retention, but this was a minor route. Gen Z's TI was mainly directly influenced by SE and POS.

6. Conclusion

With a focus on Gen Z employees in China's hotel sector, this study proposed a dual-path conceptual model combining POS and SE in parallel and examined the effect of POS and SE on TI both directly and indirectly via AC. All the assumed relationships among the proposed constructs were hypothesized, tested and analysed using PLS-SEM. Through data collected from Gen Z hotel employees, the statistical analysis yielded support for all the hypotheses. The results largely aligned with the theoretical framework, yet also revealed nuanced insights into the dynamics of Gen Z employees' intention to leave in the specific organizational setting.

Rather than only re-testing established relationships among POS, SE, AC, and TI, this study introduces and empirically tests a dual-path model that uniquely positions POS and SE as independent parallel antecedents, examining their direct effects on AC and TI and indirect effects on TI with AC modelled as a mediating variable. While most previous turnover models assume AC is the primary psychological mechanism in explaining TI, the results generated from this study empirically demonstrate that emotional attachment to an organization does not operate with the same explanatory power for Gen Z employees in China's hotel settings.

In fact, SE exerts the strongest effect on TI, and AC demonstrates the weakest, which contrasts with established patterns found in previous studies of older generations; therefore, the study provides significant generational-specific insights, which substantiates and adds depth to the broader literature on Gen Z employees' distinct workplace psychology in the hotel industry. While organizational support can work directly in reducing TI or through AC in line with traditional exchange assumptions, SE becomes a more powerful resource and indicates opportunity; the quantitative evidence from this study shows that for Gen Z, opportunity outweighs emotional attachment.

The study also yields practical implications for hospitality management practitioners. The findings suggest that high SE provides intrinsic satisfaction through competence, thereby directly reducing employees' intention to leave by enhancing confidence in their role (the strongest direct effect). However, this confidence might also enhance their perceived marketability rather than foster attachment to the organization. The weak mediating role of AC confirms that being competent at work does not inherently make Gen Z employees develop more affection for the organization; it may instead empower them to feel more confident to leave for a better opportunity elsewhere. Therefore, providing constant, constructive feedback that shows care and enables employees to see their progress and competence is a good way to reinforce employees' SE within their current position.

Since AC is no longer as powerful in retaining Gen Z employees; the "corporate family" narrative is less likely to resonate with this cohort. Therefore, the retention strategy shall shift from commitment-building and emotional attachment to personal career progression, skills development, and competence enhancement. Thus, hotel organizations should prioritize enhancing SE and provide support programs such as continuous learning opportunities. Such support directly mitigates TI (as evidenced by its strong direct effect) and should not be considered as a guarantee for long-term

emotional attachment (the weak indirect effect), rather, as a fundamental requirement for employment.

The results indicate that a stable employment relationship with Gen Z is not built on a single factor but rather on an interrelated system encompassing organizational support, SE, and AC. Typically, highly self-efficacious individuals are looking for work that is more challenging, progressive, and meaningful for personal achievement. In order to promote employee retention, it is suggested that organizations should (1) recognize and value employees' efforts and contributions through structured mechanisms, (2) foster a supportive culture and work environment where employees are facilitated through frequent and transparent communication, and (3) provide progression paths, training opportunities, personal development, and adequate career ladders where they can be continuously motivated and engaged by meaningful work assignments.

The study sample is deliberately focused on Gen Z employees within the hotel industry in China; it therefore limits the generalizability of the findings. The unique socio-cultural dynamics in China and the specific characteristics of the hotel sector mean that the proposed relationships may not hold the same for other generational cohorts, in other cultural or national contexts, or within different industry settings (e.g., IT, manufacturing). Future studies could test the robustness of this dual-path model across different demographics, cultures, and sectors. Furthermore, although the cross-sectional data collection method is practical, it restricts the ability to infer causal relationships definitively. Gen Z's values and workplace expectations are not static; they continue to evolve as the cohort ages and gains more professional experience, and their priorities may shift over time. Therefore, longitudinal research design in future work would be valuable for a more nuanced analysis of the cohort as well as tracking the developmental changes within the cohort itself.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The research has received ethics approval and the participants have consented to partake in the study.

Acknowledgement

Part of this article was extracted from a doctoral thesis submitted to Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

Funding

This study received no funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of Interest.

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