

Impact of Competency-Gap on Employee-Turnover in Hotel Industry of Punjab and Chandigarh Tri-City



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Abstract

An employee lacking the required competencies that are resources to meet demands of a job, cannot perform up to the mark and is more likely to experience job-dissatisfaction, job-stress, low morale and at last opting to quit the organization or the sector at all. The findings of the study confirm competency-gap as a significant antecedent of employee-turnover in the area of specific & core-specific skills in case of the hotel industry. However overall competency-gap is not the significant antecedent of the same. The data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of multiple choice questions planned on the basis of a five point Likert scale. The questions were related to generic knowledge, specific & core-specific knowledge, generic skills and specific & core-specific skills and demographic information. The statistical analysis was carried out using 'Z' test for single large sample.

Keywords: Competency-gap, Job-dissatisfaction, Job-stress, Low Employee-morale, Employee-turnover.

Introduction

Importance of tourism industry can be guessed in the current economic system from the fact that tourism industry contributes 10 % of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and creates 1 in 10 new jobs (WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, 2017). Hotel industry is considered as a key component of tourism industry as it provides accommodation and food & beverage services for a tourist in addition to a number of allied services. In India the industry has been growing at a very good pace due to economic growth of the nation. The 'Taj' and 'Oberoi' are well known international hotel brands originated in India. Now many of their hotel units are rated very high in the world hotel ranking. Beside that new names such as 'Tripvillas', 'Treebo', 'TG Stays', 'Sarovar', 'Concept', 'Royal Orchid', 'Fortune' & 'Welcome' by ITC Hotels, 'The Lalit' and 'Lemon Tree' are emerging in the competition across the different categories of the industry. In the past few years several international hotel-brands also have penetrated Indian market.

Hotel Industry In Punjab & Chandigarh Tri-city

Punjab is among the most developed states of India. The evolution of hotel industry in the region has been remarkable in terms of quantity and quality in comparison to the most of other Indian states. Currently in Punjab and Chandigarh tri-city there are operating all major hotel-brands including Radisson, Country Inns & Suites, Ramada, Holiday Inn, Hyatt, Marriott, Taj, The Lalit, Sarovar, etc. According to (Ministry of Tourism, 2019) there are total nine star category hotels in Punjab out of which six are five star and three are four star. Whereas Chandigarh has total eight classified star category hotels out of which six are five star, one four star and one is three star. According to (India Tourism Statics, 2019) 11,08,635 foreign tourists and 4,02,93,352 domestic tourists visited Punjab. According to (Express News Service, 2018) "the state tourism policy aims at doubling the annual tourist visits from 25 million to 50 million in the next five years". The government aims to increase the share of tourism-revenue up to twenty percent of the total GDP of the state (PTI, 2018).

Despite of a big growth of hotel industry all over the world it still needs to prove itself as an ideal career-option. It has to go a long way to turn into a pure professional workplace. It has been afflicted by some serious issues such as low salary, long and un-natural working hours, live-

services as a major component of the merchandise, highly perishable food-products, shortage of qualified staff, high variation of standard operating procedures of a job-task in different hotel- units of the same category, unprofessional work-practices, role-ambiguity, employee-turnover, etc. The prominent of them are shortage of qualified staff and employee-turnover. It is to note that shortage of qualified staff is despite of availability of strong academic infrastructure. A very high rate of employee-turnover among qualified staff makes the situation more worrisome. According to (Blomme, 2009), in the Netherlands about 70 % of all hospitality graduates leave the industry within 6 years of graduation. The sector has a turnover-rate in the Netherlands, for line-level workers 60 % and for managerial positions 25 %. According to (Singh, 2017), in India the turnover rate is 40- 50 %. In addition an employee working at lower level is generally seen changing the organization in a span of 6 months (NATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, 2013). There are many hotel companies in the market making the competition tough. The ability of a hotel to consistently ensure customer-satisfaction and a profitable business-operations depends upon having a man power possessing a set of right competencies and maintaining the competent staff in required number without a frequent fluctuations. The automation and mechanization can help to maintain a desired level of quality of the services but they cannot replace the manpower significantly unlike the manufacturing sector. A pleasant job performance of a hotel-professional is a very important ingredient of a memorable experience of a tourist. As per the job demands and resources model, competencies of an employee are resources that are supposed to facilitate accomplishment of job-tasks. An employee having a competency-gap is more likely to experience a greater degree of job-stress. The job-stress is a negative health consequence for an employee resulting out of mismatch of the competencies and the job demands. The other negative outcomes of a competency-gap include a low job-performance, job-dissatisfaction, customer-dissatisfaction, job-stress and a low employee-morale. According to Wallace, 1999; Karatepe et al., 2005 as cited by (Nart, 2014) it is accepted that job-stress and work-family-conflict can have either a bidirectional or unidirectional positive relationship. The employee-turnover that could possibly be significantly caused by a competency-gap, is known to create a number of negative outcomes including an insufficient staff, decline in the quality of work, dissatisfied customer, decreased worker loyalty and the significant associated costs to the employer. These costs include loss of skills, sunk costs of training, the inexperience of new employees, loss of business and loss of brand goodwill.

Objective of the Study

The competency-gap could be an important determinant of employee-turnover as it causes low job-performance, job-dissatisfaction, low morale and job-stress. Therefore this research aims to study

possible impact of competency-gap on employee-turnover with the following objectives:

1. To explore if an overall competency-gap is a significant triggering factor to the quit- decision of an employee.
2. To explore if competency-gap in generic-knowledge, specific & core-specific-knowledge, generic-skills and specific & core-specific-skills areas is a significant triggering factor to the quit-decision of an employee, separately.

Review of Literature

According to David McClelland, 1973, underlying & enduring personal characteristics called 'competencies' are the best predictors of outstanding job-performance instead of the intelligence (Chouhan. V. S., Jan. 2014). Page and Wilson (1994) as cited by (Chouhan. V. S., Jan. 2014) defined competencies as "the skills, abilities, and personal characteristics required by an 'effective' or 'good' manager". According to van der Klink and Boon, (2002); Flood and Flood, (2000); Dulewicz and Herbert, (1992) as cited by BELINDA D. BUTLER, (2006) generic and soft-skill competencies can impact job performance positively and future belong to them. Whereas, Fischer et al., 1993: as cited by (Delamare Le Deist, 2005) say that 'People do not have competences independent of context'. In other words it can be said that competencies are context and industry-specific. Dulewicz (1989) as cited by BELINDA D. BUTLER, (2006) found that firm-specific competencies represented only 30 percent of the total competencies, the remaining 70 percent were common to a wide range of organizations. According to Tucker and Cofsky, (1994) as cited by (Chouhan. V. S., Jan. 2014) there are five characteristics or components of competency such as 1) knowledge- an information and learning resting in a person, such as a food server's knowledge of food products; 2) skill- a person's ability to perform a certain task, such as a chef's skill to cook a variety of food products of a particular cuisine; 3) self concepts and values / attitude- values and self image of a person for example self-confidence, a person's belief that he or she can be successful in a given situation; 4) traits- physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations or information for example sharp organs of taste & smell and emotional stability to remain calm under stress. 5) motives- desires, physiological needs or similar impulses that prompt action. Katz and Kahn (1986) as cited by (Chouhan. V. S., Jan. 2014) grouped competencies into three categories which later expanded into the following four: 1) technical or functional i.e. knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. associated with the technology or functional expertise, 2) managerial i.e. knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. required to plan, organize, mobilize and utilize various resources, 3) human i.e. knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. required to motivate, utilize and develop human resources and 4) conceptual i.e. abilities to visualize the invisible, to think at abstract levels and to use the thinking to plan future-business. Warhurst, Nickson, Witz and Cullen as cited by (Beesley, 2013) additional competencies for a hotel-staff include aesthetic and (Beesley, 2013) emotional skills. Emotional skill is the

ability to manage emotions as per the requirements of the job. Specifically, it includes expression and suppression of emotions as per the job-requirement. According to the prevailing situation some emotions are expressed though they are actually not felt, on the other side some emotions are never expressed though they are actually felt. Aesthetic skill can be described as an appealing expression of the various attributes through one's body-dispositions and behavior as per the job-requirement. (Witz, 2003) describe it specifically as the attributes such as appealing outlook, attractive body-shape. The other components of behavior may include talking through the right words, in the right tone, at the right volume and a soothing calm. For the purpose of this paper the competencies that are to be studied are grouped into two categories namely 'generic' and 'specific & core-specific' of 'knowledge' and 'skills' resulting in the following four groups : 1 generic knowledge, 2 specific & core-specific knowledge, 3 generic skills and 4 specific & core-specific skills. The aim is to facilitate in-depth study of the gap and accurate identification of the gap-area, if it is found to exist. It is to note that it is a general perception that most of hotel management institutes of the area lack a befitting infrastructure in terms of provision of labs, latest equipment, sufficient number of qualified staff and as a result very few or no practical classes take place for the students. It is a well-known fact that in addition to conceptual knowledge, hotel-employees require a more number of skills which can be learnt only through practical classes. According to (Alsfadi. L & Abunafesa. R., October 24- 26, 2012) "skills gap is defined as the difference between the market needs (demand) and the current skills supplied by local education institutes (supply)". It may result due to many factors. According to (American Society For Training & Development, 2012) changes in job, backwardness of education, slow learning of work-force, insufficient learning-investment by business are causes of skill gap. According to (Learning And Skills Council, 2003) the main causes of the Skills-gap include lack of experience, failure to keep-up with a change by an employer resulting into an unfit job-role, failure to train & develop the staff, unfit nature of the employee who fill the vacancy, lack of motivation in staff due to unattractiveness of the job or its terms & conditions and lack of work-readiness on the part of the employees. According to (Giffi.C., 2018) advancement in technology and automation causes skill-gap. It is to note that employee turn-over and competency-gap are mutual cause and consequence of each other. Beside the above mentioned reasons, in the context of hotel industry some of its characteristic features such as seasonal nature of job, majority of casual work-force, different standards of the same work in the industry, unprofessional work-conditions, unprofessional work-practices, etc that contribute to employee-turnover are thought to be the additional reasons of the state of skill- gap. If left unaddressed the condition of skill-gap leads to negative consequences such as costs, customer-dissatisfaction, job-dissatisfaction, job-stress and quit-decision by an employee for the organization or the

sector. "Job-stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities / resources, and needs of a worker. Job-stress can lead to poor health and even injury" (NIOSH, 1999). The concept of job-stress is often confused with a challenge, but these two concepts are not the same. A challenge energizes an employee psychologically and physically. It also motivates an employee to learn new skills. When a challenge is met, a feeling of relaxation and satisfaction prevails. But same is not true for job-stress. It is accepted that job-stress basically results from the interaction of a worker and the conditions of the work. According to Wallace, 1999; Karatepe et al., 2005 as cited by (Nart, 2014) it is accepted that job-stress and work-family conflict can have either a bidirectional or unidirectional positive relationship. According to the Cambridge dictionary employee-turnover is the 'the rate at which employees leave a company and are replaced by new employees'. Employee-turnover does not include 'attrition' that refers to end of employment relationship due to retirement, job-elimination, or employee-death. Here for the purpose of this study the turnover is the voluntary turnover that refers to an employee leaving the company on his own will. Because competencies are important job-resources for an employee to accomplish job-tasks and to control the job-stress that may result into work-family-conflict. Therefore it is proposed that a competency-gap leads an employee to quit the organization or the sector. Therefore, this study will investigate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis-I

A competency-gap is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.

According to van der Klink and Boon, (2002); Flood and Flood, (2000); Dulewicz and Herbert, (1992) as cited by BELINDA D. BUTLER, (2006) generic competencies and soft-skills are very important and can impact job-performance positively. In other words a gap of generic competencies including soft-skills i.e. a gap of generic knowledge and generic skills can significantly cause job-stress and may lead to employee turnover. Therefore, we have the following hypotheses :

Hypothesis-II

A gap of generic knowledge is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.

Hypothesis-III

A gap of generic skills is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.

According to (Delamare Le Deist, 2005) the competencies are context and industry-specific. Thus a gap of specific & core-specific knowledge and specific & core-specific skills is a significant factor to lead to employee turnover. Therefore we have the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis-IV

A gap of specific & core-specific knowledge is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.

Hypothesis-V

A gap of specific & core-specific skills is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.

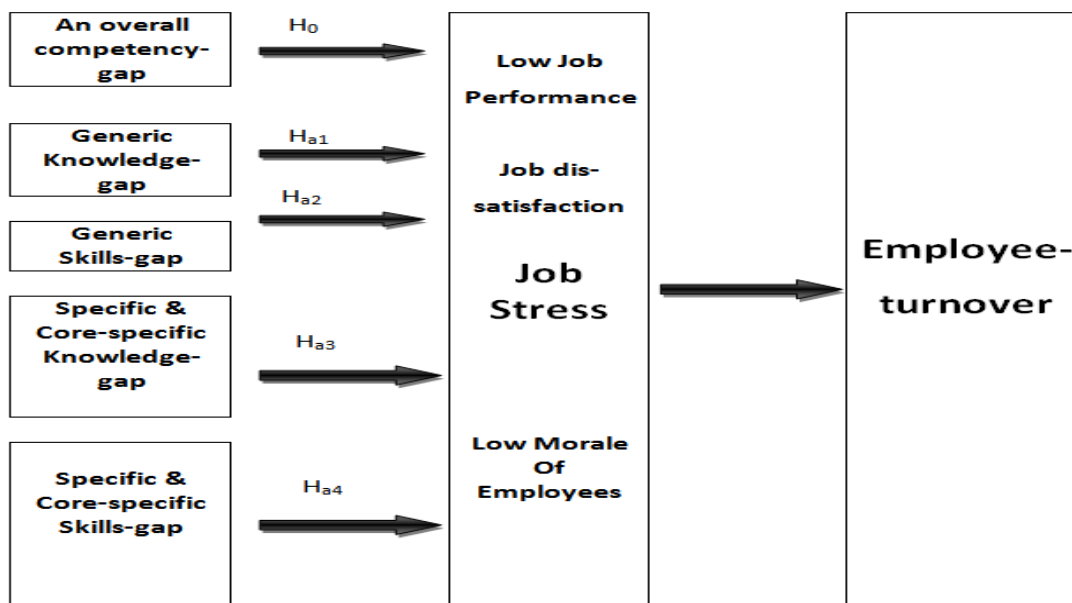


Fig. 1.1: Model of Impact of Competency-gap on Employee-turnover.

Hypothesis to Be Tested

On the basis of a review of the literature the following five hypotheses have been proposed :

1. **Null-Hypothesis** :- An overall competency-gap is not a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.
2. **Alternative Hypothesis-I, Ha₁** : A generic knowledge-gap is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.
3. **Alternative Hypothesis-II, Ha₂** : A generic skill-gap is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.
4. **Alternative Hypothesis-III, Ha₃** : A specific & core-specific knowledge-gap is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.
5. **Alternative Hypothesis-IV, Ha₄**: A specific & core-specific skill-gap is a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.

Diagrammatically, the relationship of hypotheses has been shown in the figure 1.1, displaying an overall competency-gap and its components such as generic knowledge-gap, generic skill-gap, specific & core-specific knowledge-gap, specific & core-specific skill-gap lead to employee turnover.

Research Methodology

The Instrument A structured and self-administered questionnaire having two parts, part-I for demographic information having ten questions and part-II for competency-gap study having twenty five questions was used to collect data. The questionnaire had selfdesigned multiple choice questions (having explanation and examples wherever required) except the five questions in the part-I (1,3,4,5 and 6) related to demographic information that required a short answer. The instrument used five-point Likert-scale to measure how effective was the education of a respondent on the specific accounts against the job-demands on the basis of their job-experience. The point one ('1') of the scale gives the highest mark to

the education, as 'Perfect-100%' hence shows the lowest level of the gap whereas point five ('5') of the scale gives the lowest mark to the education as 'Useless-0 %', hence shows the highest level of the gap. The option '3' is a middle point at 50 % in rating. The scale had '0' option for a respondent who was not willing to pick any option from one to five or who was not able to recall the relevant experience or was not willing to answer due to any other reason. No information related to personal identification was collected to protect the privacy of the respondents.

Data Collection

Due to non-cooperation of most of managers of the qualified hotels to share formally organized data of the employees who left the organization on their own free will. A list of such 300 leftover-employees was completed with the help of personal contacts with passed out students of hotel management institutes who had left the hotel-job. An officially classified five star hotel either a stand alone unit or affiliated to a qualified chain (having at least 25 hotel units including 5 star units) was considered qualified. Only those officially classified four and three star hotels were considered qualified who were affiliated to a qualified chain. All the international hotel-chains were considered qualified either originated in India or in another nation. Only those respondents were selected who had graduated in hotel management and were working in one of four core departments i.e. Front Office, Food & Beverage Service, Hotel-Housekeeping, Food Production, irrespective of their designation. For the purpose three year's diploma was considered to be equivalent to the degree. The questionnaire was delivered to all 150 members of the list. Out of 150, 105 respondents returned completely filled-up questionnaire. The 2 respondents had chosen '0' option therefore their feedback was excluded from the final analysis. Hence leaving the data of 103 respondents for the analysis.

Data Analysis

The descriptive data-analysis was performed using Microsoft Word and Excel applications to have insight of the distribution of the data and demographic profile of the respondents. The 'Z' test for one sample

was applied with the help of web tools available on <https://www.socscistatistics.com> to ascertain if data shows a significant level of the competency-gap by comparing the mean of the sample with hypothesized mean.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

S.No.	Particular	Number
01	Male respondents	78
02	Female respondents	25
03	Respondents that worked in five star hotels	65
04	Respondents that worked in four star hotels	26
05	Respondents that worked in three star hotels	12
06	Respondents that worked in Front Office department.	28
07	Respondents that worked in Food & Beverage Service department.	44
08	Respondents that worked in Acom. Op. department.	20
09	Respondents that worked in Food Production department.	11
10	Respondents having graduation degree in hotel management	105
11	Respondents having master degree in hotel management	0
12	Respondents from hotel industry	105
13	Respondents from allied sectors of hospitality industry	0
14	Respondents who ticked '0' option because they were not able to recall their job-experience or did not want to answer due to other reasons.	2
15	Number of respondents included in analysis of data.	103

Study of Competency-gap

For meaningful study of the competency-gap, beside analyzing the data of the part-II of the questionnaire consisting of 25 questions, the questions along with the respective data were grouped in four different sections under the following headings: generic knowledge-gap, generic skill-gap, specific & core-specific knowledge-gap and specific & core-specific skill-gap. So that area of the gap could be identified accurately if it is found to be existing. It results in the total five hypotheses including the null hypothesis which are tested ahead:

Level of significance

α is 5% i.e. 0.05. Therefore, critical value of Z is 1.645 in case of upper tailed tests and -1.645 in case of lower tailed tests. Because in case of null hypothesis the applicable Z test is upper-tailed thus, the critical value of Z is 1.645.

Decision Rules

1. Null hypothesis, H_0 is accepted if $Z < 1.645$.
2. Null hypothesis, H_0 is rejected if $Z > 1.645$.
3. Alternative hypothesis one, H_{a1} is accepted if $Z_1 > 1.645$
4. Alternative hypothesis one, H_{a1} is rejected if $Z_1 < 1.645$.
5. Alternative hypothesis two, H_{a2} is accepted if $Z_2 > 1.645$.
6. Alternative hypothesis two, H_{a2} is rejected if $Z_2 < 1.645$.
7. Alternative hypothesis three, H_{a3} is accepted if $Z_3 > 1.645$
8. Alternative hypothesis three, H_{a3} is rejected if $Z_3 < 1.645$.
9. Alternative hypothesis four, H_{a4} is accepted if $Z_4 > 1.645$.
10. Alternative hypothesis four, H_{a4} is rejected if $Z_4 < 1.645$.

Null-hypothesis, H_0

(Overall Competency-gap)

As per the applicable formula of Z test for large sample, $Z = \frac{\bar{x} - M}{S/\sqrt{N}}$, where \bar{x} is mean of the sample, M is the hypothesized value based on the median value of the Lickert scale i.e. 3 multiplied by the total number of the questions 25, thus $M = 75$, in the case, S is standard deviation of the sample and N is number of observations i.e. 103.

Here

$\bar{x} = 63.19417476$, $M = 75$, $S = 9.644726541$, $\sqrt{N} = 10.1488916$, POPULATION /SQRT 103

$Z = -12.4229588$

because $Z < 1.645$, as per rule (i) H_0 is accepted.

p value is < 0.00001

type-II error i.e. $\beta = 1 - 0.00001 = > 0.99999$

(ii) Alternative Hypothesis, H_{a1} :

(Generic knowledge-gap)

$$Z_1 = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - M_1}{S_1/\sqrt{N}}$$

$$Z_1 = \frac{13.27038026 - 18}{2.119547236 / 10.1488916}$$

$Z_1 = -12.9534828$, because $Z_1 < 1.645$ as per rule (iv) H_{a1} is rejected.

p value is < 0.00001

type-II error i.e. $\beta = 1 - 0.00001 = > 0.99999$

(iii) Alternative Hypothesis, H_{a2} :

(Generic skill-gap)

$$Z_2 = \frac{\bar{x}_2 - M_2}{S_2/\sqrt{N}}$$

$$Z_2 = \frac{12.10344653 - 21}{2.758438932 / 10.1488916}$$

$Z_2 = -32.7323385$ because $Z_2 < 1.645$ as per rule (vi) H_{a2} is rejected.

p value is < 0.00001

type-II error i.e. $\beta = 1 - 0.00001 = > 0.99999$

(iv) **Alternative Hypothesis, H_{a3} :****(Specific & core-specific knowledge-gap)**

$$Z_3 = \frac{\bar{x}_3 - M_3}{S_3 / \sqrt{N}}$$

$$Z_3 = \frac{13.27038026 - 18}{2.119547236 / 10.1488916}$$

$Z_3 = -22.6465338$ because $Z < 1.645$ as per rule (iix)

H_{a3} is rejected.

p value is < 0.00001

type-II error i.e. $\beta = 1 - 0.00001 = > 0.99999$

(iv) **Alternative Hypothesis, H_{a4} :****(Specific & core-specific skill-gap)**

$$Z_4 = \frac{\bar{x}_4 - M_4}{S_4 / \sqrt{N}}$$

$$Z_4 = \frac{28.08737864 - 27}{4.781719266 / 10.1488916}$$

$Z_4 = 2.30789123$ because $Z_4 > 1.645$ as per rule (ix)

H_{a4} is accepted.

p value = 0.010505

type-II error i.e. $\beta = 1 - 0.010505 = 0.989495$

Implications

1. Theoretical Implications: There are a number of theoretical implications from the study. The first is that in case of hotel employees of the area, overall competency-gap was not a significant antecedent of employee-turnover. Secondly, the generic knowledge-gap was not a significant antecedent of employee-turnover. The third implication rejects generic skill-gap as an antecedent of employee-turnover. Fourthly, specific & core-specific knowledge-gap could not be proved as a significant antecedent of employee-turnover. Lastly, specific & core-specific skill-gap was proved to be a significant antecedent of employee-turnover.
2. Implications For The Technical Education Sector : The study has some suggestions for technical education sector of the area. The universities must ensure that the syllabus includes all the aspects of the skills required by hotel-employees. They must ensure that the institutes have sufficient infrastructure including the labs, the latest equipment and qualified and industry-experienced staff as per the regulations. In the plan of syllabus adequate time must be allocated for the practical classes. The learning material must be updated regularly in consultation with the industry experts. Beside this the obsolete learning material must be removed from the syllabus.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted within the financial and time constraints. Apart from that there was non-cooperative behavior of the human resources managers regarding the provision of the data of turned-over employees formally in the organized format. Therefore, all the employees were studied collectively irrespective of their designation and nature of job. The caution should be exercised regarding the generalization of the results of the study across the departments and designations. It is recommended that the future research may replicate the framework of the more organized study on the basis of the designation or level of job and nature of the job such as backend employees and customer-interactive employees.

Conclusion

This study confirmed that turned-over employees had experienced a significant competency-gap in the area of specific & core-specific skills. However it rejected overall competency-gap and any gap in the sub areas such as generic knowledge, generic skill and specific & core-specific knowledge in the context of hotel employees of the area.

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