

Personality Traits and Turnover Intention among Front Level Managerial Personnel

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Due to diversity in workplace and complexity in nature of executives, it is very difficult to understand why potential executives are leaving organizations. Employee turnover is a burning issue in present at workplaces. Several researches have been conducted to identify the cause and consequences of the employee turnover. In this line of research, the present study is an effort to explore the relationship of trait emotional intelligence and personality (Big-Five) with turnover intention (intention to leave). The study was carried out on 100 front level executives of Indian organizations. Three standardized psychometric devices namely TEIQue-SF, Big Five Inventory-10 and Intention to leave were used for data collection. Obtained data was analyzed by using correlation and hierarchical regression analysis. Results of correlational analysis indicate that trait emotional intelligence and conscientiousness was significantly negatively correlated with intention to leave whereas neuroticism was significantly positively correlated with intention to leave. Results of hierarchical regression analysis conforms the results of correlational analysis. It can be concluded from the obtained results that personality play a crucial role to determine the executive's intention to leave the organization.

Keywords: Big Five, trait emotional intelligence, turnover intention, hierarchical regression analysis

We are living in the world of globalization where life at work is being too much complicated to predict. Business process outsourcing is on the peak. Employers have to face a multi-cultural work place. It is very difficult to understand the nature of executives and motivate them to work properly within the organization. Financial incentives have failed to motivate executives. High skilled executives are leaving organizations without any appropriate reason. Due to these rationales, employee turnover is becoming an annoyance for employers and employee retention is emerging as a challenge for human resource practitioners (Singh, 2007).

Abassi and Hollman (2000) identified employee turnover as a rotation of workers around the labor market; between firms, jobs and occupations; and between the states of employment and unemployment. The terms—employee turnover, turnover intention and intention to leave/quit—have been used interchangeably in literature and in this article

as well. Turnover intention is defined as “one's desire or willingness to leave an organization” (Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, de Chermont, & Warren, 2003).

Most of the current researches classified employee turnover into involuntary turnover and voluntary turnover. Involuntary turnover occurs when an employee is fired or laid off. A certain amount of involuntary turnover is inevitable and possibly even beneficial. Mobely (1982) proposed that firing workers who are not performing at desirable levels can be viewed as a positive, “weeding” process. This type of turnover increases the effectiveness of organizations.

Voluntary turnover takes place when competent and capable employees leave the organization to work elsewhere. This turnover proves costly to organizations because losing a valued employee reduces organizational productivity, increases expenses associated with recruitment, hiring and training a replacement and also provides an opportunity to competitors

to utilize the skills abilities and knowledge of an experienced and competent employee. There are several factors which may cause intention to leave the organization; personality traits are one of them.

Dispositional research has been dominated by two types of traits: personality and trait affect. In fact, both personality and affect have also been dominated by their respective specific models. Personality research has focused on the five-factor model (FFM) personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1985). The FFM establishes five factors of personality (Neuroticism/ Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness,) as a parsimonious model of distinguishing between differences among individuals' dispositions.

Affect, although originally a state-oriented construct equated with emotions and mood, later evolved as a dispositional trait (Tellegen, 1985; Watson & Clark, 1984). In recent year Petrides, Pita, and Kokkinaki (2007) identify a new construct of trait affect and named as trait emotional intelligence which is a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions and located at the lower levels of personality hierarchy. Because of the dominance of the FFM and trait affect models in the literature; these two sets of traits (Big Five factors and trait emotional intelligence) are the focus of this research.

Raja and Johns (2010) stated that due to extensive application of personality in selection and placement decisions, researchers are focusing more on personality traits. Past research has been emphasized to explore the exact mechanism through which personality traits influence the job outcomes (Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009). The research on Big Five model of personality has already explored its links with outcomes such as job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002), job stress (Penley & Tomaka, 2002), and intent to leave (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). In this article researchers focused on personality traits and intention to leave.

Big Five Personality Traits and Turnover Intention

In literature, there are two meta-analyses (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 2002) that have evaluated the relationship between personality and turnover. Barrick and Mount (1991) found that personality had weak relationships with turnover, with effect sizes ranging from .02 for Emotional Stability to .12 for Conscientiousness; Whereas, Salgado (2002) found much stronger relationships between personality and turnover, with operational validities ranging from -.14 for Openness to -.35 and for Emotional Stability.

From their study, Seibert and Kraimer (2001) reported that people that are higher on open to experience receive lower salaries than people that score low on this trait; and individuals who are high on extraversion are more likely to receive higher salaries. It was further found that extraversion was also significantly and positively correlated to promotions. Authors also found that agreeable individuals received lower salaries in highly people-orientated jobs where extensive interpersonal interactions are required. In a recent study Juhed (2012) reported that conscientiousness and extraversion had a significant negative impact on intention to leave.

Testing the effect of personality characteristics on turnover intentions Urbaniak, (2009) showed that none of the Big Five factors had a significant direct effect on the intention to leave. This finding is somehow different from results of previous studies in this area.

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Turnover Intention

Trait Emotional Intelligence (trait emotional self-efficacy or Trait EI) is a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions (e.g., emotion perception, emotion management, empathy, impulsivity) assessed through self-report questionnaires and located at the lower levels of personality hierarchy (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007). In lay terms, the construct concerns people's self-perceptions of their emotional abilities. Trait EI provides a comprehensive operationalization of the affective aspects of and lies wholly outside the

taxonomy of human cognitive ability (Carroll, 1993).

Similar to the formation of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, intention to leave also develops over time. Several antecedents have been recognized to the formation of turnover intention. One of the commonly studied antecedents is affect or emotion. Specifically, studies suggest that negative affect increases the formation of turnover intentions, whereas positive affect reduces them. In a meta-analysis it was found that positive affect ($r=-0.17$) and negative affect ($r=0.22$) influenced turnover intention accordingly (Thoresen et al., 2003). It has also been suggested that stressors frequently associated with negative affect which ultimately increase turnover (Sonnentag, Frese, Borman, Ilgen, & Klimoski, 2003). Krishnakumar (2008) reported from their study that emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with turnover intention.

Considering the importance of variables along with gaps and contradiction in existing literature present study was aimed to examine the role of trait emotional intelligence and Big five personality in predicting intention to leave the organization among front level managers.

Costa & McCrae, (1992) proposed that neurotic individuals experience anger, frustration and social anxiety. Furthermore, neurotic individuals are less likely to remain on the assignment (Caligiuri, 2000), thus it can be proposed that:

H1: Neuroticism would be positively related to intention to leave the organization.

Conscientious individuals are more responsible and persistent in achieving their goals (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). Working properly requires these characteristics; therefore the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2: Conscientiousness would be negatively related to intention to leave the organization.

According to Costa and McCrae (1992), agreeable individuals are characterized by altruism (social interest), trust and compliance (not willing to fight in case of an argument) what

make them less likely to see reasons to leave an international job.

H3: Agreeableness would be negatively related to intention to leave the organization.

In general, extroverts behave spontaneous and risky (Swickert, Rosentreter, Hittner, & Mushrush, 2002) and together with the need of socializing, looking for new contacts, and extending a social network suggest that individual that score high on this trait see more opportunities inside and outside a home organization. A satisfaction with their careers suggest that extraverts are happy with their decisions concerning a career development, thus it is believe that following decisions will also bring a satisfaction makes a decision to leave an assignment easier.

H4: Extraversion would be positively related to an intention to leave the organization.

Individuals with openness to change are less likely to remain in the same job because such individuals are willing to experience different position and nature of job.

H5: Openness would be positively related to intention to leave the organization.

Prior researches, reported a negative relationship between turnover intention and emotional intelligence (Wong & Law, 2002; Goleman, 1999; Carmeli, 2003; Lee and Liu, 2007; Falkenburg & Schyns, 2007; Hall, 2010; Trivellas, Gerogiannis, & Svarna, 2013). Particularly, Wong and Law (2002) have supported this argument and through their study they have highlighted the fact that the higher the emotional labor in a specific job, the high level of EI is negatively related to turnover intention. Further, Jain (2009) has also supported this argument and through his study he has reported that employees with high emotional intelligence develop less turnover intention. By considering that present workplace is high with emotional labor, the sixth hypothesis in this study is stated as follows:

H6: Trait emotional intelligence would be negatively related to intention to leave the organization.

Method

Sample:

This study was conducted on 100 front level managers. The Age of participates were varied from 21- 57 years with Age, Mean=39.86 (SD=12.92). Total 91 male and only 09 female were participated in the study in which 70 were married, and 20 were unmarried. 10 Participates did not respond on marital status.

Tools:

Big Five Inventory-10 (Rammstedt & John, 2007): A well-known classification about personality is the five factors known as the Big Five (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness). Each of the dimensions included in the Big Five can be measured independently using the Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10). BFI-10 comprises 10 items; 2 items for each dimension. Item rated on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1-disagree strongly to 5-agree strongly. The test-retest reliabilities across six weeks was found to be .76 for neuroticism, .79 for extraversion, .65 for openness, .69 for agreeableness and .70 for conscientiousness and mean reliability for overall scale was reported .75 for the BFI-10. Convergent validity with the NEO-PI-R domains averaged .67 for the BFI-10.

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-SF (TEIQue-SF, Petrides, 2006): TEI Ques-SF was used to measure the (traits) emotional intelligence of the participant. This is a 30-item questionnaire designed to measure global trait emotional intelligence (trait EI). It is based on the long form of the TEIQue (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Two items from each of the 15 subscales of the TEIQue were selected for inclusion, based primarily on their correlations with the corresponding total subscale scores. This procedure was followed in order to ensure adequate internal consistencies and broad coverage of the sampling domain of the construct. Items were responded to on a 7-point Likert scale. The TEIQue has been constructed with the aim of providing comprehensive coverage of the trait EI domain (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Psychometric property of the

TEI Que-SF was found satisfactory (Cronbach alpha for male=.84, and for female=.89).

Intention to leave (Farrel & Rusbult, 1992): It is manifested by intentions of searching for a different job and thinking about quitting. Respondents were asked to report the degree to which they agreed with a four-item scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The full scale included four items. Reliability of this scale was .81.

Results

To examine the relationship of personality traits (Big Five and trait emotional intelligence) with intention to leave, correlational analysis was performed and obtained results is reported in Table 1. Results reported in Table 1 indicates that intention to leave the organization was found to be significantly negatively correlated with traits emotional intelligence ($r = -.345, p < .01$) and conscientiousness ($r = -.207, p < .05$) whereas, significantly positively correlated with neuroticism ($r = .245, p < .05$).

Table 1: Summary of results of correlational analysis (N=100)

Variables	Intention to Leave the Organization
Trait Emotional Intelligence	-.345**
Neuroticism	.254*
Extraversion	-.047
Openness to change	-.202
Agreeableness	.131
Conscientiousness	-.207*

* $p < 0.05$,

** $p < 0.01$

Further, regression analysis (hierarchical) was performed to find out the causal relation of personality traits with intention to leave and results of regression analysis were reported in Table 2. Results of regression analysis indicate that trait emotional intelligence was significantly negatively associated with Intention to leave the organization ($\beta = -.345; p < .001$) whereas, Neuroticism dimension of Big Five was significantly positively associated with Intention to leave the organization ($\beta = .203; p < .05$). Association of conscientiousness and intention

to leave was found non-significant while this was negative and significant in correlation analysis. Results further show that trait emotional intelligence explain 11.9 percent of total variance in explaining intention to leave where rest of the Big Five factors explain only 7.6 percent of total variance in explaining intention to leave.

Table 2: Summary of results of regression analysis (hierarchical) for personality traits as predictors and intention to leave as criterion variable

Criterion Variable	Intention to Leave the Organization	
	Step 1	Step 2
Predictor Variables	Step 1	Step 2
Trait Emotional Intelligence	-.345***	.264**
Neuroticism		.203*
Extraversion		.124
Openness to change		-.164
Agreeableness		.078
Conscientiousness		-.071
R	.345	.441
R ²	.119	.195
Adjusted R ²	.110	.143
Fa	13.25***	3.75**

a Step 1 df = 1, 98 Step 2 df = 6, 93, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Note: Standardized β is reported in table

Discussion

The goal of every organization is to achieve high level of productivity, profit, and provide good quality of services. These organizational goals can only be realized with employees' greater efforts, supports and contributions. This is because employees are partly responsible for the achievement of organization's goals and strategy. But when these employees are willing to quite or leave (i.e., turnover intention) the jobs and the organisation, the aims and mission of the organization might not be achieved; because turnover intention is a negative job attitude that could results to employees' turnover (i.e., loss of employee). Loss of potential employees may have an unfavorable effect on the organizational performance, productivity, and effectiveness. It

may also increase the hiring and training cost and increase the workload of the remaining employees in the organization. Turnover intention is frequently the subject of studies because it is one of the strongest predictors of actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). As it is categorized as an intention, it is also included under the broad class of (negative) attitudes.

The present study was aimed to examine the role of personality traits (Big Five and trait emotional intelligence) in predicting intention to leave the organization. Present study has two specific finding. Firstly, emotional intelligence was significantly negatively correlated with intention to leave which indicate that high trait emotional intelligence executives are less likely to leave the organization and will remain for long time. Results of regression analysis also support the degree and direction of relationship between trait emotional intelligence and intention to leave.

Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in reducing the high turnover rate because employees with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to see the positive side of things by modulating their perception of the occupational environment. That's why, they will be better able to take advantage and regulate their emotions and less likely to leave their job. Result of our study is also supported by Carmeli (2003) who found that emotional intelligence is negatively related to intention to quit. She further stated that employees who successfully appraise and express their emotions, are better accepted and understood by their work colleagues; because of this, they have the ability to, manage their career path, develop themselves and lead individuals. Moreover, individuals who can utilize their emotions to produce multiple and flexible plans for future, to get better decision making, to plow creative thinking and to improve persistence against challenging tasks are more adaptive and effective in dealing with both positive (satisfaction) and negative emotions (quitting).

The study by Adeyemo and Afolabi (2007) also showed that low-level of emotional intelligence increase the likelihood of withdrawal cognition (intention to search, thinking of quitting,

and intention to quit) among female media practitioners. It would therefore be reasonable to say that executives who have high level of emotional intelligence may be less sensitive to turnover intention, because they may have the ability to put themselves in positive affective state (such as not becoming hopeless in the face of aggravation), take advantage of and regulate their emotions and emotions of others. They may feel more safe and sound in their ability to control and influence life events and pressure from workplace that may trigger turnover intention.

The second specific finding of this study is that Neuroticism dimension of Big Five was significantly positively correlated with intention to leave whereas Conscientiousness was significantly negatively correlated with intention to leave. Results of regression analysis supported the significant positive association between neuroticism and intention to leave although association between conscientiousness and intention to leave was not supported by this analysis. Results of the present study were support by several previous studies (Caligiuri, 2000; Carmeli, 2003; Smith & Canger, 2004; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006).

Caligiuri (2000) explored the big five personality characteristics to determine whether they might predict intent to leave an assignment as well as in-country job performance. Results of her study suggested emotional stability, was negatively related to intent to leave whereas conscientiousness was positively related to performance.

The negative correlation between withdrawal intention and conscientiousness is to be expected because employee who are more conscientious (and therefore by definition more inclined to reliably meet expectations and do what is expected of them) would be less likely to withdraw from job and organization.

Individuals low in emotional stability are more likely to encode and recall negative information (Watson & Clark, 1984; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and tend to have negative perceptions of themselves and their environment

(Burke, Brief, & George, 1993; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). In their illustrious analysis of the affective motivational forces of turnover Maertz and Griffeth (2004), demonstrate that those employees who have negative views of their work environments are more likely to leave the organization.

As emotionally unstable individuals tend to experience negative moods more frequently, and tend to have higher conflict with coworkers (Organ, 1994), they are less likely to become effectively socialized into their organizations. Cote (2005) hypothesized that individuals exhibiting negative emotions, such as sadness and anger, are less likely to receive social support from coworkers and more likely to experience interpersonal conflict, by this means increasing their stress levels and increasing their intentions to quit (Spector & Jex, 1998). Thus a significant negative association between neuroticism and intention to leave is quite reasonable.

Is sum results of the present study supported our first and last (sixth) hypothesis, although we could not find support for our rest of the hypotheses.

One specific thing which our study reveals that emotional aspect of personality play more important role in predicting intention to leave the organization whereas conscientiousness play less role in predicting such behavior. Emotion either in higher order in personality like neuroticism or lower order in personality like trait emotional intelligence is more valuable in prediction of withdrawal behavior like intention to leave.

Implication of the Study

Our study confirms that personality traits play an important role in predicting withdrawal behavior like intention to leave the organization. The results of the present study can be implicated in retention management through hiring practices like selection and training of the executives for organization. Personality traits have the impact on how employees interpret their work situation, and shape his behaviors in light of those interpretations. When there is a high degree of congruence of individual's personality traits with

the work environment, it is believed to result in stability and lower turnover rate.

Limitation

This study is not free from shortcomings. The study was conducted on a small sample (only 100 executives) with front level managers only. Merely nine female were participated in the study. Therefore, for propose of generalization further study should be conducted on big sample along with large number of female participants with different managerial levels like front, middle and top of different organization. Use of short version of scale (BFI-10tems, Intention to leave-4 items and TEIQue-SF-30 items) might be another imperfection of the study.

Conclusion

Our study confirms the significant positive association of neuroticism and trait emotional intelligence with intentional to leave and partially supported relationship between conscientiousness and intention to leave whereas did not confirm any significant association of other aspect of personality like extraversion, agreeableness and openness with intention to leave the organization. Along with some limitations results of study can be utilized in hiring practices and high level of retention can be achieved through it.

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