Full Length Article

The Impact of Job Stress on Turnover Intentions–The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence

Farah Naz Burki[1], Naimat U. Khan[2], Imran Saeed[3]

[1]Research Scholar at Institute of Management Studies University of Peshawar.
[2]Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Studies University of Peshawar.
[3]Assistant Professor, IBMS, University of Agriculture Peshawar.

A B S T R A C T

The study examines the relationship between job stress and turnover intentions with the moderating role of emotional intelligence. The questionnaire survey is conducted with a sample of 153 employees of banking sector in Pakistan. Two methods are used in this study to test the moderation effect i.e. Baron and Kenny's (1986) technique and the Process method of Andrew F. Hayes (2013). The results show that job stress and turnover intentions are positively related to each other whereas emotional intelligence has no moderating role between them. Based on the findings, it is proposed that organizations should focus on making active policies towards stress management so that employees' turnover intentions can be reduced ensuring an encouraging working environment.

Keywords: Job stress; Turnover intentions; Emotional intelligence, Banking Sector, Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human resource has always been a significant part of any organization; therefore, it is equally important that the human capital of a firm should be utilized in a way that would bring maximum productivity. It is necessary to compensate employees according to their skills, abilities and efforts to provide a workplace environment that is free of stress. A mental strain or pressure is stress. The reaction of an individual to his work environment characteristics that appear to be physically and emotionally threatening is called job stress (Jamal, 2005). The mental pressure that an employee experiences due to his employment is job stress. It is an accustomed practice in many different organizations that management puts extraordinary stress on employees which can unfavourably impact

the organization's performance.

Stress might be created due to different reasons. It might be because of financial damage faced by the firms and also when employees are tirelessly and continuously given high targets which they are hopeless about to achieve (Chen et al., 2011). This further leads to adverse health conditions which result in employee absenteeism, poor employee performance and high turnover (Avey et al., 2009). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed Hans Selye's (1975) work and stated that stress is of two types i.e., positive stress and negative stress. They stated that stress which motivates an individual to achieve a certain goal is called positive stress and the stress which a person cannot handle and panics one to achieve any goal is called negative stress. This paper focuses on the negative stress. According to Longo & Mura (2011) the process of thinking, planning and leaving the job is called turnover intention. Price (2001) defined turnover as "the movement of employees across the membership boundary of an organization." A mindful willingness to look for other alternatives in the organization is known as turnover intentions (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Segal & Smith (2013) stated that the capability to positively manage, utilize, comprehend, and observe your emotions to resolve conflicts, conquer challenges, communicate properly, have empathy, and ease stress is called Emotional Intelligence (EI).

1.1. Rationale of the Study

Camara et al. (2015) conducted a research on "Exploring the Relationship between Perceptions of Organizational Emotional Intelligence (OEI) and Turnover Intentions amongst Employees: The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction." Their research provides strong support for the impact of OEI on employee job satisfaction and the consequent role of job satisfaction in driving down turnover intentions. They suggested that future research could be conducted in investigating the relationship between different variables such as individual Emotional Intelligence, organizational commitment (absenteeism and turnover) and job satisfaction. Wen et al. (2020) conducted study on stress and turnover intention in hotel industry and find strong support. They suggested that other variables such emotional inteeligence, psychological hardiness and personality trait can be used as moderating variables. A

related study also suggested that turnover intention level can be overcome by using other factors such leader member exchange, psychological empowerment and emotional intelligence which buffer the effect of job stress on turnover intention (Kim et al., 2020). A recent study in pakistani context suggested that emotional intelligence can be used as a game changer (Shah, Shah, Ullah & Shah, 2020). Furthermore, study point out that job stress and employee turnover intention relationship can be decreased by using a buffering effect of organizational climate, emotional intelligence and self core-evluation (Lan et al., 2020). Previously the concept of Job stress has widely been used with job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions in Pakistan but no research has been carried out where moderating role of EI is tested to find the relationship between job stress and turnover intentions within the banking industry of Pakistan. The banking industry is chosen in this study because bankers have to work overtime without getting paid for those extra hours which might result in causing stress at work and ultimately leading to turnover intentions. Besides, banking industry also widely contributes in the economy of Pakistan, therefore, it is an important sector to be chosen in terms of conducting research. EI is all about regulating emotions, therefore, this variable has been chosen to analyze whether it helps in mitigating the employee job stress and turnover intentions or not.

The remainder of the paper is as follows. Section two is about the literature review which is followed by methodology in section three. Section four reports the results and conclusion is given in section five.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Job Stress

In modern years for the human resource managers, workplace stress has become an important issue (Avey et al., 2009). In the stress theory, a fundamental hypothesis is that stressors in the workplace are psychosocial such as lack of social support, role stress, lack of control, pressure related to high targets and the interaction of such situations. These stressors may have detrimental effects on the health of an individual which resulted in low productivity (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Stressors also detrimental effect

on work life balance, job satisfaction and well-being (Kelly et al., 2020). According to Kim et al. (2020) teachers can be retained while reduing the level of stress through their well-being. Job stress is a response of an employee against the workplace characteristics that seem threatening both physically and emotionally (Jamal, 2005). According to the Conservation of Resources theory of stress (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001) the loss of a resource or its threat experienced by employees contributes to stress. It describes the motivation which forces individuals to conserve their current resources and to pursue new resources. This maintains that when employees have a fear of losing organizational resources, it contributes to stress at work.

2.2. Turnover Intentions

A mindful willingness to look for other alternatives in the firm is known as turnover intentions (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Moreover, job stress influences the individual's job satisfaction which results in low performance (Applebaum et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2010). According to Longo & Mura (2011) the process of thinking, planning and leaving the job is called turnover intention. It is necessary to understand the two different types of turnover, namely voluntary and involuntary turnover. Voluntary turnover is when the employee takes a decision to quit the job with his own will whereas involuntary turnover is when the employee is terminated from the job by the employer (AlMazrouei & Zacca, 2020; Griffeth & Hom, 2004). As voluntary turnover is more meaningful and controllable for organizations, therefore, most studies focus on voluntary turnover instead of involuntary turnover (Price, 1977). Firth et al. (2004) said that turnover intention is actually a solid sign for actual turnover and also turnover intention refers to the intent to voluntarily quit the job. According to Falkenburg & Schyns (2007) the intent of changing companies voluntarily or quitting the labor market altogether is defined as turnover intention. Price & Mueller (1981) and Suifan et al. (2020) mentioned that it is a better option to use turnover intention over actual turnover because it is more practical. They illustrated that there are countless external factors that have an influence on the behavior of actual turnover.

2.3. Emotional Intelligence

EI can be defined as a social intelligence which assists people to recognize their

personal emotions and also the emotions of people around them. Furthermore, it allows people to distinguish between those emotions and helps them in making suitable choices related to thinking and action (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; Cooper & Sawaf, 1997). According to Perkins (1994) & Sternberg (1996), an intelligence which can first be learned, then developed and can be improved further is known as EI. It enables us to think in a creative way and to utilize our emotions intelligently to fix our problems. Goleman (1998) and MacCann, et al. (2020) is of the view that EI is a significant set of psychological abilities that relates to successful life. It is the ability to handle stress and manage feelings which is proven to be significant for success. It enables an individual about how and when to be expressive in emotions and also how to control them. Empathy is mainly a key aspect of EI. Cooper (1997) stated that those employees who possess high level of EI can better deal with stress at workplace. EI contributes in reduction of occupational stress by properly pinpointing the feelings of stress and frustration and therefore works in regulations of those emotions (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997).

2.4. Job Stress and Turnover Intention

Job stress influences the individual's job satisfaction, this further results in low performance, low commitment, high anxiety and in the quitting intention (Caillier, 2020; Applebaum et al., 2010). A research was conducted in a university hospital to examine the association between job stress and the type of turnover of nurses. The results showed that job stress had an important role in the turnover of those nurses, and a few job stressors like inadequate authority at work and lack of autonomy, time urgency and work overload were more linked to the type of turnover (Lee & Chang, 2007). A study was conducted by researchers in Negeri Sembilan which showed that a significant positive relationship between stress and turnover intention was experienced by teachers (Nizam et al., 2007). Leka & Cox (2008) and Boudrias et al. (2020) stated that organizations are affected by stress as it results in decreasing commitment to work, increasing absenteeism, high burnout level, deviance behaviour and increasing staff turnover. Jamal (2005) mentioned that work stress among Canadian and Chinese employees was significantly and positively associated with turnover intention.

Due to stress and mental work demands, it was reported that 51% of workers

were less productive in the workplace (American Psychological Association, 2009). Stress related to work among American companies was assumed to cost more than $300 billion per annum, which leads to absenteeism and turnover. Stress, company benefits, wages, job performance and employee attendance are all elements that play a vital role in employee turnover (Mobley, 1982). According to Hsien-Che Lee & Tsai-Hua Chuang (2010) if the occupational stress is higher among employees, the higher is the quitting intention. Thus, stress among employees causes an increase in the turnover intention. Mostert et al. (2008) stated that occupational stress likely increases employee's tendency to quit their existing job or employer. Layne et al. (2001) mentioned that occupational stress is thought to contain a great influence on turnover intention whereas occupational stress was a considerable predictor of intents to quit their present employer and job. There are a number of researchers who found a direct association between job stress and turnover intention (Noor & Maad, 2008; Chen et al., 2010; Applebaum et al., 2010; Saadeh & Suifan, 2020). The hypothesis in this case is:

H_1: *There is a strong positive relationship between job stress and employee turnover intentions in the banking industry of Pakistan.*

2.5. EI and Turnover Intention

A very strong relationship between EI and turnover intention has been witnessed in a field survey that was being conducted on the nurses of different organizations, who were offering care services for health in Greece. In this particular survey the use of emotions on turnover intentions is observed specifically (Trivellas et al., 2013). According to Langhorn's (2004) empirical study, leaders possessing the ability to have a control over their emotions, chiefly in the challenging and dynamic environment, would successfully reduce turnover in the organization. According to a study conducted by Siddiqui & Hassan (2013) and Huang, Wu, & Zhang, (2019) an insignificant relationship was observed between EI and turnover rate of employees. EI has found to be a construct that could help out organizations in decreasing the turnover, improving organizational culture, identifying transformational leaders, enhancing employee acceptance of radical change and stimulating creativity (Carson et al., 2000). Meisler (2013) found that employees possessing a higher level of EI are less expected to quit jobs whereas workers

who possess lower level of EI are more inclined to leave jobs. According to the earlier findings, the relationship between turnover intention and EI has proven to be negative (Wong & Law, 2002; Goleman, 1998).

2.6. Emotional Intelligence as a Moderator between Job Stress and Turnover Intentions

According to Gowing et al., (2006) those organizations that have high level of EI have high employee satisfaction, customer service and employee commitment, which therefore with the passage of time result in substantial saving of costs related to job turnover in organizations.

The emotionally intelligent employee may reduce the leaving intentions due to the ability to better control emotions. The ones with the higher EI deal with hardships in smart ways and are more motivated to stay in the organization (Carmeli, 2003). Carmeli (2003) chose a sample of senior managers in public sector organizations and found a connection between their EI and withdrawal intentions. Managers who possessed high level of EI had a strong ability in managing stress which resulted in their withdrawal of turnover intention. High emotionally intelligent employees are better able to build and preserve quality relationships (Lopes et al., 2003; Wen et al., 2020). According to Saks (2006) if the relationship between a supervisor and subordinate is good, it eventually results in better engagement of employee at work and in lower turnover intentions. The individuals who possess high EI are way too devoted to their organizations (Carmeli, 2003; Kim et al., 2020), their relationships with their supervisors are much better (Jordan & Troth, 2011; Lan et al., 2020) and such employees will have less intentions to quit. However, employees with low EI are more intended towards leaving their organizations (Carmeli, 2003), and if they have worse relationships with their supervisors (Jordan & Troth, 2011).

H_2: *EI moderates the relationship between Job stress and employee turnover intentions.*

2.7. Diagrammatic representation

We can diagrammatically represent the relationship between variables as follows:

Emotional Intelligence

Job Stress		Turnover Intentions
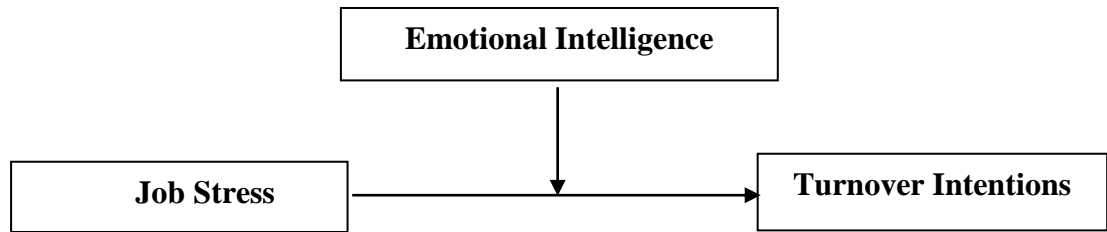
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sampling technique used in this research is non-probability convenient sampling. The questionnaires are distributed among banking employees of all levels (top, middle and lower) within the Peshawar city of Pakistan. A total of 190 questionnaires were distributed both online and manually and overall 153 bankers responded with 80% response rate.[1]

For this research, banking sector is targeted to collect data from employees working in all the lower, middle and higher levels of management in the banks of Peshawar. Since it is known that banking employees have to experience long working hours almost on a daily basis which might be considered as the most prior reason for facing high job stress (Sahibzada et al., 2018). Therefore, banks within the vicinity of Peshawar are chosen to collect the data.

A 5-point likert scale is used in the questionnaire through which the respondents expressed their levels of agreement and disagreement related to each question with options including Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). This likert scale has been recommended by most of the researchers as it is known to reduce the frustration level of respondents and increases the response quality and rate (Sachdev & Verma, 2004). Moderation analysis are performed through latest technique of Preacher and hayes (2013) which is considered a perfect model for

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[1] A statistical software named as G*Power was used to choose the appropriate sample size for this research. The minimum number of respondents for the research survey calculated by G*Power 3.1 online tool (Faul, Erdfelder & Buchner, 2007) is 107. For the improvement of rigor of the study there is a desire for a larger sample. Therefore, the researcher sought to increase the sample size to 190 against which 153 questionnaires are returned.

moderation. Three different instruments are used for gathering the data. The independent variable being the Job stress is measured by a 5 items scale developed by Parker and Decotiis (1983), turnover intentions being the dependent variable is measured with a 3 items scale established by Lance (1988); Khatri, Fern & Budhwar (2001) whereas moderating variable EI is measured with a 16 items scale developed by Wong & Law (2002).

4. RESULTS

Table 1. Reliability Analysis (N = 153)		
Description	**Cronbach's Alpha**	**No. of items**
Job Stress	0.75	5
Turnover Intentions (TI)	0.71	3
Emotional Intelligence	0.88	16

In order to determine the reliability of variables, Cronbach's alpha test was run on the entire data set of the research. The alpha value of independent variable i.e., Stress is α=0.75, dependent variable i.e., Turnover Intentions has the value of α=0.71 and moderating variable i.e., EI has α=0.88. The overall alpha reliability value is 0.85 which gives an indication to run further statistical tests related to the research.

Table 2. Linear Regression				
Hypothesis 1				
Variables		**β**	**t-test**	**Sig**
Step 1 JS (IV) →TI (DV)		0.516	7.39	0.000
R= 0.516, R2=0.266, ΔR2=0.266, F=54.67				

H₁: There is a significant positive relationship between job stress and employee turnover intentions.

For hypothesis 1, the value of R2 is 0.266 which refers that 26% fluctuation is due to turnover intentions. β represents the beta value which means one unit change in job stress leads to an increase in turnover intentions by 0.51 units. F-statistics shows fitness of the model. It has a standard value of 4 and in the above table it is 54.67 which is greater than 4 which confirms the model's fitness. The t-value and P-statistics support the acceptance of alternative hypothesis at five percent level of significance. Therefore, the above values prove that job stress has a significant impact on employee turnover

intentions. The results of the first hypothesis are similar to the results of studies put forward by Cote & Morgan (2002); Layne et al., (2004); Leka & Cox (2008); Applebaum (2008), Noor & Maad (2008) which also show a positive relationship between job stress and employee turnover intentions.

Variables	β	t-test	Sig
Step 2 JS x EI (Interaction term) →TI (DV)	0.199	1.26	0.209
R=0.523, R2=0.274, ΔR2=0.008, F=28.24			

Table 3. Moderation - Method I			
Hypothesis 2			
Variables	**β**	**t-test**	**Sig**
Step 2 JS x EI (Interaction term) →TI (DV)	0.199	1.26	0.209
R=0.523, R2=0.274, ΔR2=0.008, F=28.24			

H_2: *EI moderates the relationship between job stress and employee turnover intentions.*

For testing the second hypothesis an interaction term is created by multiplying the independent variable job stress with the moderating variable EI. This interaction term is tested with the turnover intentions which shows an insignificant result i.e., p = 0.209. The value of R2 has increased from 0.266 to 0.274 and R2 change has a value of 0.008 in the second step which shows 0% change in the strength of relationship between dependent and independent variable after incorporating the moderating variable (EI). F-value of the model is 28.24 which is greater than the standard value and confirms the fitness of the model. On the other hand, t-statistics has a value of 1.26 which indicates the rejection of hypothesis at five percent significance level. Also, the significance value of P is 0.209 which is greater than 0.05 and shows the acceptance of null hypothesis and rejection of alternate hypothesis. Therefore, the above analysis confirms that EI does not moderate the relationship between job stress and turnover intentions. The insignificant value may be due to the small sample size of 153 as (Kelloway, 1998) documented that moderation effect can be best explained with the minimum sample size of 200.

Process Moderation - Method II

In order to further confirm the moderating effect of EI in changing the strength of

relationship between job stress and turnover intentions, the Process method of testing moderation effect by Andrew F. Hayes (2013) is also used. It is an observed variable OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) and logistic regression path analysis modeling tool for SPSS and SAS. This method is widely used for estimating direct and indirect effects in single and multiple mediator models and two and three way interactions in moderation models. Following results were obtained after running this moderation test:

Table 4. Model Summary						
R	**R²**	**MSE**	**F**	**df1**	**df2**	**P**
0.5231	0.2737	0.7480	17.2088	3.0000	149.0000	0.0000

The model summary indicates the significance of the overall model since p = 0.00 which is less than 0.05 but the moderating variable EI and the interaction term are not independently significant in their separate models. Table 5 shows the values of each variable separately.

Table 5.						
	Coeff	**se**	**t**	**p**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
EI	0.15	0.11	1.30	0.19	-0.07	0.38
JS	0.59	0.09	6.57	0.00	0.41	0.77
int_1	0.03	0.15	0.23	0.81	-0.26	0.33

In the table job stress shows a significant P value of 0.00 whereas P value for EI is 0.19 and for interaction term it is 0.81. The results of this method explain that job stress has a significant effect on turnover intentions but EI plays no role in moderating the relationship between job stress and turnover intentions. The study conducted by Siddiqui & Hassan (2013) provides support for the results of the second hypothesis which also documented an insignificant relationship between EI and turnover rate of employees. On the other hand, findings of the second hypothesis are not in accordance with the results of studies carried out by Carmeli (2003); Jordan et al., (2002); Wolfia & Kim (2013); Trivellasa et al., (2013) which show a significant negative relationship between EI and turnover intentions.
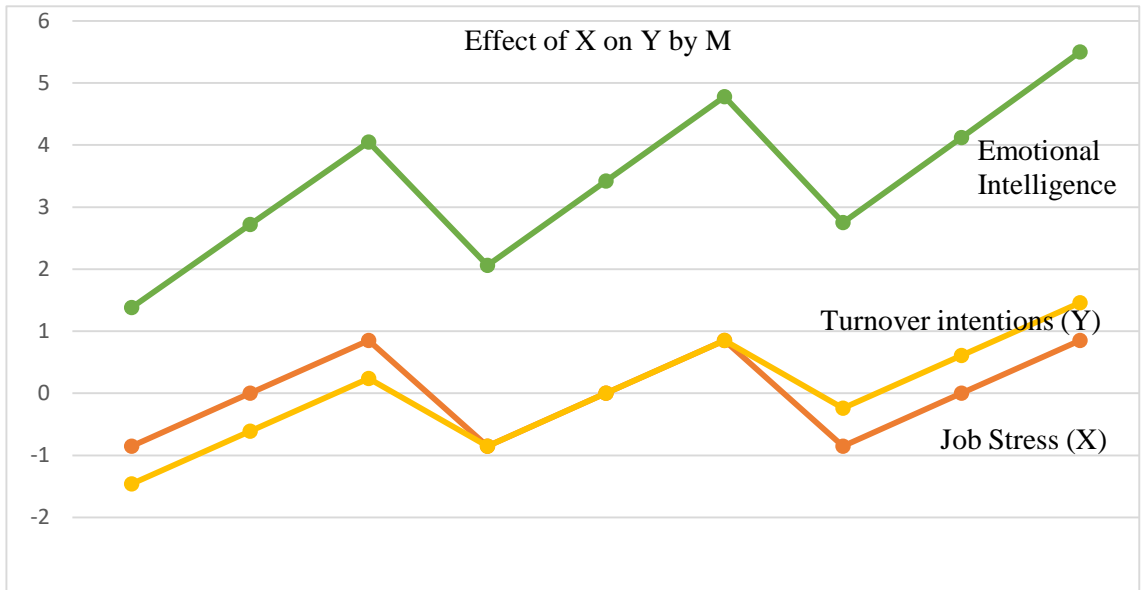
Figure 1. Process moderation Graph

The values of variables that the process method showed were plotted on the excel sheet for building the above graph which shows that job stress and turnover intentions have relationship with each other whereas the graph of moderating variable EI i.e. the green line shows no relationship with the other two variables as it lies at quite a far distance above them.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study is conducted in order to find the relationship between job stress experienced by banking employees and their turnover intentions with the moderating role of EI inoder to weakening the relationship between job stress and employee turnover intentions. The main objective of the study was to find the effect of job stress on employee turnover intention. The analysis of results show that job stress has a strong direct significant relationship with employee turnover intentions i.e., an increase in job stress leads to an increase in the employee intents about leaving the organization and vice versa. The results of the first hypothesis are similar to the results of studies put forward by Cote & Morgan (2002); Layne et al., (2004); Leka & Cox (2008); Applebaum (2008),

Noor & Maad (2008) which also show a positive relationship between job stress and employee turnover intentions.

On the other hand, the role of EI is tested as moderation effect of relationship between the independent variable job stress and turnover intentions as the dependent variable. The second objective was to find the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between job stress and employee turnover intention. The results show that EI plays insignificant role in reduction of turnover intentions of employees in the banks operating within Pakistan. A study conducted by Siddiqui & Hassan (2013) provides support for the results which also documented an insignificant relationship between EI and turnover rate of employees. On the other hand, the findings of the second hypothesis are not in accordance with the results of studies carried out by Carmeli (2003); Jordan et al., (2002); Wolfia & Kim (2013); Trivellasa et al., (2013) which show a significant negative relationship between EI and turnover intentions. The insignificant value of EI does not mean that banking employees do not have any level of EI. The limitation of this study may be because of lack of enough employment opportunities in Pakistan as the unemployment rate in the country is 5.79%, therefore, employees do not bother whether they are highly emotionally intelligent or not and are compelled to continue working in their existing jobs no matter what level of stress they might be going through to earn a living. Also, different areas possess different cultural backgrounds due to which EI may reveal significant results in some places and insignificant in others. Another important factor in EI showing insignificant value is that there exists exempted employment in Pakistan, this is why EI has no effect on employee job stress. Moreover, the sample size of the study is (n=153) which is less than 200, while studies show that for moderation minimum sample size must be greater than 200 (Kelloway, 1998).

The results show that organizations must recommend device active policies towards stress management. Many organizations do not use stress management techniques and if they do it will be beneficial for the firm in the long run as it would help them in retaining their competent employees. Also, employee grievances must be addressed thoroughly to maintain a healthy working environment free of stressors. Regular training sessions for stress management can mitigate the level of stress before it

reaches to the level of job burnout. In addition, the results provide an idea for the researchers to ponder on variables other than EI that might play a role of moderation in changing the strength of relationship between stress and turnover intentions.

Alternatively, the sectors other than banking industry can also be targeted for future research to check variability in the results of different sectors. The sample size (N=153) is only conducted in a single city of Peshawar, the results may be different while collecting data from different cities with idiosyncratic cultures. There are some other factor which might decrease the turnover intention level of employees which can be used as mediator variables such as leader member exchange, organizational justice, challenge stress. Moreover, in future researchers can used healthy workplace climate as a moderator to overcome the turnover intention level of employees.

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