

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPLOYEE TURNOVER OF NEW RECRUITS – A CASE OF AN IT COMPANY

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Introduction

Information Technology industry, fondly known by the name IT industry serves as a huge platform providing employment. India alone is said to generate around 3.9million direct employments in the IT sector (NASSCOM, 2017). However, IT sector faces a major setback when it comes to the increasing turnover rates. Based on the Allied workforce mobility survey, nearly 33% of new recruits quit within first six to seven months where as 23% of the new hires leave their jobs before completing one year. This burden falls on the company and the efforts to manage such turnover are estimated to range from 100% to 300%, of the replaced employee's salary (Ferrazzi, 2015).

Companies find it hard to reinvest the time, cost and effort to fill the turnover gap. Many youngsters join the IT industry merely thinking of the whims and fancies that seem to be associated with it. However, once they join and get trained into the workforce, they are taken aback by the monotonous working hours, deadline pressure and greater job demands. They find it hard to cope up or adapt from a student's role to their new independent and demanding role as an employee. Their workspace becomes totally different from what they have perceived before. (Morgan McKinley, 2015)

Research Problem

As per the Annual Compensation Trends Survey of KPMG (2017) the highest employee turnover recorded was for the IT sector at 20.4%, followed by media and advertising sector at 18.5% and banking and financial sector at 17.4%. Out of the total turnover rate across different job sectors a whopping 66% falls under the age bracket of 16 to 24years. This shows that employee turnover is at its maximum at entry level jobs. These are mostly the new campus hires who get into their first job after education.

Aon Hewitt survey (2016) recorded a five year low attrition rate of 16.3 percent in the year 2015. It was the lowest total turnover rate that corporate India has witnessed since the 2009 financial crisis. On the contrary, a survey by Wisdom Jobs highlighted fresher job turnover at a maximum of 14 per cent where as mid to senior level position recorded a lower rate of 8 per cent for the year 2015. The worst affected sectors found were IT, ITES and software industry where turnover rate was 25 per cent or more at entry-level positions. Even the IT giants like Infosys, Wipro and TCS faced a heavy turnover rate among the entry level workforce (DNA India, 2015) Taking this problem into consideration the study tries to explore on the employee turnover of new campus recruits of IT industry for the year 2015.

Research Gap

Previous studies on Emotional Intelligence were carried out across the globe, to assess the EI scores among students, employees and other target groups. In most of the cases the purpose of the study was to evaluate the EI scores based on moderating factors; gender, education, experience or ethnicity influence the EI scores (Gani & Musadir, 2015; Sembian & Vishwanathan, 2012). Studies in relation to EI and turnover rates were mostly centred around retail and service sector organizations. In Indian context, there are studies available in IT sector where relation of EI to talent retention is studied in conjunction with job stress, job engagement, performance, leadership and job satisfaction (Gautam & Malhotra, 2015). However, there is an obvious gap when it comes to the research on EI in relation to turnover rates of new campus recruits of IT industry.

Need and relevance of the study

Workforce stability is an area where all organizations strive to keep a positive balance. Almost all IT corporate's invest ample time and money in recruitment, induction and orientation training for the campus recruits to enable smooth transition from student to employee role. As per Times of India report (2014), Companies investment on such activities ranges from three to six month to even one year without any return on investment during the period. The compensation package offered to the campus recruits is considerably good too. However despite providing decent salary and good work space facilities employee turnover among the new hires continues to happen. Extensive study of literature suggests an underlying issue with the mindsets of majority of the new hires where they tend to be less confident, fails to express their emotions and feelings positively, less adaptive, lack group cohesiveness, no self-awareness and unable to build and maintain cordial relations within the work place. (Joseph & Lakshmi, 2010)

It is observed that most of the campus recruits tend to react emotionally to stressful job hours and fail to take feedbacks from their superiors positively. Such a scenario leads to a feeling of detachment from the job causing low levels of loyalty towards the company. This negative emotion causes them to eventually, quit the job than facing the situation confidently. Thus it could be seen that the underlying issue is with the mindset of the new hires where they fail to overcome their negative emotions. Rather they need to use their emotions more intelligently. Here, the role of Emotional Intelligence sets in. Emotional intelligence or EI on a broad spectrum can be referred to as a person's ability to understand his own emotions as well as his peers, and the ability to react to others emotions intelligently (Goleman, 1995). It helps people to cope better with others reducing stress that lead to a productive and stable workforce. Emotional Intelligence is crucial for better performance and advancement in career. Considering this fact the study intends to access the EI scores of fresh campus recruits who joined the company on or after 2015. With a view to find whether there is any influence of EI on turnover rates, the EI scores of employees who resigned from this set of new hires are also evaluated.

Research Objectives

This study is aimed at conducting research on the newly recruited campus hires of a Multinational IT company. The objective is to determine the possible influence of emotional intelligence on turnover rate of campus recruits in the company. It tries to study whether the level of Emotional Intelligence directly affects the turnover rate. The study also tries to analyse whether there is any difference between emotional intelligence scores between the employees still on roll with those who have resigned.

Hypothesis

Low emotional intelligence score is a determinant of high employee turnover.

Research Methodology

This study aims to analyse employee turnover of an IT company as a case. The study is carried out among the newly joined campus recruits of a global product development and consulting IT company, having its branches in the US, Singapore, Europe, and Middle-East apart from other branches in India. The sample taken for the study consisted of two sets. The first set includes the newly recruited campus hires who joined the company on or after 1 Jan 2015 and are on rolls of the company. The second set consists of those employees who joined on or after 1 Jan 2015 but resigned before completing one year with the company.

Questionnaires were administered to the respondents, All the new employees hired were considered for the study which included 64 employees on rolls and 46 resigned. Incomplete results were avoided and finally responses from 50 employees still on rolls and 20 employees who left the company were considered for evaluation. Statistical analysis was done on the data obtained to determine the Emotional intelligence variables. The scores arrived at, were used to compare the effect of emotional intelligence on turnover. Total sample comprised 37 males and 33 females, and the mean age of participants was 24.5 years. 'Student's' T-test is used to analyse the data.

TEIQue questionnaire (TEIQue; Petrides & Furnhm, 2003) by Thomas International was used for arriving at trait emotional intelligence of the participants. TEIQue is the abbreviation of 'Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire.' TEIQue is currently available in two versions, one with over 150 items and the other with 30 items to capture over 15 facets of sampling domain. This study takes the TEIQue SF, or the short form version to capture the data for arriving at EI scores.

Emotional Intelligence

People with high EI finds it easy to adapt or cope with any given situation reducing the stress level and is seen to maintain better social relationships. EI concatenates the ability to perceive, use and understand emotions along with the capacity to regulate emotional vibes both in oneself and in others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Another model of EI evolved by Petrides (2009) which does not endorse EI as ability based but proposes that each human being have a their own emotional traits and self-perceptions that derive their unique personality. The Trait model of Emotional Intelligence is thus arrived only in conjunction with an exhaustive exploration of a person's personality. This model uses TEIQue to measure the trait to determine the level of Emotional Intelligence. The questionnaire determines how well we understand ourselves and others, and the ability to use this information to achieve our goals. It is an assessment tool to measure EI. It helps to predict and self access about how people understand and mange their emotions. 15 facets of our personality are measured and grouped under four heads and two independent facets. Below are the main five heads and the 15 facets fall under it.

Well-being factor	Happiness
	Optimism
	Self-Esteem
Self control factor	Emotion Regulation
	Impulse Control
	Stress Management
Emotionality factor	Empathy
	Emotion Perception
	Emotion Expression
	Relationships
Sociability factor	Emotion Management
	Assertiveness
	Social Awareness

In addition to the main 4 facets there are other two independent facets are Adaptability and Self Motivation. (Thomas, 2012). In short, EI is the umbrella under which many personality facets fall in that help in evolving the ability to manage ones emotions intelligently for better cooperation and team work.

Literature Review

Many factors pave way to employee turnover especially new hires. This could range from reasons like Pay and benefits, career advancement opportunities, to coping issues, work environment and dissatisfaction. According to American business weekly magazine, inc., 75 percent of the reasons analysed that result in employee turnover point towards coping issues with their managers. (Schwantes, 2017) Another article in FORBES points out that the first and foremost quality to start with in a work place is empathy. (Altman, 2017)

Previous studies have established the importance of EI in Job satisfaction, Self-control, Emotionality and other main facets of emotional intelligence. A meta-analytical investigation that grouped 25 studies combining a total sample of 8520 participants throws light into the relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being. The result provided that there was a significant and positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Subjective Well-Being (Alvarez et al, 2016). Self control, another important facet of EI has also been studied in relation to productivity. According to a report from Korn Ferry Institute, California Emotional self-control helps a person to manage disruptive impulses and destabilising emotions. Once the emotions and impulsive reactions are controlled the person will be able to stay better focused and calm. This in turn helps increasing his productivity and is highly essential to develop leadership skills (Goleman, 2017). Emotionality is another important factor when it comes to

understanding and managing one's own emotions as well as dealing with emotions of others. Another study by Sindhuja in Indian context done among Indian Military Pilots revealed that optimum capacity to manage ones emotions is highly detrimental for the smooth and effective interpersonal functioning of aircrew. The study highlights its significance for a positive workplace performance. It even recommends employing emotional intelligence assessment during the selection process among pilot aspirants both in fixed wing and rotary wing of Indian Air force. Study propagates EI score as a good predictor of occupational performance. Further the study puts forth suggestion to incorporate suitable EI training programs for enhancing performance of pilots. (Sindhuja et al, 2013)

Being social is a necessity when it comes to team work and good peer relationships. In this regard, study on the role of EI in predicting networking behaviour was studied among local entrepreneurs in Spain. The basis of the study states that proactive networking behaviour triggered a support transition towards entrepreneurial careers. The findings indicated that the ability to regulate emotions influences their social networking behaviour that helps to manage and succeed in their business relationships. (Teresa et al, 2016). Another detriment leading to self motivation is self-efficacy and commitment. Employers normally expect a level of competency and commitment from their work force. Self-efficacy relates to a person's belief about one's own capacity of completely performing a course of action effectively (Bandura, 1993). Organizational commitment on the other hand refers to a kind of bonding where the employees feel a sense commitment towards the organization where they put their sincere efforts to the maximum to help attain organizational goals. (Raju & Srivastava, 1994). A study carried out among primary level school teachers revealed EI as an integral part on self-efficacy and organizational commitment (Sridhar & Badiei, 2008). A Previous study (Yost, 2006) too indicates that teacher self-efficacy plays a vital role in the process of teacher retention. It gave researchers new insights to focus on the significance of emotion-related parameters that affect self-efficacy and commitment towards ones job (Narayan & Narasimhan, 2016)

EI is found to have a positive relation with the overall job satisfaction. In most cases employee dissatisfaction, either on job or the job environment is the core reason for making a decision to quit. Hence, Emotional intelligence is a very significant aspect in the current business scenario. In a study conducted among employees of Manganese Ore India Ltd. (MOIL), the results revealed the relation between low EI score to poor job satisfaction that eventually resulted in poor performance forcing the employee to quit (Shahu, 2010). The essence of emotional intelligence lies in increased coping levels and better communication among peer groups. Team work is the most accepted mode to reap success in any organization. Coherent team work is possible only when one has a better ability to understand, manage and adapt positively within a team environment. A recent research study indicates that the combined emotional intelligence of team members had a significant influence on team task performance. The study also showed that EI level of a person can be increased through training (Murphy, 2009). Any employee of an organization strives to succeed in his career. Career success too is linked to EI. Though the term career success is perceived differently by each person, a generally accepted understanding is a career that keeps a person satisfied financially and emotionally with a drive and passion to continue and serve the organization. A person with a successful career finds happiness in his work and looks forward to go to his work environment each day. However, in any industry employees are susceptible to organizational politics, where some employees effectively tackle and move on whereas some others fall prey to such situations leading to stress and dissatisfaction. Emotional Intelligence is proved to be the effective ingredient here to overcome such a situation. A study by Sowmya and Panchanatham (2016) rolled out on Indian perspective to find the Relationship between Organizational Politics, Emotional Intelligence and Career Success proves this right.

Analysis on these different studies highlights the fact that EI is linked directly or indirectly to many significant factors that keeps an employee enjoy and stick on to his job. In this juncture, previous research establishing the relation between EI and employee retention are also analysed for this study. A research among Indian Defence personnel, under the Indian Air Force found that the Emotional Intelligence scores of Officers who got promoted to the upper level of command were higher than those who failed to get promoted. The officers who failed in successive promotions were found to resign voluntary from service.(Nidhi & Ashish, 2016) This shows the significance of EI on talent retention. Another study on employee retention in IT sector by Dhanalakshmi, Gurunathan & Vijayakumar (2016) revealed that any measures take in lieu of Talent Retention have a significant positive impact on Employee Engagement and thereby increased morale which may lessen the chance for the employees to quit. Employee mentoring sessions on EI can be considered as an effective talent retention tool as a measure to control employee turnover. A study among employees of software industry in Bangalore assessed the major issues leading to turnover and it throws light to many variables. Interestingly most of these variables fall on the emotional paradigm and not financial alone and hence could have been effectively dealt with a high level of emotional intelligence. The major area of concern was job pressure and high level of stress associated with it. Another area was where coping and adapting to new groups as it is quite common that employees are moved from one process to another. Monotony seemed to sets in very quickly which again shows a lack of nurturing the employees through proper retention strategies and all these

were main reasons for turnover (Thirulogasundaram & Kumar, 2012). From the detailed analysis of available literature it is apparently evident that Emotional Intelligence does have influence on workforce turnover. People high in emotional intelligence are found to easily cope with the social complexities of the workplace. They often try to lead and motivate his peers, and excel in his tasks. In fact, it has come to a situation where employers look upon Emotional Intelligence scores too during the hiring process. (Segal et al, 2018)

Analysis and Interpretation

The data obtained after administering the questionnaire where the respondents opined on a 7 point Likert scale were pooled in and analysed statistically. Analysis of the data is as below.

Table 1 The mean value of EI among the employees on rolls and resigned

Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error (Mean)
Employees on rolls	50	5.1453	.79107	.11187
Employees resigned	20	2.4817	.32865	.07349

From among the total responses collected, the mean value, standard deviation and standard error is calculated. From table 1, it can be seen that the mean value of EI of Employees on rolls at a value of 5.1453 is reasonably high when compared to the value of EI of Employees resigned with a mean score 2.4817

Table 2 Levene's Test and 'Student's' t-test on the EI scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
EI	Equal variances assumed	16.228	.000	14.515	68	.000	2.66367	.18352	2.29747	3.02987
	Equal variances not assumed			19.900	67.837	.000	2.66367	.13385	2.39656	2.93078

As from Table 2 two tailed t-test assuming equal variance, the mean values of EI scores between employees on rolls and those resigned is found to be statistically significant at 1% level.

Table 3 The mean value of four facets among the working and resigned employees

Factors	Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error (Mean)
Well-being	working	50	5.6867	.75114	.10623
	resigned	20	2.7167	.42954	.09605
Self-control	working	50	4.7767	1.11961	.15834
	resigned	20	2.2250	.51943	.11615
Emotionality	working	50	5.2125	1.08452	.15337
	resigned	20	2.6563	.45681	.10215
Sociability	working	50	4.7767	1.01553	.14362

	resigned	20	2.2083	.43888	.09814
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Even though the pattern of the mean value of the facets remain same between the employees there is a substantial difference in the mean scores as evident from the table 3. Among the four main factors of EI, Well-being factor shows highest mean value at 5.6867 for the employees on roll where as the value of resigned employees stood at 2.7167. As for the resigned employees the lowest score was for the Sociability factor at 2.2083. Mean values of all the four facets of EI is found to be reasonably high among the employees on rolls compared to those resigned from the organization. Ref: Table 3

Table 4 Levene's Test and 'Student's' t-test based on the four main factors

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Well-being	Equal variances assumed	7.040	.010	16.585	68	.000	2.97000	.17908	2.61266	3.32734
	Equal variances not assumed			20.739	59.431	.000	2.97000	.14321	2.68348	3.25652
Self-control	Equal variances assumed	12.355	.001	9.749	68	.000	2.55167	.26174	2.02938	3.07396
	Equal variances not assumed			12.994	66.365	.000	2.55167	.19637	2.15964	2.94369
Emotionality	Equal variances assumed	11.681	.001	10.151	68	.000	2.55625	.25181	2.05377	3.05873
	Equal variances not assumed			13.872	67.739	.000	2.55625	.18428	2.18851	2.92399
Sociability	Equal variances assumed	11.117	.001	10.874	68	.000	2.56833	.23619	2.09702	3.03965
	Equal variances not assumed			14.765	67.493	.000	2.56833	.17395	2.22118	2.91548

As per the results of students T test, the diff in mean values of all facets of EI is found to be statistically significant at 1% level between resigned and employees on roll.

Findings and conclusion

Study is carried out to measure the difference in EI scores to determine that the target group with comparatively low EI scores quit the job easily. This could in turn help the Human Resources Team to identify the importance of EI and initiate measures to improve EI of new hires to control or reduce turnover rate. Further to the analysis of data it is observed that there is a significant relation between emotional intelligence and employee turnover rate. The study highlights the importance of Emotional Intelligence and justifies how it can be favourable for organizations. The total score of EI is reasonably high among the employees on rolls of the company compared to those resigned. Similar is

the pattern in the case of 4 main facets of EI. Main factors Well-being, Self-control, Emotionality and Sociability is reasonably high among employees on roll.

An article in CNBC, points out that the chance of hiring employees who quit within 15 months of joining were 43 percent less. Such employees receive a low interview call back rate of 7.6 percent when compared to others with over 13.4 percent who stay in a job for over 15 months. (Umoh, 2018) This shows that both the employer and employee suffer when a new hire quits the job. Many employees quit before getting another offer of employment. This takes a toll on their financial viability too. Employees with high EI scores excels in understanding oneself and are capable of managing his emotions and display better coping attitude in the work environment. They tend to promote well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability. Thus they tend to stay longer with the company. Based on the findings, the study accepts the Hypothesis, that low emotional intelligence score is a determinant of high employee turnover. Thus it can be concluded from the study that there is a tendency among fresh recruits with lower EI to quit jobs.

Suggestions

Organizations have the option to take different approaches to inculcate EI to their workforce. Based on the organization strategy, EI evaluation could be made at the time of hiring itself. Other than aptitude, logical reasoning and technical tests conducted in general for different sectors, an assessment of EI scores could also be made. The list of selected candidates could be finalised considering the EI scores too. Alternately, for existing employees evaluation of EI scores and intervention techniques to impart EI could be initiated. Training programs with practise sessions are found to be very effective in imparting EI. As a thumb rule EI improves through practice and hence Training departments could work with employees and plan EI sessions as a continuous process for improvement. This eventually helps the employees boost up their perspective, become more self-aware, empathetic and observant which makes them easy to get along with peers. Once the employees start taking criticisms in a constructive manner rather than getting offended the workplace becomes free of tension and stress. Thus it paves way to a better workplace promoting team spirit and cohesion where no employee would easily think of quitting his job.

Scope for further research

The study opens new area for further research on the topic. This study was limited to the employees of a particular organization. Further studies could be carried out with different organisations across IT sector. Similarly the study could be extended to other sectors too, to find whether the significance between EI and employee turnover remains the same. The findings could be replicated with larger sample size, different industries and with level of experience to access the EI scores. The study could also be replicated keeping the variables controlled.

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