

The association between interpersonal conflict, turnover intention and knowledge hiding: The mediating role of employee cynicism and moderating role of emotional intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Academia is prone to incivility and interpersonal conflict like any other workplace environment, although incivility in academia is manifested in behaviors such as undermining colleagues' professional standing, intelligence and authority; reprobating other's accomplishments; and hiding knowledge from other faculty members. The autonomy, independence, academic freedom, and tenure in academia lead to a working environment (culture) with different "rules of engagement", governed by the faculty members themselves. This study examines the impact of employee cynicism on faculty's interpersonal conflict as a source of stress, which leads to undesirable organizational behaviors, namely higher turnover intention and knowledge hiding behavior; furthermore, the role of faculty's emotional intelligence as a moderator on the relationship between interpersonal conflict among faculty members and turnover intention has been investigated as a second objective of this study. The study uses a quantitative method of research and analysis, by collecting data from 200 faculty members in private higher education institutions. The study's hypotheses were tested by Smart PLS3 (SEM) to conclude that: 1) interpersonal conflict directly influences turnover intention and knowledge hiding behavior; 2) employee cynicism has no mediating effect in the relationship between interpersonal conflict, and turnover intention or knowledge hiding behavior; 3) Faculty's emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between interpersonal conflict and turnover intention.

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1. Introduction

Different forms of bullying in higher education have been documented among various ranks of faculty members (Lester, 2013; Reio & Ghosh, 2009). Conflict is extensively pervasive in academia and inevitable in the intellectual community (McElveen et al., 2009). Various studies have discussed the nature and sources of conflict in academia. Clark et al. (2013) have mentioned the vast presence of incivility in academia among the faculty members who do not have any idea how their behavior might impact colleagues. Some researchers argue that conflict is what leads to an individual's growth of knowledge and is present in every educational system (Parker, 1997). The combination of factors presented in today's academic culture such as academic freedom, tenure distress, and more corporatized form of organizations, would lead to conflict between faculty members (Snyder-Yuly et al., 2020; Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Twale, 2017; Twale & De Luca, 2008). Nelson and Lambert (2001) mention "Academic Freedom" as the spirit of academic life. They continue with the doctrine of "Academic Freedom" which is stated to defend and protect academicians against discrimination with its four pillars, eventually being used to justify other non-academic behaviors such as intimidation, harassment, and other uncivil conducts. Keashly and Newman (2010) discuss the "Academic Freedom and Autonomy" in higher education climate, they claim that:

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“Autonomy is a critical requirement for academic freedom and refers to both independence of thought and action as well as immunity from being under influence of others, fostering and promoting a climate of open debate, critique, and permit the exploration of diversity of ideas, that is critical to knowledge creation and application”

The “autonomy/independence” career anchor is related to professional life in academia, and is a source of conflict among faculty members in higher education (McElveen et al., 2006; Cheldelin, 2000). According to Dalpezzo and Jett (2009), faculty superiority may be one of the factors leading to conflict. Keashly and Newman (2013) in their study, observed: “setting a co-worker up to fail, making rude comments, abusing position and authority, and withholding vital information” as the most common uncivil behavior among faculty members. Other studies suggest undermining academicians’ professional standing, criticizing one’s achievements, competence, authority, and intellectual capabilities are some forms of bullying in academia (Keashly & Newman, 2013).

Empirical studies show incivility at the workplace can increase turnover rates, work withdrawal, and other negative outcomes (Kisamore et al., 2010; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Besides the mentioned outcomes of bullying at the workplace, an undesired behavior in academia, where the members are expected to share their knowledge, is knowledge hiding behavior (Hernaus et al., 2013). Feist and Gorman (2013) posit the existence of mistrusted relationships in academia, the pressure in reaching higher academic positions, achieving more publications and funds (Walsh & Hong, 2003) which can eventually lead to hiding knowledge from colleagues (Hernaus et al., 2018). Aljawarneh et al. (2020) argue that the absence of trust in the workplace leads to knowledge hiding behavior. They also mention cynicism as a defensive attitude, which could arise if employees think that they are losing other’s support; according to the conservation of resources theory (Abubaker & Arasli, 2016). Any organizational practices that cause employee discomfort, disappointment, and frustration would lead to cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Therefore, workplace incivility can lead to cynicism and cynics are less likely to share their knowledge with others and engage in work deviant behaviors (Aljawarneh & Arasli, 2018).

Previous studies suggest that cynicism (negative attitudes toward one’s employing organization), has three components: 1) Perceiving an organization as lacking integrity, 2) negative effects toward the organization, 3) being disposed to critical behavior or denigration toward the organization. These three components of beliefs, effects, and actions, are components of functional attitude theory (Dean et al., 1998; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Hilgard, 1980; Smith, 1947). All of these factors exist on continua that go from positive to negative (Boe, 2014; Allport, 1935; Breckler, 1984). The area of analysis is not people that are cynical in general, but rather people that have cynical attitudes toward their organizations specifically (Dean et al., 1998; Hart, 1997).

Levin and Cross (2004) posit that trust among colleagues increases the likelihood of knowledge exchanged in an organization. Furthermore, Braxton and Bayer (1999) introduce cynicism as one of the few norms of conduct in academia that should not be violated according to the faculty members. Connelly et al., (2012) argue that knowledge hiding behavior either as hiding or holding knowledge is more apparent among colleagues who do not trust each other. On the other hand, research has shown the significant role of emotions in teaching careers and how emotions are involved in all aspects of teaching (Khoshkar et al., 2020). Mc Elveen et al. (2006) discuss the fact that professors should learn “emotional intelligence” skills in order to be able to motivate others, and be aware of their own and other’s emotions, due to the fact that emotional intelligence is positively related with teamwork, trust, organizational commitment; and negatively related with knowledge hiding behavior (Geofroy & Evans, 2017). According to the empirical studies, knowledge hiding behavior is not anticipated in an academic environment where its purpose is to serve knowledge and individuals have a higher cultural intelligence (Bogilović et al., 2017; Hernaus et al., 2019).

The presence of employee turnover intention as well as knowledge hiding, are clear obstacles to the smooth running of any company or institution. This study primarily focuses on two of the undesired outcomes of interpersonal conflict in academia: turnover intention and knowledge hiding behavior. Aljawarneh et al. (2018) indicates that cynicism promotes uncivil behaviors such as knowledge hiding. They examine the mediating role of cynicism in the relation between tolerance to workplace incivility and knowledge hiding behavior. According to Ilies et al. (2011) Interpersonal conflict is a social stressor in employees. To address the gap in the existing literature, this article focuses on explanatory factors absent previously; the impact of a determinant such as interpersonal conflict as a social stressor on turnover intention and knowledge hiding behavior through the mediating role of cynicism in an academic environment is explored. Prati and Karriker (2010) discussed the influence of emotional intelligence as a moderator on the relationship between burnout and perception of emotional labor. Furthermore, Szczygiel and Bazinska (2013) studied the role of emotional intelligence as a moderator on the relation between negative emotions felt by employees and burnout. Stone et al., (2010) have examined the moderating role of social competencies such as political skills, emotional intelligence, and self-monitoring on the relation between interpersonal conflict and counterproductive work behaviors.

Furthermore, this study has explored the relationship between interpersonal conflict and turnover intention, with emotional intelligence as a moderator, among faculty members in an academic environment, to fill the gap in the existing literature. Factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, and education are used as control variables. The aim of this study is to provide a better understanding of the role played by emotional intelligence on interpersonal conflict in academia; whether certain undesirable

outcomes occur due to the existence of cynicism; and how they can be managed properly by academicians. This study was conducted on three private higher education institutions in Kyrenia, North Cyprus, among 200 faculty members.

2. Literature review background and hypotheses development

2.1 Interpersonal Conflict, Cynicism, and Turnover Intention

Interpersonal conflict is seen as a noteworthy cause of stress in organizational settings (Agboola, 2016; Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001). As a work stressor, interpersonal conflict has associations with multiple negative outcomes in employees, for example an increase in the rate of psychosomatic issues (Pennebaker & Skelton, 1982). Frone (2000) has advised that when attempting to better the perceptions of employees toward their jobs, there should be a focus on both the interpersonal relationships between colleagues, as well as the interpersonal relationships between superiors and subordinates.

According to the general theory of Social Relations of Fiske (1992), Communal Sharing (CS) relationships, one of the four models of social relations; holds that when individuals share certain attributes, identification with said attributes cause them to be kind and altruistic toward one another. People are disposed to desire this kind of identification and perceive certain obligations as being entailed by them (Fiske, 1992). A similar view is that people feel closer to and want to be treated well by the people with whom they share personal characteristics (Eatough, 2010). It follows then that conflict is more likely to occur between people that have differences in their cultural backgrounds, attitudes, values, perceptions, etc. (Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1996). Donovan et al. (1998) argues that the quality of interpersonal relationships between workers and managers has a direct impact on work satisfaction and turnover intention. Toksoy and Cetin (2017) in their study "the effect of interpersonal conflict and knowledge sharing on organizational cynicism" concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between interpersonal conflict and cynicism; and a significant negative relationship between knowledge sharing and cynicism. Çınar et al. (2014) findings in their study of "The relationships among Organizational Cynicism, Job Insecurity and Turnover Intention" show that cynicism in the workplace, and high turnover rate have strong positive relations. The mediating role of cynicism in relation between incivility and turnover was studied among nursing employees with cynical attitudes towards their colleagues and the organization, who engage more in uncivil behaviors which eventually lead to turnover intentions (Nazir and Ahmed, 2016). Based on the related theories and literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Interpersonal conflict directly impacts turnover intention.

Hypothesis 2: Employee cynicism mediates the relationship between interpersonal conflict and turnover intention.

2.2 Interpersonal Conflict, Cynicism, and Knowledge Hiding Behavior

By referring to the social exchange theory where social behavior is the result of an exchange process based on cost-benefit analysis (initiated by Homans 1958), this study handles knowledge hiding behavior in workplaces as an action which is carried out in line with cost-benefit considerations. Blau (1964) discussed that ineffective social exchange may be caused due to interpersonal distrust; and furthermore Connelly et al., (2011) indicated that distrust is related to the intention to hide knowledge. Duffy et al. (2002) suggest that knowledge hiding may appear as a suppressive social behavior which can prevent establishing positive and powerful interpersonal relationships. Keremers (2018) found that there is a significant positive relationship between knowledge hiding behavior and turnover intention. Interpersonal dynamics influence employees' decisions on whether to hide or share their knowledge with colleagues, specific personal or group behaviors may indicate some of these dynamics. Organizational context and climate may also impact decisions on knowledge hiding or sharing (Connelly et al., 2012). There are three different strategies used in hiding knowledge from colleagues, they are evasive hiding when someone provides incorrect or misleading information, rationalized hiding represents proposing a rational excuse for hiding the knowledge, and playing dumb is when the person pretends to be ignorant about the knowledge; although the outcome of all the strategies is the same (Connelly et al. 2012). Demirkasimoğlu (2016)'s study of "Knowledge Hiding in Academia" posits that academicians tend to use the rationalized hiding strategy when withholding knowledge from their colleagues. Feist and Gorman (2013) pointed out that mistrusted relationships may be present in atmospheres of higher education. Demirkasimoğlu (2016) argues that organizational factors such as authority and power may influence knowledge hiding tactics in academia; furthermore, she mentions that knowledge hiding behavior might impact performance, innovation, and creativity in an organization.

Aljawarne and Atan (2018) dealt with knowledge hiding behavior as an outcome of workplace incivility; the impact of incivility on knowledge hiding was tested through the mediating role of cynicism. Based on the preceding discussion and reasoning the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Interpersonal conflict directly impacts knowledge hiding behavior.

Hypothesis 4: Employee cynicism mediates the relationship between interpersonal conflict and Knowledge hiding behavior.

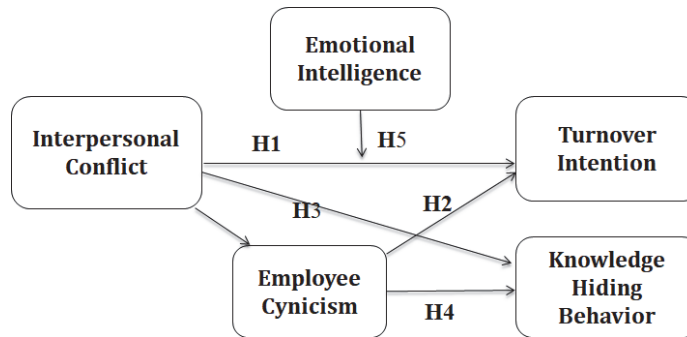


Fig. 1. Conceptual model

The concept of emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to analyze and comprehend one's emotions and those of others, for informative and prescriptive ends. It was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. Emotional intelligence includes the ability to manage emotions and pick-up emotional language or emotional signals (Emotional intelligence theory of Mayer & Salovey). Furthermore, in order to comprehend emotions, one needs to have knowledge of emotions and emotional vocabulary and how they are synthesized to create new emotions. To manage emotions, there should be the ability to manage one's own emotions, and the emotions of others as well. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are less vulnerable to negative behavior; they can bypass their discontent and use it constructively (Westerlaken et al., 2009). Individuals that possess higher emotional intelligence have a less surface level perception of events and how things appear. They try to quell tensions and are not prone to abusive behavior (Kisamore et al, 2010). The ability to understand and control emotions is a fundamental aspect of emotional intelligence. It can lead to a reinforcement of supportive behavior, a higher likelihood of help from others, and therefore a better state of mind in the workplace (Tripathy, 2018; Khajeh et al., 2013). Superiors that have high emotional intelligence positively impact their subordinates, such as lowering the chances of quitting intentions and improved perceptions of day to day practices (Falahat et al., 2014). According to Cherniss and Goleman (2001), higher-ups with greater emotional intelligence are more likely to keep their employees. Leaders with better interpersonal skills, have good relationships with the people below them, which results in many advantages for all parties involved (George, 2000). Emotional intelligence leads to lower chances of stress and other negative feelings (Goleman, 1995). There exists a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and EI, according to Arakelian et al., (2013). Emotional intelligence has been demonstrated to be a moderator in the relation between stress and burnout in the study of Gorgens-Ekermans¹ and Brand (2012). Another study which focuses on EI as a moderator is on the relations between affective responses and job insecurity, and also the relations between affective responses and behavior by Jordan et al., (2002). Based on the discussions the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: Employee's emotional intelligence moderates the effect of interpersonal conflict on turnover intention.

3. Research Method

A deductive research approach is applied based on previous research theories. This study has used the quantitative method of data collection and analysis. A new study model was developed and tested by using various questionnaires as instruments for data collection.

Different questionnaires measured various study's variables and the measurements were used to analyze the relationship between the variables.

The questionnaires' content validity has been previously tested, although the internal consistency (reliability) scale for measuring the weakness or strength of the correlations between the variables were checked for this specific study. This study was conducted in the higher education environment. The study has used Smart PLS3 software with complex bootstrapping routines which has the ability of running and interpreting our structural equation model for analysis.

3.1 Population & Sampling

The population of this study was the total number of faculty members of three different private universities in Northern Cyprus of 499. A *convenient sampling* method was used in this study. The questionnaires were distributed randomly among different faculty members with different academic ranks. The 5 Likert scale questionnaires ranging from "I strongly agree to I strongly disagree" were distributed considering a 95% confidence interval and an acceptable 5 percent margin of error, a sample size of 218 respondents was calculated, Therefore, a total of 220 questionnaires were distributed and 200 acceptable responses were gathered. The Likert scale questionnaires for study variables and their dimensions are listed in Table 1 as follows,

Table 1

The survey questionnaires covering all the variable's dimensions

<p>Section 1) Employee Cynicism: by Nader Mohammad Saleh Aljawarneh and Tarik Atan (2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe top management says one thing and does another • Top management's policies, goals, and practices, seem to have little in common • When top management says it is going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen • Top management expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another • When I think about top management, I feel aggravation" • When I think about top management, I feel tension • When I think about top management, I experience anxiety • I criticize top management's practices and policies with others • "I often talk to others about the way things are run at top management • I complain about how things happen at top management to friends outside the organization" • I complain about how things happen at top management to friends outside the organization"
<p>Section2) Knowledge hiding: by Demirkasimoğlu (2015).</p> <p><i>Evasive hiding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Agreed to help him/her but never really intended to" • "Agreed to help him/her but instead gave him/her information different from what s/he wanted" • "Told him/her that I would help him/her out later but stalled as much as possible" • "Offered him/her some other information instead of what he/she really wanted" <p><i>Playing dumb</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Pretended that I did not know the information" • "Said that I did not know, even though I did" • "Pretended I did not know what s/he was talking about" • "Said that I was not very knowledgeable about the topic" <p><i>Rationalized hiding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Explained that I would like to tell him/her, but was not supposed to" • "Explained that the information is confidential and only available to people on a particular project" • "Told him/her that my boss would not let anyone share this knowledge" • "Said that I would not answer his/her questions"
<p>Section3) Emotional Intelligence: Wong, C.S. and Law, K.S. (2002).</p> <p>Self-Emotion appraisal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time. • I have good understanding of my own emotions. • I really understand what I feel. • I always know whether or not I am happy. <p>Others' Emotion Appraisal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior. • I am a good observer of others' emotions • I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others. • I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me. <p>Use of Emotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them. • I always tell myself I am a competent person. • I am a self-motivated person. • I would always encourage myself to try my best. <p>Regulation of Emotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally. • I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions. • I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry. • I have good control of my own emotions.
<p>Section 4) Interpersonal Conflict: The Workplace Interpersonal Conflict Scale: An Alternative in Conflict Assessment. By: Wright et al. (2017).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt like you were treated unfairly by others at work? • Had a disagreement with others over the work you do? • Been shown a lack of respect or felt underappreciated by others at work? • Been treated with hostility or rude behavior by others at work? • Had others yell at you at work? • Been blamed or criticized for something that was not your fault by others at work? • Been given unclear directions by others at work?
<p>Section 5) Turnover intentions: by Colarelli (1984).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. I frequently think of quitting my job • 2. If I had my way, I will still be working for this organization 1 year from now. • 3. I am planning to search for a new job within the next 12 months.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 First Phase: Measurement Model

For assessment of *individual item reliability*, the loadings of each measurement item have been checked. All the loadings exceed the threshold (0.7). Thus, it has been concluded that the reliability of items on individual scales is acceptable (Naldi et al., 2007).

In order to evaluate the *internal consistency* of constructs, Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A and Composite Reliability scores (*construct reliability*) along with Average Variance Extracted (*convergent validity*) scores have been extracted from the model.

The Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A and composite reliability scores are above the threshold (0.7). Therefore, the aforementioned measures indicate that the employed constructs are reliable (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores are higher than 0.5 denoting that the constructs converge sufficiently and they explain the variances of their items (Hair et al., 2019).

Bootstrapping with 1000 samples

Path analysis

Table 2

The Path Analysis (the result of direct and mediation effect)

	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Emotional Intelligence → Interpersonal Conflict	2.113	1.235	2.514	0.007
Emotional Intelligence → Turnover Intention	3.659	1.101	6.432	0.003
Employee Cynicism → Knowledge Hiding Behavior	2.257	1.141	1.931	0.054
Employee Cynicism → Turnover Intention	3.106	1.063	1.953	0.121
Interpersonal Conflict → Employee Cynicism	2.041	1.074	2.601	0.508
Interpersonal Conflict → Knowledge Hiding Behavior	2.702	1.155	4.707	0.042
Interpersonal Conflict → Turnover Intention	3.052	1.118	2.563	0.034
Knowledge Hiding Behavior → Turnover Intention	3.085	1.071	2.206	0.021

Moderation Analysis: The moderating effect of Emotional intelligence between Emotional intelligence and Turnover intention in table 3, indicating that hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Table 3

The Moderating Effect between Emotional Intelligence and Turnover Intention

	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Emotional intelligence → Turnover Intention				
Moderating Effect 1 → Turnover Intention	3.005	0.932	2.206	0.028

Construct reliability and validity

Table 4

The study variables' internal reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Emotional Intelligence	0.835	0.889	0.860	0.736
Employee Cynicism	0.748	0.818	0.807	0.706
Interpersonal Conflict	0.936	0.939	0.948	0.724
Knowledge Hiding Behavior	0.781	0.797	0.767	0.695
Moderating Effect 1	0.966	1.000	0.795	0.764
Turnover Intention	0.868	0.868	0.919	0.791

The final step of measurement model evaluation was conducted for assessing *discriminant validity*. This evaluation has been executed through Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. The HTMT scores do not exceed even the conservative threshold (0.85). Thus, the results are assuring that there is no problem regarding discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2016).

Table 5

HTMT values, showing the discriminant validity

	Emotional Intelligence	Employee Cynicism	Interpersonal Conflict	Knowledge Hiding Behavior	Moderating Effect 1	Turnover Intention
Emotional Intelligence						
Employee Cynicism	0.745					
Interpersonal Conflict	0.381	0.147				
Knowledge Hiding Behavior	0.859	0.75	0.772			
Moderating Effect 1	0.331	0.261	0.456	0.434		
Turnover Intention	0.798	0.565	0.077	0.616	0.122	

Second Phase: Structural Model

R-Squared Q-Squared F-Squared

Predictive capability of the model as well as linkages amongst constructs have been evaluated for collinearity issues based on R-square, which is variance explained, and Q-square that is cross-validated redundancy (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). Through bootstrapping method, hypothesized linkages have been shown to have significance Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 which are the direct relations between interpersonal conflict and turnover intention, and Interpersonal conflict and knowledge

hiding behavior are accepted, while mediating effect has not been found to have a significant role, therefore hypotheses 2 and 4 are rejected. This is used at 95% confidence level and that paths are taken as significant, when the value varies from zero in structural paths (Castro & Raldon, 2015; Henseler et al., 2016).

Table 6

R2 / Q2

Variable	R-square	Q-square
Turnover Intention	0.210	0.118
Employee Cynicism	0.235	0.174
Knowledge-hiding-behavior	0.311	0.225
Emotional Intelligence	0.322	0.238

Collinearity issues were examined through VIF and as it can be seen, all values are below the threshold of 5, implying that collinearity is not a critical problem amongst variables (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 7

VIF (Collinearity Statistics) Inner VIF Values

	Emotional Intelligence	Employee Cynicism	Interpersonal Conflict	Knowledge Hiding Behavior	Moderating Effect 1	Turnover Intention
Emotional Intelligence						1.819
Employee Cynicism				1.002		1.795
Interpersonal Conflict		1.000		1.002		2.94
Knowledge Hiding Behavior						2.509
Moderating Effect 1						1.657

5. Discussion and implications

This study has aimed to discover the role of employee cynicism and emotional intelligence in private higher education institutions in Northern Cyprus. Interpersonal conflict is a social stressor in the workplace and according to Ilies et al. (2011) interpersonal conflict is almost unavoidable at work places and there are some negative consequences and distress associated with it. This study has discovered that interpersonal conflict among faculty members in higher education institutions can be directly related to turnover intention and knowledge hiding behavior in academia. Academia's culture and climate should nourish and promote knowledge sharing; although Hernaus et al. (2018) mentioned that the presence of competition and mistrust among members in academia could lead to the undesirable organizational behavior of knowledge hiding. Connelly et al. (2012) concluded in their study of "Knowledge hiding in organizations" that absence of trust among colleagues can lead to the undesired behavior of knowledge hiding. The results of our analysis indicate that interpersonal conflict is directly related with knowledge hiding behavior and turnover intention, which are both undesired behaviors in an organization.

However, employee cynicism has no impact on the relationship between interpersonal conflict and knowledge hiding behavior, or interpersonal conflict and turnover intention. Therefore, the conflict among faculty members might arise due to the culture of academia, factors such as academic freedom, autonomy, and tenure which could be abused by some academicians leading to interpersonal conflict. On the other hand, emotional intelligence of the faculty members can impact the relationship between interpersonal conflict and turnover intentions in academia. Academicians, by better understanding their own emotions and being aware of their colleagues' emotions can reduce the negative consequences of interpersonal conflict which lead to turnover intention. The academic freedom and tenure granted to faculty members should not be abused for impairing or demotion of colleagues who have joined the organization at a later date. The tough competition for acquiring more publications, higher ranks, and more funds due to corporatization of more academic institutions has led some academicians to ignore their colleagues' emotions and well-being. Academicians need to be aware and more in control of their emotions, in other words they need to learn to be more emotionally intelligent regardless of the rank they hold. The competition and conflict among faculty members should not lead to hiding knowledge which is an undesirable behavior in any organization. In conclusion the academicians need to question their level of emotional intelligence.

6. Research limitations and future research suggestions

6.1 Limitations

The study was held in three private higher education institutions in the northern part of Cyprus which is an island located in the Mediterranean region. Due to the sensitivity of the questionnaires, lecturers of some specific faculties were either hesitant to respond, or undermined the validity of the questions they were asked. Although all of the questionnaires were tested for content validity previously in other studies, some academicians were insisting on proving that the questions are not relevant. This issue might be related with the respondents' first language not being English. Furthermore, some of the respondents might have not responded to the questions on knowledge hiding as accurate as they were supposed to as Demirkasimoğlu

(2016) mentions in her article: academicians may not want to reveal the full extent of their knowledge to their colleagues, despite the fact that they are supposed to share their knowledge with everyone.

6.2 Further research

This study may be held in other educational institutions where the staff members do not enjoy the academic freedom and tenure available in higher education institutes, where cynicism might have a major impact on turnover intention and knowledge hiding behavior. The study could also be applied in other industries to find out the degree to which employee cynicism can mediate between a social stressor and undesired organizational behaviors. As Altbach (2007) suggests in his study, there are different interpretations of academic freedom depending on the governments' policies and the cultural climate of a country; therefore, holding this study in another culture might show a different outcome in terms of mediation role of cynicism. This study has found the significance of the faculty members' emotional intelligence on controlling the conflict among colleagues and reduction of the undesired behaviors such as knowledge hiding and turnover intention in academia. The importance of emotional intelligence can be studied in relation to other undesired behaviors and social stressors.

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