

Empathy and employee turnover intention: The impact assessment

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The aim of this study is to evaluate the effect empathy has on employee turnover. This study used correlational research design to investigate the relationship between empathy and employee turnover intention among the employees of hotel and hospitality industry operated within Kathmandu valley. The predictive variable employed in the analysis is empathy and employee turnover is dependent variable. This study's population was Nepalese hotel and hospitality industry employees. Sample size taken was 131 based on purpose reviewing literatures in the relevant subject. The findings were derived from primary data. Data were collected establishing questionnaire on the 5-point Likert scale. Questionnaires were administered via e-mail. Frequency and percentage is used to estimate empathy level. ANNOVA and t-tests were used to determine the disparity of opinion based on age and gender. The matrix of correlation has been used to analyze the relationship between the empathy with employee turnover intention. The study result shows a clear negative association between Empathy and Employee Turnover Intention. The message of this study is that management should develop strategies that will ensure the employment of Emotionally Intelligent Employees as well as build opportunities within the company that will improve the employee's interpersonal relationship to minimize the turnover of employees.

Keywords: Empathy, Employee Turnover, hotel and hospitality industry

Introduction

Soft skills, most importantly empathy have become more important today. But as literacy rate is very low in Nepal and most of the people (including many educated ones) are unaware about the importance of emotional intelligence at workplace; even organizations seem ignorant about the role of empathy in human resource management. Again, to the matter of concern, such research has never been conducted in the context of Nepalese organizations which covers the impact of empathy in employee turnover. This research is conducted to accomplish the gap seen in the Nepalese literature. And we believe this study would be of great benefit to Nepal because foreign researchers who have conducted research on emotional intelligence linked to human resource management field. Thus, researcher believes that there is a clear connection between empathy and employee turnover in the country's organisations.

Tourism is a thriving industry. Hence the companies are nowadays very worried about recruitment process. With decent academic results and job experience, they hire highly intelligent people (Pfeffer, 1998). Candidates are given less priority to testing the emotional intelligence. People with high academic scores may have low emotional intelligence, i.e. they may lack empathy. It can contribute to numerous organizational issues such as low work satisfaction, low team spirit, weak group unity, low morale etc. (Golman, 2000). There can be plenty of problems with employee turnover because people working under the same roof cannot understand each other and do not care about understanding each other (Price, 1977). Problems of staff turnover are found in most organisations (Becker, & Huselid, 2006). Hence, the main aim of this study is to assess the impact of Empathy on Employees turnover.

Literature Review

The concept 'empathy' was invented by Titchener, an adaptation of the German word Einfühlung (Wipsee, 1986), more than a hundred years ago. Empathy, often described as the ability to feel the emotions of other people, helps us to understand beyond someone's obvious surface actions by placing ourselves in the shoes of others

and taking an active interest in their concerns (Goleman, 2000; Mencl & May, 2009). Empathy skills help leaders to better understand the views and viewpoints of other peoples, making the work atmosphere more pleasant and efficient, says Voss, Gruber, and Reppel (2010). Marques (2010) states that, To achieve leadership performance, leaders need to build empathy skills to their full potential as empathy strengthens leadership by providing leaders with a sense of listening, serving their followers, and a better understanding of community interrelationships. Followers would therefore be more likely to invest energy and effort in their success towards the community.

Organizational turnover has often been defined as "the ratio of the number of organizational members left over the period considered to be divided by the total number of persons in that organization over the period" (Price, 1977) and is sometimes detrimental to an organization's successful operation. At the other hand, Adams and Beehr (1998) offered a description of organizational turnover "turnover means 'leaving any job of any length'" (Feldman, 1994) and is usually thought to be accompanied by continued daily jobs. Likewise, administrators evaluate the turnover of workers as the whole cycle associated with filling a vacancy. Each when a job is filled, either willingly or involuntarily, the hiring and training of a new employee is required. The process of replacement is known as turnover (Woods, 1995). This term, employee turnover, is also often used in attempts to assess employee ties within a company as they quit, regardless of reason (Gustafson, 2002).

An organization's optimum effectiveness and productivity does not depend solely on its financial capital or the best strategy, but also on the degree to which and how it uses its human resources (Hosain,2017).

As Hosain has mentioned, an organization's effectiveness and productivity depend on its human capital. We should recognize that an organization's success depends on the proper use of human resources, since only human beings organize other resources. And a manager should develop a good relationship with his / her workers to make the human resources work for the organization's betterment. Also if the manager has empathy ability then that can better communicate with his / her employees. Empathy allows us to better understand people, and to communicate with them.

Empathy is a critical component of the emotional intelligence (EI) of workers in influencing their work behaviour, since "empathy is the ability to see the world from the viewpoint of another person and the ability to respond to what someone else may think and feel about a situation" regardless of how that view may vary from their own experience (Stein & Book, 2011). Empathy is an individual's ability to take into account the viewpoint of other people and to consider their emotions, and to be mindful of their thoughts and experiences. Employees need to build an environment of inquiry and transparency, persistence and motivation in order to foster learning and cultivate attitude development, and all these are the components of empathy (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). In a study focused on the performance and EI of the employee (Osisioma, Nzewi & Nnabuife, 2016) it was concluded that Empathy has a clear inverse relationship with the turnover rate of employees. Management will aim for a wide-ranging organizational approach to getting workers closer to each other, such as arranging get-together gatherings, end-of-year celebrations and other social events, so that they can better understand each other because that will go a long way to raising awareness of others and connect well with others.

Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, and de Chermont (2003) noted that the incentive to switch from one company to another is caused by the organizational chaos that may be associated with the employees 'hostile actions towards each other, which may have been created due to lack of empathy.

Choerudin, (2016) concluded in that turnover aim for workers is to retain emotional stability. Factors influencing the purpose of the employee's turnover can have a wide range of factors such as the labor market, time period with the company, work level satisfaction and above all the key reasons in EI that are the ability of a person to consider certain emotions. When workers cannot recognize each other's feelings, then work satisfaction will be reduced and turnover rate increased. Empathy, as an aspect of EI, is therefore one of the deciding factors in the purpose of employee turnover. Hosain,(2018)'s study showed that employees respond with a decision to voluntarily leave their jobs in response to individual subjective EI experiences. Therefore, through group participation, leaders (managers) may build an atmosphere in which workers feel they are part of, thus improving their EI status in a positive way, which in effect decreases their turnover intentions even

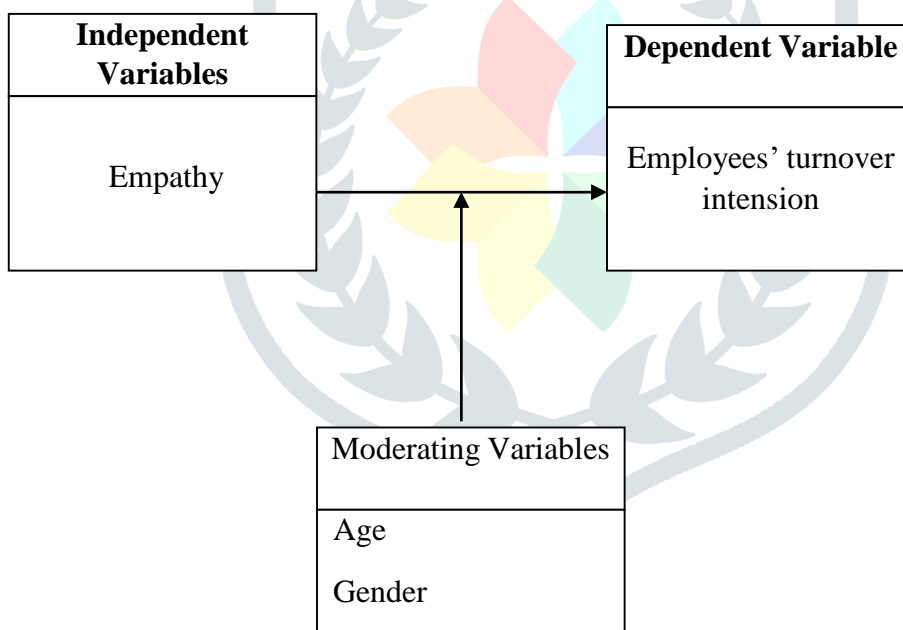
during the time of transition period. Since Empathy is the dimension of EI, empathy also has a greater influence in the research conducted above, suggesting empathy can also play an effective role in reducing employee turnover.

Older adults displayed greater pro-social behavior than younger adults because of the induction of empathy. There was a positive correlation between state emotional empathy ratings and pro-social actions in older adults, but not younger adults, and tentative evidence of higher rates of emotional empathy in older adults with higher cognitive empathy that contributed to lower intended turnover (Beadle, Sheehan, Dalhben, & Gutches, 2015).

Employees with higher levels of empathy are likely to be more customer focused. Empathy helps company workers to consider the interests of consumers when providing services, and resolve their special needs. Thanks to their higher degree of empathy that contributes to customer orientation, these workers are expected to perform better, which is a major determinant of work satisfaction. And the higher employee satisfaction rates reduces the organizations 'turnover (Pandey, Singh, Saini, & Kalyanaram, 2017).

In a report, Krishnakumar (2008) found no support for the hypothesis that EI would have a negative impact on turnover intention. Empathy as the factor of the EI may not have played any role in the intention to build turnover. As various studies find the contrary result, this study was carried out to evaluate the impact of Empathy as an aspect of Emotional Intelligence in the turnover intention of employees. Based on the above literatures and discussion following theoretical framework has been developed:

Figure 1. Relationship between empathy and employee turnover intention



Research Methodology

The research method used in this analysis is correlational research method to find the connection between empathy and the turnover of the employees. The population of this study is hotel workers, and the employees of hospitality business working within Kathmandu Valley. The hotel and hospitality industry has been chosen because they are the significant contributors to Nepal's GDP and, most importantly, employee turnover is substantially higher in those sectors. Tourism is the focus field of Nepal's plans and policies. Hotel and hospitality are the major sector for growth of the tourism sector. The study is conducted with the help of primary data and sample of 131 was taken. We have taken this sample reviewing the article "Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Employees Turnover Rate in FMCG Organizations" published in Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences where only 40 samples were taken to study turnover which indicates that even studies with small samples may help to identify theoretically provocative ideas that merit further exploration (Siddiqui, 2013). Primary data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires through

Google forms. For identifying the group opinion difference related to independent variable (empathy) on the basis of gender t-test was used and one way ANOVA evaluated the difference of opinion between empathy & age. Mean and frequency were used to assess the position.. Pearson's correlation coefficient for determining the relationship between the purpose of empathy & employee turnover intention as statistical tools for analyzing the data.

Analysis and Results

Table 1. Profile of respondents based on gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	62	47.3
Female	69	52.7
Total	131	100.0

Table 1 lists the respondent's frequency distribution by gender. It means that the result of this analysis can be generalized across gender because the sample is tentatively in proportion to the national distribution of the population.

Table 2. Age wise profile of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-25	72	55.0
26-35	23	17.6
36-45	19	14.5
46 and above	17	13.0
Total	131	100.0

Table 2 lists the respondent's frequency distribution by generation. It indicates that most of the respondents fell within the Youth Group as described by Nepalese policy, i.e. 18-40 years. Therefore, the study results are more useful for understanding the degree of empathy and the young employee turnover intention.

Table 3. Comparison of Empathy by Gender

Gender	N	Mean
Male	62	4.0452
Female	69	4.1362

Table 3 indicates the average degree of female empathy is higher than the males but not much different. It means the females are more empathetic in average. The explanation for this may be that by nature females are more soft-hearted and empathic.

Table 4. T-test between gender and empathy

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	SE Mean
Male	131	1.85	1.3	0.13
Female	131	1.65	1.2	0.12

T= 1.13

p= 0.002

DF= 129

P- value is lower than the significance and t-test value is greater than the recommended value (tabulated value). It indicates that the empathy-related male and female perception is different. It means that both male and female do not equally take the outcome of empathy on turnover intention.

Table 5. Comparison of Empathy by Age

Age	N	Mean
20-25	72	3.9278
26-35	23	4.1826
36-45	19	3.9368
46 and above	17	4.8471
Total	131	4.0931

The table 5 shows that average level of empathy of old employees is higher in comparison to the younger ones.

Table 6. Empathy and Age

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.280	3	4.093	10.621	.000
Within Groups	48.944	127	.385		
Total	61.224	130			

p-value (0.000) is significant at 1 percent level of significance because p-value is less than alpha (0.01). Thus, it can be said that there is significant relationship or association between age and empathy. It can also be said that there is difference in opinion between or among the groups developed based on age.

Relationship between empathy and employee turnover intention

Table 6 displays the coefficients of Pearson's correlation, meaning significance, and number of cases with non-missing values. For empathy and employee turnover the correlation coefficient is -0.863. Since -0.863 is comparatively small compared to 1, and p-value is .000 which is less than degree of significance (.05). This thus suggests that empathy and the turnover of workers are associated strongly and negatively with each other. It shows that when empathy increases, the tendency of employees to turnover intention decreases.

Table 6. Relationship between empathy and employee turnover intention

		Empathy	Employees Turnover
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	1	-.863**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	131	131
Employees Turnover	Pearson Correlation	-.863**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	131	131

** . Correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion and Conclusion

A new conceptualization of empathy was developed on the basis of careful review of previous conceptualizations, empirical proof, and arguments made in the field by different scholars. To date, few writers have addressed the challenge in such a manner. By developing an interpretation of empathy from the results of the study performed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, a negative result (-0.863) has been obtained, which indicates a clear negative association between Empathy and Employee Turnover. The consequence of this is that as the organisation's empathy increases, the turnover of workers decreases. This is, the pace at which the employee exits the company should decrease as the organisations' level of empathy rises and vice versa. This is in line with results from (Shahhosseini, Silong, Ismaill, and Uli, 2012), which suggested that EI plays a significant role in the relationship at work and thus influences the extent of the organization's personal and industrial conflicts. This was also corroborated by Furnham's observations (2012), as he concluded that emotional intelligence has a lot to do with how individuals cope with challenging job circumstances. ANOVA reveals the difference of opinion on the aim for empathy and turnover. The disparity in age and gender based opinion. This research reveals that female empathy levels are higher than males. But the results are incompatible with our results. This is attributable to specific research background as those study were carried out in the developed country. Similarly this research shows that age and empathy have a major relationship or connection. It means that the average empathy level of older workers is higher than the younger ones. This result is consistent with the (Crosby & Fiona, 2015) results. The explanation for this agreement could be the common socio-cultural context and the profile of the respondents, as well as the two study areas.

Different theses relating to empathy and employee turnover were developed in the field of HRM. Pandey (2019) found that the robust exchange of knowledge helps to minimize staff turnover. Through his book 'The Human Equation,' Pfeffer (1998) suggested that the efficient exchange of information tends to minimize employee turnover. This thesis supports the results of other studies in different contexts and research areas. Guest (1997) indicated that the sharing of information does not directly affect the intention of turnover but the attitude of the people, culture should mediate the sharing of information and the intention of turnover to achieve desired results. Thus, robust further study is required to justify the findings.

Research Implications

Managerial Implications

It is inferred from the results of the study that Empathy has a clear inverse relationship with the turnover rate of the employees. This provides many managerial implications. First to mention here is management should look for an organizational wide approach of bringing the employees closer to each other like organizing get together activities, end of the year parties and other social events so that they can understand themselves better as this will go a long way in increasing their awareness of others and relate well with others. Secondly the organization should institute a reward system where employees that exhibit outstanding empathy will be provided that helps to maintain engender group cohesion and understanding. Lastly, hiring should not rely on IQ alone; efforts should also be made to assess the emotional level of intelligence for industrial harmony among such employees. This research provides the administrators of various organisations with imputations to the recruiting and socialization policies.

Future Research Implications

More research is also required to examine all the variables that affect the attitudes and behaviors of people related to promoting employee success in relation to empathy resulting in employee turnover. This research is performed inside selected industry organisations. Further work may therefore be carried out which increases the scope of the study. Similarly, the study did not attempt to examine the impact of employee turnover had on empathy. And, despite this, further work may be investigated. In order to validate the results of this study, further work can consider the various hypotheses linked to emotional intelligence.

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