

Examining the Moderating Effects of Organizational Identification between Human Resource Practices and Employee Turnover Intentions in Indian Hospitality Industry

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Abstract - This paper presents an employee turnover intention model, which examines the effects of frontline employees' perceptions of human resource practices (recruitment, selection, training, career growth opportunities, performance appraisal and compensation) on employee turnover intention in Indian hospitality firms. Using this model as a framework, the role of organizational identification in the aforementioned relationship is explored. Hierarchical linear regression analyses demonstrated that selection and compensation practices have significant effects on employee turnover intention. Organizational identification moderates the relationship between selection practices and employee turnover intention. The paper concludes with implications for managers in hospitality industry and some future research directions.

Keywords - Human resource practices, Organizational identification, Employee turnover intention, Hospitality industry.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover is an endemic issue in hospitality industry, worldwide. Employee turnover intention acts as a surrogate for actual employee turnover. One of the most challenging issues faced by the hospitality organizations today is to manage the changing employment relationship. Being in customer service business, hospitality industry capitalizes heavily on its human resources to achieve its competitive advantage. Hospitality industry is a highly customer service-oriented business where interaction between employees and customers determine the competitive advantage and success of the business [1 and 2].

In spite of the unique feature of the hospitality industry being highly labor-intensive [3], only a few studies have explored the impact of human resource practices on employee attitudes and behaviours. Most of the existing studies have focused on the impact of individual practice of human resource management on organizational performance which might inflate the true results [4]. Moreover, human resource development is frequently addressed as a reactive concern within the tourism and hospitality sector [5]. Majority of the prior studies have examined the impact of human resource practices at organizational level [6]. In addition, Ghebregiorgis and Karsten [7] described that there is not much research on the employee's reaction to human resource practices and turnover intention. In this study, we

have focused on the frontline employee's perception in hospitality industry.

Jobs in tourism and hospitality industry are largely perceived to be undesirable and common features of hospitality employment are low wages, poor working conditions, lack of job security and promotion opportunities which results in high staff turnover [8]. Yang, Wan and Fu [9] identified the following concepts as the determinants of employee turnover, such as salary and fringe benefits, working hours, workload, work pressure, training and development, leadership, career plans and family factors. Hotels generally regard high turnover as part of the work-group norm and employees frequently hold the belief that they are entering jobs with limited career development opportunities [10]. Because of the existing negative image about the jobs in hotels among the hotel employees and outsiders, it is crucial to determine the role of employees' identification with the hotels. Ashforth and Mael [11] reported that the employee identification within the context of their work group identities will have effect on their attitudes and behaviours. Dukerich, Golden, Shortell [12] emphasized that there exists few empirical studies that examine the effects of organizational identification. Therefore, we suggest that in hospitality industry, examining the impact of organizational identification on employee's intention to quit is essential. Given that, there exist very few studies in hospitality industry, studying the relationship between human resource practices, organizational identification and its effect on employee turnover intention which warrants further research to fill this gap.

The abundant research on human resource practices stands as a testimony to the widespread interest in the minds of practitioners and researchers in order to gain insight into the practices that have an effect on the overall organizational performance. Despite the fact that the literature concerning human resource practices in the hospitality industry is replete with studies from the developed countries, researchers from the developing countries have been exploring the applicability of those models and frameworks in their particular context. From the practitioners viewpoint this study would be supportive to know how employees' organizational identification and human resource practices combine to inform employees' decision to stay or leave the organization, because this would have implications for the management of such attitudes. The research questions, we

investigate in this study are as follows: (1) Does human resource management practices affect frontline employees' turnover intention? (2) Whether frontline employees' organizational identification moderates the relationship between human resource practices and employee turnover intention?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Human resource practices play a decisive role in influencing employee attitude and behaviour. High performance work practices (such as promotion, labour-management participation teams) that contribute to employee development should enhance employee retention and these practices had a negative relationship with employee turnover [6]. Human resource systems are path dependent, can be a unique source of competitive advantage and it is difficult to imitate human resource management practices and policies [13]. Budhwar and Debrah [14] noted that in the recent past there has been a remarkable development in human resource management research on developed countries but little has been written about developing nations. High-performance human resource practices invest in improving service capacity through employee selection policies, training practices, integrated performance management system, competitive rewards and empowering employees in decision making, which would provide sufficient support to employees so that they can do their best to satisfy customers and effectively perform their jobs[15].

A. Relationship between Human Resource Practices and Employee Turnover Intention

Recruitment Sources: According to Breaugh [16] recruiting sources have been subsequently related to employee performance, absenteeism and work attitudes. Individuals recruited through professional conventions and who apply directly to organizations (self-initiated contacts) possess more accurate and complete information about the job and the organization, and consequently employees will have longer tenure than do individuals recruited via newspapers, college placement offices and employment agencies. Bonn and Forbringer [17] noted that hiring almost any 'warm bodies' that are interested in hospitality industry results in higher levels of employee turnover and suggested to recruit through sources like referrals, hiring of minorities, elderly and handicapped employees in order to reduce employee turnover. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1. Source of recruitment will be negatively related to employee turnover intention

Selection: Hotels have been identified constantly as an industry with ill-defined recruiting practices, where there is a gap to match hotel's needs and the hiring specification [18]. Ghebrejorgis and Karsten [7] emphasised that proper staffing can help to keep the employee's morale high because besides getting the right people, recruiting has an important symbolic aspect. Bonn and Forbringer [17] found that employees selected through realistic job previews will have lower turnover intention. Paraskevas [19] found that in

the selection process behavioral interviews and bio-data verification are used more and references are not checked in hospitality industry and added that in the present unstable environment, hospitality recruiters have a tendency for the job-fit rather than organization-fit of candidates. In contrast to the above stated findings, Dawson and Abbott [20] stated that employees selected with better person-organization fit will have the intention to remain and perform better for the organization. Based on this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2. Selection practices will be negatively related to employee turnover intention

Training: One main reason attributed for high employee turnover in hospitality industry is it has not sought highly trained and qualified staff [8]. Solnet and Hood [21] described hospitality industry as highly people-intensive, lack in career options and beset by employee turnover. On-the-job training is the primary method used in the hotels [3 and 22], but the employers fail to offer the training with trained trainers [23], which affects quality of training. Davidson, McPhail and Barry [24] have noted that employee training and skill development have been one of the forefront challenges hospitality industry faces for many years. According to them both formal and informal training plays a vital role for host of reasons, including the global expansion in the industry, to reduce employee turnover, the need for knowledge enhancement and career paths, increasing legal requirements and importantly, to enhance the quality of service delivered to customers. The existing substantiation leads to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H3. Training practices will be negatively related to employee turnover intention

Career growth opportunities: One factor which forces hotel employees to seek employment elsewhere is lack of internal labor markets [25]. Walsh and Taylor [26] stated that employees in hospitality industry leave their organization within a year or two due to the lack of clear career ladder in sight. They also found that, employees are lacking in the intrinsic aspects of their job such as challenging jobs and leaning-oriented work relationship than the extrinsic aspects such as rewards. Lack of training and career growth opportunities in the hotels make the employees to quit their job [27]. Kong and Baum [28] stated that professional development is essential to develop skills of front office employees in order to attain competitive advantage. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4. Career growth opportunities will be negatively related to employee turnover intention

Performance Appraisal: Performance management programs appear to be increasing in use, especially in the upper segment of hotel industry [29]. Employee performance standards should be linked with customer care policies and appraising should be done against the performance standards, which need to be realistic, achievable, and measurable [30]. Performance appraisal ratings are often

used to make personnel decisions such as pay raises and promotions, therefore bias in ratings will have adverse effects on job satisfaction and turnover intention [31]. Aggarwal and Bhargava [32] stated that performance appraisals must be linked with appropriate compensation and training strategy; developmental appraisal aligned with long-term and specific/unspecific performance measures, career management and skill-based training will result in stronger employment relations. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5. Performance appraisal will be negatively related to employee turnover intention

Pay and Benefits: Hotel employees have been perceived as the lowest paid among employees in other industry, due to low skills and lack of union support [29]. Monetary incentives and educational incentives offered to employees will reduce turnover intentions. Employees are underpaid and undertrained in hospitality industry which leads to low level of motivation, job dissatisfaction, high employee turnover and ultimately dissatisfied customers [16]. High quality human resources are lacking in hospitality sector as employees do not want to stay long in hotel front office because of demanding work, low wages and uncertain opportunities for promotion [28]. Employers should actually focus on enhancing the work environment, notably in terms of pay and benefits in order to attract and retain talented employees [33]. Salary and better benefits offered elsewhere are the major reason for employee turnover in the hospitality sector [34]. If organizations offer promotion opportunities and competitive salaries, then employees are less inclined to consider leaving the organization [35]. From the above discussion, we advance the following hypothesis:

H6. Pay and benefits will be negatively related to employee turnover intention

B. Organizational Identification as a Moderator

The term social identity was coined by Tajfel [36] to define and comprehend the social psychological aspects of intergroup discrimination. He defined social identity as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and the emotional significance attached to the membership'. People form social identities based on certain categories, such as nationality, race, class, occupation, sex and religion, which in turn influence their attitudes and behavior. Ashforth and Mael [8] stated that organizational identification is a specific form of social identification and they conceptualized organizational identification as individual's perception of oneness with or belongingness to the organization and stated it as a perceptual cognitive construct with idiosyncratic characteristics that differentiate individuals from other individuals. Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail [37] defined organizational identity as cognitive linkage between the organization and self.

Individuals identifying with their organization demonstrate better job performance, more job satisfaction and work motivation and less intention to search for other

jobs and actual turnover [38 and 39]. In the meta-analysis about organizational identification, Riketta [40] found that organizational identification is strongly and negatively correlated with employees' intention to quit. From social identity theory perspectives Kim, Chang and Ko [41] affirmed that organizational images are linked to employees' self-concepts and that can confer positive or negative attributes on an employee. Strength of individuals' identification will be influenced by two key organizational images: their perception of identity of the organization and outsider's perception of their organization [37]. Therefore, it is expected that Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between human resource practices and employee turnover intention. Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

H7: Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between human resource practices and employee turnover intention.

H7a. Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between source of recruitment and employee turnover intention.

H7b. Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between selection practices and employee turnover intention.

H7c. Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between training practices and employee turnover intention.

H7e. Organizational identification moderate the relationship between career growth opportunities and employee turnover intention.

H7e. Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between performance appraisal and employee turnover intention.

H7f. Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between pay & benefits and turnover intention.

III. METHODOLOGY

Data for the study were collected from the frontline employees' (front-office and food & beverage (service)) of three, four and five star rated hotels in South India. We have considered only larger organizations in our study because large organizations have more capacity to specialize in human resource practices and policies when compared to smaller organization [42].

A. Exploratory Investigation

Because the literature on the constructs of the study in Indian hospitality industry is not yet rich enough to provide a sound conceptual foundation an exploratory qualitative study was undertaken to investigate the concepts from frontline employees' perception. Focus group discussions with frontline employees were conducted to develop a conceptual model and to gain insights about the following questions:

- 1) What is their perception about human resource practices in their hotel?

- 2) What do they perceive about working in a hotel and what do outsiders of the hotel (society) perceive about their employment in hotel?
- 3) What are the key reasons for employees' turnover intention?

A total of three focus group discussions were conducted one from each category of hotels. All the focus group discussions were held in the hotel premises. Demographic characteristics of the focus group participants are exhibited in the table I. Questions asked by the moderator covered topics such as perception about human resource practices, instances of and reasons for turnover intention, important factors influencing employee turnover intention and perception about working in hotel.

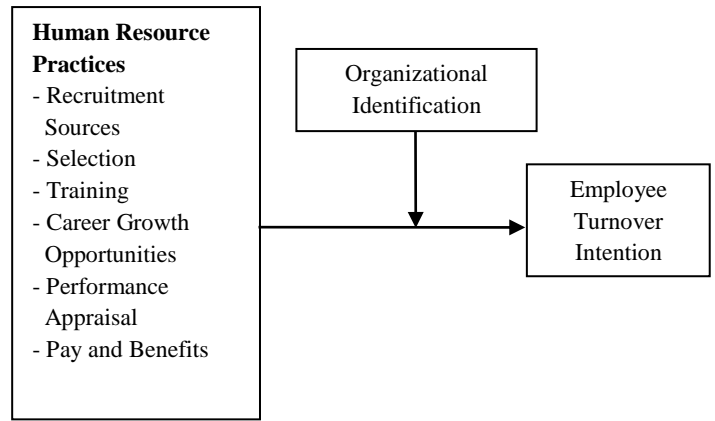


Figure1. Conceptual Framework

TABLE I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

Designation	Hotel Category	Group Composition	Level of Education*			Gender	
			A	B	C	Male	Female
Frontline employees (front office and food and beverage (service))	3 Star	9	8	1	-	9	-
	4 Star	9	4	5	-	6	3
	5 Star	11	-	8	3	7	4

Notes: Level of Education*
 A- Diploma in hotel management
 B- Bachelor's degree in hotel management/other field
 C- Master's degree in hotel management/other field

Insights from exploratory investigation

The responses of focus group participants about turnover intention were remarkably consistent across hotel categories. The focus group discussion indicated that lack of career growth opportunities, low pay and better opportunities elsewhere are the major reasons for to quit the job. One female participant described the frustration she felt about how outsiders perceive the jobs in the hotel industry. Followed by few more participants in the group, one male participant of the five star hotel responded that "Well, I do not want to identify myself as the employee of this hotel". One of the key themes that consistently emerged out of the discussions was employee identification. Subsequently, career growth opportunity and organizational identification factors were included in the conceptual framework.

In this conceptual framework six human resource practices are considered. Human resource practices play a vital role in signaling the message in terms of shaping the employment relationship. They are recruitment, selection, training, career growth opportunities, performance appraisal and pay & benefits. These practices are identified based on the existing literature and findings from the focus group discussion. We aimed at studying the relationships among human resource practices and employee turnover intentions. Building on the negative image of the jobs in hospitality industry and findings from the focus group discussion we have considered organizational identification in the conceptual framework.

B. Questionnaire survey

Survey questionnaire were hand delivered to the human resource managers who distributed them to employees' of the hotel. 294 questionnaires were distributed; 236 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 80 percent.

1) Measures

Measures for the study were adapted from the standardized scales. Human resource practices were measured with 31 items consisting of statements on the subject of six human resource practices. Khatri [44] and Edgar and Geare [45] scales were adapted to measure recruitment and selection, training and pay & benefits; ten, five and eight items per construct were used, and the reliabilities were .70, .79 and .80 respectively. Career growth opportunity was measured with six items ($\alpha = .75$) were adapted from Ganesan and Weitz [46]. Four items for performance appraisal ($\alpha=.60$) were obtained from Chang [47] Organizational identification was measured using six items scale ($\alpha=.75$) reported in Mael and Ashforth [48]. Employee turnover intentions was measured with five items ($\alpha = .78$). Three items were adapted from Landau and Hammer [49] and two items were from Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid and Wendy [50]. The items were measured on 5-point Likert scales. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to test the factor structure of our measures, all of which were drawn from the pre-existing scales. The results indicate that RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error Approximation) is .049, GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) is .866, AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index) is .830, and CFI (Comparative of Fit Index) is .906. More explicitly, there is partial evidence that the existing data supports the model with an acceptable RMSEA and CFI value. Unfortunately, GFI and AGFI are below 0.90. But, it can here be enclosed that the good fit statistics can be obtained through a large sample size.

2) Control Variables

Based on previous research, age was measured as a continuous variable (mean 27.01; S.D. 5.38, minimum 18 and maximum 57) and gender was measured as a dichotomous variable. Educational qualification was measured as four categories with 1- diploma in hotel

management; 2- bachelor's degree in management; 3- master's degree in hotel management; 4- degree in other fields. Finally, work experience in current hotel was measured as continuous variable.

3) Results

3.1. ANOVA

Table 2 provides the difference in turnover intention across frontline employees' demographic factors. In order to understand whether the difference in turnover intention across frontline employees' demographic factors is significant, ANOVA is used. On examining turnover intention across frontline employees' demographics such as age, gender, educational qualification, department and work experience, it is found that turnover intention is different across frontline employees' age, educational qualification and work experience. The frontline employees who are up to 25 years of age are found to have higher turnover intention (mean=3.09), followed by the frontline employees in the age group of 30 to 35 years (mean=2.91), 25 to 30 years (mean=

2.83) and more than 35 years (mean=2.32). Moreover, it is observed that turnover intention is inversely proportional with age. The mean values of turnover intention across educational qualification indicate that frontline employees with master's degree in hotel management (mean=3.33) are found to show higher level of turnover intention compared to employees with diploma in hotel management (mean=3.11), bachelor's in hotel management (mean=2.83) and degree in other field (mean=2.64). Therefore, it is inferred that frontline employees with higher level of educational qualification possess high level of turnover intention. From the mean values of turnover intention across employees work experience in the current hotel, it is found that frontline employees with less than 1 year of work experience (mean=3.12) showed the highest level of turnover intention, followed by frontline employees with 1 to 5 years (mean=2.88), 6 to 10 years (mean=2.54) and more than 10 years (mean=2.50). Thus, it may be inferred that frontline employees with lesser work experience seem to report greater turnover intention.

TABLE II. MEAN VALUE AND DIFFERENCE IN EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INTENTION ACROSS FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES' DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic Variables	Category	No. of Respondents	Mean	S.D	F Value
Age	Up to 25 years	107	3.09	0.829	3.86**
	25 to 30 years	90	2.83	0.967	
	30 to 35 years	22	2.91	1.127	
	More than 35 years	17	2.32	1.011	
	Total	236	2.92	0.943	
Gender	Male	180	2.98	0.951	3.25
	Female	56	2.72	0.898	
	Total	236	2.92	0.943	
Educational Qualification	Diploma in H.M	97	3.11	0.820	3.02*
	Bachelors in H.M	87	2.83	0.954	
	Masters in H.M	9	3.13	1.188	
	Degree in Other Field	43	2.64	1.058	
	Total	236	2.92	0.943	
Work Experience	< 1 year	85	3.12	0.925	2.95*
	1 to 5 year	124	2.88	0.892	2.95*
	6 to 10 year	16	2.54	1.064	
	>10 year	11	2.50	1.217	
	Total	236	2.92	0.943	

Notes:*p<.05; **p<.01.
S.D refers to standard deviation.
H.M refers to hotel management.

3.2. Hierarchical Regression

Hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted and as per recommendation of Aiken and West [51] the data were mean centered by creating new centered independent and moderator variable after deducting the mean values of

respective independent and moderator variable terms. Table 3 presents the results of hierarchical linear regression. Demographic factors such as age, gender, educational qualification and work experience were entered as control variables.

3.2.1. Direct Effects

The results show that after controlling for the effects of age, gender, work experience and educational qualification; selection ($\beta = -.218^*$, $p < .05$) and compensation ($\beta = -.239^*$, $p < .05$) has significant negative relationship with turnover intention (Table 3). Therefore, the hypothesis 2 and 6 are supported. Hypothesis 1, 3, 4, and 5 were not supported.

Table 3 Moderating Effect of Organizational Identification on the Relationship between Human Resource Practices and Employee Turnover Intention

	Employee Turnover Intention		
	Model 1	Model2	Model3
Age	-.130	-.122	-.131*
Gender	-.146*	-.135*	-.140*
Educational Qualification	-.120	-.104	-.110*
Work Experience	-.144*	-.117	-.094
Recruitment		.359	.361
Selection		-.218*	-.210*
Training		.315	.312
Career Growth Opportunities		-.008	-.005
Performance Appraisal		.097	.102
Compensation		-.239*	-.250*
OI		-.197*	-.107
Recruitment* OI			.071
Selection * OI			-.413**
Training * OI			.266
Career Growth Opportunities* OI			.192
Performance Appraisal* OI			-.077
Compensation* OI			.063
R²	.087	.291	.325
Adjusted R²	.071	.256	.272
F value	5.477***	8.326***	6.134***
R² change			.16

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.
OI refers to organizational identification

3.2.2. Moderation Effects

Finally, Hypothesis 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e and 7f proposed that six human resource practices in the study will moderate the relationship between human resource practices and turnover intention. The tests revealed that only one of the six potential moderation terms were significant (Table 3). Hypothesis 7b was supported. The interaction term for the selection and organizational identification had a significant and negative relationship with turnover intention ($\beta = -.413$, $p < .01$). Table 3 shows that the adjusted R² was .272; the R² change and the overall model were statistically significant.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The results indicated that hypothesis 2 was supported. Selection practices were negatively related to employee turnover intention. This finding is in harmony with the

existing literature [21, 23 and 52]. Study empirically demonstrated that employees, who perceive fairness in selection process, would tend to believe to stay with the organization for a longer tenure. Employees who undergo realistic job preview during the selection process will have lower intention to leave the organization. Hypothesis 6 examined negative relationship between compensation and employee turnover intention and was supported. This direction of relationship is consistent with the literature [4, 27 and 29]. Pay and benefits in hospitality industry is considered to be very low compared to other service sectors in India, which acts as a major reason for employee turnover intention. If an employees' identification with the organization is high, consequently it will have negative impact on turnover intention [38, 53]. The results indicate that organizational identification moderates only the effects of selection practices on employee turnover intention. Ghebrejorgis and Karsten [7] noted that selection process has an important symbolic aspect. Also, research indicates that effects of realistic job previews are stronger in influencing employee turnover intention [54], suggesting that the moderator effect found in the present study may be more pronounced in the actual selection situations. Moderating effects of organizational identification in the relationship between human resource practices and employees' intention to quit has not been examined in the past; in this study we have attempted to examine the role of organizational identification as a moderator. Reviewing the support for the hypotheses in the study, data needs further examination. Data collection for the study is in progress and the results might change with increased sample size. Future research should further explore the moderating effect of organizational identification with respect to its significant relationship with human resource practices and thereby its effect on employees turnover intention. A more complete picture of the types of inferences applicants make and why or how they make them may be attainable by using an interactionist perspective [55].

The practical implication of the study suggests that employers need to consider employees perception of human resource practices in formulating and executing those practices. Human resource practices influences employee's intention to quit, therefore employer's needs to craft their human resource practices, accordingly. Decreasing the employees' turnover intention and subsequent turnover will result in minimizing the financial cost and effort involved in the recruitment, training and replacement cost [56]. Therefore, for practitioners, these findings also have implications for the prevention or reduction of employee turnover by fostering organizational identification. Human resource practices should be updated regularly by analyzing the dynamic needs of the employees. Human resource practices should be formulated in such a way to overcome the negative images postulated by the employees and outside society. Recruiters should be trained to carefully monitor the degree of warmth they display in the process of interview, since their behaviors can have widespread effects [57]. Realistic job previews offered during the selection process will create a clear vision about the job and will reduce employee turnover intentions [17]. During the selection

process, if the applicants receive inaccurate portrayals of the organization then issues such as unmet expectations, low satisfaction and high turnover will arise [58]. Employers need to take into account that recruitment and selection are only the beginning of the employment relationship and therefore the quality of the people proposed for that process will affect the success of the human resource management. Therefore any human resource management practices that can amplify the capacity of an organization of obtaining and keeping top talents will strengthen the relationship between human resources practices and organizational efficiency [59]. The constructs of the model provide a vehicle through which human resource researchers might test the model empirically in various contexts.

The findings of the study indicate that need for hospitality industry to focus on human resource practices and emphasize employee identification with the organization in order to not reduce turnover intentions among employees but also to improve their performance. This study contributes to understanding the role of organizational identification in the turnover process. Employers need to be aware that human resource practices may not directly affect employee's turnover intention. The paper has thus highlighted the significant relationship between organizational identification and employee turnover intentions; further explored the role of organizational identification as a moderator in the process turnover intentions. In India, hospitality industry is one of the rapidly growing industries among the other service industries. On the other hand the industry is reeling under shortage of skilled human resources and also there exist manpower demand-supply gap [60]. In order to attract and retain employees in hospitality industry employers should emphasize on the human resource practices and focus on improving the negative image of the industry. Therefore, this study provides key insights in to understanding the role of employees' identification with their organization and their valuation of human resource practices and how such attribution affects employee turnover intentions.

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