

# Why Do Ready Employees Leave? Contrasting Effects of Organisational Support and Readiness for Change on Turnover Intention

Asri Afendi

Doctor of Business Administration Candidate, Faculty of Business and Economics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Email: afendi.ilias@gmail.com

Dr. M.Y. Kamal

Faculty of Business and Economics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Email: mohdkamalmuhsin@gmail.com

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## Abstract

Organisations operating in dynamic environments increasingly emphasise employees' readiness for change as a critical capability for adaptation. However, its implications for employee retention remain insufficiently understood, particularly in relation to whether such capability-oriented constructs influence employees' decisions to remain with or leave the organisation. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), this study examines how perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, and readiness for change influence turnover intention. Data were collected from 340 employees in Malaysia and analysed using multiple regression techniques. The findings indicate that perceived organisational support and perceived supervisor support are significant and negative predictors of turnover intention, highlighting the importance of relational exchange signals in sustaining employee attachment. In contrast, readiness for change does not exhibit a significant relationship with turnover intention, suggesting that cognitive preparedness alone does not translate into retention outcomes. These findings contribute to the literature by distinguishing between capability and attachment mechanisms in shaping employee behaviour. While readiness for change enhances adaptability, it does not anchor employees within the organisation. Instead, relational support appears to be the primary mechanism through which organisations influence retention during periods of change. From a practical perspective, the results suggest that organisations should not assume that developing change-ready employees will automatically reduce turnover. Instead, efforts to enhance adaptability must be complemented by strong organisational and supervisory support to reinforce employee commitment.

**Keywords:** Organisational Support, Supervisor Support; Readiness for Change, Turnover Intention, Organisational Restructuring, Malaysia

### **Introduction**

Organisations undergoing extensive transformation operate in increasingly volatile and uncertain environments, commonly described as VUCA conditions (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). More recently, such environments have been characterised as brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible, reflecting heightened complexity and unpredictability. These dynamics intensify the challenge of sustaining employee retention during periods of organisational change.

In Malaysia, recent economic and organisational developments further underscore this complexity. While the country continues to demonstrate relatively strong macroeconomic performance, it remains exposed to external uncertainties, including geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions, and structural shifts in global supply chains (Lee, 2026). At the same time, labour market data indicate that job losses continue to occur across key economic regions, with layoffs concentrated in sectors such as manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and information and communication (Hamdan, 2026). Such conditions highlight the persistent challenge of managing employee retention during ongoing organisational change.

A critical but underexplored challenge in these contexts is the unintended loss of capable and adaptable employees, who are often the most prepared for change yet also the most mobile. This raises an important question: why do employees who are ready for change still consider leaving the organisation?

Existing research has consistently emphasised the role of organisational support in fostering employee attachment and reducing turnover intention (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Similarly, perceived supervisor support has been shown to strengthen employee commitment through relational exchange mechanisms (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988; Maertz et al., 2007). In parallel, readiness for change has been conceptualised as a cognitive precursor to adaptive behaviour, reflecting employees' beliefs regarding the necessity and feasibility of organisational change initiatives (Armenakis et al., 1993; Oreg et al., 2011).

Despite extensive research on organisational support and employee retention, the role of capability-oriented constructs such as readiness for change in shaping turnover intention remains underexplored, particularly in restructuring contexts. This issue is closely aligned with broader debates within organisational behaviour concerning the distinction between capability and attachment, adaptability and retention, and mobility versus stability.

Understanding this distinction is critical, as organisations increasingly invest in developing adaptable workforces without clear evidence of whether such investments translate into sustained employee retention. This raises critical questions about whether organisations are inadvertently developing employees who are better prepared to leave rather than remain. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), this study examines how perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, and readiness for change influence turnover intention. Specifically, it investigates whether readiness for

change functions as a stabilising mechanism, as commonly assumed, or whether it may instead operate as a capability that is independent of employee attachment.

### **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

#### *Theoretical Foundation: Social Exchange Theory*

Social Exchange Theory provides a well-established framework for explaining employee attitudes and behaviours within organisational contexts (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The theory posits that relationships between employees and organisations are governed by reciprocal exchanges, whereby favourable treatment from the organisation creates an obligation for employees to respond with positive attitudes and behaviours.

While this perspective has been widely used to explain how organisational support reduces turnover intention, it has been less frequently applied to examine how capability-related constructs, such as readiness for change, influence employee withdrawal decisions. This highlights an important conceptual gap, where the mechanisms underlying stability and mobility have not been clearly distinguished.

In restructuring contexts, these exchange relationships become particularly salient, as employees rely more heavily on organisational signals to interpret the nature and quality of their relationship with the organisation (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

#### *Perceived Organisational Support and Turnover Intention*

Perceived organisational support (POS) refers to employees' beliefs regarding the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Employees who perceive high organisational support are more likely to develop stronger emotional attachment and reciprocate through behaviours that benefit the organisation.

During restructuring, POS becomes particularly important as employees face heightened uncertainty. Supportive organisational actions may signal continued organisational commitment, thereby reducing withdrawal tendencies (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Allen et al., 2003).

H1: POS is negatively related to turnover intention.

#### *Perceived Supervisor Support and Turnover Intention*

Perceived supervisor support (PSS) reflects the extent to which employees believe that supervisors provide recognition, guidance, and assistance (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Supervisors act as the primary representatives of the organisation and play a critical role in shaping employee perceptions.

Supportive supervisory behaviour reduces uncertainty and strengthens exchange relationships, thereby lowering turnover intention (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Maertz et al., 2007).

H2: PSS is negatively related to turnover intention.

### *Readiness for Change and Turnover Intention*

Readiness for change refers to employees' beliefs regarding the necessity and appropriateness of organisational change initiatives (Armenakis et al., 1993). Employees who are psychologically prepared for change are more likely to accept and adapt to organisational initiatives.

Prior research has generally associated readiness for change with favourable outcomes, including reduced resistance and more positive attitudes (Oreg et al., 2011). Accordingly, employees with higher readiness are expected to exhibit lower turnover intention.

H3: Readiness for change is negatively related to turnover intention.

As all variables were collected using self-reported measures, common method bias may be a concern. Procedural remedies such as ensuring respondent anonymity and using established measurement scales were applied to mitigate this risk.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design and Sample*

Data were collected using a structured survey administered to employees in Malaysia who had experienced organisational restructuring or voluntary separation schemes (VSS). Survey-based approaches are widely used in organisational research to capture employee perceptions and behavioural intentions in dynamic organisational contexts.

A snowball sampling approach was employed to reach respondents with relevant restructuring experience across various industries and job levels. While non-probability sampling limits generalisability, it is appropriate when targeting specific populations that are difficult to access (Creswell, 2014). The final dataset comprised 340 usable responses, which were included in the statistical analysis.

The sample includes both employees who remained with their organisations following restructuring and those who had exited after the change process. This enables a more comprehensive assessment of employee responses to organisational disruption.

### *Measures*

All constructs were measured using previously validated scales adapted from established organisational behaviour literature. The use of validated instruments enhances measurement reliability and construct validity (Creswell, 2014). Responses were recorded using a Likert-type scale ranging from low to high agreement.

Perceived organisational support (POS) was measured using items adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1986), capturing employees' perceptions of organisational care and recognition.

Perceived supervisor support (PSS) was measured using items adapted from Kottke and Sharafinski (1988), reflecting the degree of supervisory support and responsiveness.

Readiness for change (RFC) was measured using items based on Armenakis et al. (1993), capturing employees' beliefs regarding the necessity and appropriateness of organisational change.

Turnover intention (TI) was measured using established scales assessing employees' likelihood of leaving their organisation, which is widely used as a proxy for withdrawal behaviour in organisational research.

#### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analytical procedure was structured in three stages to align with the study objectives.

First, descriptive statistics were computed to examine the distribution and central tendencies of the study variables. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951).

Second, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships among the study variables and to assess the potential for multicollinearity.

Third, multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesised relationships between perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, readiness for change, and turnover intention. This approach allows for the simultaneous estimation of the effects of multiple independent variables on a single dependent variable (Creswell, 2014).

Turnover intention was specified as the dependent variable, while perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, and readiness for change were entered as independent variables.

#### *Common Method Bias*

As all variables were collected using self-reported measures, common method bias may be a concern. Procedural remedies were implemented, including ensuring respondent anonymity, using established measurement scales, and reducing evaluation apprehension.

These steps are consistent with recommended practices for mitigating common method variance in behavioural research (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

#### *Reliability and Validity*

The measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951), as reported in Table 2. This indicates that the items within each construct reliably measure the intended underlying concept.

Construct validity was supported using established measurement scales from prior research, as well as the examination of correlation patterns among variables. The correlations among independent variables remained within acceptable limits, with no evidence of excessively high intercorrelations, suggesting that multicollinearity is unlikely to pose a concern.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the research prior to participation. Anonymity

and confidentiality were assured, and no identifying information was collected. All data were used solely for academic research purposes.

## Results

### *Respondent Profile*

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The sample comprises 340 employees drawn from diverse organisational contexts. The majority of respondents are female (55.6%), with a substantial proportion aged between 30 and 49 years (70.3%). The sample is highly educated, with 48.5% holding postgraduate qualifications and 40.6% holding undergraduate degrees.

In terms of organisational position, most respondents occupy managerial roles (95.6%), indicating that the data reflects perceptions from employees with decision-making responsibilities. Respondents are drawn from both public and private sectors, with 53.2% from private organisations and 46.8% from government or government-linked companies. The sample also reflects a relatively experienced workforce, with 53.5% having less than five years of tenure and 46.5% having five or more years.

Overall, the sample represents a professionally experienced workforce suitable for examining the study variables.

Table 1

*Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 340)*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	151	44.4
	Female	189	55.6
Age Group	20–29	50	14.7
	30–39	104	30.6
	40–49	135	39.7
	50+	51	15.0
Education Level	Postgraduate	165	48.5
	Undergraduate	138	40.6
	Diploma/Below	37	10.9
Organisational Level	Management	325	95.6
	Non-executive	15	4.4
Organisation Type	Government/GLC	159	46.8
	Private	181	53.2
Tenure	< 5 years	182	53.5
	≥ 5 years	158	46.5

### *Descriptive Statistics and Reliability*

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and correlations among the study variables.

The mean scores indicate moderate to relatively high levels across constructs, with readiness for change (M = 5.34) recording the highest value. Perceived organisational support (M = 4.38) and perceived supervisor support (M = 4.58) are at moderate levels, while turnover

intention exhibits greater variability ( $M = 4.22$ ), suggesting differences in employee responses to restructuring conditions.

Correlation analysis indicates that perceived organisational support ( $r = -.239$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and perceived supervisor support ( $r = -.229$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are negatively associated with turnover intention, consistent with expectations derived from Social Exchange Theory. In contrast, readiness for change is not significantly correlated with turnover intention ( $r = .063$ ,  $p > .05$ ), indicating no significant relationship.

The correlations among independent variables remain within acceptable limits, with the highest correlation observed between perceived organisational support and perceived supervisor support ( $r = .725$ ). This suggests that multicollinearity is unlikely to pose a significant concern.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Correlations*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	$\alpha$
1. Perceived Organisational Support (POS)	4.38	1.58	—				.90
2. Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)	4.58	1.62	.725***	—			.92
3. Readiness for Change (RFC)	5.34	1.03	.498***	.443***	—		.85
4. Turnover Intention (TI)	4.22	1.92	-.239***	-.229***	.063	—	.85

**Notes.** SD = standard deviation;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha.

\*\*\* $p < .001$

#### *Regression Analysis*

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, and readiness for change on turnover intention. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

As shown in Table 4, the overall model is statistically significant ( $R^2 = .14$ ,  $F = 18.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that the set of independent variables jointly explains a meaningful proportion of variance in turnover intention.

Table 3 presents the regression coefficients. Perceived organisational support is significantly and negatively associated with turnover intention ( $\beta = -0.239$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that employees who perceive higher levels of organisational support are less likely to consider leaving the organisation. Similarly, perceived supervisor support is significantly and negatively related to turnover intention ( $\beta = -0.229$ ,  $p < .001$ ), reinforcing the importance of supervisory relationships in shaping employee retention.

In contrast, readiness for change is not significantly related to turnover intention ( $\beta = 0.063$ ,  $p = .244$ ). This finding suggests that cognitive preparedness for change does not independently influence employees' intentions to remain with or leave the organisation.

Table 3

*Multiple Regression Results Predicting Turnover Intention (N = 340)*

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	p
Constant	5.403	0.302	—	< .001***
Perceived Organisational Support (POS)	-0.29	0.05	-0.239	< .001***
Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)	-0.33	0.06	-0.229	< .001***
Readiness for Change (RFC)	-0.02	0.04	0.063	.244

**Notes.** Dependent variable: Turnover Intention (TI).

B = unstandardised coefficient; SE = standard error;  $\beta$  = standardised coefficient.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 4

*Model Summary for Regression Analysis*

Model	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
1	0.14	0.13	18.50	< .001***

**Notes.** Dependent variable: Turnover Intention (TI).

Model includes POS, PSS, and RFC as predictors.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Summary of Hypothesis Testing**

Table 5 summarises the results of hypothesis testing. Hypotheses H1 and H2 are supported, as both perceived organisational support and perceived supervisor support significantly reduce turnover intention. Hypothesis H3 is not supported, indicating that readiness for change does not independently influence withdrawal tendencies.

Table 5

*Summary of Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result	Decision	Interpretation
H1	POS → Turnover Intention	Significant ( $\beta = -0.239$ , $p < .001$ )	Supported	Higher organisational support reduces turnover intention
H2	PSS → Turnover Intention	Significant ( $\beta = -0.229$ , $p < .001$ )	Supported	Supervisor support reduces turnover intention
H3	RFC → Turnover Intention	Not significant ( $\beta = 0.063$ , $p = .244$ )	Not Supported	No significant relationship

### Summary of Findings

Figure 1 presents the final model.

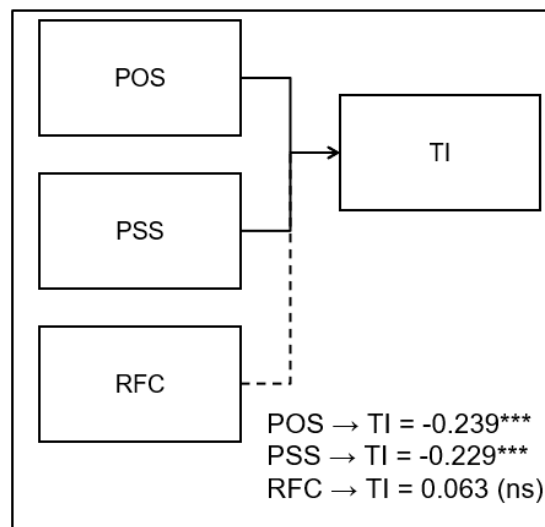


Figure 1. Empirical Model with Standardised Coefficients

Notes: Solid lines indicate significant relationships. Dashed line indicates non-significant relationship. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

### Discussion

#### *Overview of Findings*

This study examined how perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, and readiness for change influence employee turnover intention in the context of organisational restructuring. The findings indicate that perceived organisational support and perceived supervisor support are significant and negative predictors of turnover intention, whereas readiness for change does not demonstrate a significant direct relationship.

These results suggest that, under conditions of organisational disruption, support-based signals play a more central role in shaping employee withdrawal decisions than cognitive readiness alone. Employees appear to rely more heavily on relational cues that signal organisational commitment and care when evaluating whether to remain with the organisation.

#### *Support as a Stabilising Mechanism*

Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, the findings demonstrate that organisational and supervisory support function as stabilising mechanisms that reduce employee withdrawal tendencies (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When employees perceive that the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being, they are more likely to reciprocate through continued attachment and reduced intention to leave (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Maertz et al., 2007).

The role of supervisory support is particularly salient. Supervisors represent the organisation in day-to-day interactions and serve as the primary channel through which organisational intent is interpreted. In periods of restructuring, where uncertainty is heightened, employees rely on immediate relational cues to assess their situation. Supportive supervisory behaviour

provides reassurance, clarifies expectations, and reduces ambiguity, thereby mitigating withdrawal tendencies.

From a practitioner perspective, the effectiveness of support is shaped not only by formal organisational practices but also by how support is experienced in everyday interactions. Research suggests that trust, transparency, and consistent interpersonal behaviours are critical in shaping employee responses under uncertainty (Zak, 2017). Accordingly, support must be both structurally embedded and relationally enacted to influence employee behaviour effectively.

#### *Readiness for Change and the Readiness Paradox*

Contrary to expectations, readiness for change does not exhibit a significant direct relationship with turnover intention. This finding suggests that readiness for change may not function as a stabilising mechanism in the absence of supportive organisational signals.

While prior research conceptualises readiness for change as a positive psychological state that facilitates adaptation (Armenakis et al., 1993; Oreg et al., 2011), the present findings indicate that readiness may operate as a capability-based orientation rather than a behavioural anchor. Employees who are ready for change are likely to possess greater adaptability, confidence, and perceived control over uncertain situations. However, these attributes may not necessarily translate into organisational attachment.

From a practitioner standpoint, employees who demonstrate higher readiness for change are often more self-sufficient and capable of navigating uncertainty. While these qualities are desirable, they may also increase employees' perceived employability and openness to external opportunities. This creates a paradox in which capability development enhances adaptability while simultaneously weakening attachment.

Drawing on resilience literature, readiness may be interpreted as an initial capacity that does not automatically translate into behavioural outcomes. In this sense, readiness reflects the potential to engage with change, but without reinforcing relational mechanisms, this capacity may not be enacted in ways that reduce turnover intention.

#### *Integrating Capability and Attachment*

The findings highlight a critical distinction between capability and attachment in organisational contexts.

Capability-enhancing mechanisms, such as readiness for change, improve employees' ability to respond to uncertainty. However, attachment is shaped more strongly by relational, emotional, and cultural factors within the organisation. Practitioner research suggests that emotional culture, trust, and shared meaning play a central role in sustaining employee commitment, particularly under conditions of disruption (Barsade & O'Neill, 2016; Groysberg et al., 2018).

In practice, organisations that focus primarily on capability development without reinforcing relational attachment may inadvertently create a workforce that is highly adaptable but less anchored. This highlights the importance of integrating capability-building initiatives with practices that strengthen trust, emotional connection, and organisational identification.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings provide several important implications for organisational practice.

Organisations should prioritise the consistent delivery of support at both organisational and supervisory levels. Support signals must be visible, credible, and experienced in day-to-day interactions to effectively reduce employee withdrawal tendencies.

In addition, capability-building initiatives, particularly those aimed at enhancing readiness for change, should be implemented with awareness of their potential unintended consequences. While such initiatives improve adaptability, they may also increase employees' perceived employability and openness to external opportunities, although this possibility is not directly tested in the current study.

More importantly, organisations must actively manage the balance between capability and attachment. This requires complementing capability development with practices that foster trust, emotional connection, and a sense of purpose. High-trust environments characterised by transparency, recognition, and autonomy have been shown to reduce stress and strengthen employee engagement under conditions of uncertainty (Zak, 2017).

Overall, effective management of organisational change requires a dual focus on developing capability while sustaining attachment.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study is subject to several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. Future studies may adopt longitudinal approaches to examine how employee perceptions and behavioural intentions evolve over time.

In addition, while this study examines readiness for change as a capability-oriented construct, the findings suggest that such capability does not directly translate into retention outcomes. This highlights the need to further investigate the underlying mechanisms through which capability influences employee behaviour.

Future research may explore mediating or moderating factors, such as employee resilience, emotional intelligence, or organisational climate, that may explain how capability-oriented constructs are translated into sustained behavioural outcomes. Additionally, individual-level capabilities such as self-efficacy may act as boundary conditions that shape the relationship between organisational support, readiness for change, and turnover intention.

### **Contribution of the Study**

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that organisational signals do not uniformly translate into retention outcomes, thereby challenging assumptions that capability development alone enhances employee stability.

By introducing this distinction, the study advances a more nuanced understanding of employee responses to organisational change. It highlights that adaptability alone is

insufficient to ensure retention and underscores the importance of relational mechanisms in sustaining employee attachment.

### Conclusion

This study examined the roles of perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, and readiness for change in shaping employee turnover intention under conditions of organisational restructuring. The findings indicate that support-based mechanisms play a more central role in influencing employee retention than capability-oriented factors.

Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, both perceived organisational support and perceived supervisor support were found to significantly reduce turnover intention, highlighting the importance of relational exchange signals in sustaining employee attachment. In contrast, readiness for change did not exhibit a significant relationship with turnover intention, indicating that cognitive preparedness for change does not necessarily translate into retention outcomes.

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that organisational signals do not uniformly translate into retention outcomes, thereby advancing a more differentiated understanding of employee responses to organisational change. Importantly, the findings provide insight into a persistent organisational challenge, namely the retention of capable and adaptable employees during restructuring, who may otherwise be expected to remain but are often among those most likely to leave.

By distinguishing between capability and attachment mechanisms, this study highlights the need for organisations to move beyond capability development alone and to invest in relational practices that sustain employee commitment. In doing so, it offers a more nuanced perspective on managing employee behaviour under conditions of organisational change.

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