

ROLE OF SUPERVISOR & COWORKER SUPPORT AND GROUP COHESIVENESS ON EMPLOYEE INTENTION TO STAY

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Abstract: Employee turnover research had been a priority for most industry captains and HR practitioners. With the business environment becoming more competitive, employees in today's organizations are hard to be lured only by attractive compensation and benefit package offers. Recent research had indicated the growing importance of more and more contextual antecedent factors influencing employee intention to stay in organizations. Prior literature had supported the finding that employees were giving priorities to more and more contextual issues as compared to organizational and psychological factors influencing their intention to stay. Out of the contextual issues there is hardly any research done exclusively on the role of social factors (antecedents) like supervisor support, coworker support and group cohesiveness on employee intention to stay. Taking this as a research gap an attempt has been made in the present study considering the response of 300 (Middle level Operations) employees working in the Information Technology companies based in the NCR of Delhi. The data collected from the respondents were fed for structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS 20. The study came out with an empirical model depicting the interrelationship between supervisor support, group cohesiveness and employee intention to stay. Although supervisor support and coworker support had significant interrelationships with employee intention to stay, the empirical model depicts that supervisor support played an important role mediating group cohesiveness and employee intention to stay.

Key Words: Supervisor Support, Coworker Support, Group Cohesiveness, Social Antecedents, Employee Intention to Stay, Information Technology organizations

1. INTRODUCTION

Industry captains and HR experts had long been pursuing the challenge of retaining their key employees and understanding the reasons behind their intention to stay or quit. The issue over the last few years had become quite daunting for most management experts with large scale changes occurring in the business horizon of which the Information Technology sector had been going through large scale structural changes and challenges. Hence studies exploring factors explaining employee turnover behavior had gained attention.

Most studies like those conducted by Stauss, Chojnacki, Decker, and Hoffman (2001) indicated that employee intentions to stay were closely associated with their psychological perspectives like likings, identity, involvement, trust, readiness to be re-associated with their organizations. The other angle provided for such research was in terms of exploring various organizational factors influencing employee intention to stay. Authors like Chaminade, (2007) as for example had rightly pointed out that employees needed a conducive organizational environment which contributed to their engagement for the longer perspective. Abelson (1993) in this regard expressed employee turnover as one of the most important strategic priorities for any organization. In a very recent report prepared by Future Workplace and Kronos and published by Fortune magazine (Schawbel, D., 2016) it was indicated that 87% of employers perceived that improving the effectiveness of people being retained was a crucial priority for their companies. The relevance of this important issue is has been described to be more challenging considering the growing unstable or volatile business scenarios (Caplan and Teese, 1997). The importance of ensuring highly skilled employees by organizations had been pointed out in the study conducted by Rappaport, Bancroft and Okum (2003). Important evidence regarding the consequences of employee attrition could be put forward from the studies conducted by Abbasi and Hollman (2000). Several authors like Griffeth and Hom (2000, 2001) had discussed the relevance of considering employee intentions to stay as indicators for improving organizational competitiveness.

II. RATIONALE OF STUDY

Researchers like Ghiselli, Lopa and Bai, (2001) had frequently used employee intention to stay as an important predictor of employee retention in an organization. However most of these studies like those of Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, and Erez, (2001) hardly gave any pure insights into the involvement of social antecedents in explaining employee intentions to stay.

Although employee intention to stay had been discussed and researched in the light of mostly psychological and organizational factors, offlate the contextual factors such as work environment, peer relations had been found to be increasingly important for influencing employee intention to stay. Authors like Milkovich and Boudreau (1997) were one among such researchers whose study had highlighted the importance of contextual factors. This led other authors to study other contextual issues such manager-subordinate relations, pay (Milkovich & Boudreau, 1997); lack of development opportunities (Baron, Hannon & Burton, 2001), commitments & responsibilities at home. The role of social antecedents in employee intention to stay in the Indian context had hardly gathered any attention except those explored by Mutsuddi, I, Sinha, C., (2017a, 2017b). These studies had given a clear indication that social factors do play important contributing roles for influencing employee intention to stay. The studies conducted by Mutsuddi, I & Sinha, C (2017a, 2017b) had also indicated the existing gap in existing literature on social antecedents of intention to stay in employees.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 Social antecedents

Social factors influencing employee performance had emerged as important considerations for employee intention to stay considering the role of more and more contextual factors influencing employee retention perspectives in organizations. Social factors or social antecedents could be indicated as issues people behavior and performance in the given social environment of an organization. The study conducted by Holtom, Mitchell, Lee and Eberly (2008) also established the relevance of social factors in employee organizational life. The recent studies conducted by Mutsuddi, I., and Sinha, C., (2017a, 2017b) had similar justifications.

3.1.1 Social Support

Earlier studies conducted by Thoits, P. A. (1995) revealed that social support had a major role as a contributing social antecedent by influencing employee relationships at the work and helping them to cope job related stress. Virtanen I.A., Isotalus P., (2011) had justified that social support contributed to the well-being of employees by acting as an amalgamating and remedial perspective leading to their happiness and satisfaction at the workplace. Sheldon Cohen (2004), House, James S. and Robert L. Kabarl (1985) had described social support as the ability of people around employees to provide psychological and instrumental assistance facilitating their effective performance and coping job stress. Kasprzak, E., (2010) in this regard elaborated social support with regards to employee work relationships with their peers (coworkers), superiors (supervisors) and even those received from their family members and friends. Boyun Woo and Packianathan Chelladurai (2012) on the other hand had indicated that perceived social support of an employee could be described as the combination of coworker support, supervisor support, and organizational support. House, J. S., Kahn, R. L., McLeod, J. D., & Williams, D. (1985) had indicated that social support was needed mainly for seeking resource support mainly in terms of instrumental resources, informational resources, and emotional resources. Considering the above literature the present study assumed that employees needed organizational social support from their supervisors and coworkers.

3.1.1.1 Supervisor Support

Researchers like Stephanie Payne and Ann Huffman (2005) had justified that supervisor support was an important antecedent factor mediating people relationships in an organizational set ups. The research study conducted by Chien-Cheng Chen Su-Fen Chiu (2008) had shown that supervisor support had an important contribution towards employee commitment and performance. Further the study conducted by Kroon Brigitte and Freese Charissa (2013) indicated that employee turnover intentions has negative interrelationship with support for career development and supervisor support. This clearly established the importance of supervisor support influencing employee turnover intentions. Another recent study conducted by Alshutwi S. (2017) had indicated that employees required to constantly referring to their supervisors for getting on-the-job assistance, advice, feedback, and information in order to perform as per the expectations of the organization. The research conducted by William Gentry, Karl Kuhnert and Scott Mondore (2006) also indicated that supervisor support for blue-collar part time employees had significant interrelationship with their intention to stay.

3.1.1.2 Co-worker Support

Coworker support has been claimed to be an important consideration for the successful worklife of employees in any organization. The study conducted by Greenglass, Burke, & Konarski, (1997) indicated that coworker support was needed by people in the form of instrumental, informational and emotional support for satisfying performance of employees in the organization. In this regard early research evidence as those of Fiedler et al. (1976) could be contended. These researchers found that coworker support were expressed as friendly ties, mutual acceptance of employees, resulting in trust, association and comrade among the group members. Authors like Sheldon Cohen (2004) contended that employees needed instrumental support of their colleagues in terms of receiving material or technical assistance for successful completion of their day to day tasks. On the other hand informational support was required to seek necessary information to perform pertaining duties and jobs. On the other hand emotional support was needed to develop a sense of belongingness, empathy and moral support. Hamilton (2007) on the other hand showed that with more and more coworker support and comrade, employees experienced job satisfaction. This also mitigated their job stress and work tension related issues. Further the study conducted by Jungert (2012) indicated that co-worker support had significant influence on the self-efficacy and performance of employees. Offlate the research study of Selvarajan, et al (2016) indicated that co-worker support was important for influencing employee work conflicts and interpersonal relationships.

3.1.2 Group Cohesiveness

Authors like Urien, B., (2015). while establishing the interrelationship between Group cohesiveness in employee retention studies had found that the variable came out as an important factor responsible for managing organizational and job performance of employees which influenced their decisions to stay. Similar themes could also be seen in the research conducted by Evans & Dion, (2012); Rico, Alcover, & Taberner, (2011); Smith, Arthur, Callow, Hardy, & Williams, (2013). These researchers had indicated that group cohesiveness emerged as one of the most important contributing factors contributing to successful performance of the employees assigned to groups. Further, the research conducted by Xiao-Ping Chen, Simon, Naumann and Schaubroeck (2005) indicated that out of various group factors namely Group Leadership Support, Group Cohesiveness, Group Homogeneity and affective tone of group members were considered to be important for eliciting group citizenship behavior among the group members. They also found that this further influenced the overall performance and effectiveness of the group and most importantly turnover intentions of the group members. Another important research conducted by Angela Li et al (2014) had also indicated that group cohesiveness contributed for reducing the was negative effects of job stress at work and enhancing organizational commitment of the employees.

IV. Objectives of the Study

Based on the above literature review the following objectives were developed, namely:

- To study whether supervisor support, co-worker support and group cohesiveness influenced employee intention to stay in selected Information Technology organizations in and around the NCR of Delhi.
- To study the interrelationship between supervisor support, co-worker support and group cohesiveness influencing employee intention to stay.

V. Hypothesis

Based on the above literature and objectives, the following hypotheses were established, namely:

- H_1 : Supervisor support, co-worker support and group cohesiveness had significant influence on employee intention to stay.
- H_2 : Supervisor relation, co-worker relation and group cohesiveness had significant interrelationships with one another.

VI Methods

6.1 Data

Responses were collected from 300 (Middle level Operations) employees working in the Information Technology companies based in the NCR of Delhi. Of the respondents 27.7% belonged to the age group of 26-30 years and 72.3% belonged to the age group of 31-35 years. 1.0% of the respondents had 0-1 year experience followed by 34.7% having 2-5 years and 64.3% having 5 to 10 years of work experience. 63% of the respondents were male and 37% were female.

6.2 Procedures

The data were collected by instrumenting a questionnaire using the survey method where the employees from various Information Technology companies in and around the NCR of Delhi were contacted by the use of personal contacts. The respondents included in the study (sample) were randomly picked from a list of probable candidates for the survey coded with serial numbers. Although around 360 questionnaires were distributed only 300 responses were found to be usable for further analysis.

6.3 Measures

The questionnaire used a five point Likert scale (1 for “Strongly Disagree” to 5 for “Strongly Agree”). The respondents were asked to respond to the items depicting the measures used in this study. The instrument (Appendix 1) used was aimed to identify respondent opinion on their intention to stay pertaining to three social antecedents namely, supervisor support, co-worker support, group cohesiveness and lastly intention to stay. Each construct had 5 items as depicted in Appendix 1.

VII. Results

Data collected from the survey were first fed into the spreadsheet using SPSS version 20. For instrument validity Cronbach Alpha scores for each construct namely, supervisor support, coworker support, group cohesiveness and intention to stay were computed (Table 1) and were found to be well within the acceptable values (>0.65). Table 1 further depicts the descriptive statistics of the items pertaining to each construct in the form of their mean scores and standard deviation.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Items (measures) & Cronbach Alpha Score for the constructs

| Constructs | Items (Measures) | Valid N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Cronbach Alpha |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------|------|----------------|----------------|
| Supervisor Support (SS) | SS1 | 300 | 4.45 | .530 | .69 |
| | SS2 | 300 | 4.63 | .504 | |
| | SS3 | 300 | 4.63 | .543 | |
| | SS4 | 300 | 4.62 | .556 | |
| | SS5 | 300 | 4.57 | .565 | |
| Coworker Support (CS) | CS1 | 300 | 4.61 | .529 | .71 |
| | CS2 | 300 | 4.49 | .539 | |
| | CS3 | 300 | 4.65 | .505 | |
| | CS4 | 300 | 4.59 | .532 | |
| | CS5 | 300 | 4.64 | .521 | |
| Group Cohesiveness (GC) | GC1 | 300 | 4.44 | .644 | .68 |
| | GC2 | 300 | 4.43 | .600 | |
| | GC3 | 300 | 4.43 | .648 | |
| | GC4 | 300 | 4.36 | .652 | |
| | GC5 | 300 | 4.38 | .592 | |
| Intention to Stay (ITS) | ITS1 | 300 | 4.66 | .515 | .704 |
| | ITS2 | 300 | 4.73 | .445 | |
| | ITS3 | 300 | 4.75 | .456 | |
| | ITS4 | 300 | 4.72 | .450 | |
| | ITS5 | 300 | 4.64 | .482 | |

In order to compute the structural fit the construct variables were fed to form the structural model estimates using AMOS with Intention to Stay (ITS) as the dependent variable. Supervisor Support, Co-worker Support, and Group Cohesiveness were fed as independent variables. It is worth mentioning that the maximum likelihood of the estimates used for analyzing the fit indices for the constructs was expected to be univariately normal.

7.1 Regression Estimates & Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis set above were tested by using regression estimates using structured equation modeling (SEM) as depicted in Table 2 & 3 respectively.

Table 2: Regression Estimates depicting interrelationships between dependent and independent variables

| | | | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|-----|------|----|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| ITS | <--- | SS | .214 | .086 | 2.485 | .013 |
| ITS | <--- | CS | .139 | .072 | 1.920 | .05 |
| ITS | <--- | GC | -.170 | .111 | -1.536 | .125 |

NB: The critical ratio (CR) is the commonly recommended basis for testing statistical significance of structured equation model components with CR values beyond ± 1.96 establishing significance

It is clear from Table 2 that, supervisor support (CR score 2.485; $p \leq 0.05$) and coworker support (CR score 1.920; $p \leq 0.05$) had significant interrelationships with employee intention to stay. On the other hand group cohesiveness had no significant interrelationship with employee intention to stay. This finding depicts that supervisor and coworker support were considered to be important contributors of employee intention to stay in organizations.

Table 3: Regression Estimates depicting interrelationships between dependent and independent variables

| | | | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|----|------|----|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| SS | <--> | CS | -.003 | .010 | -.276 | .782 |
| CS | <--> | GC | .001 | .005 | .247 | .805 |
| SS | <--> | GC | .026 | .009 | 2.878 | .004 |

NB: The critical ratio (CR) is the commonly recommended basis for testing statistical significance of structured equation model components with CR values beyond ± 1.96 establishing significance

Table 3 depicts the regression estimates pertaining to the interrelationships between group cohesiveness and the social support variables namely supervisor and coworker support as well as the interrelationship between supervisor support and coworker support. Table 3 clearly shows that Group Cohesiveness had significant interrelationships with supervisor support (CR score 2.878, $p \leq 0.05$). As group cohesiveness had no significant interrelationship with coworker support and intention to stay (Table 2), its role as a mediating factor to influence employee intention to stay could not be established clearly. In the same perspective as supervisor and coworker support were not significantly interrelated the emerging empirical model remains partially explained (Fig 1.1 & 1.2).

Based on the regression estimates depicted from Tables 2 & 3, the empirical model depicting (Fig 1.2) the path of interrelationship of the variables could be established. The role of group cohesiveness in employee intention to stay remains partially explained as it only found to have significant interrelationship with supervisor support. However based on the results depicted in Fig 1.2 it could be indicated that group cohesiveness had a significant influence on the supervisor support sought by the employees which further influenced their intentions to stay. As coworker support alone had significant interrelationship with intention to stay, its role in the emerging empirical model could not be strongly justified with the context of its involvement with either group cohesiveness and or supervisor support.

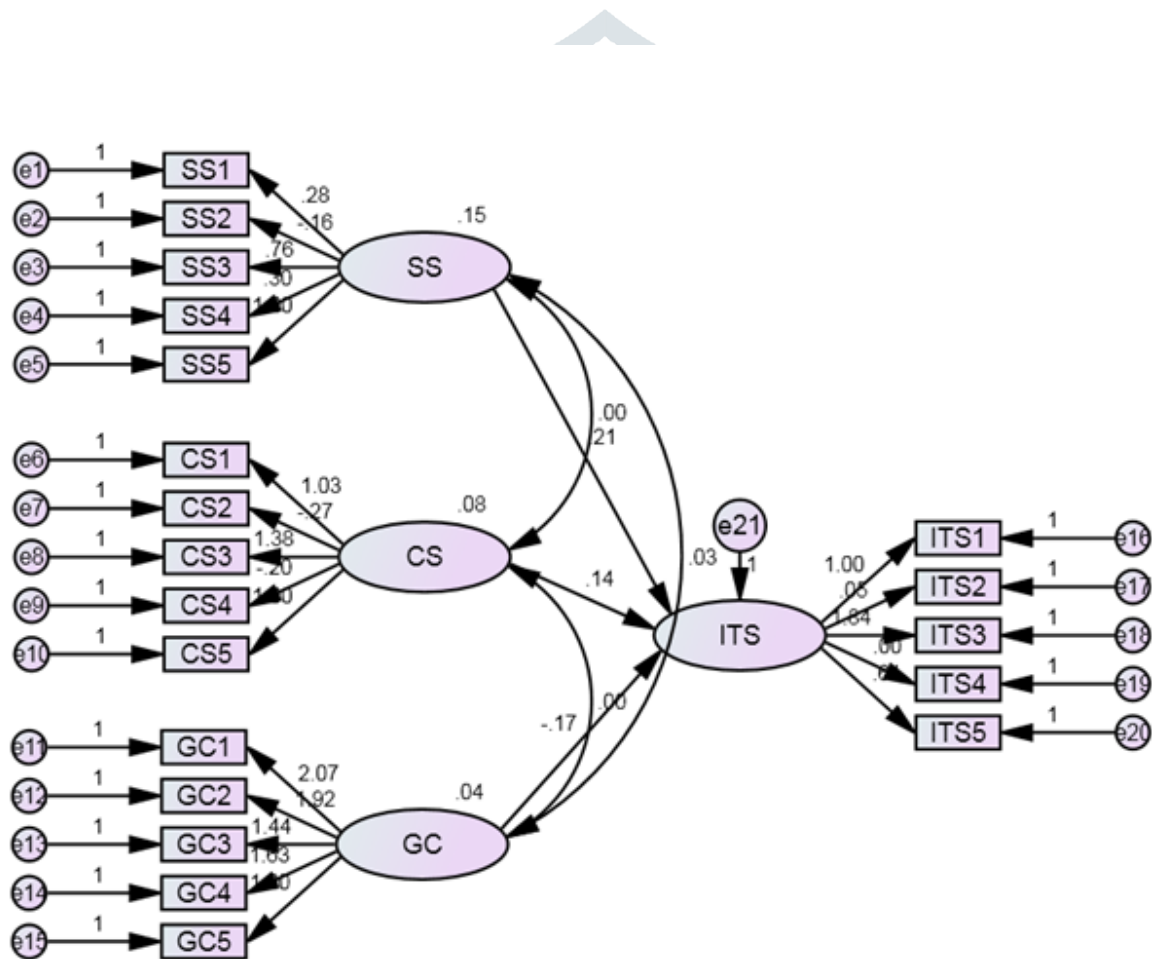


Fig 1.1: The empirically tested model

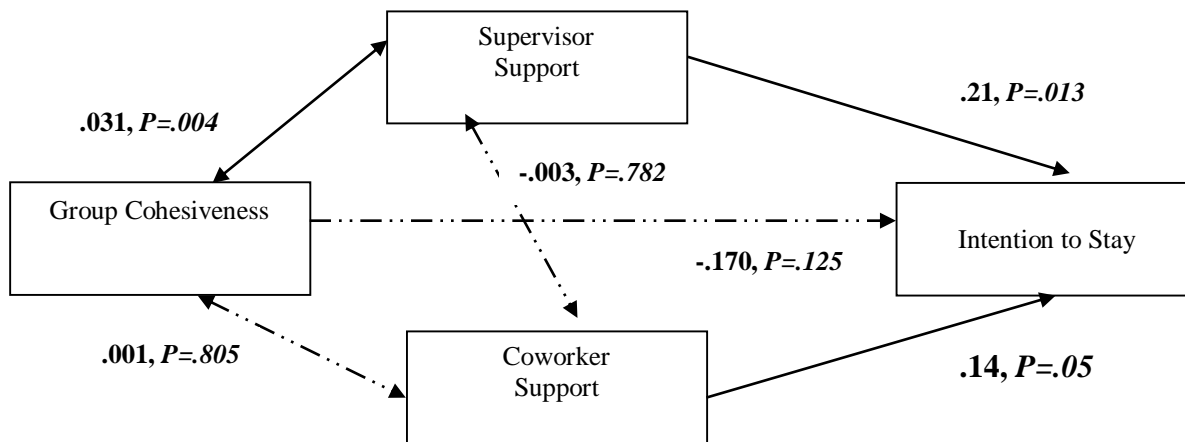


Fig 1.2: The empirically tested model

7.2 Model Fit

In order to assess the fitness of the emerging empirical model Model Fit indices were computed using AMOS 20. Table 4 indicates the various Model Fit indices extracted from AMOS. For the analysis, Goodness-of-fit Index (GFI) and Root Mean Square Error of approximation (RMSEA) scores were considered as “Absolute Fit Measures” (Byrne 2001). Whereas other Model Fitness indices such as Normed λ^2 score, Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI) and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) were subsequently computed to support the claims for the model fit. Table 4 illustrates the overall fit indices computed for the proposed (default) model.

Table 4: Overall Fit Indices used for testing the structural model

| Fit Indices | RMR | GFI | AGFI | RMSEA | Normed λ^2 (CMIN/df) |
|---------------|------|-----|------|-------|------------------------------|
| Default Model | .030 | .95 | .93 | 0.08 | 3.526 |

It is evident from Table 4 that the GFI (.95), AGFI (.93), and RMSEA (0.08) scores are above the standard recommended values for said indices establishing the fitness of the proposed model (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black 1998). Normed chi-square score of 3.526 was also found to be well above the acceptable value. The model partially establishes the path showing that group cohesiveness influenced employee intention to stay through supervisor support.

VIII. DISCUSSIONS

The present research had established an empirical model depicting the interrelationship between supervisor support, group cohesiveness and employee intention to stay. The model depicts that supervisor support plays an important role mediating group cohesiveness and employee intention to stay.

8.1 Supervisor Support & Employee Intention to Stay

The interrelationship between supervisor support and turnover intentions in employees had been established in several management research studies. The research conducted by Chien-Cheng Chen and Su-Fen Chiu (2008) indicated that supervisor support was associated with organizational commitment behavior of employees' OCB indirectly by influencing their job satisfaction and person-organization fit in the organization. Brigitte Kroon and Charissa Freese (2013) indicated in their research that supervisor support played an important role to decrease turnover intentions of employees by facilitating career development motivation. Zhenxiong Chen, (2001) previously had justified that supervisor relations had significant association with employee outcomes in terms of their performance and job satisfaction. Gentry, W.A., (2007) indicated that supervisory-support climate was an important consideration in the retention perspective of part time employees. These research evidences strongly contend and justifies the finding of the present study depicting significant interrelationship between supervisor support and employee intention to stay.

8.2 Group Cohesiveness & Supervisor Support

The present study had revealed an interesting finding depicting the significant interrelationship between group cohesiveness and supervisor support. To justify this finding the findings of the study conducted by Xiao-Ping Chen, Simon, Naumann and Schaubroeck (2005) could be contended. This research had indicated that out of various group factors namely Group Leadership Support, Group Cohesiveness, Group Homogeneity and affective tone of group members were considered to be important for eliciting group citizenship behavior among the group members. This finding justifies that there could an important contribution of group leadership from the perspective of group members as well as supervisors influencing group cohesiveness and employee performance in their groups. Steinhardt MA, Dolbier CL, Gottlieb NH, McCalister KT. (2003) indicated that supervisor support, and group cohesiveness played important role resulting in higher employee job satisfaction in organizations. Shmuel Stashevsky, Meni Koslowsky, (2006) in another study had indicated that transformational leadership had a significant association with team cohesiveness of employees further justifying the role of leaders and supervisors for facilitating group cohesiveness.

8.3 Coworker Support and Employee Intention to Stay

Data analysis in the study had further revealed significant interrelationship of coworker support and employee intention to stay. Dorothea Wahyu Ariani (2015), in a recent study came out with an empirical model depicting the psychological conditions pertaining to co-worker relations among employees and their engagement with the organization. She-Cheng Lin and Jennifer Shu-Jen Lin (2011) in another research showed that job satisfaction played an important role as a mediating factor influencing coworker relationship and employee organizational commitment. The study conducted by Paul Chou (2015) showed that organizational social support at had an important role for influencing the subjective well-being of employees in an organization. However in the context of the present research the intervening role of coworker support remains partially unexplained as the former hardly had any significant interrelationships with supervisor support and group cohesiveness.

IX LIMITATIONS

The present research has been conducted involving only 300 respondents working in information technology organizations in and around the NCR of Delhi which opens up its scope of conducting similar researches in other IT hubs across the country. The study had explored only three social factors like supervisor support, coworker support and group cohesiveness. This opens up the opportunity for exploring other social antecedents affecting employee intention to stay.

X PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study had clearly established the importance of social antecedents as essential contributors of employee retention perspectives in Information Technology organizations in the NCR of Delhi which had been overlooked by prior authors. The findings of the study depicting the mediating role of supervisor support influencing group cohesiveness and employee intention to stay calls for attention from policy makers and HR captains to facilitate and improve leadership and interpersonal capabilities of supervisors and managers so as to create engaging work relationships among employees and enhance group cohesion at the workplace. HR policies in this regard could be aimed to bring about transformation in managerial and supervisory roles facilitating an engaging social environment in the organization.

11 CONCLUSION

The present research had portrayed the importance of the mediating role of supervisor support influencing group cohesiveness and employee intention to stay in Information Technology (IT) organizations located in and around the NCR of Delhi. The study has highlighted important consideration emphasizing policy makers and supervisors facilitating an engaging social work environment which could instill group cohesiveness of employees working in teams or groups. Co-worker support had also been found to be important for employee intention to stay which could hardly be ignored considering the importance of a likeable and satisfying social environment in the organization. The empirical model depicted in the study would facilitate HR captains and policy makers to bring about changes in managerial and supervisory practices in the organization, facilitate an environment of support, cohesion and teamwork which would have important implications on employee intention stay.

APPENDIX 1

Items used in the Instrument

| Sl. No. | Items | References |
|---------|---|---|
| 1. | At present I am not having any thoughts regarding quitting this organization (ITS1) | Scale was modified on the basis of the Michigan Organisational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1979; Seashore et al., 1982) |
| 2. | I am going to stay and continue with this company (ITS2), | |
| 3. | As an employee I feel attached with my organization (ITS3) | |
| 4. | I have plans for working at my present role for at-least for some more time in the near future (ITS4) | |
| 5. | At present I am not looking for any new job opportunity (ITS5) | |
| 6. | I get "On-the job" assistance from my supervisor regarding my tasks (SS1) | Scale developed on the basis of inputs from Fukui S, Rapp CA, Goscha R, Marty D, Ezell M. (2014) Kalidass, A., & Bahron, A., (2015). Robert Eisenberger (2002), |
| 7. | I receive emotional support from my superiors (SS2) | |
| 8. | My superior assists me with value-added services so as to make me comfortable (SS3) | |
| 9. | I get feedback from my supervisor to perform effectively (SS4) | |
| 10. | My supervisor stands for me in hard times (SS5) | |
| 11. | I get emotional support from my peers (CS1) | Scale developed from the studies of O'Driscoll, Brough & Kalliath, (2004), Tianan Yang, et al (2015). |
| 12. | I get job-sharing assistance from my peers during tasks (CS2) | |
| 13. | I receive advise from my coworkers on work related matters (CS3) | |
| 14. | I receive "On-the job" suport from my coworkers (CS4) | |
| 15. | I get encouragement from my coworkers to do well (CS5). | |
| 16. | Employees in this organization have a strong attachment with one another in their group (GC1), | Scale developed on the basis of Henry et al. (1999) & Treadwell, T et al (2001). |
| 17. | People in our company have high levels of attachment with their work groups (GC2) | |
| 18. | People in our company enjoy interdependence within the group to which they belong (GC3) | |
| 19. | The mutual bond among group members helps people in our organization to perform effectively (GC4) | |
| 20. | As a group member I feel valued when I interact within my work group (GC5) | |

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