

# Interpersonal Trust among University Employees: An Empirical Investigation

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## **Abstract**

*Workforce interpersonal trust is considered as a driving force to increase the efficiency of the organization. The current investigation aimed to explore the degree of interpersonal trust of university employees in terms of their biographical variables such as gender, nationality, experience and qualification. The current investigation carried out among employees working in different colleges of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The interpersonal trust questionnaire along with biographical blank sheet was used to gather the responses from the employees. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The investigation results observed that (i) female university employees showed significantly higher degree of professional support than male counterparts, (ii) communication, a dimension of interpersonal trust ranked least by both female & male and Saudi and Non-Saudi employees, (iii) the facets of interpersonal trust, managerial competence and professional support ranked highest by Ph.D. and master & less qualified employees of the PSAU, (iv) high and low experienced group of employees of PSAU did not differ significantly on interpersonal trust and its various facet. The current findings provide certain suggestions to implement to add innovative ideas in the similar kinds of research.*

**Keywords:** Trust, Interpersonal trust, Qualification, Gender, Experience, Saudi Arabia

## **Introduction**

Due to the fast pace of change of technological, political, economic, societal and worldwide changes, the business scenario becoming greater adaptability to cope with these uncertain changes and thereby, started debate on various aspects of the organizational variables such as creativity, innovation, leadership, motivation and specifically interpersonal trust in the organization have been viewed as pivotal instruments to enhance the positive outcomes of the organization. Indeed, it is significance to understand trust in the organization as Blois (1998) state that trust is a central phenomenon of the organization contains various issues across the business have been associated with trust within the business scenario. Trust can be generated through collaboration and cooperation rather than authority utilization and due to it trust became the focal point of organizational social capital to achieve the goals through social in nature (Atkinson & Butcher, 2003). Further, trust is considered as one the pillar resemblance to the significant relationships within the members of the organization working together. As seen

in the literature, the concept “trust” came firstly in American Heritage Dictionary (1991) as “confidence in the integrity, ability, character and truth of a person or thing”. Researcher, Mishra (1999) defines trust “as one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is competent, open, concerned and reliable”. Whereas, Robbins & Coulter (2005) conceptualized trust “ as the belief in the integrity, character, and ability of a leader”. As we know that interpersonal trust states that all members of the organization have faith and belief, understand their words and positive interactions. Researcher, Six (2007) conceptualizes the interpersonal trust as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability to the actions that is important to you”. Another researcher, McAllister (1995) refers “interpersonal trust as the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions and decisions of another”. Whereas, Geller (1999) defines “interpersonal trust is the extent of people ascribe good intentions and abilities to their peers”. As per the concept, it can be said that worker have trust on their peers when the felt the ability to perform the assigned task and good intention to trust others. DePasquale and Geller (1999) explored that higher level of interpersonal trust is considered as the strength for smooth functioning of the organization.

### **Review of Literature**

It is noticed that the literature available does not support much to differentiate between trust and interpersonal trust within the public and private agencies. Albeit, it is better to highlight the variations of interpersonal trust where the trust is significance in the form of reciprocity of each other. McAllister (1995) viewed interpersonal trust in terms of individual and organizational levels, and explores that organizational performance can only be achieved when all members put all efforts to work together to complete the task. Geller (1999) revealed in his study two parameters of interpersonal trust which can be seen in the form of confidence in the ability and confidence in the intentions of others.

Plentiful researchers begun study worldwide on interpersonal trust with different variables and supported directly or indirectly relationships among diversified workforce (McAllister, 1995; Geller, 1999; Perry, 2004; Wang, 2003; Ferrin, *et al.*, 2007; Evan & Reville, 2008; DePasquale and Geller, 1999; Six, 2007; Robbins & Coulter, 2005; Mishra, 1999 and Ali & Allam, 2016). Perry (2004) revealed that decision-making process initiated by supervisor appeared a dominant predictor of trust with the help of empowerment, feedback and creditability. A study conducted among Australian employees on employee satisfaction, interpersonal trust and employee loyalty and found that there is a strong association between these three variables. Hassan *et al.*, (2012) and Gillespie and Mann (2004) mentioned that commitment and productivity can be maximized through the greater degree of interpersonal trust among the members of the different groups. Bakiev (2013) conducted a study among Kyrgyz National Police to probe the interpersonal trust relationship with organizational performance. The results revealed that high level of commitment and interpersonal trust among the officer indications to maximum the level of organizational performance at Kyrgyz National Police. Al-Kahtani & Allam (2015) initiated a study among university staff and revealed that defensive and supportive communication climate ( communication, facet related to interpersonal trust)

have direct relationship with the role conflict. Most recently, Ali & Allam (2016) initiated a study among employees working in the university and observed that openness and communication, facets of interpersonal trust has a significant impact on general role stress and openness detected negligible relationship with personal inadequacy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The following objectives has been formulated by the researcher:

- ✚ To examine the degree of interpersonal trust among gender of the employees working in the varied department.
- ✚ To explore the degree of interpersonal trust among Saudi and Non-Saudi employees working in the different department in PSAU.
- ✚ To compare the Ph.D. and Master & less groups of employees with respect to interpersonal trust
- ✚ To determine the interpersonal trust on the basis of the lower and higher experience group of employees working in PSAU.

Hypotheses:

The researcher formulated four null hypothesis to make the investigation more scientific and verify the significant differences:

- ✚ HO<sub>1</sub>: The male and female employees would not differ significantly in terms of interpersonal trust and its fours aspects.
- ✚ HO<sub>2</sub>: There would not be a significant difference between Saudi and Non-Saudi employees on interpersonal trust and its fours aspects.
- ✚ HO<sub>3</sub>: There would not be a significant difference between Ph.D. and Master & less groups of employees on interpersonal trust and its fours aspects.
- ✚ HO<sub>4</sub>: There would not be a significant difference between higher and lower experience group of employees on interpersonal trust and its fours aspects.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

The present study conducted on 125 employees selected randomly, working in different colleges and departments of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is observed that few employees did not respond to various items. The age and working experiences of the employees varied in the investigation.

### **Tools Used**

Shefali *et al.*, (2011) developed and standardized the interpersonal trust scale has been used in the current investigation to gather the information. This particular scale has four dimensions( communication, openness, professional support and managerial competence) and each dimension contained 6 items and altogether consisted of 24 items. Each dimension has 3 negative and 3 positive items and all odd items are positive whereas, all even items are in the negative usage. Further, each item needs to be rated on the continuum of disagree to totally agree with the score ranges from 0-3. The reliability coefficient of this scale is 0.91, considered

significant at .001 level. The investigator also used the self-made biographical variables to collect the information of the participants such as gender, experience, qualification etc.

### Data analysis

Inferential and descriptive statistical methods applied to analyze the data to achieve the objectives of the investigation and make the findings more eloquent.

### Procedure

The two tools mentioned above administered to the employees working in Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The original scale translated into Arabic with the help of experts to avoid any kind of the discrepancies in terms the meaning of the item and make all respondents to understand in a better fashion. The instructions were provided in a clear manner to all participants and requested them to fill accordingly. They were assured that their responses will not be revealed to anyone of their higher officials and would be kept confidential and such responses would be used only for research purposes.

### Results and Discussion

**Table-1: Showing Mean, SDs, t-values of gender with interpersonal trust and its four aspects**

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value
Communication	Female	26	8.58	1.474	.381
	Male	99	8.71	1.814	
Openness	Female	26	10.12	2.422	.067
	Male	99	10.08	1.926	
Professional Support	Female	26	12.46	3.190	2.25**
	Male	99	10.95	2.379	
Managerial Competence	Female	26	10.85	3.472	.66
	Male	99	11.34	3.078	
Total Interpersonal Trust	Female	26	42.00	6.829	.618
	Male	99	41.08	6.439	

\*\* significant at .01 level

Result obtained from the aforesaid table-1 that the two groups of gender on overall interpersonal trust Result evident from the table-1 that the mean and sd of two groups with respect to gender on various dimension of interpersonal trust were 8.58& 8.71; 10.12 & 10.08;

12.46 & 10.95; 10.85 & 11.34 and showing mean and sd on overall interpersonal trust was 42.00 & 41.08 and 6.829 & 6.439. It indicates from the table that male and female were found significantly differ on professional trust ( $t=2.25, P>.01$ ). Thereby, the proposed null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) partly rejected. The result can be attributed that professional support creates a sense of worthiness among female more than their counterparts. Further, we can add that guide them well, organize the things systematic manner and managerial competencies pertaining to functions that might also play the key role in terms professional supports to the female incumbents to inculcate the interpersonal trust. The researcher Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003) observed and suggested that managerial support is vital for the employees to induce worthy interpersonal trust. Recently Ali & Allam (2016) investigated and observed that personal inadequacy and role boundedness can be influenced through professional support.

**Table-2: Showing Mean, SD's and Rank order of interpersonal trust among female and male employees**

Variables	Female			Male		Rank Order
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank Order	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Communication	8.58	1.474	4	8.71	1.814	4
Openness	10.12	2.422	3	10.08	1.926	3
Professional Support	12.46	3.190	1	10.95	2.379	2
Managerial Competence	10.85	3.472	2	11.34	3.078	1

Table-2 depicted that the highest mean scores were 12.46 & 10.95 for female and male respectively. It is observed that communication an aspects of interpersonal trust emerged as the least contributor to interpersonal trust and ranked fourth among them. This can be due to ambiguity in sharing the ideas with others, hiding information, not providing right & timely feedback might be felt not the considerable amount of the interpersonal trust in both the incumbents. While, managerial competence ranked first by the male incumbents showed that competencies, skills, abilities, potentials and knowledge create the interpersonal trust to perform the responsibilities. Al-Kahtani & Allam (2015) said that supportive communication plays an important role to erase the role ambiguity and perform well.

**Table-3: Showing Mean, SDs, t-values of Saudi and Non-Saudi employees on interpersonal trust and its four aspects**

Variables	Nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value
Communication	Saudi	25	9.36	1.630	2.43**
	Non-Saudi	87	8.44	1.809	
Openness	Saudi	25	10.12	1.965	.09
	Non-Saudi	87	10.16	2.118	
Professional Support	Saudi	25	10.16	1.908	3.50**
	Non-Saudi	87	11.85	2.760	
Managerial Competence	Saudi	25	10.00	2.121	3.46**
	Non-Saudi	87	11.93	3.365	
Total Interpersonal Trust	Saudi	25	39.64	5.626	2.04*
	Non-Saudi	87	42.38	6.832	

\*\* significant at .01 level

\* significant at .05 level

It can be seen from the table-3 that mean score of Saudi and Non-Saudi employees were observed on various aspects of interpersonal trust were 9.36 & 8.44; 10.12 & 10.16; 10.16 & 11.85 and 10.00 & 11.93 and sd were 1.630 & 1.809; 1.965 & 2.118; 1.908 & 2.760 and 2.121 & 3.365 respective .The two groups differed significantly on communication (t=2.43, P>.01), professional support (t=3.50, P>.01), managerial competence (t=3.46, P>.01) and overall interpersonal trust (t=2.04, P>.05). Hence the proposed null hypothesis (H0<sub>2</sub>) rejected. The result might be attributed that Non-Saudi intentions to perform better, involve more in the organizational activities, secure job position in the organization and so on than the Saudi employees to create interpersonal trust.

**Table-4: Showing Mean, SDs, rank order of Saudi and Non-Saudi employees in terms of interpersonal trust and its four aspects**

Variables	Saudi			Non-Saudi		Rank Order
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank Order	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Communication	9.36	1.630	4	8.44	1.809	4
Openness	10.12	1.965	2	10.16	2.118	3
Professional Support	10.16	1.908	1	11.85	2.760	2
Managerial Competence	10.00	2.121	3	11.93	3.365	1

It is evident from the table-4 that managerial competence ranked highest by the Non-Saudi employees and secondly by Saudi employees. It can be highlighted that Non-Saudi employees showing competencies to generate interpersonal trust and establish rapport among others. While both the groups showed communication as least which indicates that lower level of providing feedback, hiding information and no articulations might be the reasons for lower ranked.

**Table-5: Showing Mean, SDs, t-values of Ph.D and Master & less qualified employees in terms of interpersonal trust and its four aspects**

Variables	Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value
Communication	Ph.D.	52	8.62	1.891	.348
	Master and less	73	8.73	1.644	
Openness	Ph.D.	52	10.10	1.993	.038
	Master and less	73	10.08	2.067	
Professional Support	Ph.D.	52	11.48	2.524	.786
	Master and less	73	11.11	2.706	
Managerial Competence	Ph.D.	52	11.58	2.886	1.032
	Master and less	73	11.00	3.333	
Total Interpersonal Trust	Ph.D.	52	41.77	6.154	.731
	Master and less	73	40.92	6.763	

It is appeared from the table-5 that the mean scores of Ph.D. and master & less qualified groups were observed on interpersonal trust were 41.77 & 40.92 and sd 6.154 & 6.763. It is also found from the above table that both the groups of qualified employees did not differ significantly at any points on interpersonal trust and its aspects. Therefore the planned hypothesis (H0<sub>3</sub>) was accepted. It is imperative to discussed that mean scores are not varying much among these two groups and showing similar trends. It indicates about that due to qualified in nature and understanding interpersonal trust are found to be more and similar among them.

**Table-6: Showing Mean, SDs, rank order of Ph.D. and Master & less groups of employees in terms of interpersonal trust and its four aspects**

Variables	Ph.D.			Master & less qualified		Rank Order
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank Order	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Communication	8.62	1.891	4	8.73	1.644	4
Openness	10.10	1.993	3	10.08	2.067	3
Professional Support	11.48	2.524	2	11.11	2.706	1
Managerial Competence	11.58	2.706	1	11.00	2.886	2

Table-6 portrayed that the highest mean scores were 11.58 & 11.11 for Ph.D. and Master & less groups of employees respectively. It is observed that communication an aspects of interpersonal trust emerged as the least contributor to interpersonal trust and ranked fourth among both the groups of employees. Further, openness emerged as third place among these two groups of employees. It can be highlighted that Ph.D. employees are more sensible to create trust among all with the help of competencies and knowledge.



**Table-7: Impact of high and low experience on interpersonal trust and its four aspects among employees of PSAU**

Variables	Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value
Communication	Low Experience	57	8.98	1.706	1.852
	High Experience	50	8.36	1.758	
Openness	Low Experience	57	9.96	2.138	.225
	High Experience	50	9.88	1.757	
Professional Support	Low Experience	57	11.09	2.917	.686
	High Experience	50	11.44	2.392	
Managerial Competence	Low Experience	57	10.74	3.238	1.433
	High Experience	50	11.62	3.129	
Total Interpersonal Trust	Low Experience	57	40.77	6.928	.421
	High Experience	50	41.30	6.079	

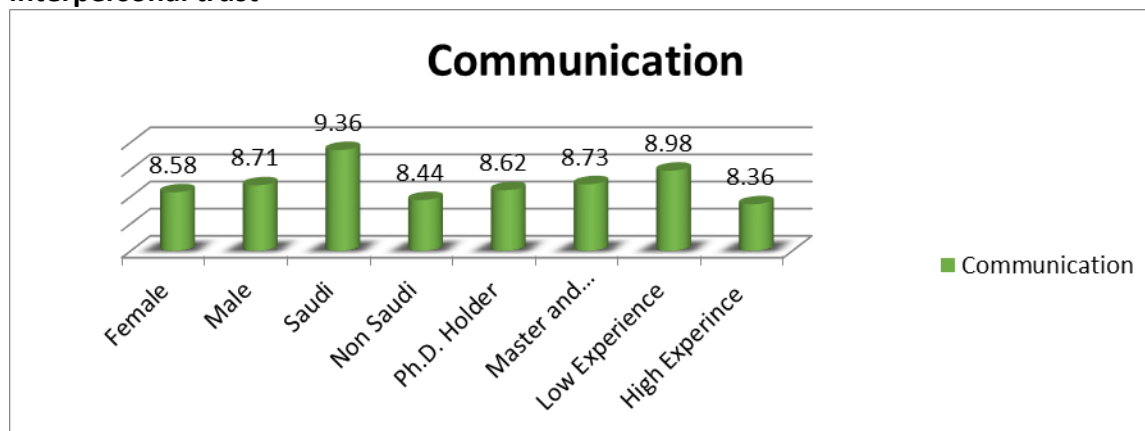
Result obtained from the aforesaid table-7 that the two groups of high and low experienced employees on overall interpersonal trust and its facets. Results manifested from the table-7 that the mean and sd of two groups with respect to experience on various dimension of interpersonal trust were 8.98 & 8.36; 9.96 & 9.88; 11.09 & 11.44; 10.74 & 11.64 and 40.77 & 41.30. It is evident from the findings that both the groups were not differing at any point of significant level. Thus, the proposed null hypothesis ( $H_{04}$ ) was accepted. It is noticed that mean score was found more among higher experienced group of employees on managerial competencies comparatively with all other aspects might be due to higher level of experience indicates more ability to organize, plan, direct, motivation and coordination to make a good decisions about the person and organization leading to have more interpersonal trust.

**Table-8: Showing Mean, SDs, rank order of low and high experience groups of employees in terms of interpersonal trust and its four aspects**

Variables	Low Experience			High Experience		Rank Order
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank Order	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Communication	8.98	1.706	4	8.36	1.758	4
Openness	9.96	2.138	3	9.88	1.757	3
Professional Support	11.09	2.917	1	11.44	2.392	2
Managerial Competence	10.74	3.238	2	11.62	3.129	1

It is apparent from the table-8 that managerial competence ranked highest and communication ranked lowest by the higher experienced employees. Whereas, professional support ranked highest and communication ranked lowest by the lower experienced employees. It can be said that communication given lower ranked by both the groups means flow of communication blocks and thereby fragmenting or limiting the communication among them to generate interpersonal trust.

**Diagram-1: Showing Mean scores of biographical variables with communication, a facet of interpersonal trust**



**Diagram-2: Showing Mean scores of biographical variables with openness, a facet of interpersonal trust**

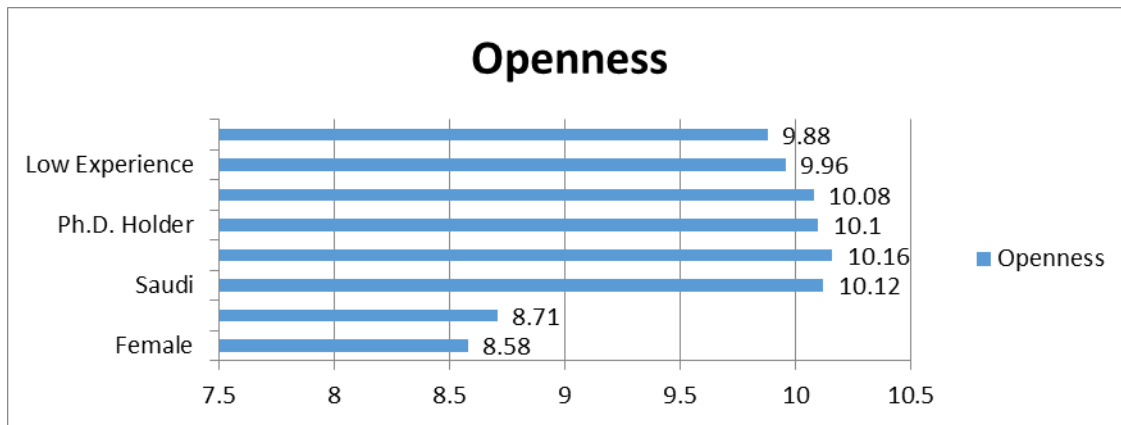


Diagram-3: Showing Mean scores of biographical variables with professional support , a facet of interpersonal trust

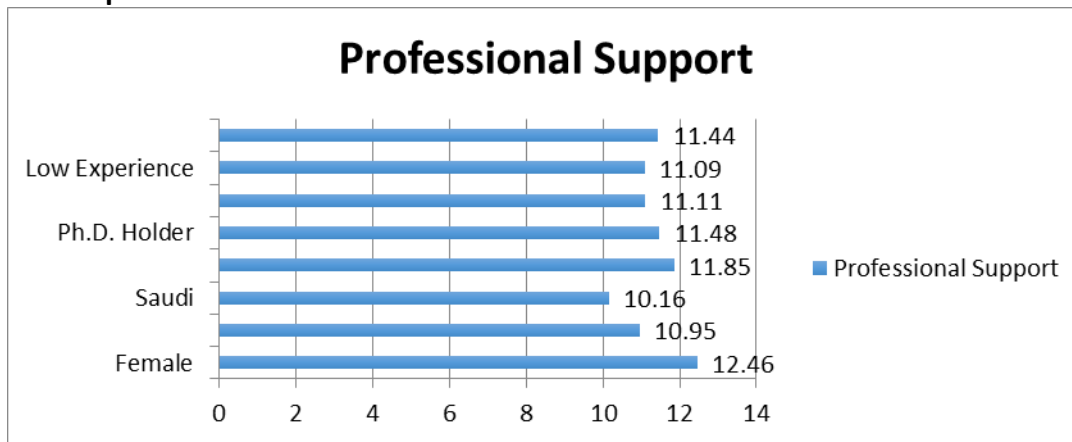
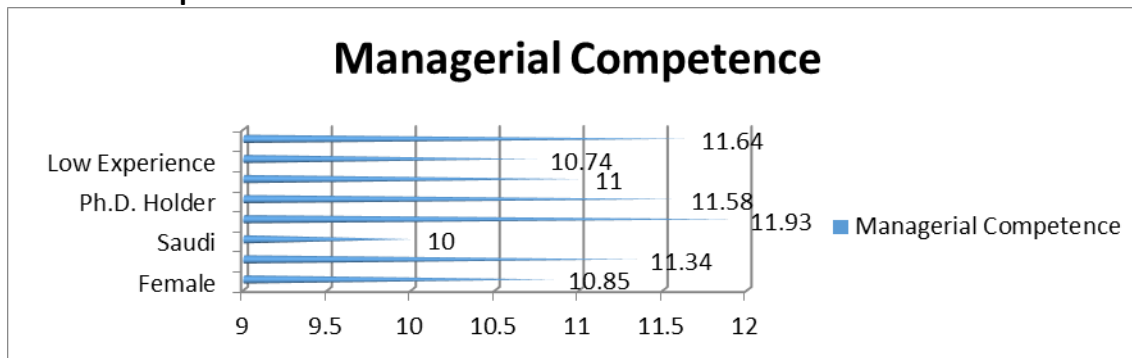


Diagram-4: Showing Mean scores of biographical variables with managerial competence , a facet of interpersonal trust



It is evident from the diagram 1,2,3 & 4 that biographical variables have different mean scores on different facets of interpersonal trust and varying from one to another. Albeit, results can be easily understood with the help of diagram and differentiate the degree of importance of their aspects in relation to interpersonal trust.

**Conclusions**

The following conclusions have been drawn on the basis of the current findings:

- ✚ Female university employees showed significantly higher degree of professional support than male counterparts.
- ✚ Communication , a dimension of interpersonal trust ranked least by both female & male and Saudi and Non-Saudi employees.
- ✚ Professional support and managerial competence ( Interpersonal trust dimensions) perceived higher by Non –Saudi employees whereas, Saudi revealed higher degree of interpersonal trust in terms of communication.
- ✚ No significant differences were perceived by Ph.D. and mater & less degree holder employees on any dimensions of interpersonal trust.
- ✚ The facets of interpersonal trust, managerial competence and professional support ranked highest by Ph.D. and master & less qualified employees of the PSAU.
- ✚ High and low experienced group of employees of PSAU did not differ significantly on interpersonal trust and its various facet.
- ✚ The dimensions of interpersonal trust, professional support and managerial competence were ranked highest by low and high experienced employees of the PSAU.

In glimpse, it is necessary to highlight that the purpose was to ascertain the degree of interpersonal trust among faculty members with their biographical characteristics. Albeit, it is observed that gender, age, qualification, nationality and experience were found to be related directly or indirectly to interpersonal trust and its facets but in a varied degree.

### **Suggestions and limitation**

The investigator retrospect the available literature and the findings of various social scientists on different aspect of interpersonal trust. Based on understanding of the variables taken into study, the researcher suggested that trust play major role to achieve the goals of the organization. Thereby, it is necessary to have congenial atmosphere, professional relationships, coach & mentor at workplace for proper guidance, suitable flow of communication, intentions to share each & every aspects with others and appropriate training to create vertical and horizontal interpersonal trust among the employees. Moreover, the current research has certain limitations and avenues for further study to add new values in the modern investigation. The findings of the study cannot be generalize to all university employees due to small size of the sample and limited statistical techniques.

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