Organisational Entrapment and Turnover Intention: The Mediating Effects of Limited Job Opportunities and Skill Gaps

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Abstract

When employees desire to quit, they are typically expected to resign; however, many still stay with the intention to leave, which reasons are not well explored in research. Past research has mainly examined the antecedent factors that lead to employees' intentions to leave, while there is less interest in the intervening factors that influence employees' decision to remain. In this regard, this study investigated the mediation effect of limited job and skill gap between organisational entrapment and intention to leave, guided by Rational Choice Theory. The research used a quantitative research design; a sample of 216 (determined via the Leslie Kish technique) were chosen from 500 employees of selected commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria. Exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis were carried out to assess the reliability and validity of the research instrument. The hypotheses were tested using PROCESS Macro (Model 4), with 5000 resamples by bootstrapping. The results indicated that limited jobs and skill gaps were significant factors that mediated the relationship between organisational entrapment and intention to leave. The study concluded that employees might not leave because of perceived constraints in the labour market and lack of competencies, which may however limit organisational commitment and performance in their current organisation. Therefore, the study recommends that continuous upskilling and reskilling, mentoring, and labour market awareness workshops should be organised periodically to increase workers confidence and employability, while minimising entrapment and reduced performance.

Keywords: Intention to Leave, Limited Job Opportunities, Organisational Entrapment, Rational Choice Theory, Skill Gaps.

Introduction

The intention to leave has long been considered the most powerful predictor of voluntary employee turnover and a major signal for removal in any organisation when downsizing. Hence, employees continued presence indicates that they are satisfied with their work, they are committed to the organisation, and that human resource management (HRM) is effective (Aslan & Soesanto, 2026). The intention to leave is a workplace conundrum that ignores a new trend in which workers stay even though they want to leave. In such instances, continued organisational membership does not indicate commitment, but rather can be a consequence of other factors, such as limited job options, and the lack of skills needed in another job. Given that this hidden workforce phenomenon exists it does create some important concerns, as employees may be physically in the workplace, but psychologically out of the 'game', leading to a lower level of engagement, innovation, and contribution to organisational performance.

This phenomenon has gained increasing significance in this era of accelerating technological and economic change. Accordingly, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2024) highlighted that the demand for new skills, reskilling and workforce adaptability is a key aspect of employability in the wake of digitalisation and the emergence of artificial intelligence, automation and data-driven operations. Employees bereft of requisite skills continuous lead them to situations where not pleased with their own employer(s)/organisation, may refuse to seek new employment, because they feel their skills are no longer relevant or sufficient in the labour market.

More so, in the banking sector in Nigeria, commercial banks have seen growing competition from existing rivals, new and fast rising financial technology companies and changing customer expectations. These occurrences have been stepping up investments in digital banking infrastructure, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence. Data shows that about ₦518.5 billion was spent on information technology by eight major banks alone, in Nigeria in 2024, a 109% rise from the ₦248 billion spent in 2023 (Nairametrics, 2024). The unprecedented investment shows how quickly the banking business is evolving, and how much greater the need is for digital and analytical skills in the workforce. Although digital transformation enhances overall operational efficiency and customer service delivery, it has also added to the workload of employees in terms of the need to keep their knowledge and skills current.

Staff in banks are generally expected to master new technologies, meet challenging performance goals in a rapidly changing organisational context. Employees with skills not aligned with these changing needs may feel less competitive on the job market. Moreover, the difficult economic environment in Nigeria, with its high cost of living and job insecurity, further deters voluntary exit from organisations since if one resigns without a job, they may be at a high risk of financial constraints. As a result, a number of workers might have a high intent to leave, but remain in their organisations because they feel that there are not many job opportunities available and that their current knowledge and skills are not adequate to get potential jobs.

The situation poses a huge problem that is sometimes overlooked in the Nigerian banking industry. A lack of employees' turnover can lead to the impression that the employees are satisfied, when in reality, some are staying in the organisation because they do not see any viable jobs available outside of the company (George, 2026). These workers can still perform their formal duties while displaying less engagement, commitment to the organisation and discretionary effort. These subtle behavioural outcomes could become negative over time, impacting on motivation, service quality, customer satisfaction and overall performance (Malalage & Perera, 2025). While the topic of employee turnover is discussed widely in literature, studies have mainly focused on factors that influence actual employee turnover (such as Dhoopar et al. (2026); Emidy et al. (2026); Gupta & Bhatia (2026); Haque et al. (2026); Kuuyelleh et al. (2026)), and very limited research has been conducted to explore the factors that influence those who stay despite having the intention to leave. Therefore, this study explored the mediating effect of limited job opportunity and skill gaps in the relationship between the intention to leave and organisational entrapment amongst employees of selected commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

Intention to Leave

Within the context of this study, intention to leave is defined as an employee consciously and deliberately deciding to exit a current organisation. It is well acknowledged as the most direct cognitive antecedent of voluntary turnover since it is the measure of an employee's judgment that he or she continues to desire organisational membership (St-Onge et al., 2026). The authors asserted that the more or less the idea to leave inevitably leads to an exit from the organisation, however, employees can gain less certainty in uncertain labour markets. Employees may have a desire to leave but feel constrained by other factors, supported by empirical evidence from the Nigerian banking sector. The determinants of voluntary turnover intention for bank employees were investigated by Nwibere (2024) who used a cross-sectional survey of 229 bank employees out of a sample of 270. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. The study results revealed that leadership approach, working conditions, compensation and job promotion were significant factors that affected employees' desire to quit, indicating the importance of organisational practices in determining employees' desire to leave. The study focused on the causes of turnover intent, not taking into account the reasons why some workers stay in jobs they would like to quit, or look at the barriers of a lack of opportunities or lack of skills.

Organisational Entrapment

Organisational entrapment, in the context of this study, is a constraint-driven organisational stay; it is a situation in which an employee wants to change his or her job, but remain voluntarily in the organisation. Notably, the construct contrasts with organisational commitment and job embeddedness, which can both predict remaining in an organisation through psychological attachment to the organisation, reciprocity or social ties. Organisational entrapment, on the other hand, focuses on the inability of employees to leave a company, whereby they still desire to leave. Armsworth-Maw (2026) discussed about how leaders can find themselves in an undesirable situation within a complex corporate system because they see getting out of it as a very tough situation. Likewise, Feenstra-Verschure et al. (2024) addressed subjective career lock, empirically validating that employees who are not satisfied with their jobs often stay put in careers they dislike due to their lack of an internal sense of being stuck and the inability to move into different career opportunities. These studies give important insights into persistence in constraint, but neither conceptually includes entrapment as a type of employee behaviour nor investigates the link between lower intention to leave and actual employee attrition from an organisation. This means that empirical evidence of the relationship between intention to leave, labour-market constraints and organisational entrapment is still limited, especially in the Nigerian banking sector. This study aims to fill this void by investigating the concept of organisational entrapment as a specific organisational behaviour phenomenon that is caused by skill gaps and limited jobs.

Limited Job Opportunities

Limited job opportunities include workers' belief that there is a shortage of appropriate alternative jobs suitable for their qualifications, experience and career aspirations (Ly, 2026). The concept is not just about the actual number of available vacancies, but employees' perception of how likely they are to get a similar position. This means that when employees feel the labour market is less than desirable, they might not be willing to leave even if they are discontent or have a solid plan to leave. In this context, the lack of job opportunities acts as a labour-market constraint leading to reductions in the extent to which the intention to leave becomes realised. Therefore, a scarcity of employment can lead to organisational entrapment, limiting employees’ behavioural options. This notion is supported by Gassmann et al. (2025), who found that unemployment has no significant effect on initial intentions to leave, however, increases its likelihood by

40%. The study, using SOEP data, demonstrates that a high GDP is a retention motivator, while a high unemployment is a “push” factor inducing the desire to leave. The authors found that subjective concerns do not primarily influence layoff mobility, but rather economic conditions, affirming that the characteristics of the labour market play a significant role in employees' decisions to leave, in addition to their workplace experiences. The research was, however, concerned with involuntary job-loss and employee plans due to labour-market constraints affecting organisational behaviour. Thus, the evidence of how limited job opportunities mediate the influence of organisational entrapment on employee intention to leave is still limited.

Skill Gaps

Skill gaps are the differences between the skills that employees possess and those needed for job now or in the future (Owoeye & Akinbo, 2025). This concept is gaining more significance in the era of digital transformation, automation, and AI, which are changing the nature of work in various sectors. Skill gaps can be linked to a reduction in organisational productivity, but also have an impact on employee's perceptions of employability. Skill gaps, therefore, can be regarded as a salient pathway to intention to leave leading to organisational entrapment instead. Chivige and Magidi (2026) suggested that when employees feel their skills are not matching the demands of the labour market, they may feel as if they have limited chances of finding work elsewhere and may not be motivated to exit their organisation. Van Harten et al., (2022) conducted a systematic review examining the association between employability and job mobility. The study found that the absence/shortage of competencies, knowledge and skills had a significant impact on employees’ sense of employability and desire to seek employment elsewhere. However, the study looked at perceived employability and job mobility and not employees who are working in an organisation with a desire to leave. Therefore, it offers less insight particularly of the mediating role of perceived skill gaps on the relationship between organisational entrapment and intention to leave.

Research Gap and Hypotheses

Previous studies that have examined the factors that influence employees' intention to leave have looked at perceived organisational support, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, meaningful work, human resource development practices, work-life balance, career development opportunities, competence development, employability and employee development practices (Sreedisha & Celina, 2026; Kellerer & Süß, 2026; Kuuyelleh et al., 2026; Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2026; Haque et al., 2026; Hom & Kiazad, 2025; Gupta & Bhatia; 2026; Emidy et al., 2026; Dhoopar et al., 2026; Al Riyami et al., 2026). Hence, little attention has been made regarding factors that hinder employees’ ability to leave when they want to. The current study explored limited job opportunities and skill gaps as a mechanism through which intent to leave is related to organisational entrapment.

H1: Limited job opportunities significantly mediate the relationship between intention to leave and organisational entrapment among employees in selected commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria.

H2: Skill gaps significantly mediate the relationship between intention to leave and organisational entrapment among employees in selected commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Foundation

The study is based on Rational Choice Theory (RCT) as developed by Homans (1961) and developed further by Coleman (1990). According to Rational Choice Theory, people act by weighing up the options and choosing the one they believe will be most advantageous and generate the least potential loss. Within the context of this study, the theory views employees as rational actors performing cost-benefit calculation, hence, even if an employee is deeply unhappy with his/her work situation, they still stay if the calculated costs of

leaving outweigh the benefits of quitting. The theory is particularly relevant to this research as it explains why constrained opportunities shape decision-making, which links directly to the need to understand the mediators of limited job opportunities and skill gaps in the connections between intention to leave and organisational entrapment. Whereas behavioural perspectives believe that intentions should lead to actions without any questioning, RCT holds that decisions are influenced by environmental constraints that determine what is and is not possible. As a result, people might not be able to pursue their desires if the price tag is too high compared with the benefits. Thus, employees may have a strong desire to leave due to discontent with their job, lack of career opportunities or negative work experiences, but their decision to quit is dependent on factors, such as the presence of viable job options (Duffour et al., 2026). Organisational exit is riskier when job opportunities in the external labour market are scarce and/or the employee believes that his or her own abilities are not sufficient to compete for a position in that labour market. In these situations, staying with the organisation is a rational adjustment to the labour market constraints, and not a sign of organisational commitment, job satisfaction, or successful employee retention.

Methodology

Descriptive-quantitative research approach was adopted for the study as it allowed the study constructs to be objectively measured and the proposed hypotheses tested empirically and described as they occur. The target population consisted of 500 employees of selected commercial banks In Lagos, Nigeria, and a sample size of 218 was determined using the Leslie Kish (1965) technique. However, participation in the survey was conducted with a simple random sampling technique, which gave every employee equal probability of responding to the survey. A structured questionnaire specially designed for the study was used to gather primary data. Data were screened, and analysed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using IBM SPSS, and AMOS Statistics. The mediation models were estimated using PROCESS Macro, exploring the hypothesised indirect relationships. Mediation analysis was done with a bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples. The indirect effects and 95% bootstrap confidence intervals were used for testing the hypotheses. A mediation hypothesis was accepted if the bootstrap confidence interval did not contain zero (significant indirect effect) and was rejected if it did contain zero (no significant indirect effect).

Validity of the Research Instrument

Construct validity was checked to guarantee that all the items of the measurement were able to cover the study constructs. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (0.60 or higher) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.05$) were first checked to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Communalities (variance of ≥ 0.50) in the items were also used as a guide to determine whether the items meaningfully contributed to the measure of each of the constructs. In addition, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was further used to validate the measurement model by examining the relationship between the observed items and their underlying constructs, with acceptable values of (≥ 0.50).

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.619
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	194.533

df

6

Sig.

.000

Source: Researchers Illustration (2026)

Table 1 shows the results of the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The minimum value for factor analysis was set at 0.60, and the obtained value of KMO was found to be 0.619, which is greater than the recommended value. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant (p = 0.000) indicating that there was sufficient inter-item correlation to proceed with factor analysis. This indicates that the measurement items developed for this study were appropriate for assessing the underlying constructs.

Table 2. Communalities

Initial

Extraction

Intention to Leave

I frequently think about leaving this organisation

1.000

.803

I regularly apply for job opportunities outside this organisation

1.000

.612

I would accept an offer from another organisation if I met its employment requirements

1.000

.888

I believe I would leave this organisation if a suitable opportunity became available

1.000

.782

Limited Job Opportunities

There are very few employment opportunities available

1.000

.613

I rarely find job vacancies that match my qualifications and experience

1.000

.735

I believe securing another suitable job would take a long time

1.000

.862

The current labour market makes it difficult for me to obtain another job

1.000

.893

Skill Gaps

My current skills are insufficient to compete effectively in today's job market

1.000

.740

I need additional training to improve my employment prospects

1.000

.676

My current skills do not adequately reflect the changing demands of employers

1.000

.795

My skill set reduces my confidence in pursuing employment opportunities outside this organisation

1.000

.697

Organisational Entrapment

I feel trapped in my current employment situation

1.000

.662

I remain in this organisation out of necessity rather than personal choice

1.000

.595

I feel restricted in my ability to leave this organisation

1.000

.820

I feel unable to act on my desire to leave this organisation

1.000

.630

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Researchers Illustration (2026)

Table 2 shows that all items had extraction values greater than the recommended 0.50, which demonstrated the useful contribution of each of the items to their respective constructs. Intention to Leave ranged from 0.612 to 0.888, and Limited Job Opportunities ranged from 0.613 to 0.893. Skill Gaps items' scores ranged from 0.676 to 0.795, and Organisational Entrapment items' (0.595 to 0.820). The findings suggest that the items were well represented with the factors extracted and were suitable for assessing the constructs in the study.

Measurement Model

Figure 1: Measurement Model of the Study Constructs

Source: Researchers Illustration (2026)

Figure 1 shows that the standardised factor loadings ranged from 0.537 to 0.925, indicating that the observed indicators were suitable for the latent constructs they measured. The latent constructs showed a positive correlation between them, ranging from 0.214 to 0.531. Organisational Entrapment had positive correlation with Intention to Leave (r = 0.531), Limited Job Opportunities (r = 0.366) and Skill Gaps (r = 0.214). Limited Job Opportunities also positively correlated with Intention to Leave (r = 0.343) and Skill Gaps (r = 0.501); skill gaps had a positive correlation with Limited Job Opportunities (r = 0.411). In general, the measurement model had a satisfactory results of indicator loading and positive relationships between the study constructs, which is suitable for the subsequent mediation analysis.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

To test the reliability of the instrument it was necessary to see if the items measuring each construct were consistent with each other. The assessment included overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of each construct, corrected item–total correlation, and Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted of each item. To investigate the relationship that each item had with the construct score, the corrected item–total correlation was used, with values ≥ 0.3 regarded as acceptable indicator of adequate contribution of their respective constructs. The

overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted were used to assess the internal consistency of each construct and item, with an acceptable value of ≥ 0.70.

Table 3. Reliability Outcomes

Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Intention to Leave (.794)		
ITL1	.626	.740
ITL2	.520	.785
ITL3	.565	.763
ITL4	.672	.733
Limited Job Opportunities (.764)		
LJO1	.405	.633
LJO2	.446	.610
LJO3		
LJO4		

.789

.781

.707

.755

Skill Gaps (.843)

SG1

SG2

SG3

SG4

.462

.403

.434

.546

.702

.868

.826

.722

Organisational Entrapment (.791)

OE1

OE2

OE3

OE4

.548

.494

.681

.645

.885

.666

.759

.798

Source: Researchers Illustration (2026)

Table 3 shows that the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Intention to Leave construct was 0.794, Limited Job Opportunities (0.764), Skill Gaps (0.843), and Organisational Entrapment (0.791), all above the threshold of 0.70. All corrected item-total correlation were above the minimum threshold of 0.3 (ranging from

0.403 to 0.672), while the Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted of all constructs surpassed the predetermined criteria of 0.70 (ranged from 0.707 to 0.885). This suggests that no items were worth deletion at this point as they showed a good level of internal consistency of the newly created measurement items.

Results and Discussions

Resultant Mediation Model

Figure 2. Structural Relationship

Source: Researchers Illustration (2026)

Outcomes in Figure 2 shows that organisational entrapment was associated with increases in both limited job opportunities and skill gaps, implying that employees who feel unable to leave attribute constraints to labour market and their skill gaps. Organisational entrapment also was positively correlated with intention to leave, suggesting that organisational entrapment was still related to employees' desire to leave. Notably, the relationship between organisational entrapment and limited job opportunities ($\beta = 0.366$) was higher than that of organisational entrapment and skill gaps ($\beta = 0.214$). The relationship between skill gaps and intention to leave ($\beta = 0.406$) was higher than that of limited job opportunities and intention to leave ($\beta = 0.171$).

Hypothesis Testing

H1: Limited job opportunities significantly mediate the relationship between intention to leave and organisational entrapment among employees in selected commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria.

H2: Skill gaps significantly mediate the relationship between intention to leave and organisational entrapment among employees in selected commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Table 4. Mediation Hypothesis Outcomes

Indirect Relationship	Indirect Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Decision
H1					
OE → LJO → ITL	0.073	0.030	0.022	0.139	Supported
H2					
OE → SG → ITL	0.101	0.030	0.039	0.157	Supported

Source: Researchers Illustration (2026)

Table 4 indicates that the indirect effect of Organisational Entrapment on Intention to Leave via Limited Job Opportunities was significant (indirect effect = 0.073). The bootstrap 95% confidence interval of the mediation effect of Limited Job Opportunities was (0.022, 0.139) and did not contain zero, suggesting that there is a significant mediation effect of Limited Job Opportunities between Organisational Entrapment and Intention to Leave. Thus, the hypothesis of the role of Limited Job Opportunities in the relationship between Organisational Entrapment and Intention to Leave was accepted.

The partial mediation of Skill Gaps between Organisational Entrapment and Intention to Leave was positive and significant (indirect effect = 0.101). The 95% Bootstrap Confidence Interval for the mediation effect of Skill Gaps on Organisational Entrapment and Intention to Leave was (0.039, 0.157), with no overlap with zero indicating that the mediation effect was significant. Based on this, the hypothesis of Skill Gaps as the mediators between Organisational Entrapment and Intention to Leave was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The results showed that limited job opportunities mediated the relationship between organisational entrapment and intention to leave among the employees of the selected commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria. It suggests that those workers who feel there is less opportunity for them to leave their existing employers are more likely to stay with them despite wanting to quit. The discovery adds weight to the view that workers' choices of where to work are influenced not just by the conditions of their workplace, but also by the conditions of the labour market. This finding supports those of Gassmann et al. (2025), who showed that conditions in the labour market have a significant effect on employees' mobility choices. The current study builds on the literature by showing that perceived limited job opportunities are part of the reasons why employees stay in the organisation despite their intent to quit. The study also reveals that skill gaps significantly mediated the relationship between organisational entrapment and intention to leave. This suggests that employee with the intention to leave remain in the organisation owing to the lack of required sills for another job. The results are in line with Van Harten et al. (2022), who found that employees' perceived employability is very much shaped by their competencies and has a strong impact on external job mobility. The present study verifies and extends knowledge of employability beyond organisational entrapment, emphasising the mediating nature of skill gaps in the relationship between organisational entrapment and intention to leave.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study found that organisational entrapment affects the intention to leave via limited job opportunities. Employees can get an authentic desire to leave their organisations; however, they are more prone to stay when they feel there is not a lot of suitable career opportunities accessible. This finding is consistent with the rational choice theory approach which states that people act in accordance with the options they have, and the cost and benefit that will result from each option. If employees think that they face higher uncertainty by leaving their organisation as compared to staying, then it becomes more rational to stay remain. It was further found that skill gaps serve as a mechanism by which organisational entrapment affects the intention to leave. Staff who feel their skills are not sufficient to pursue employment opportunities outside the organisation are more likely to stay after deciding to leave. This also is consistent with Rational Choice Theory because employees may be more inclined to stay within the organisation if they believe that lack of skills will deprive them of the opportunity of finding a similar job elsewhere.

Recommendations

Based on the study’s findings, it is recommended that organisations improve employees' career mobility programme by providing structured career counselling programme, labour market awareness programme and clear career planning programme, to minimise perceptions of restricted employment opportunities. Organisations will therefore benefit from continuous professional development, train staff on current skills; digital skills, reskilling and upskilling programmes to boost staff employability, strengthen their confidence in the labour market and reduce entrapment levels. In the absence of these recommendations; commitment, focus, and overall performance suffer.

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