

Young adults in flux: The role of dimensions of emerging adulthood and psychological capital in the intention to remain in an organization

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Psychologie a její kontexty 13(1), 2022, 81–101
<https://doi.org/10.15452/PsyX.2022.13.0012>



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Abstract Objective. Research dedicated to turnover intentions has proliferated in the last decades, identifying various predictors of intention to voluntarily quit the organization. However, although previous studies indicated that younger employees are more prone to turnover intentions, emerging adulthood, as a specific developmental period, has been neglected in previous research dedication to turnover intentions. Emerging adulthood corresponds to ages 18–29 years, during which individuals consider themselves as no longer adolescents, but not yet as full-fledged adults. Besides the achievement of developmental milestones, various psychologically based qualities – known as *dimensions of emerging adulthood* – are differentiated in a research literature, and can play a role in turnover intentions. Relatedly, although *Psychological capital* (PsyCap) – as a second-order construct integrating hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism – has been established as a correlate of intention to remain in the organization in previous studies, the role of positive psychological resources in intention to stay in an organization during emerging adulthood, as a specific developmental period, has been neglected. Moreover, recent literature also indicates that the relationship between psychological capital and turnover intention could be indirect – i.e., mediated by other variables such as *work engagement* – and that a similar pattern of results could be expected also in the case of dimensions of emerging adulthood. Thus, the aim of the present paper is to examine the role of (A) dimensions of emerging adulthood (as potentially important developmental factors) and (B) psychological capital (as a positive psychological state that could be purposefully cultivated) in

the intention to remain in the organization both directly, and indirectly (i.e., potentially mediated via work engagement).

Method. The sample consisted of 192 people in the age range of 19-29 years. A cross-sectional design has been employed. *Psychological capital* (CPC - 12R), *Dimensions of emerging adulthood* (IDEA-8), *Work engagement* (UWES - 17), *Intention to remain in the current organization* (scale), and *Big-Five* personality traits (BFI-II-Short) have been used.

Results. Results indicated that the intention to remain in the organization was positively related to engagement and to psychological capital, but it was not related to dimensions of emerging adulthood. In fact, a model with psychological capital - as the only predictor - was preferred according to the Bayesian multi-model linear regression. Moreover, mediation analysis indicated that conditional on the model assumption - X (psychological capital) → M (work engagement) → Y (intention to remain in the organization), work engagement can account for a significant portion of the variance between X and Y. A similar pattern of results occurred concerning one dimension of emerging adulthood, namely the feeling in-between - X (feeling in between) → M (work engagement) → Y (intention to remain in the organization). However, other dimensions of emerging adulthood were not relevant in the present context. The further exploratory analysis also indicated that dedication - as specific aspect of engagement - could be of some importance in the present context.

Conclusions. It can be concluded that psychological capital predicted intention to remain in the current organization both directly and indirectly - via work engagement - and this could have practical implications as it seems that psychological capital is possible to cultivate. Moreover, although the role of feeling in-between was rather indirect, smaller, and less certain, it can help us to better understand the nuances of the turnover intentions in a turbulent period of emerging adulthood.

Limitations. The main limitation of the present study is the cross-sectional research design and the convenience sampling. Therefore, replication and further extensions are recommended for future research.

Keywords Psychological capital, dimensions of emerging adulthood, engagement, intention to remain in the organization, turnover intentions.

Introduction

The individual's intention to voluntarily quit the organisation is widely considered a matter of concern for employers. For example, according to the retention report provided by Work Institute (2020), more than 27 out of every 100 employees voluntarily left their job in 2019. Thus, it is not surprising that the topic of turnover intention, or alternatively, intention to remain in an organization, has received considerable research attention in the last decades with various social, economic, and psychological processes being identified as important factors (see, e.g., Jha, 2009 for a review). However, although some evidence indicates that younger people are more prone to turnover (e.g., He et al., 2020), EMBASE, Cochrane Library, PsycINFO the examination of turnover intentions in the context of emerging adulthood – as a specific developmental period – is neglected in the research literature. Furthermore, only a small amount of research attention is dedicated to related positive psychological resources in this developmental period, such as psychological capital (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Thus, inspired by two separate research traditions – developmental psychology and positive psychology/positive organisation scholarship, our aim is to investigate the role of dimensions of emerging adulthood and psychological capital in the intention to stay in the organisation. In particular, we were interested in the role of dimensions of emerging adulthood and psychological capital in intention to stay in an organization directly, but also indirectly – via work engagement. We believe that this endeavour can extend our understanding of the work-related aspects of young people and also guide future research and preparation of interventions that can facilitate the intention to stay in organisations in the turbulent life-span period of emerging adulthood. The article begins by providing a description of emerging adulthood. Then, it proceeds to discuss psychological capital and the potential role of work engagement in the intention to stay in an organization.

Emerging adulthood

When does one becomes an adult and what does it mean to become an adult? These questions are difficult to answer definitively, especially in some post-industrial modern societies (Arnett et al., 2014). For example, over the last 50 years, the transition to adulthood occurs at an older age and has become more prolonged in the high-income societies. To reflect these changes, a new developmental stage between adolescence and adulthood has been suggested at age 18 to 29 years¹ (see, e.g., Arnett, 2000, 2014 for further discussion).

During this stage of life, individuals consider themselves no longer adolescents, but not yet as full-fledged adults. Despite developmental similarities with those of the previous or subsequent stages, there are some features of emerging adulthood that make this period rather distinctive (Arnett, 2000, 2001, 2014; Reifman et al., 2007) In particular, as

¹ 18–25 period could be also found in literature, but in more recent works Arnett extended further (Arnett, 2014).

stressed by Arnett et al. (2014), emerging adults differ from adolescents in their physical, legal, and educational status. They are physically and sexually mature, independent, and diverse in their work and study choices. On the other hand, in comparison to older adults, most emerging adults have not yet established stable and lasting love and work commitments. Instead, emerging adulthood is a time of high instability, with multiple love and work transitions before settling down.

This life stage can be characterized by the achievement of various developmental milestones (e.g., independence from a nuclear family). However, more internal psychological based features can be delineated as well. These are *dimensions of emerging adulthood*. Initially, Arnett (2000, 2014) suggested five dimensions of emerging adulthood, namely identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in between, and possibilities and optimism. These dimensions reflect the experiences and beliefs of young adults in a transitional period of life that is not clearly defined by traditional milestones or roles. However, it was unknown whether these dimensions also replicate in countries other than the USA. In fact, some later studies suggested somewhat different constellation of potential factors. For example, in a multi-national setting, IDEA-8 was developed and validated as a measure that assesses four specific aspects of emerging adulthood (see, e.g., Faas et al., 2018). These are identity exploration, experimentation/possibilities, negativity/instability, and feeling in-between.

Emerging adulthood has been shown to be quite idiosyncratic concerning various aspects of life, work domain included (Arnett, 2000, 2014). For example, a relatively high level of work fluctuation has been discussed with regard to this developmental period by Arnett (2014), and such instability extends also to relationships and other areas of life. A statistic in the USA indicates that emerging adults between the ages of 18 to 29 hold eight to nine jobs on average (US Department of Labor, 2012; cited according to Arnett, 2014). Relatedly, younger people (roughly corresponding to the range of emerging adulthood) have a higher probability of quarterly job-on-job change transitions in comparison to older people across different countries of Europe according to Eurostat.

However, despite these trends, dimensions of emerging adulthood have not been yet examined in the context of the intention to stay in an organisation. Therefore, based on the definition of dimensions of emerging adulthood that capture young adults' beliefs and experiences in this developmental period, we hypothesized that being torn between adolescence and adulthood (*feeling in-between*); an increased tendency to explore different ways of living to define themselves (*identity exploration*); engagement in exploring many opportunities (*experimentation*); and instability of the present developmental period related to feelings of unsettledness and overwhelmedness (*negativity/instability*) could be important factors related to psychological development that influence an individual's intentions to leave an organization. However, we also think it is important to consider the inner positive psychological strengths of individuals in terms of psychological capital, as discussed below.

Psychological capital

What are forms of capital worth considering in the workplace? As suggested by Luthans and Youssef (2004), in addition to other forms of capital that are widely recognized – such as traditional (e.g., financial), human (e.g., selection and building of tacit knowledge), or social capital (e.g., cross-functional work teams) – a type of capital that is psychological in nature could also matter for organizations. More specifically, according to Hobfoll’s theory of conservation of resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018), individuals attempt to protect, preserve, and acquire resources to cope with various demands. These resources are interrelated and often “travel together” in a caravan of resources that interact and are developed together. Such a caravan of resources could be exemplified by psychological capital.

Psychological capital (PsyCap) refers to a positive psychological state characterized by control, intentionality, and agentic goal pursuit (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). As a second-order factor, PsyCap integrates four well-known constructs from positive psychology, namely “(1) having confidence (*self-efficacy*) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (*optimism*) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (*hope*) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (*resilience*) to attain success” (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2006; p. 3).

HERO (an acronym often used in the research literature for *Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism*) has been shown to be related to various desirable work-related outcomes on one hand and negatively related to undesirable outcomes on the other hand (Avey et al., 2011, Kong et al., 2018; Loghman et al., 2023; Wu & Nguyen, 2019). For example, a recent comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Loghman et al. (2023) indicates that PsyCap is related to performance, work satisfaction, burnout, engagement, and also turnover intentions. Thus, we hypothesised that due to its empowering nature, PsyCap will predict intention to stay in the organisation.

Why replicate above mentioned finding? First, most of the reviewed articles used the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-24 or brief version PCQ-12). There are some limitations of these measures, though. This includes limited psychometric properties (e.g., factorial structure; see Dawkins et al., 2013, for further discussion) but also limited availability in some languages. Furthermore, the questionnaire is not free to use for practitioners, limiting its use in practical settings. For these reasons, the Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12; Lorenz et al., 2016) and revised version of Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12R; Dudasova et al., 2021) have been suggested as a welcome alternative. However, due to the novelty of the scale, the suggested nomological network should be further corroborated also with this alternative measure (CPC-12R). Also, despite the fact that the relationship between PsyCap and intention to leave the organization has been established, many studies lack information concerning the incremental validity of PsyCap above and beyond more fundamental personality traits. For example, according to Choi and Lee (2014), the major-

ity of research dedicated to the role of psychological capital in employee outcomes did not account for personality traits and there is a possible overlap between the two constructs. This is important as previous research identified some personality traits related to this variable. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Zimmerman (2008) showed that the trait of being emotionally stable was the best negative predictor of employees' intentions to leave, while the traits of being conscientious and agreeable were the best negative predictors of employees' actual decisions to quit. Last but not least, some recent studies indicated that the role of PsyCap in turnover intentions could be more nuanced and rather indirect. Thus, in the next part, we will cover the role of engagement as a potential mediator.

Work engagement

What are some characteristics of an employee who is involved and interested in his or her work? Employees that are engaged have been described by “a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities” (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702). Engagement itself is defined by Schaufeli et al. (2006) as an emotional, cognitive, and behavioural “fulfilling work-related state of mind” (p. 702). More specifically, it is characterized by three dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption. *Vigor* refers to the workers' high energy and mental strength while working, as well as readiness to put in effort and overcome challenges. *Dedication* refers to the workers' feeling of importance, excitement, and motivation. *Absorption* refers to the workers' state of being fully focused and immersed in their work.

Work engagement has been associated with PsyCap to a higher degree than intention to leave (Loghman et al., 2023), indicating a more direct connection with PsyCap. In fact, work engagement has been suggested as potential mediator between PsyCap and turnover intentions in previous research. For example, Rivaldi and Sadeli (2020) found that various positive job attitudes mediated the relationship between psychological capital and turnover intentions; Yang et al. (2014) found that psychological capital was positively related to engagement and mediated the relationship between perceived organisational support and work engagement; and Eltaybani et al. (2018) found that the intention to stay in a workplace was predicted by work engagement among other factors. Therefore, we hypothesized that that PsyCap will be related to intention to stay in organization indirectly, via work engagement.

A similar pattern of results could also be expected when dimensions of emerging adulthood are considered. As pointed out by Arnett (2014; p. 169), emerging adults “...aspire to find a job that will be an expression of their identity. Merely being able to ‘buy more stuff’ is not enough...”. Rather, they try to find work that provides the “right match between a job and their interest and abilities, so they will enjoy it thoroughly” (Arnett, 2014, p. 185). These statements strongly resemble the conceptualization of work-engagement and suggest an indirect role of work engagement in intention to stay in organization. In fact, as a perspective on job shifts in this period from a way of gaining some cash into something that becomes the cornerstone of adult life (Arnett, 2001, 2014), work engagement could be of importance in intention to stay in organization.

The present study

Emerging adulthood is widely recognised as a specific developmental period that can be characterized by various psychologically based qualities (for example, it is an age of negativity and instability). At the same time, young people possess positive psychological resources that help them cope with various stressors and facilitate their work engagement. How do these two aspects (subjective developmental qualities related to emerging adulthood and positive psychological resources in terms of PsyCap) contribute to intention to stay (in an organisation)? In an attempt to integrate two separate research traditions (developmental psychology and positive psychology/positive organisation scholarship), we aimed to examine the role of four dimensions of emerging adulthood and PsyCap as predictors of intention to stay in an organization in young people aged 18–29 years both directly, and also indirectly, via work engagement. In particular, simple correlation analysis and more advanced Bayesian multi-model regression analysis have been implemented to examine direct relations. Also, mediation analysis was used to examine whether work engagement could account for a portion of variance between dimensions of emerging adulthood/PsyCap and intention to stay in organization when more fundamental personality traits are accounted for.

We hypothesized that dimensions of emerging adulthood will negatively predict intention to stay in an organization ($H_{1a_{to,d}}$), while PsyCap will predict intention to stay in organization positively ($H_{2a_{to,d}}$). Furthermore, we expected that the relationship between dimensions of emerging adulthood and intention to stay in organization and between PsyCap and intention to stay in organization will be mediated via work engagement ($H_{3a_{to,d}}$ and H_{4} , respectively). Also, in an exploratory fashion, we also wanted to examine which aspect of work engagement is the best candidate for a role of potential mediator.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 192 participants in the age range of 19–29 years. Mean age was $M = 24.49$ ($SD = 2,86$) years ($Med = 24$, $Mod = 22$ years), while 59% (113 participants) were women. When asked how much (in terms of %) do they feel like adults (the range was 0% – I don't feel like an adult at all to 100% – I feel fully like an adult), participants responded that they feel like they are located somewhere in the middle of the scale ($M = 54.12$, $SD = 27,84$; $Med = 50.50$, $Mod = 70$). 35% of participants were single, 54% in relationship, 11% married. Considering the type of work, 53% had a full-time job, and 42% a part-time job, while 5% had other jobs (e.g., entrepreneurs).

A convenience sampling method and on-line data collection were used.² In particular, research participants were approached through social networks and email communicati-

² The present results are part of a bigger research project. More specifically, specific sample and variables of interest have been selected for the purpose of the present paper. Although the present

on. Our sampling strategy was to sample as many participants as possible given available resources. As the present study is part of a bigger research project, the sample size for the present analysis was not determined by a priori power analysis. However, sensitivity power analysis indicated that the present study should be sufficiently powered (i.e., power more than 80% with $\alpha = 0,05$) to detect an effect as small as $r = 0,18$.

Method

Due to resource constraints, we employed a cross-sectional design. The variables used for analysis consisted of the following scales:

Psychological capital was operationalized via a revised version of Compound Psychological Scale (CPC-12R) (Dudasova et al., 2021; Lorenz et al., 2016; Kačmár et al., 2022). Although the Psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ) proposed by Luthans et al. (2007) is considered a gold standard in the research literature, a *Compound Psychological Scale* (CPC-12) has been recently proposed (Lorenz et al., 2016), revised (Dudasova et al., 2021)a and adapted to Slovak language (Kačmár et al., 2022) as a viable alternative with some potential benefits. The scale consists of 12 items (three items per factor) encompassing *self-efficacy* (e.g., I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort), *hope* (e.g., I can think of many ways to reach my current goals), *optimism* (e.g., Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad), and *resilience* (e.g., After serious life difficulties, I tend to quickly bounce back), rated on a six-point scale, ranging from 1 “*strongly disagree*” to 6 “*strongly agree*”. Internal consistency was McDonald’s $\omega = 0.90$.

Dimensions of emerging adulthood have been operationalized via IDEA-8 Scale (Faas et al., 2018; Ráczová et al., 2022). Although more dimensions could be identified in research literature, four dimensions have been corroborated in a big multinational sample (Faas et al., 2018), and also in the Slovak adaptation study (Ráczová et al., 2022). In total, 8 items (two items per scale) are rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 “*completely disagree*” to 4 “*completely agree*”. The dimensions were *feeling in between* (e.g., ...feeling adult in some ways but not others), *experimentation* (e.g., ...time of many possibilities), *negativity/instability* (e.g., ...time of feeling stressed out), and *identity exploration* (e.g., ...time of deciding your own beliefs and values). Internal consistency was McDonald’s $\omega = 0.90$ for experimentation, $\omega = 0.78$ for instability, $\omega = 0.68$ for exploration, and $\omega = 0.70$ for feeling in-between scale.

Work engagement has been operationalized via the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES – 17) (Schaufeli, Bakker, 2003; Lichner et al., 2018). The scale consists of 17 items. The items are rated on a scale from 1 “*never*” to 7 “*all the time*”. Internal consistency was McDonald’s $\omega = 0.95$ for the whole scale. As we were interested mainly in the concept of engagement as such, the total score has been used for the main analysis according to the recommendation of the authors. However, as differentiation between three dimensions could be of some importance in extending the main findings, we also used three separate

paper is related to the thesis of two co-authors and another paper, the present results are unique and not presented elsewhere.

dimensions of engagement, namely *vigor* (e.g., At my work, I feel bursting with energy) (McDonald’s $\omega = 0.86$), *dedication* (e.g., My job inspires me) (McDonald’s $\omega = 0.92$), and *absorption* (e.g., Time flies when I’m working) (McDonald’s $\omega = 0.87$) in additional exploratory analysis.

The intention to remain in the organization has been operationalized via a scale adapted by Schragegová and Rošková (2016). The scale consists of 3 items rated on a five-point scale,³ ranging from 1 “*strongly disagree*” to 5 “*strongly agree*” (e.g., “If I have my own way, I will be working for one year from now”). McDonald’s $\omega = 0.79$.

Furthermore, as it was suggested to account for personality when examining the role of PsyCap in various work related outcomes (see, e.g., Choi and Lee, 2014), *Personality traits*, in terms of Big-Five, has been included in the main model. The personality traits were operationalized via BFI-II short (Soto & John, 2017; Kohút et al., 2020). Items were rated on a five-point scale from 1 “*strongly disagree*” to 5 “*strongly agree*”. McDonald’s $\omega = 0.76$ for *extraversion* (e.g., ...tends to be quiet), $\omega = 0.75$ for *conscientiousness*, $\omega = 0.64$ for *agreeableness* (e.g., ... is compassionate, has a soft heart), $\omega = 0.67$ for *open-mindedness* (e.g., Is original, comes up with new ideas), and $\omega = 0.79$ for *negative emotionality* (e.g., ...worries a lot).

Results

JASP 0.16.2 has been used for analysis. Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics

	Intentions to stay	Work engagement	Psychological capital	Experimentation	Instability	Exploration	In-between
Median	11.00	83.00	54.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
Mean	10.33	80.22	53.19	6.27	5.62	6.21	6.5
Std. Deviation	3.64	18.95	8.61	1.39	1.54	1.43	1.54
Minimum	3.00	34.00	13.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Maximum	15.00	114.00	72.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00

First, we performed a correlation analysis. As Shapiro-Wilk test indicated the violation of assumptions of bivariate normality for some combinations of scales, we used non-parametric Spearman’s rho correlation analysis. As can be seen in Table 2, results showed that *Intention to stay* was positively correlated with *PsyCap* ($r_s = 0.30$, $p < .001$), but not with *Experimentation* ($r_s = 0.03$, $p = 0.71$), *Instability* ($r_s = -0.09$, $p = 0.25$), *Exploration* ($r_s = -0.02$, $p = 0.82$), or *Feeling in between* ($r_s = -0.15$, $p = 0.05$ – we were not able to reject the null hypothe-

³ Note that five point scale was used in the present research due to compatibility with other scales.

sis here; but in contrast to other dimensions of emerging adulthood, the size of the effect considering feeling in between and instability could be potentially meaningful in a long run according to interpretational guides provided by Funder and Ozer, 2019). Importantly, intention to stay was related to engagement ($r_s = 0.48, p < .001$), while work engagement was positively related to PsyCap ($r_s = 0.54, p < .001$) and experimentation ($r_s = 0.22, p = .005$), and negatively correlated with feeling in between ($r_s = -0.23, p = .003$).

Table 2
Correlation matrix (Spearman's rho)

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
	Intention to stay	Engagement	PsyCap	Experimentation	Instability	Exploration	In-between
1. Intentions to stay	—						
2. Engagement	0.48***	—					
3. PsyCap	0.30***	0.54***	—				
4. IDEA Experimentation	0.03	0.22**	0.33***	—			
5. IDEA Instability	-0.09	-0.13	-0.29***	-0.19*	—		
6. IDEA Exploration	-0.02	0.08	0.01	0.24**	0.12	—	
7. IDEA In-between	-0.15	-0.23**	-0.17*	0.12	0.20**	0.35***	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Second, to further extend findings with regard to relative plausibility of various hypothetical models with different combinations of potential predictors and evidence for inclusion or exclusion of potential predictors, Bayesian multi-model regression analysis was carried out (Bergh et al., 2021). After observing data, odds in favour of the model containing PsyCap as the only predictor (most probable model) increased by a factor of more than ten 10 (BFM = 23.65 – moderate support). Predictive performance of preferred model was better than null model (BF01 = 34.30) or the alternative models (moderate to strong support).⁴ When all models were taken into account simultaneously through Bayesian model-averaged analysis, the results provided moderate evidence for including PsyCap as a predictor (BF_{inc} = 8.90; posterior inclusion probability = 0.90),⁵ but results were less decisive regarding excluding In-between factor (posterior exclusion probability = 0.74). Results were slightly more decisive for excluding other dimensions of emerging adulthood.

⁴ JZS model prior with r scale .364 and Betabinomial prior were used for analysis.

⁵ When Big-five factors are added as predictors, the evidence for including PsyCap is still moderate, but lower (BF_{inc} = 3.01). When Big-five is added into the first block, evidence is inconclusive.

od (posterior exclusion probabilities = 0.80 to 0.84). Posterior Summaries of Coefficients are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Posterior Summaries of Coefficients

Coefficient	P(incl)	P(excl)	P(incl data)	P(excl data)	BF _{inclusion}	Mean	SD	95% Credible Interval	
								Lower	Upper
Intercept	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	10.33	0.28	9.83	10.86
Experimentation	0.50	0.50	0.19	0.81	0.23	-0.01	0.09	-0.24	0.22
Instability	0.50	0.50	0.20	0.80	0.25	-0.02	0.09	-0.38	0.07
Exploration	0.50	0.50	0.18	0.82	0.22	-3.58e-4	0.08	-0.26	0.17
In-between	0.50	0.50	0.26	0.74	0.34	-0.05	0.12	-0.37	0.07
PsyCap	0.50	0.50	0.91	0.09	10.73	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.15

Third, to examine potential mediating role of work engagement in more complex model, we conducted mediation analysis with Bias-corrected percentile Bootstrap (2000 replications) method and Maximum Likelihood estimator. Importantly, as suggested as by Choi and Lee (2014), Big-Five personality traits were accounted in this step as background confounders.⁶ The results are summarized in a Table 4. As expected, there was a total effect of *PsyCap* on *intention to stay* ($\beta = 0.22$; $p = 0.02$; CI [0.03, 0.46]). However, dimensions of emerging adulthood *did not* predict *intention to stay*. In particular, *experimentation* ($\beta = -0.07$; $p = 0.42$; CI [-0.25, 0.12]), *instability* ($\beta = -0.03$; $p = 0.77$; CI [-0.21, 0.16]), *exploration* ($\beta = 0.03$; $p = 0.69$; CI [-0.17, 0.23]) and *feeling in-between* ($\beta = -0.05$; $p = 0.54$; CI [-0.29, 0.16]) were all non-significant predictors (all $p > 0.05$) with much smaller effects (all $\beta < 0.10$).

Importantly, though, there was an *indirect effect* of *PsyCap* on *Intention to stay* via *work engagement* ($\beta = 0.17$; $p = .003$; CI [0.06, 0.35]). Thus, although it does not mean that other models can be excluded; conditional on the model assumption $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$, our statistical test shows that work engagement can account for a significant portion of variance. The effect of *experimentation* ($\beta = 0.04$; $p = 0.33$; CI [-0.04, 0.13]), *instability* ($\beta = 0.04$; $p = 0.37$; CI [-0.05, 0.12]), and *exploration* ($\beta = 0.04$; $p = 0.26$; CI [-0.04, 0.15]) on *intention to stay* were not mediated via *work engagement*. However, there was an *indirect effect* of *feeling in-between* on *work engagement* ($\beta = -0.09$; $p = 0.03$; CI [-0.18, -7.31e-4]) (note however that as type I error increases due to multiple comparisons, the reader should be cautious in interpretation as this finding could be false positive result as indicated by not passing Bonferroni correction).

⁶ We also computed sensitivity analysis without controlling for Big-five personality traits. Results are convergent.

Table 4
Mediation analysis

			Standardized Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
Direct effects								
PsyCap	→	Intentions to stay	0.05	0.09	0.57	0.57	-0.12	0.25
IDEA_Experimentation	→	Intentions to stay	-0.10	0.08	-1.38	0.17	-0.27	0.07
IDEA_Instability	→	Intentions to stay	-0.06	0.08	-0.76	0.44	-0.23	0.09
IDEA_Exploration	→	Intentions to stay	-9.72e-3	0.08	-0.12	0.90	-0.18	0.17
IDEA_In-between	→	Intentions to stay	0.03	0.08	0.43	0.67	-0.16	0.20
Indirect effects								
PsyCap	Engagement	Intentions to stay	0.17	0.05	3.55	3.91e-4	0.06	0.35
IDEA_Experimentation	Engagement	Intentions to stay	0.04	0.04	0.97	0.33	-0.04	0.13
IDEA_Instability	Engagement	Intentions to stay	0.04	0.04	0.89	0.37	-0.05	0.12
IDEA_Exploration	Engagement	Intentions to stay	0.04	0.04	1.13	0.26	-0.04	0.15
IDEA_In-between	Engagement	Intentions to stay	-0.09	0.04	-2.17	0.03	-0.18	-7.31e-4
Total effects								
PsyCap		Intentions to stay	0.22	0.09	2.42	0.02	0.03	0.46
IDEA_Experimentation		Intentions to stay	-0.07	0.08	-0.81	0.42	-0.25	0.12
IDEA_Instability		Intentions to stay	-0.03	0.09	-0.29	0.77	-0.21	0.16
IDEA_Exploration		Intentions to stay	0.03	0.09	0.39	0.69	-0.17	0.23
IDEA_In-between		Intentions to stay	-0.05	0.09	-0.62	0.54	-0.29	0.16

Note. Delta method standard errors, bias-corrected percentile bootstrap confidence intervals, ML estimator.

Moreover, with aim to further extend present findings in an exploratory fashion, we also examined three separate aspects of engagement. Results showed that there was total effect of PsyCap on intention to remain in organization. *Dedication*, as a factor of engagement, mediated the relationship between PsyCap and intention to remain in organization ($\beta = 0.14$; $p = 0.01$; CI [0.03, 0.34]), but we were not able to reject null hypothesis for other paths (all $p >$

0.05)⁷. However, when Big-Five is not accounted for – as a form of sensitivity analysis – *dedication* mediated both, *PsyCap* ($\beta = 0.02$; $p=0.003$; CI [-0.01, 0.04]) and *feeling in between* ($\beta = -0.06$; $p = 0.02$; CI [-0.15, -0.02]). The results are shown in Appendix A and B, respectively.

Discussion

The present pilot study aimed to examine the role of dimensions of emerging adulthood and psychological capital in the intention to stay in organizations in young people in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood. We expected that intention to stay in the organization will be related to dimensions of emerging adulthood (negatively) and *PsyCap* (positively) and that this relationship could be explained by work engagement as a potential mediator.

As hypothesized, *PsyCap* predicted intentions to stay in the organization. The higher is the score in *PsyCap*, the higher is also the intention to stay in the current organization. This is not surprising as this finding is in line with previous studies. For example, a recent meta-analysis provided by Loghman et al. (2023) showed that *PsyCap* is related to turnover intentions. Relatedly, Choi & Lee (2014) found that, among other criterion variables, psychological capital was negatively related to turnover intentions and this was true even when Big-five personality traits were accounted for as in present research. However, Choi & Lee (2014) focused on employees in South Korea and used PCQ-12 measure of psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007). This is an important distinction from a present study as present results conceptually replicate and further extend the results of Choi and Lee (2014)' study not only with a different culture but also with different operationalization of *PsyCap* – CPC-12R (Dudasova et al., 2021; Lorenz et al., 2016; Kačmár et al., 2022) This is true also for meta-analytic findings provided by Loghman et al. (2023). For example, CPC-12R and translations to other languages, such as Slovak language, were not included.

Psychological capital has been shown to be associated with work engagement in previous research (e.g., Costantini et al., 2017; Lorenz et al., 2016; see also Loghman et al., 2023) and turnover intentions have been shown to be predicted by work engagement (i.e., Eltaybani et al., 2018 showed that work engagement predicted intention to stay in the current workplace in care nurses). Such a pattern of results indicates a potential mediating role of work engagement worth future examination as discussed below. In fact, besides direct effect of psychological capital, conditional on the model assumption $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$, our statistical test showed that work engagement can account for a significant portion of variance. As in previous case, this finding is convergent with research literature. For example, Rivaldi and Sadeli (2020) found that job satisfaction, well-being, and also work engagement mediated the relationship between psychological capital and turnover intentions.

However, contrary to our expectations, dimensions of emerging adulthood did not relate to or predict intentions to stay in the organization. The only exception was feeling

⁷ Please note that, due to number of comparisons, risk of false positive finding is high.

in between. In particular, feeling in-between was negatively associated with engagement and engagement was positively associated with the intention to stay in the organization. Therefore, it can be assumed that the more an individual struggle with becoming adult, the less resources are available for him or her to fully engage with the work, and, consequently, less he or she intends to stay in current organization. More specifically, *dedication* – workers' feeling of importance, excitement, and motivation – has been nominated as potentially important aspect of work engagement in the present study. This could be an important finding as this dimension differs from absorption and vigor in several ways. In particular, dedication refers “to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702). This is in line with Arnett (2014)’s observation that young adults look for work that suits their interests and abilities well, so they can enjoy it fully, seeking a job that expresses their identity rather than just being able to “buy more stuff”. Although there is some chance that this finding is a false positive and future replication is necessary, this can help gain greater insight into the nuanced nature of turnover intentions during emerging adulthood as discussed below.

However, how can the absence of the relationship between intention to stay in organization and other dimensions of emerging adulthood be interpreted? There are several possible interpretations. First, it is possible that individuals learn to cope with the demands of this developmental period and, therefore, positive psychological resources are more important than aspects such as instability, exploration, or experimentation. Second, the relationship between dimensions of emerging adulthood and intention to stay in organization could be indirect. Although we examined one potential candidate variable that can account for the variance between X and Y in present research, the list is exhaustive and other potential mediators could be suggested and examined in future research.

In sum, present findings are congruent with the positive role of psychological capital in attitudes, behaviour, and performance of employees (Avey et al., 2011; Loghman et al., 2023), but partially also with Arnett (2014)’s observation that emerging adults try to find work that provides the “right match between a job and their interest and abilities, so they will enjoy it thoroughly” (Arnett, 2014, p. 185). Though, the problem that emerging adults face could be that some of them feel a higher degree of conflict – they have not fully embraced the transition to their adult role – and this prevents them from being more engaged. The similar logic applies to the role of psychological capital. Noteworthy, the present study embraced the assumption that psychological capital precedes engagement, and, consequently, turnover intentions. However, it is also possible that engagement contributes to development of psychological capital via an upward spiral and pattern is more complex than expected. This rationale relates also to dimensions of emerging adulthood. Although we expected that individual’s experiences and beliefs related to transitional period of emerging adulthood influence their work engagement and this impacts turnover intentions, causality could be reversed. For example, more the young people want to quit their job, the less engaged they feel and more chaos about adult roles experience. Thus, future research is necessary to resolve these puzzles and to corroborate the

proposed causality. In fact, as our research was cross-sectional, any statement regarding causality is not warranted and conceptual at most. Rather, what we mean by term mediation is that the substantial part of the covariance shared by X and Y is explained by the conceptual model. Future studies need to establish if proposed implicit causal structure is supported by longitudinal data and experimental studies.

Several additional limitations are worth reflecting upon. For example, it is worth mentioning that convenience sampling was used in the present study. Although we don't think that this limitation could hinder our inferences, a more representative sample could be used in future research to examine potential moderators. Additionally, objective data on the turnover of employees could be used in future longitudinal studies instead of assessing the mere intentions as there is a natural gap between intention and behaviour that could also be subject to potential moderators. This can also help mitigate potential common method bias. Additionally, as pointed out by a reviewer, it is important to mention that although we focused on subjective perception in terms of dimensions of emerging adulthood, the bigger picture is far from comprehensive. First, a brief version of IDEA with "only" four dimensions has been used, reducing the number of theoretically important dimensions. Relatedly, although brief versions have some benefits (e.g., they save time of participants), longer scales are preferable and recommended for future research in terms of psychometric properties. Relatedly, objective markers of adulthood were not included in present research. As there could be a difference in motivation to work and related intention to leave the organization in people who study and somebody who already completed the studies, started family and works full time; this information along with more objective markers could be added in future research to better understand a more complex pattern of results. In fact, although we focused more on psychological level of analysis in the present study (in terms of dimensions of emerging adulthood), other levels of analysis could be important as well and are reserved for future research. Third, although Schrageová and Rošková (2016) used 7 point scale, we used 5 point scale as in original research of Colarelli (1984) creating potential discrepancy.

The present study contributes to the field in several ways. First, it conceptually replicates previous findings (e.g., concerning the role of psychological capital in turnover intentions). As we employed CPC-12R, this study also contributes to emerging literature concerning this specific operationalization of psychological capital. Second, it extends previous studies concerning the focus on emerging adulthood as a specific developmental period, as this is rather neglected topic in I/O psychology.

In conclusion, the present results support the role of psychological capital in intention to stay in organizations. This could be important concerning potential implications as previous studies indicated that the psychological capital could be cultivated by interventions. Moreover, it has been shown that feeling in-between could be considered as a potential risk factor with regards to work engagement and this could be consequently related to turnover intentions. We hope that this study will spark more interest in the developmental period of emerging adulthood in I/O psychology.

Source of funding

The preparation of this manuscript was supported by Vega contract no. 1/0853/21 and by the Slovak Research and Development Agency, contract no. APVV-19-0284.

Data availability statement

Data and results are available at https://osf.io/gb3xf/?view_only=ac2c44b550c147f8b35fd0e9calb80e4. Note that data were collected as a part of a bigger research project.

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Kačmár, P., Baranyiová, D., & Zentková, L. (2022). Young adults in flux: The role of dimensions of emerging adulthood and psychological capital in the intention to remain in an organization. *Psychologie a její kontexty*, 13(2), 2022, 81–101. <https://doi.org/10.15452/PsyX.2022.13.0012>

Appedix A – Mediation analysis 2 – Exploratory extension (three factors of engagement differentiated)

		Estimate			Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval		
								Lower	Upper	
Direct effects										
PsyCap	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.01	0.09	0.17	0.86	0.19	-0.20	0.19	
IDEA_Experimentation	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.10	0.07	-1.31	0.19	0.06	-0.27	0.06	
IDEA_Instability	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.05	0.08	-0.62	0.54	0.11	-0.21	0.11	
IDEA_Exploration	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.02	0.08	0.29	0.77	0.20	-0.14	0.20	
IDEA_In-between	→	Intentions_to_stay	6.79e-4	0.08	8.76e-3	0.99	0.18	-0.18	0.18	
Indirect effects										
PsyCap	→	Engament_Vigor	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.10	0.05	1.98	0.05	4.68e-3	0.28
PsyCap	→	Engagement_Dedication	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.14	0.05	2.60	9.23e-3	0.03	0.34
PsyCap	→	Engagement_Absorbtion	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.03	0.04	-0.92	0.36	-0.16	0.05
IDEA_Experimentation	→	Engament_Vigor	→	Intentions_to_stay	9.64e-3	0.02	0.46	0.64	-0.03	0.08
IDEA_Experimentation	→	Engagement_Dedication	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.03	0.03	0.97	0.33	-0.03	0.14
IDEA_Experimentation	→	Engagement_Absorbtion	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.01	0.02	-0.75	0.45	-0.09	8.31e-3
IDEA_Instability	→	Engament_Vigor	→	Intentions_to_stay	8.64e-3	0.02	0.38	0.70	-0.04	0.07
IDEA_Instability	→	Engagement_Dedication	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.03	0.03	0.83	0.40	-0.05	0.12
IDEA_Instability	→	Engagement_Absorbtion	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.01	0.02	-0.78	0.44	-0.09	0.01
IDEA_Exploration	→	Engament_Vigor	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.02	0.02	1.00	0.32	-0.02	0.12
IDEA_Exploration	→	Engagement_Dedication	→	Intentions_to_stay	5.01e-3	0.03	0.16	0.87	-0.08	0.09
IDEA_Exploration	→	Engagement_Absorbtion	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.02	0.02	-0.84	0.40	-0.09	0.02
IDEA_In-between	→	Engament_Vigor	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.03	0.02	-1.09	0.27	-0.10	0.01
IDEA_In-between	→	Engagement_Dedication	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.06	0.04	-1.62	0.10	-0.17	1.21e-3
IDEA_In-between	→	Engagement_Absorbtion	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.03	0.03	0.92	0.36	-0.03	0.13
Total effects										
PsyCap	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.22	0.09	2.44	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.45	
IDEA_Experimentation	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.07	0.08	-0.82	0.41	0.13	-0.25	0.13	
IDEA_Instability	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.03	0.09	-0.30	0.77	0.15	-0.21	0.15	
IDEA_Exploration	→	Intentions_to_stay	0.03	0.09	0.40	0.69	0.23	-0.15	0.23	
IDEA_In-between	→	Intentions_to_stay	-0.05	0.09	-0.63	0.53	0.16	-0.28	0.16	

Note. Delta method standard errors, bias-corrected percentile bootstrap confidence intervals, ML estimator.

Appendix B – Mediation analysis 3 – Sensitivity analysis (three factors of engagement differentiated; Big-five personality traits not accounted for)

	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Direct effect						
PsyCap → Intentions_to_stay	7.34e-4	9.18e-3	0.08	0.94	-0.02	0.02
IDEA_Experimentation → Intentions_to_stay	-0.07	0.05	-1.25	0.21	-0.18	0.05
IDEA_Instability → Intentions_to_stay	-0.02	0.05	-0.46	0.64	-0.11	0.08
IDEA_Exploration → Intentions_to_stay	7.70e-4	0.05	0.01	0.99	-0.10	0.11
IDEA_In-between → Intentions_to_stay	0.02	0.05	0.33	0.74	-0.09	0.12
Indirect effects						
PsyCap → Engagement_Vigor → Intentions_to_stay	0.01	6.72e-3	1.52	0.13	-4.00e-3	0.03
PsyCap → Engagement_Dedication → Intentions_to_stay	0.02	6.95e-3	2.95	3.19e-3	6.04e-3	0.04
PsyCap → Engagement_Absorbtion → Intentions_to_stay	-3.24e-3	4.87e-3	-0.67	0.51	-0.02	7.26e-3
IDEA_Experimentation → Engagement_Vigor → Intentions_to_stay	0.01	0.01	0.86	0.39	-0.01	0.07
IDEA_Experimentation → Engagement_Dedication → Intentions_to_stay	0.04	0.03	1.46	0.15	-0.01	0.13
IDEA_Experimentation → Engagement_Absorbtion → Intentions_to_stay	-7.75e-3	0.01	-0.62	0.54	-0.06	0.01
IDEA_Instability → Engagement_Vigor → Intentions_to_stay	-6.98e-3	0.01	-0.69	0.49	-0.05	9.15e-3
IDEA_Instability → Engagement_Dedication → Intentions_to_stay	1.66e-3	0.02	0.08	0.93	-0.05	0.05
IDEA_Instability → Engagement_Absorbtion → Intentions_to_stay	-2.94e-3	6.08e-3	-0.48	0.63	-0.04	9.68e-3
IDEA_Exploration → Engagement_Vigor → Intentions_to_stay	0.02	0.01	1.12	0.26	-8.79e-3	0.08
IDEA_Exploration → Engagement_Dedication → Intentions_to_stay	0.01	0.02	0.49	0.63	-0.04	0.08
IDEA_Exploration → Engagement_Absorbtion → Intentions_to_stay	-9.49e-3	0.01	-0.64	0.52	-0.07	0.02
IDEA_In-between → Engagement_Vigor → Intentions_to_stay	-0.03	0.02	-1.40	0.16	-0.10	4.89e-3
IDEA_In-between → Engagement_Dedication → Intentions_to_stay	-0.06	0.03	-2.29	0.02	-0.14	-0.01
IDEA_In-between → Engagement_Absorbtion → Intentions_to_stay	0.02	0.03	0.66	0.51	-0.03	0.09
Total Effects						
PsyCap → Intentions_to_stay	0.03	9.02e-3	3.12	1.78e-3	7.91e-3	0.05
IDEA_Experimentation → Intentions_to_stay	-0.03	0.06	-0.46	0.65	-0.15	0.11
IDEA_Instability → Intentions_to_stay	-0.03	0.05	-0.57	0.57	-0.13	0.08
IDEA_Exploration → Intentions_to_stay	0.02	0.06	0.31	0.75	-0.11	0.14
IDEA_In-between → Intentions_to_stay	-0.06	0.05	-1.08	0.28	-0.18	0.07

Note. Delta method standard errors, bias-corrected percentile bootstrap confidence intervals, ML estimator.

