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## The Relation between Demographic Factors and the Turnover Intention in Pre-Opening Hotel Businesses

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### Abstract

Determining the employees' turnover intention in pre-opening hotel businesses is important for the hospitality industry who have to bear the costs of employment and in-service training. This study aims to examine the relation between of the employees who are recruited by opening hotel businesses and their turnover intentions. A questionnaire was utilized on 151 employees who worked at six 5-Star pre-opening hotels in Istanbul. Respondents were selected based on convenience sampling method. According to the results of the study, *turnover intentions* of the employees in opening hotel businesses are low. It was also found that there is difference on turnover intention based on gender variable.

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*Keywords:* Pre-opening hotel; hospitality industry; demographic factors; turnover intentions.

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### 1. Introduction

The success of organizations depends on the quality of the employees in tourism industry (Reichel and Pizam, 1984; Sepehri et al., 2014). The level of employee turnover is considered among the important factors that define the success of the businesses in that, the less the turnover the superior the hotel is over the other hotels in the competitive set (Hinkin and Tracey, 2000; Baum, 2007; Mohsin, Lengler, and Bhupesh, 2013). Thus low turnover rates are imperative for hotels in order to continue their existence and activities (Baum, 2006).

Pre-opening hotels can be defined as the lodging facilities that are operating, organizing, recruiting and training employees budgeting, marketing, planning the main opening date etc. before they start serving guests (Landman, 2012a). This construction and pre-opening process is over for 12-18 months in large hotels, and 6-9 months in small facilities (Savath Hospitality Management, 2014). Employee turnover rate is important especially in *pre-opening hotel businesses* that have to organize their structure according to future expectations and budgeting for the processes of recruitment and training of employees which can lead additional costs for the period of pre-opening (Landman, 2012b).

The primary targets of hotel businesses during opening stage are preparing the building and the products for the market, defining its position in the market for the future, and setting the operational standards for all functions of human resources department. Employment costs in pre-opening hotels are more than established

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hotel facilities which are already in business. Employees' leaving the job before the official opening may interrupt the opening process of the hotel and even delay the planned opening date. For this reason, the factors such as demographic factors of the employees which may cause the employees leave the job should be considered strategically in a newly-established organization (Boles, Ross, and Johnson, 1995). Therefore, whether there are differences on turnover intention among the employees in terms of demographic must be determined which would make it possible for the businesses to take relevant precautions. However, a better understandings of demographic factors may build a difference in strategically managing employees (David, 2011). Employees' demographic characteristics and their relationship between intention to leave during the opening stage may provide managers generating the greater levels of employee satisfaction and organizational commitment, and reduce the risk of any delay and cancellation on the planned official opening date that may occur due to the high job turnover intentions associated with recruiting, selecting, and training costs as well as potential negative impact on the future customer relationships (Schwepker, 2001).

This study aims to determine the demographic factors that would affect turnover intentions based on a quantitative research on six hotels in Istanbul, Turkey. The results offer valuable insights for hotels that are in pre-opening stage to recruit the motivated and loyal employees who would differentiate the organization from competition in the future with a strategy implementation manner. In addition, it is projected that the outcomes of this study will contribute to the efforts that aim to decrease the employee turnover rate in pre-opening hotel businesses.

## 2. Literature Review

The employee turnover rate in the hospitality industry is the highest in the tourism industry which can reach up-to 200% and 300% a year, the employee costs may also be as high as 40% of the total operational expenses (Hartman and Yrie, 1996; Hinkin and Tracey, 2000; Kennedy and Berger, 1994). When the fact that a new employee being more costly for the business than the other employees for the 30-day-long work is considered, it becomes obvious that hotel businesses providing quality services depends on developing a strategic management philosophy that will ensure the long-term loyalty of their employees (Demir, Çolakoğlu and Güzel, 2007; Meier, 2007; Özyer, 2010; Cetin et al., 2014).

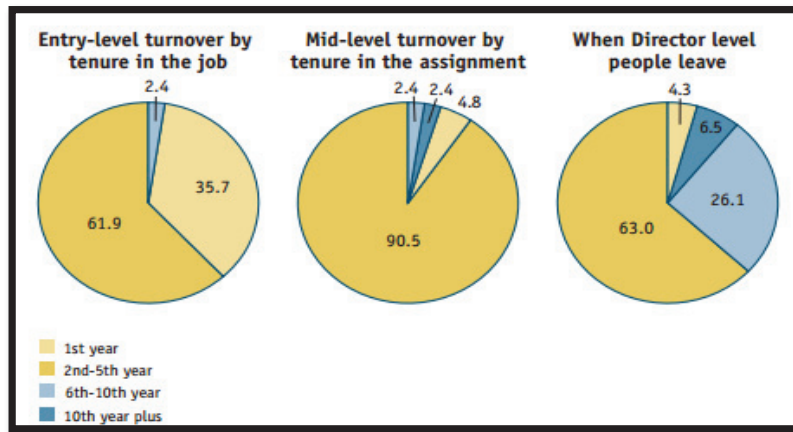
In recent years, various studies have been conducted on the turnover intention. In these studies, it has been observed that the reasons for the high employee turnover rates in hotel businesses are; the physical difficulties of the job, excessive working hours, job stress, wrong practices of managers, low training possibilities, and better working opportunities in other industries (Fallon and Rutherford, 2010, p. 454; Williams, Harris, and Parker, 2008; Ogbonna and Harris, 2002). Lashley (2000, p. 115) groups the reasons of the employee turnover rates as *evitable* and the *inevitable* circumstances. He describes the evitable situations as low wage policies, physical difficulty of the job, long working hours, improper management styles, lacking training opportunities, improper working conditions, stress and transportation difficulties; and describes the inevitable ones as retirement, illness, death, marriage, birth leave, educational reasons and similar other factors. Mobley (1982, p. 10) claimed that the turnover intention is different from the real action of leaving the job, and explained this situation by offering a comparison of the employees both staying and leaving the job. Tett and Meyer (1993) likewise defined turnover intention as intentionally to seek an alternative role in other organizations.

It has been argued in the literature of organizational behavior that there is a relation between the organizational outcomes like the turnover intentions of the employees and their job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performances (Susskind et al., 2000). In addition, there are various studies in which factors such as demographic and job characteristics, organizational commitment, organizational environment, exhaustion, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, job satisfaction and similar other factors are examined in hospitality (Çolakoğlu, Ayyıldız and Cengiz, 2009; Toker, 2007; Matin, Kalali and Anvari, 2012; Hong and Kaur, 2008; Toker, 2007; Yalçın and İplik, 2005, p. 399). Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) define the organizational commitment, (i.e. the turnover intention, and other factors that may affect the other organizational outcomes) under four different dimensions which are *personal characteristics*, *role characteristics*, *structural characteristics*, and *job experience*. These factors, which may affect the organizational outcomes, are defined as the past experiences of the employees, situational, organizational-functional, and personal factors by Schwenk (1986, p. 229). Luthans, Baack, and Taylor (1987) stated the demographic factors as gender, age, marital status, education status and vocational experience. When the structure of the tourism industry is considered, tourism training level, the title and the department of employees might also be added to the demographic factors as can be seen in the study of Demirdelen and Ulama (2013).

In this context, Allen and Meyer (1993) stated that the working hours of the employees in the organization, their status a career path in an organization increases the satisfaction level of the employees, and this situation creates a positive relation between the working durations of the employees and their commitment to the

organization. As well as the employees' turnover intentions, there is the possibility of the other employees in the leader or manager position in the organization leaving the job. In Figure 1, the duration in which the employees at various levels leave the organization has been given by Volper (2002). In addition to this, employees from different departments may leave the job due to the job related conflicts among each other (Glissmeyer, Bishop, and Fass, 2008).

Fig.1. Levels of Turnover Intentions



Source: (Volper, 2002)

In the studies conducted on the turnover intentions in terms of gender factor, there is not a full consensus. In this context, it has been argued that male employees have more organizational commitment because they work at better positions when compared with the female employees. Another viewpoint is that, due to the roles of the women in their families, their roles in the business life becomes secondary (Aven et al., 1993, p. 646). The study conducted in China by Chen and Francesco (2000) stated that in traditional Chinese society, due to the role of women was subordinating to that of men, in business life female employees' organization commitment is lower and their intention to leave is higher than male employees'. Pınar et al., (2011) conducted a study in hospitality and reported their results, claiming that married couples had the responsibility of supporting their families and therefore gave more importance to the salary and job structure. Cohen (1993) conducted a study on the age variable and stated that young employees had higher organizational commitment because they have weaker job experiences and therefore they have fewer alternatives in terms of changing their jobs. Toker (2007) concluded in his study that the employees with higher educational status had high job satisfaction levels. In different studies in which the viewpoints of the individuals with tourism education on career opportunities were examined, it was determined that these individuals did not want future careers in tourism because of various reasons such as the insufficient wages, inflexible working hours, and the lower perception of the society on the tourism as a profession, and therefore their turnover intentions were high (Lu et al., 2009 ; King, McKercher and Waryszak, 2003; Brown, Arendtb and Bosselmanc, 2014; Güzel et al., 2014).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Goal

The issues of what type of employee from which demographic background should be recruited for what kind of job in the newly-formed organization are important for strategic allocation of human resources in the hotel businesses which are in the opening stage before they go into the tough world of competition. The employees' leaving the job or having the intention to do so may interrupt the opening process of the new hotel or may delay the planned opening date. In this context, it is important for the hotel businesses to examine and determine the demographic factors that may affect many incidences such as the turnover intention and many other similar negative factors.

In this study, the issue of whether there are differences among various demographic groups, on the intention for leaving the job is examined in new hotels in Istanbul whose constructions have been newly completed but have not started active business yet. With the increase in the number of the tourists coming to Istanbul, the number of hotel investments have also increased recently. This situation will increase the competition among the hotels which want to host as many guests at highest rates as possible in the future. The issues of keeping the

human resource and developing it, which are among the important means of bringing the hotels forth among the rivals, will have a vital importance. This study may cast a light on the employment processes for the pre-opening hotel businesses by revealing the relation between the demographic factors of the employees and the turnover intentions. For this reason, we have tried to reveal the relation between the turnover intention and the demographic factors of the employees in pre-opening hotel businesses.

### *3.2. Sample and Data Collection*

The study population consists of the employees of thirteen 5-star hotels constructions have been newly-completed in Istanbul. These hotels planned to start active business in 2014 (Kasa, 2013). However, in the scope of the study, because of the limitation of time, monetary costs and the difficulties in contacting all the employees at these hotels, due to the employment process still being in progress and the indefinite number of employees of these hotels, convenience sampling method has been adopted. For this reason, the questionnaires were applied in 6 different pre-opening hotels. The most important reason for selecting these 5-star pre-opening hotels which planned to start active business life within 12-18 months is that there is a fast increase in the hotel business and in the number of the hotels in Istanbul in recent years. It has been considered important that this rate of development might be influential on the results of the study.

The Turnover Intention Scale consisting of 3 items, which was developed by Mobley, Horner and Hollingsworth (1978; 410), and whose reliability has been tested in advance was used in the study to collect data. In the first section of the questionnaire, 8 questions concerning the demographic factors of the employees (age, gender, marital status, educational status, tourism training status, vocational experience, the department, the title) were asked by considering the structure of the hotel business and tourism industry in the light of the data obtained via literature review. The Convenience Sampling Method has been used in the study and 6 pre-opening hotels were visited and 250 questionnaires were distributed. 165 questionnaires were returned, and 151 questionnaires that met the criteria for the study were used. The scales were formed in the style of 5-Point Likert Scale, and the statements in the scale were graded as “I don’t agree at all!” (1), “I don’t agree!”(2), “I am indifferent!” (3), “I agree!” (4), and “I totally agree!” (5). A coding scale was developed to measure the turnover intentions of the participants (1, 00 – 2, 50 low, 2, 51 -3, 50 medium and 3, 51 -5, 00 high).

In the light of the obtained data, the demographic characteristics of the participants were determined. The statements on turnover intentions have been explored through Factor Analysis in order to reflect their reliability and explanatory power. The groups were combined in order to ensure the homogeneity in some of the demographic findings obtained from descriptive statistics. In order to determine whether the demographic factors of the participants had an effect on the turnover intention or not, firstly the Kolmogorov Smirnov Test was applied to test whether the data showed normal distribution; and then analysis of variance tests were conducted. The value  $P < 0,05$  was determined in the tests results, and it was observed that the data did not show normal distribution and were non-parametric. The “Mann-Whitney U” and “Kruskal Wallis-H tests were used to test whether there were a meaningful difference between the demographic factors of the participants and the turnover intention.

### *3.3. Analysis and Results*

#### *3.3.1. Descriptive Statistics on Demographics*

When the demographic factors of the employees in pre-opening hotel businesses are examined (Table 1), it is observed that the participants consist mostly of women, and the age of them can be defined as ‘young’, and as for the marital status, it is observed that most of them are single. In terms of educational status, it has been determined that 65,6% of the participants are university graduates, 51% of them graduated from high schools, vocational training courses, or have received tourism training at universities. When the vocational experiences of the participants were also considered, it was found that only 23,8% of them have a job experience of 10 years and over.

When the other factors are examined, it is observed that 31,1% of the participants are front office employees, 20,5% of them are F&B employees, 19,9% of them are hotel housekeeping employees, 28,5% of them are employees at other departments. Regarding the titles of the employees, it is observed that 25,8% of the participants are medium-level employees, 26,5% of them are lower-level managers, and 47,7% of them are the other personnel.

Table 1. Demographic factors

Demographics Frequencies	Groups	f	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	50	33,1
	Male	101	66,9
<b>Age</b>	18-25	40	26,5
	26-35	95	62,9
	36-45	16	10,6
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	48	31,8
	Never Married	103	68,2
<b>Education</b>	High school or less	15	9,9
	Graduate	37	24,5
	University	99	65,6
<b>Tourism Education</b>	Not Available	74	49,0
	Vocational School / Course	32	21,2
	University	45	29,8
<b>Vocational Experience, (Year)</b>	0-1	48	31,8
	2-5	30	19,9
	6-10	37	24,5
	10 and more	36	23,8
<b>Department of Work</b>	Front Office	47	31,1
	F&B	31	20,5
	Housekeeping	30	19,9
	Other	43	28,5
<b>Title</b>	Mid- Level Manager	39	25,8
	Lower-Level Managers	40	26,5
	Personnel	72	47,7

### 3.3.2. Empirical Results

#### 3.3.2.1. Factor Analysis

In order to test the factor analysis of the data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and the Barlett Sphericity Test have been used (Durmuş et al., 2013, p. 89). The KMO coefficient in this study has been determined as 0,717. The Barlett Sphericity Test has been determined as ( $P_{sig} = ,000$ ;  $P < 0,05$ ). The Cronbach Alfa coefficient has been determined as 0,937. These results are suitable for a Factor Analysis (Nunnally, 1967, p. 248). In order to determine the factor structure, and obtain significant interpretable factors, the Basic Components Analysis and the Varimax Rotation Techniques have been used. The factor dimensions of the data are shown in Table 2. When the factor dimension table is examined, it is observed that the turnover intention in opening hotel businesses is low (Mean= 2,2).

Table 2. Factor Analysis Table

Factor	Factor Rank	Mean	Cronbach Alfa ( $\alpha$ )
<b>Intention to Leave</b>		2,192	,937
I often think about quitting my present job.	,907		
I will probably look for a new job in the next year.	,952		
As soon as possible, I will leave the organization.	,968		
<b>Total Variance Explained (%)</b>	%88,82		
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequac.</b>	,717		
<b>Barlett's Test of Sphericity Chi- Square</b>	4480.656		
<b>(P&lt;0,05)</b>	,000		

#### 3.3.2.2. Differences Among Groups based on Intention to Leave

As it is observed in Table 3, there is a meaningful difference only between the turnover intention and the gender variable, and these data are obtained in the Mann-Whitney U Test conducted to determine the gender, marital status and the turnover intention (Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) < 0,05) among different groups. It is observed in

Table 3 that according to the gender variable, the mean rank value for the female employees is 66,05; and 80,93 for the males. Therefore the turnover intentions of the male employees are more than the female employees.

Table 3. The Mann-Whitney U Difference Test for Demographic Variables

	Intent to Leave	N	Mean Rank	MWU	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	50	66,05	2027,500	0.043
	Male	101	80,93		
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	48	72,31	2295,000	0.467
	Never Married	103	77,72		

As shown in the results of “Kruskal Wallis Test” in Table 4, it has been observed that none of the other independent variables has meaningful difference on the turnover intention except gender (i.e. between the turnover intention and the variables such as age, educational status, tourism training status, vocational experience, the department, and the title (Asymp. Sig< 0,05)).

Table 4. Kruskal Wallis-H Difference Test for Demographic Variables

	Intent to Leave	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
<b>Age</b>	18-25	40	84,24	2,682	0.262
	26-35	95	74,35		
	36-45	16	65,19		
<b>Education</b>	High school	15	68,37	0,699	0,705
	Graduate	37	74,45		
	University	99	77,74		
<b>Tourism Education</b>	Not Available	74	82,96	4,979	0,083
	Vocational School / Course	32	63,33		
	University	45	73,57		
<b>Vocational Experience, (Year)</b>	0-1	48	77,83	6,806	0,078
	2-5	30	90,18		
	6-10	37	63,22		
	10 and more	36	74,88		
<b>Department</b>	Front Office	47	84,33	2,918	0,404
	F&B	31	74,37		
	Housekeeping	30	73,88		
	Other	43	69,55		
<b>Title</b>	Mid- Level Manager	39	70,73	1,604	0,449
	Lower- Level Manager	40	82,64		
	Personnel	72	75,17		

## Conclusion

In this study, the relationships and differences between the demographic factors of the employees and the turnover intention in pre-opening hotels has been examined. The first result is the fact that the turnover intention in pre-opening hotel businesses is low. Another important finding is that there were significant differences among gender groups based on their intentions to quit. The turnover intentions of the male employees have been found to be higher than that of the female employees. This finding contradicts with some of the results that are mentioned in literature concerning turnover intention and the gender variable. For instance, the study of Chen and Francesco (2000) results are not similar with this study. This may show that in pre-opening hotels, the roles of female in society are left in the background of the business life.

In addition, it has also been determined that the age characteristics of the employees may be defined as ‘young’, and 75,2% of them have 10 years and below job experiences. In the study conducted by Cohen (1993), the organizational commitment of younger employees was found to be higher because they had weak job experiences and therefore had fewer opportunities for changing their jobs. The fact that younger employees have higher organizational commitment affects the turnover intention in reverse direction corroborates with the

finding of this study stating that young employees have lower turnover intentions. In addition, the fact that there is not a meaningful relation between the marital status of the employees and the turnover intention is another finding.

Beside these results, the educational status of the employees in pre-opening hotels were found as: 65,6% of the employees are university graduates, and 51% of them have had an education in tourism. Employees with higher educational status were reported to have higher job satisfaction levels by Toker (2007). For this reason, it may be also suggested that the employees with higher job satisfaction levels have lower turnover intentions.

In this study however, no meaningful differences were found between the departments in which the employees work and their titles, and the turnover intention. However, in other studies in the literature conducted to determine the relationship between the departments and titles in hotel businesses (Glissmeyer, Bishop, and Fass, 2008; Üngören, 2008, p. 896; Gürkan and Demiralay, 2013) opposite results were reported. This situation may be the result of the departments and titles in opening hotels being not clear, or due to the fact that there has not been sufficient time yet for judgment.

To conclude, it has been determined in this study which has explored the effects of the demographic factors and of the employees on pre-opening hotel businesses and on the turnover intentions. The turnover intentions of the employees are low, male employees have more intentions for leaving the job than the female employees. In the light of the findings of this study it is considered that a contribution has been made to the literature. In further studies, organizational issues in different dimensions in opening hotels may be dealt with in detail.

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