

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Career optimism as a bridge: Linking perceived support to employee engagement and turnover intention

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Keywords

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
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Received: 13 March 2025**Accepted:** 28 June 2025**Published:** 21 August 2025**Abstract**

Although research acknowledges the connection between perceived support and key employee outcomes in high turnover sectors, there is a large gap regarding the actual psychological mechanisms behind the connection. This study is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET) and seeks to investigate the significant mediating role of career optimism in the relationships between perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, and employee engagement and turnover intention outcomes. Using a quantitative research approach, a model with six hypotheses was tested. Data were collected from a sample of 320 major stakeholders from construction, planning, architectural, management, and consulting organizations across the African building sector using a structured questionnaire and analyzed with SmartPLS. Results indicated that all predicted paths were supported. Both POS and PSS had a strong positive influence on career optimism. In turn, career optimism served as an important psychological resource that led to higher employee engagement (H3, H5) and significantly lower turnover intention (H4, H6). These findings confirm that supportive organizational behaviors are internalized as a positive expectation of the future before translating into positive work behaviors and reducing withdrawal cognition. Given career optimism is a variable that is highly malleable, the findings also have direct implications for key stakeholders in the African building sector. Construction organizations can leverage career development programs and improved supervisor support to directly enhance employees' belief in their professional future with the organization. This specific intervention opportunity offers a strong mechanism for directly enhancing workforce stability, increasing employee engagement, and increasing project and business performance.

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INTRODUCTION

The building industry, which includes construction, planning, architectural, management and consulting organizations, is a high-impact, fast-moving and crucial engine of economic growth throughout the continent (Poku et al., 2025). To achieve competitive advantage and execute complex infrastructure projects, organizations rely on a highly engaged and stable workforce, but the industry is often characterized by high pressure and high talent turnover. Employees are considered an organization's greatest asset in today's highly competitive and technologically advanced business world (Peter, 2025). In evaluating performance, competitiveness, profitability and growth, all firms must factor employee engagement into the

equation. Employee engagement is an example of employees' positive psychological behavior or mental state at work, which lead to positive job-related outcomes. According to Kissi et al. (2024), this psychological bond between employees and their job has gained significance in the 21st century.

Turnover intention is sensitive to many external factors, and may serve as a more valid reflection of the actual state of organizational management than actual turnover behavior (Prot-siuk, 2025). Turnover intention is a cognitive and psychological predictor of voluntary separation from an organization, often viewed as the final step in a process of withdrawal (Kissi et al., 2024). An employee with a high level of turnover intention consciously plans to look for or accept a different job in the

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near future. Since replacing employees, training employees, and lost productivity are costly, reducing Turnover Intention (TI) is a primary strategic goal of any organization (Yucel et al., 2023). The industry faces continual high labor turnover, which may have both positive and negative effects on performance and productivity for construction organizations. Construction workers rank highly among professionals who experience high levels of job stress and burnout through stressors including but not limited to time pressures, inequitable rewards, the perceived unfair treatment of their organization, and lack of safety training, all of which suggest a lack of organizational support (Jun et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023). The high rate of construction turnover intention is reportedly associated with such factors as perceived alternative job opportunities, fringe benefits, dissatisfaction with pay Wang et al. (2024), and lower engagement of employees (Asif et al., 2023).

Wall (2024) contribution of supervisors is necessary to mitigate employee turnover in numerous industries worldwide. Supervisor support is a job resource that could resolve the issues employees face at work with help and direction (Chami-Malaeb, 2022). Empirical research also indicates that employees who are most engaged are likely to remain with their employers (Hersugondo et al., 2025; Wall, 2024). As an outcome of management, work engagement has a place in nearly every industry for supervisors to implement, including construction. Asif et al. (2023) conclude that as supervisors advance personal initiatives and innovativeness in dealing with new issues, the self and professional fulfillment of construction workers is likely to diminish turnover intentions. However, engaged employees view work as challenging instead of demanding or stressful. Engaged employees are enthusiastic about what they do and are full of positive energy which makes them focus on finishing their work, and therefore enhances their enjoyment of general responsibilities in the organization (Hussain et al., 2025). Therefore, researchers will want to know about the role of supervisor support and work engagement regarding the turnover intentions of construction professionals.

Perceived organizational support is explained as employees' overall beliefs about how much the organization values their contributions and takes an interest in their well-being (Ma et al., 2023). Based on the norm of reciprocity, POS leads to a felt obligation on the part of employees to return the organization's beneficial treatment with positive job-related behavior, attitudes, and ultimately commitment to the organization's goals (Abdullahi et al., 2025). High POS means that employees feel valued, which leads to a sense of safety and belonging. Also, when employees are faced with a challenging situation to resolve their work-related issues, the organization is seen as a

guarantee to provide help in settling an employee down and caring for the employee through providing a proper solution to the resolution of those workplace issues. Rubel et al. (2025) argue that perceived organizational support is an employee's description of the company where he/she works, employees will see and have views about the extent of which the company provides support and feedback that is in accordance to the performance and efforts that have been made by employees Ahli et al. (2024).

Lee et al. (2025) state that optimism, one of the significant constructs in the modern world, impacts the lives of people in various ways. Gercek and Elmas-Atay (2024) identifies the concept of optimism in a person's belief that good things will be in their future, Akkaya and Akçay (2025) define optimism as one of the individual differences variables that indicate the degree to which people have generalized positive expectations concerning their futures. Optimism has many benefits, such as improved mental and physical health, increased overall well-being, and better academic performance (Amin Jafari et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2023). Gercek and Elmas-Atay (2024) noted the significance of optimism in career development and highlighted that optimism is instrumental to career planning and research, determining career goals, and making career decisions. Career optimism is defined as a person's positive expectancy about their vocational future that reflects the belief that the individual will achieve desirable career outcomes despite challenges (Oubibi et al., 2022). As a personal resource, CO is based on the employee's belief in their ability to effectively manage their career trajectory and the belief that the context (external environment) will present opportunities.

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between perceived support (organizational and supervisor) and key employee outcomes, such as employee engagement and turnover intention. However, the research findings are inconsistent. High levels of support are often said to significantly lower TI and raise EE; but, in other studies, the relationship between the two constructs has been found to be non-significant. In this case, the link may not be direct, and depend on the context and/or psychological mediators. This inconsistency shows an important gap in identifying the mediating or moderating variables to convert external relational resources to internal motivation. Second, the African building sector has its own dynamics, as the labor conditions and retention challenges are on the verge of rapid evolution sooner than later with respect to the contemporary economic conditions (Hussain et al., 2025; Protsiuk, 2025). Hence, this study is justified by the need to take it into the context of the specific developing nation. There is a strong encouragement on the notion that the outcome of

this research can support and/or improve the engagement and support environments of the construction industry in Africa, as highlighted in the research. This study therefore intends to determine whether or not the association between perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support and employee could require the important mediating role of career optimism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory

The foundational framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET) is indispensable for understanding the dynamics of reciprocal relationships in organizational contexts, serving as a critical lens through which workplace behavior is analyzed (Cook & Rice, 1998). The conceptual foundation of SET suggests that all exchanges are initiated by an actor directing an action toward another actor. The target of the action then provides an attitudinal or behavioral response in return which ultimately represents the nature of the relationship formed between the actor and the target. Pioneering work established two orientations of SET: Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) advanced a psychological orientation, which primarily focused on instrumental behavior, while (Pincus, 2023) presented an economic orientation, which included rules of power and exchange. Importantly, SET fundamentally assumes two parties are adhering to a set of agreed rules related to the exchange, the most studied of which is reciprocity, and refers to bi/multi-directional exchanges that are inherently social, as distinguished from economic exchange and is established as broad moral principle (Cook & Rice, 1998). Relationships, in organizational theory, are developed through value-based commitment and trust over time, as sustained interactions that develop in cycles of transactions that are reciprocal (or expected). An important distinction in the evolution of the concept of SET is the idea that exchanges are complex, and take place at both manifestly (active exchanges) and latently (inactive exchanges) observable levels and are also described as a "psychological exchange" (Hersugondo et al., 2025). Inactive exchanges, such as where the target of an exchange is withheld from performing an undesirable behavior are important because they may be challenging to detect, define, and may generate impact, thus warranting a challenge of the traditional view of exchange covering only socio-economic constructs. The significance of SET is its ability to delineate and describe how positive and negative exchanges of both tangible (economic) and symbolic (socioemotional) resources, ultimately determine the quality of a positive resource attachment within interpersonal attachments in organizational settings (Krishnan & Rathakrishnan,

2025; Lee et al., 2025).

The effect of ICT-enabled behavior on employee outcomes is systematically examined using the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET), which perceives workplace relationships as reciprocal obligations. Therefore, perceived organizational support and perceived supervisor support are the main initiating actions or resources exchanged from the organization and its agents to the employee (Peter, 2025). PSS is emotional, practical, and informational support that indicates managers value employees' thoughts and contributions, as well as their well-being. In SET, employees who perceive high levels of care for them and their interests from the organization (POS) or the supervisor (PSS) feel morally obliged to reciprocate the goodwill. Reciprocation primarily happens as increased employee engagement as demonstrated by vigor, dedication, and absorption. When employees perceive their supervisor values them, they are more likely to feel engaged in their work, directly increasing EE (Pincus, 2023). But when ICT-enabled behavior occurs and disrupts the necessary psychological detachment to recover from work, it decreases EE. In these cases, POS is implemented as a moderator to alleviate the negative effects of behavior on EE, because the employee increases engagement to repay the perceived caring of the organization for them and their well-being. On the other hand, this supportive exchange relationship also impacts a critical outcome turnover intention, which is when employees voluntarily leave (Chami-Malaeb, 2022). Employees who are highly engaged and are receiving high PSS feel a sense of obligation to the organization and are less likely to leave, resulting in support, engagement and turnover intention having a negative relationship (Hameed et al., 2022). Thus, EE and decreased TI reflect the employee status of the reciprocal exchange confirming that organizational support under psychological demands creates positive affective states and commitment and aligns with the basic tenets of SET.

Perceived Organizational Support and Career Optimism

Grounded primarily in Social Exchange Theory (SET), the basic tenet of this relationship is that employees, when they view the organization as appreciating employee contributions, and as an organization that cares for employee satisfaction and well-being, will feel an obligation to reciprocate those positive attitudes and behaviors (Akgunduz et al., 2023). POS is defined by the perception of the organization in the employee's demonstrated care for the satisfaction and welfare of the employee at work. CO is also defined in relation to the individual's personal belief that the employee can pursue career aspirations. CO is understood as a psych resource that focuses on

efficacy or expectations for career paths (Jun et al., 2023). The hypothesis that the POS directly influences CO is theoretically justified by the concept that an organization that provides a climate of supported validates the employee's assessment of success in the organization (Al Zeer et al., 2023). Prior quantitative research suggests that employees, who are career ambitious, fueled by career success. Asif et al. (2023), recognizes that POS, similar to perceived supervisor support and social support is one external factor that contributes to employee engagement by providing the structural, and emotional scaffolding, necessary to develop a positive view of their career pathway.

While many studies have focused notably on perceived supervisor support or social support as antecedents of career optimism, their findings highlight an essential contextual confirmation of the direct relationships of POS on CO, as perceived supervisor support is largely theorized as an organization agent. For example, structural equation modelling has empirically established that PSS and SS are significant antecedents of CO, which provides compelling evidence that this type of support mechanism provided from the workplace fosters the employee's belief in their future career (Ahmad & Nasir, 2023; Winarno et al., 2022). In this study, PSS positively influenced CO and CO positively influenced work engagement. CO's mediating role between workplace support (PSS/SS) and work engagement has been accepted in numerous contexts, and CO is a critical organizational-level psychological construct in this process. External studies also corroborated this chain, and it was established that career-based self-efficacy is a closely linked concept to career optimism and significantly mediates the relationship between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement (Karatepe et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022). The ongoing provision of broader organizational care, which involves and transcends immediate supervisor behavior, implies a level of trust that stimulates continuous professional expectations and, as a result, employees are inspired to invest their energy through increased work engagement (Akgunduz et al., 2023). Accordingly, the evidence establishing a connection between POS and CO reinforces the contention that meaningfully caring organizations provide additional value for developing the aspirational aspect of foresight that is necessary for continuing professional commitment.

H1: Perceived organizational support has a direct impact on career optimism.

Perceived Supervisor Support and Career

PSS is defined as the overall perception of an employee's circumstances, when a supervisor who acts on behalf of the organization values the employee's contribution, cares about the

employee's wellbeing, and provides support, encouragement, and attention to the employee as an individual (Hersugondo et al., 2025). PSS is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), which posits that employees who perceive high levels of care from the organization and from their supervisor are morally obliged to reciprocate those levels of care through both positive attitudes and positive behaviors in the workplace. Career Optimism is a future-oriented psychological resource which represents an individual's personal belief that their career aspirations can be successfully pursued, closely aligned with concepts of career-based self-efficacy (Hussain et al., 2025). The demonstration of PSS provides an employee with the structural and emotional scaffolding to foster that optimism; the employee feels valued by the supervisor, thus affirming the employee's self-worth and that investment in career planning for the long-term is worthwhile within the employment context (Peter, 2025). Additionally, there is evidence in the literature indicating that optimists are naturally more socially appealing, resulting in being incorporated into more supportive social networks and receiving positive responses in work contexts. Yucel et al. (2023) studies finding a positive association between dispositional optimism and support availability (e.g., prosocial behavior, assisting others) or simply the number of supportive interactions received. As a result, the direct effect of PSS on CO is an important first exchange; supervisors' support is not viewed as simply transactional support, but rather positively reinforces the employee's evaluation of their potential for success in future career (Asif et al., 2023).

Empirical research from multiple studies automatically supports the idea for a direct link between supervisory support to develop career-related positive beliefs (Kissi et al., 2024; Wall, 2024; Yucel et al., 2023). As an example, a structural equation modeling analysis found that PSS had a positive and significant effect on CO. This finding emphasizes the important role of supervisors' in developing the psychological resources that employees use to navigate their career paths. Moreover, PSS is an important direct predictor of CO because CO has been shown to be an important predictor and mediator of positive outcomes such as work engagement (Hussain et al., 2025). CO has a strong positive and significant effect on work engagement (WE) in particular. This level of analysis suggests that supervisory support can successfully lead to more engagement primarily by first developing the employee's belief in their career. Previous studies on similar psychological constructs support this mechanism; empirical studies using career-related self-efficacy a core component of CO have also shown that self-efficacy robustly mediates the relationship between PSS and employee engagement (Peter, 2025). Kissi et al. (2024) also

demonstrated that self-efficacy allowed employees to better perform complex tasks and offered evidence that career-based variables from support will promote work engagement. Ultimately, accepting the hypothesis that PSS has a direct effect on CO provides a solid basis for understanding how the organizational climate, through the immediacy of supervision, nurtures the aspiring mindset for continuous elevated levels of engagement and performance.

H2: Perceived supervisor support has direct impact on career optimism.

The Mediating role of Career Optimism

Wang et al. (2024) affirm that POS provides the developmental and emotional security that leads to this optimistic, future orientation. Specifically, when employees feel appreciated and resourced in relation to their organization, they feel greater certainty that their future professional endeavors will be positive and within their control (Akkaya & Akçay, 2025; Amin Jafari et al., 2025). Studies have indicated that the pathway from organizational resources to personal resources to positive work outcomes (engagement) provides a more comprehensive rationale as to why organizations invest in resources and who will maximize their investments through increased individual performance and job embeddedness (Lee et al., 2025). While the provided sources may not directly test the POS, CO, and EE relationship, they confirm that support from organizational agents (supervisors) and peers (social support) successfully utilizes CO as a critical mediator to drive engagement. Specifically, studies confirmed that CO significantly mediates the effect of PSS on WE and the effect of SS on WE. The high explanatory power of CO itself on engagement positions it as a highly significant psychological resource in the support-engagement sequence. (Gerçek & Elmas-Atay, 2024) consistent with earlier literature recognizing the importance of career-based self-efficacy (a related construct) as an underlying mechanism explaining the connection between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement. For instance, past experiments have affirmed that career-based self-efficacy helps employees carry out complex duties and mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support (or supervisor support) and work engagement (Ahmad & Nasir, 2023). Consequently, the sustained presence of POS is theorized to nurture CO, which, in turn, provides the motivational impetus and self-assurance necessary for employees to remain fully psychologically present and invested in their tasks, thus maximizing the overall level of Employee Engagement.

The established management literature on organizational behavior demonstrates a negative relationship between POS and

TI, suggesting that employees are less likely to leave an organization when they feel supported (Oubibi et al., 2022). However, this relationship is often mediated by psychological states, with career optimism being a particularly powerful mediator. An employee with high career optimism about their possible future in the current organization becomes less desirous of any job opportunities, thinking their current career trajectory can fulfill their long-term career needs (Chui et al., 2022). Thus high career optimism serves to psychologically anchor the employment relationship; it operates as an internal filter that reduces the desirability of external opportunities, thereby decreasing the cognitive motivation to search for or accept another job. Although a direct empirical test of the POS, TI pathway is absent in the immediate literature provided, the link can be strongly inferred through the established sequence of relationships. Research confirms that work engagement is negatively associated with TI, and furthermore, WE is reported to fully mediate the negative relationship between support (e.g., PSS) and TI (Wang et al., 2024). Given that CO is empirically demonstrated to be a potent positive antecedent of WE, and that POS acts as an antecedent to support variables that foster CO, the mediating pathway of CO becomes theoretically salient. A staff member with high POS appreciates the worth of the individual, which creates CO; this positive belief about the future career achievement subsequently motivates increased WE, and employees who are more engaged do not have negative thoughts, such as thoughts to quit (Ahmad & Nasir, 2023; Ma et al., 2023). Therefore, CO serves as a psychological buffer: the feeling of security and validation that comes from POS reinforces the belief the employee has about their long-term success (CO) and reduces the potential withdrawal of resources, which indirectly counters the intention to leave the organization (Ahmad & Nasir, 2023; Ma et al., 2023). This conceptual linkage suggests that nurturing CO through POS is an effective long-term organizational strategy for talent retention, confirming the vital, though indirect, and influence of career foresight on stabilizing the workforce (Akkaya & Akçay, 2025; Oubibi et al., 2022).

H3: Career optimism has mediating relationship among perceived organizational support and employee engagement.

H4: Career optimism has mediating relationship among perceived organizational support and turnover intention.

The design and construction workforce teams are often used in the construction industry to deliver services to clients and project stakeholders. The design and construction workforce is guided by a supervisor, the supervisor's actions, strategies, and effort have a significant influence on workers' productivity (Ahmad & Nasir, 2023; Gerçek & Elmas-Atay, 2024). Supervi-

supervisor encouragement has a significant influence on employee engagement at work. Supervisor support may enhance the reduction of physical fatigue in the construction industry. Employees also invest their resources poorly when supervisor support is low or there is a sense of absence (Akkaya & Akçay, 2025; Amin Jafari et al., 2025). However, supervisors support employee engagement and ultimately support employees to create a plan of action and develop competencies. Supervisors provide essential instrumental support, resources, and mentorship regarding careers which shapes an employee's belief that their career ambitions and goals may be realistically attainable within their immediate organizational environment. This interpersonal interaction also emphasizes feelings of psychological safety, and that one has a measure of control over shaping their career path, which is key to establishing a positive conviction of a future expectancy (Jun et al., 2023; Yucel et al., 2023). The function of motivation through CO is ultimately moderated through employee engagement as a positive assessment of one's professional future provides intrinsic motivation to invest their competencies and energy to perform at their highest capability.

Chami-Malaeb (2022) define career optimism as the expectation that someone will consistently produce positive outcomes in future career development, or the expectation of thinking or behaving in a way where the most positive aspects of events are framed with a degree of comfort in the process of career planning. Akkaya and Akçay (2025) described career optimism as the expectation of most beneficial outcomes and thinking about the positive aspects of future career development and feeling a degree of comfort in completing career planning tasks. Moreover, career optimism is considered a key indicator of future career success. In the context of career optimism research, it has been noted that the antecedents of the construct are less prevalent than the outcomes (Gerçek & Elmas-Atay, 2024). Career optimism was originally conceptualized as a trait, and even more recent work suggests that optimism is moldable and empowerable (Wang et al., 2024). Saks (2022), it is certainly important to understand the antecedents of the construct of career optimism to help inform and target interventions and supports.

Based on research findings, the effects of PSS on motivation outcomes are overwhelmingly indirect through the employee's psychological resources. Studies show that supportive leadership does positively influence psychological capital which in

turn influences engagement (Asif et al., 2023). Supportive supervisors create an environment which employees view as nurturing and stabilizing for themselves immediately at work. This increased optimism becomes a motivational driver, providing the positive emotional disposition or states, energy and cognitive attentional resources that lead to productive outcomes that are measured by increased levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption of employee engagement (Hersugondo et al., 2025; Yucel et al., 2023). This environment reduces the anxiety and uncertainty on the job, allowing the employee to concentrate on pursuing long-term goals instead of defensively withdrawing. PSS plays a directly influential role by mentoring and advocating representing the organization as a place of future career success, thus fostering high levels of CO. Only then does CO reduce turnover intention or TI Yucel et al. (2023). The mechanism is in perceived goal alignment and job embeddedness. In other words, if an employee has some confidence of achieving a desired outcome internally, there is no longer a need to leave (Hussain et al., 2025; Peter, 2025).

H5: Career optimism has mediating relationship among perceived supervisor support and employee engagement.

H6: Career optimism has mediating relationship among perceived supervisor support and turnover intention.

Conceptual Model

According to Social Exchange Theory, the demands placed on CWs and stakeholders in the construction industry results in physical and psychological distress. They are experienced exhaustion from the job and require an equally commensurate level of resources of human nature for construction professionals to generate quality end product construction for clients. The theory posit resources offered to construction professionals are, supervisor support and organizational support are found to increase work engagement which in turn is likely to increase positive work attitudes and behaviors. Thus, Social Exchange Theory argues that CWs like all other workers, feel an urge to reciprocate in the form of work engagement and turnover intention. The reviewed literature and theoretical lenses presented here, suggest a mediating role for work engagement in the relationship between supervisor support and turnover intention (Hussain et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2025). Therefore, review literature and social and career optimism theories present a relationships of supervisor support, organizational support, career optimism, work engagement and turnover intention, across, as shown in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Method

Because of a reliance on the positivist perspective, logical reasoning, and standardized questionnaire templates for data collection and analysis, this research is based upon a quantitative approach. The research employed a two-phase method approach. The first phase involved a comprehensive literature review on perceived support, career optimism, employee engagement, and turnover intention to create a preliminary survey instrument. The survey prototype was then tested with industry experts in a pilot study. The second phase involved instrument modification based upon expert feedback, resulting in the final structured questionnaire which measured all the theoretical relationships indicated, from review, contextual to this study.

Participants

This study's population included all major stakeholders in construction, planning, architectural, management, and consulting organizations in the African building sector. The participants represented professional roles as quantity surveyors, construction managers, project managers, architects, structural engineers, work supervisors, and others relevant stakeholder in the sector. The final sample size consisted of 320 participants for the main study. A pilot study was conducted prior to the main survey to test for clarity and contextual validation of the variables derived from the literature, and particularly for relevance to the African building context. Ten experts in the discipline were purposively sampled or recruited through snowball sampling. Concerning the selection criteria, they were either in a management position or had their management qualification, or were registered in a professional body in their field of work and, had been employed for a minimum of five years in a role that was relevant to carrying out the task of the current work, thus, resulting in trustworthiness in the initial refinement of the instrument.

Data Collection and Demographics

The research employed a convenience sampling strategy, a non-probability method considered appropriate due to challenges in estimating the size of the professional population across the diverse geographic landscape of the African building sector. The convenience sampling method involved selecting the most accessible and willing individuals meeting the selection criteria to participate in the study. The final questionnaire was self-administered in face-to-face engagement sessions to facilitate clarification and enhance response rate. Although it is impossible to say exactly how many were sampled without the original raw data, the final sample used for all statistical analysis was 320.

The final sample of 320 participants provided a substantial dataset for analysis. The demographic profile indicated consistency in expertise and experience among respondents, which supports their professional and personal knowledge of the data provided for this research. The analysis indicated that respondents possessed a high degree of formal education, where 54.2% holding master's degrees. A significant portion of the workforce is routinely highly experienced, as indicated by 33.3% of respondents who worked between eight (8) and thirteen (13) years. Since more than 50% of the population had over 7 years of relevant job experience and a high level of education, the credibility and trustworthiness of the information is valid to pursue for research ambiguity.

Instruments

The final questionnaire consisted of four sections and used existing multi-dimensional scales to their appropriateness in a construction context, and all were measured using primarily five-point Likert scales. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) was measured using eight items, such as "My manager cares for my contribution to school,". Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) was used five items, such as, "My supervisor really cares about my well-being," using the five-point Likert scale. Career Optimism (CO) was measured using (Wall, 2024) six-item scale including "Preparing for the future" and "Work-

ing up to my ability.” Employee Engagement (EE) was measured (Kissi et al., 2024) using a nine-item scale for example, “At my job, I feel strong and vigorous” and “I’m passionate about what I do.” This measure was used in the previous, multi-dimensional conceptualization, and responses again used the five-point Likert scale for the responses. Lastly, Turnover Intention (TI) was measured using (Kissi et al., 2024) five-item scale (e.g., “I’m soon going to leave this company” and “In the next six months, I am going to leave this company”), with items measured on the same five-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Measurement Model

The primary purpose of measurement model analysis is to establish the association between structure and project, focusing specifically on identifying the relationship between structures in the model. Based on outer loading, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), the modelling output indicated sufficient convergent validity (Hair et al., 2024). It is acknowledged that if the AVE of each variable exceeds 0.50, the model is deemed acceptable. The modelling output indicated none of the variables’ AVE values fell below 0.50, thus indicating the model was acceptable. If the value of composite reliability or of Cronbach’s alpha exceeds 0.70, the variable is considered reliable.

TABLE 1. Assessment of measurement model

Variables		Items	O.L	α	CR	AVE
Perceived Organizational Support		POS1	0.762	0.888	0.911	0.563
		POS2	0.821			
		POS3	0.794			
		POS4	0.734			
		POS5	0.734			
		POS6	0.781			
		POS7	0.723			
		POS8	0.728			
Perceived Supervisor Support		PSS1	0.753	0.865	0.903	0.65
		PSS2	0.817			
		PSS3	0.867			
		PSS4	0.768			
		PSS5	0.82			
Career Optimism		CO1	0.724	0.863	0.898	0.596
		CO2	0.78			
		CO3	0.804			
		CO4	0.826			
		CO5	0.778			
		CO6	0.713			
Employee Engagement		EE1	0.808	0.926	0.938	0.629
		EE2	0.785			
		EE3	0.729			
		EE4	0.787			
		EE5	0.783			
		EE6	0.812			
		EE7	0.836			
		EE8	0.723			
		EE9	0.862			

Cont.....					
Variables	Items	O.L	α	CR	AVE
Turnover Intention	TI1	0.789	0.892	0.921	0.699
	TI2	0.874			
	TI3	0.89			
	TI4	0.801			
	TI5	0.822			

Discriminant validity assessed whether all structures in the proposed model were empirically differ from one another, using the standard methods, Fornell–Larker criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), as measurements (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which requires the average

variance of the structure is represented as being greater than the square of the maximum correlation with any structure (see Table 2). In addition, the most recent proposed threshold coefficient of HTMT of not exceeding 0.85 suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was also incorporated (see Table 3).

TABLE 2. Discriminant validity

	1	2	3	4	5
Career Optimism	0.772				
Employee Engagement	0.626	0.793			
Perceived Organizational Support	0.730	0.717	0.750		
Perceived Supervisor Support	0.646	0.656	0.747	0.806	
Turnover Intention	0.667	0.704	0.625	0.662	0.836

TABLE 3. HTMT

	1	2	3	4	5
Career Optimism					
Employee Engagement	0.687				
Perceived Organizational Support	0.824	0.784			
Perceived Supervisor Support	0.734	0.725	0.843		
Turnover Intention	0.752	0.757	0.722	0.745	

Structural Model

The proposed linkages between the variables under examination were evaluated through the analysis of the path coefficients (beta) and determination coefficients (R^2) (Hair et al., 2024). The coefficient of determination (R^2) of career opti-

mism was above 0.33 and falls within a moderate category (Table 5). The SRMR was 0.081 (Table 5), thus satisfying the rated requisite of being less than 0.085 and therefore considered a good fitting (Hair et al., 2024).

TABLE 4. R -Square and SRMR

	R Square	SRMR
Career Optimism	0.555	0.081
Employee Engagement	0.392	
Turnover Intention	0.445	

All path analysis results are displayed in Figure 2. Figure 2 indicates the direction and size of the direct relationship via the positive and negative symbols of the path coefficient and

the absolute value of the standardization coefficient. This indicated that all direct suspension paths were statistically significant (Hair et al., 2024). The t -test was utilized to support the

hypothesis as to whether there is an influence of each independent or exogenous variable separately on the dependent or endogenous variable. Table 5 presents the results of assess-

ing the hypotheses in terms of path coefficients (β), t -statistics, and p -values.

TABLE 5. Hypothesis testing

	Beta Values	T Values	p Values
Perceived Organizational Support -> Career Optimism	0.560	8.838	0.000
PSS -> Career Optimism	0.228	3.592	0.000
Perceived Organizational Support -> Career Optimism -> Employee Engagement	-0.350	6.947	0.000
Perceived Organizational Support -> Career Optimism -> Turnover Intention	0.373	7.218	0.000
Perceived Supervisor Support -> Career Optimism -> Employee Engagement	-0.143	3.428	0.001
Perceived Supervisor Support -> Career Optimism -> Turnover Intention	0.152	3.610	0.000

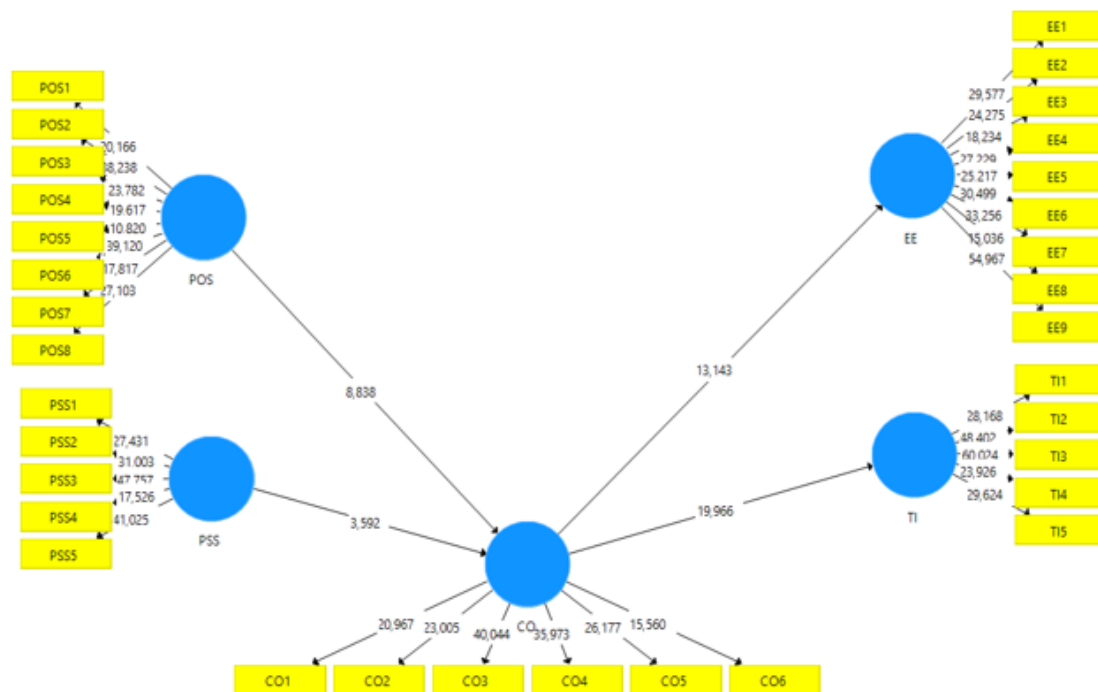


FIGURE 2. Structural model

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to assess the effect of perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, and career optimism on turnover intention and work engagement of all major stakeholders in construction, planning, architectural, management and consulting organizations operating in the Africa building industry. This suggests that if employees are aware of support by their supervisors in their work they will be less inclined to develop turnover intentions. This aligns with Poku et al. (2025) who stated perceived support reduced construction employees' turnover intentions, and their likelihood of leaving.

The support for Hypothesis 1, which states that perceived organizational support has a direct effect on career optimism, was confirmed. This finding means that employees' general sense that their organization cares for their contributions and well-being provides the necessary mental security and resource base to create a positive and future-oriented perspective towards careers (Hussain et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2023). If the organization shows a sign of investment and caring, employees feel empowered and secure enough to believe they can be professionally successful for the long-term from that context, thus supporting POS as a precursor to psychological capital development. Similarly, the support for Hypothesis 2, which states that

perceived supervisor support has a direct effect on career optimism demonstrates the proximal and immediate impact of the direct manager on the employee's perspective of the future. Managers serve the role of the primary implementer of organizational policies, providing mentorship, constructive performance feedback, and career advocacy. This finding is also in keeping with the literature that shows that supportive leadership assists in reducing ambiguity and building self-efficacy, both of which are significant drivers of career optimism (Jun et al., 2023). Thus, the direct manager's role provides concrete evidence that provides more than just a belief that advancement in the career is possible the manager is assisting and facilitating it, improving self-confidence that they have a future in their career.

The mediating role of career optimism, which mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee engagement, provides evidence of the psychological pathway through which organizational resources are transformed into actual motivation. This study suggests that the general support of the organization would first need to be internalized by way of a positive future expectancy, before such a relationship is fully developed into a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Thus, while POS would likely not lead to engagement directly, it may create a sense of hope and belief in the future, which then creates the sustainable intrinsic energy needed for the employee to engage the whole self in their role (Amin Jafari et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2023). Perceived organizational support and turnover intention in hypothesis 4, career optimism mediates the process, provides a meaningful way to understand talent retention. In accordance with Social Exchange Theory, POS offers resources that mitigate strain, this study offers insight that the resource of career optimism is an essential component to retaining employees. Employees with high career optimism who feel they can accomplish their career goals through experiencing perceived organizational concern at that time become psychologically embedded. This future focus commitment serves as a very powerful internal filter and reduces the perceived attractiveness of other job opportunities and intuitively focuses a person on reducing (turnover intention), which is consistent with what we referenced above in the embedded job literature (Gercek & Elmas-Atay, 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

The results reveal that perceived support from supervisors and engagement is statistically significant, and it is moderated by career optimism. Normally being supported by one's supervisor keeps engagement high. Being supported by a supervisor when one is career optimistic will allow an employee to rely on their supervisor's support when faced with a total unpre-

dictability about their positions in their working environments. Optimism gives an employee that extra motivation when they know they can rely on the support of their supervisor. In other words, supervisors are not just creating positive work conditions, they are creating an environment of motivation by assuring their employee's belief in their long-term developmental professional path. Ultimately, career optimism serves as a mediator in the relationship between perceived supervisor support and turnover intention, emphasizing the vital function the supervisor plays in stabilizing the workforce through the support of thinking about the future (Chui et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2025). PSS is most effective at reducing turnover intention when it also contributes to the development of CO. When a manager provides guidance and advocacy, the employee sees a viable and positive career trajectory that is best served by remaining in the role. This positive expectancy serves as a psychological lock keeping the employee within the organization and reduces the likelihood of looking for another job, which enhances the understanding of the negative relationship between supportive management and voluntary turnover intention beyond just a direct effect (Gercek & Elmas-Atay, 2024).

Conclusion and Implications

The success of the African building sector involving construction, planning, architectural, management, and consulting companies depends in large part on project performance and workplace stability. All six hypotheses were supported, confirming that career optimism acts as the necessary psychological pathway connecting relational support to positive employee outcomes. Results showed that organizational and supervisory support were critical antecedent factors promoting an employee's belief in a fruitful career future. Positivity in future long-term predictability was shown to be the mechanism for simultaneously increasing employee engagement and reducing turnover intentions. As a result of this data, construction firms must address their support and assured the proportion of support is translate into a personal resource on career optimism to stabilize the workforce and result in the utmost productivity.

Support from the organization and supervisors should not be viewed merely as reciprocal exchanges; rather, it represents a critical external input to promote the personal resource, career optimism. This particular psychological capital as career optimism is the fuel for high dedication levels required for engagement, and provides the necessary psychological embeddedness to mitigate the probability of voluntary withdrawal; thus providing an exacting and a more detailed account of the support-outcome link. Organizations should use targeted inter-

ventions towards career development, mentorship, and career promotion pathways to enhance employee optimism. Supervisors' training should be reinforced to ensure they are not just providing task related support, but engaged in career advocacy (by enhancing PSS and CO). If an organization develops a genuine belief in future success (and promotion) in the organization, they can proactively mitigate the hidden desire to leave and encourage some resilience to protect project and organizational performance. Future research should adopt longitudinal design to confirm and establish causality and stability of the relationships over the life span of large construction projects. Additionally, cross-national comparison research across regions of the African continent could further clarify both the contextual factors affecting the adaptation of the support and the construction of career optimism.

The use of a cross-sectional study designs collecting data from a sample of 320 stakeholders does not allow for definitive

causal conclusions and limits the consideration of how employee attitudes and perceptions of support change over time. While this limitation could be addressed by using statistical covariates, subsequent studies ought to adopt a longitudinal design in order to capture the inherently dynamic nature of career optimism in engagement and turnover intention across different project phases. Furthermore, this research studied the African building industry as a singular context. Subsequent research could study the diversity of organizations in the sector and consider differences in classifying/comparing stakeholders based on organizational structure (i.e., public sector contractors vs. privately owned multinational consulting firms). This classification would permit examination of whether factors such as management systems, profit orientation, or external institutional reform impacts professionalized pressure experienced by employees, and in turn, whether this impacts perceived support and career optimism.

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