

# Perception about the role of Managers and HR in employee counseling - IT sector

Neethu Lazar, Research Scholar, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India,

neethu.lazar04@gmail.com

Dr. Geo Paul K, Principal, Rural Academy for Management Studies, Cochin, India,

gpk772003@yahoo.com

**Abstract :** Employee counselling practices are designed to receive a potential outcome among the employees in their persistent performance as well as to reduce intricate problems of employees through face to face intervention of counselors in the IT sector. Sometimes managers or HR in the IT sectors act as counselors, by way of which potential skills and abilities of their employees can be understood well in advance. However, some employees are not willing to take counselling from their manager and HR because of repercussions, while others prefer respective manager or HR due to favorable conditions and easy accessibility. The present study aims to identify the preference of employees in selecting the manager and HR as counselor to address their problems. It has also tried to explain the demographic perception of employees towards the selection of manager and HR as counselor. Data for the present study has been collected through a stratified sampling method in which 100 response have been taken from four IT organizations. F tests, Chi square, U test, Kruskal Walli's ANOVA were used to analyze the data. The result of the study indicates that employees give more preference to share their problems with friends and family members and only third and fourth preferences were given to the manager and HR respectively. It also indicated that no significant difference shown in the demographic variables of the employees towards the perception of selecting Manager or HR as counselor except the age group

**Keywords —** Employee counselling, employees, manager, counselor

## I. INTRODUCTION

Information Technology (IT) sector is one of the growing sectors in India, and it has got tremendous boost due to globalization of the Indian economy. It has been found to be ideal for Kerala in terms of its potential to generate opportunities and employment. Employees working with IT sector are facing various health problems due to continuous physical and mental stress which in turn affects their performance and productivity. According to Peter Ducker "within a hundred years, there will be unprecedented change will happen in human condition than internet, technology and commerce." Therefore, it is necessary to shape the employees in accordance with the organizational objectives with the help of workplace counselling. According to Keith Davis – "Employee counselling involves a discussion of an emotional problem with an employee with the general objective of decreasing it."

Employee counselling emerged as a contrivance to retain capable workforce in the organization. It is a way forward for the well-being of their employees which backing employees to cope with organizational change (Brammer

and Shostrom 1977). Potential performance can be extorted by motivating and counselling employees towards prescribed standards. According to Ray (2011) "productivity and passivity do not go hand in hand; only a vibrant corporate environment can produce results." Organizations can use their managers, HR Manager and volunteers as in-house counselors or hire external agencies for counselling activities.

Now a day, managers as well as human resource departments in various organizations are trying hard to ensure performance from the employees. Many in the IT sector turn to their managers to carry out counselling as it tune their employees to discreetly handle unexpected changes happening at the workplace. Managers will be well aware of his/her employee's rudimentary skills, abilities, attributes individuality and exasperating situations which helps them to lead the employees in counselling sessions (Ray 2011). HR manger in counselling plays an imperative role in describing employee's career in the workplace, performance and Stress Management. They are responsible for organization's efficacy which can be discreetly taken from employees by ameliorating their work life.

## COUNSELLING AS A MEANS OF EXERTING INFLUENCE BY MANAGER AND HR AND ITS POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

Most of the IT sectors are working efficiently with the help of their resources, and they believe employees are the driving force to accomplish their objectives. Effectiveness of counselling may be realized by the manager or HR in most of the cases rather than a collective request from the employee, as there is negative repercussion towards counselling services. Normally individuals resist change because of doing things in an antiquated way rather than thinking out of the box (Mulki et. al 2012). Managers and HR in IT sectors play an important role to improve employee's mental and physical distress through employee counselling.

According to Netto (2006) "The purpose of counselling is to provide an individual with the opportunity to discuss his/her problems with a suitably qualified person." It also appears to be a service provided to employees who are ambivalent in their roles and responsibilities at the organization. Nevertheless, if the employees cannot receive the perceived outcome from the manager or HR, they will be re-directed to the external counselor for further therapy. Haslam (2005) indicated that some employees are not willing to share their mental health problems with colleagues and managers as they believe that negative repercussions may occur from their attitude.

### MANAGER AS A MEDIATING ROLE

Managers in the IT sector are in level 2 category, and are responsible for the performance and productivity of their workforce. Maintaining quality work force becomes an inevitable need of the manager for the growth of the whole organization in a competitive world (Joseph 2018). Dhar (1986) indicated that managers in the organization act as mediator or counselor in employee counselling. Also, it's an intrusive effort into the problems of an employee which facilitate them to make a valuable resource to the organization According to Tuvulla (2017) "the role of managers in workplace counselling is to set up suitable workplace programs that are cost-effective and acceptable to all employees, formulate policies that enhance employee performance and train managers in counselling skills that enable them to identify employees who need help."

The incongruity towards the line managers, colleagues and subordinates leads to persistent problems at the workplace which in turn affect the employees adversely (Lazar N 2018). Therefore, the manager decides to give counselling to their employee or refer him to external therapy. Some managers do not want their employees to be managed by others, and they will act as custodian since they are answerable for the performance of their workforce.

## HR AS A MEDIATING ROLE

HR initiatives in the business firm results in sustainable development to overall activities to the employees as well as organization (Padmasiri and Jayathilake 2014). Wright et.al (2005) pointed out the role of HR department has grown significantly in strategic decision-making activities as a strategic partner in the organization. It also helped to create value for others, manage leadership, talent and culture within the organization. (Gyton, G 2017). HR activities of the business provide assistance to enhance the employee as well as organization performance and thus contribute their maximum effort for the well-fare of the business. (Huselid 1195)

The role of HR in counselling can be extended in a number of significant ways with the backing of their organization. Performance evaluation of an employee is been done by the HR department which helped them to analyze each one of their employees. Intricate problems at the workplace can be minimized with the interventions of HR as well as the incumbent skills and abilities of an employee can be retained. Ramlall (2019) emphasized the study of Emeagwal & Ogbonmwan in his paper, in which Strategic HRM practices help to enhance competitive advantage of every organization and a sustainable growth will be reflected by the motivated human capital and employee commitment

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Aydogdu (2010) emphasized his research to understand workplace counselling activities in a university sample. He has divided the respondents in two different study groups for in-depth interview which comprises 8 academic staff and administrative staff respectively. The respondents conceded that workplace counselling helped them to overcome their problems effectively also got a good work milieu. The first group emphasized the employee the counselee from inside the organization as he/she will be more familiar with the organizational milieu. However, second group respondents were against internal counselor because of confidentiality issues. It also noticed that, no significant difference shown with regard to the demographic variables of the respondents.

Tuvulla (2017) described about the effectiveness of workplace counselling on employee performance. Sixty eight percents of the respondents in the study were in favor of in-house counselling compared to external counselling sessions. Rest of the respondents backing external counselling sessions as it maintains high confidentiality.

Dhar (1986) pointed out that the immediate supervisor or manager will be able to easily understand work milieu of their employees also their personal attributes will be influenced in the employee's character. Managers or Supervisor are the responsible people to create a suitable

ambiance to talk freely about employee’s problems in the organization also he/she may have to be a good listener so that problems may be ameliorated.

Matolo & Mukulu (2016) had conducted a case study where he had emphasized employer’s role in counselling. Counselling was considered as a care to employees which is given by the employers to address and prevent ill health among the employees. He also pointed out that the attitudes of employers need to be composed as it adversely affects the counselee.

Choice of counselors has been made to employees due to many factors. It may be because of attitude; communication, friendliness; language etc. of counselor towards counselee, as well as the response towards intricate problems demonstrate counselor’s character. Sometimes demographic variables of the counselee may be reluctant to take counselling from managers or HR. Some employees consider this as a serious matter as it relates to their employment.

The present study tried to explain the employee’s preference in selecting the manager or HR as counselor. And it has been found that, there is dearth of literature in the present study as well as in the field of employee counselling in Indian Context. Hypotheses in the study were identified with the available literature.

- Demographic variables have a significant influence on the role of manager and HR in employee counselling
- There is no significant influence on employees in selecting counselor as HR and Manager.

**RESEARCH MODEL**

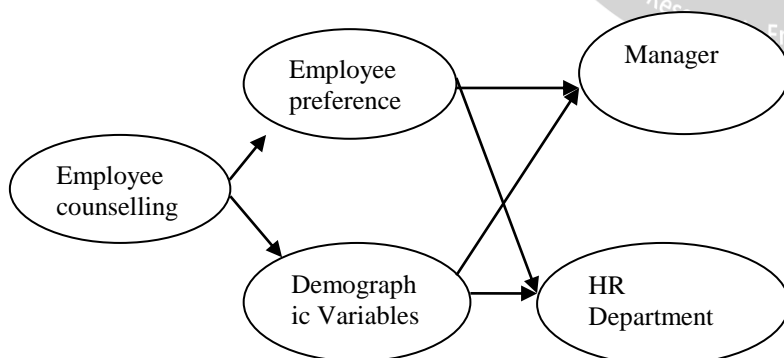


Figure 1: Research Model; Attributed by Researcher

In the above figure 1, we illustrated the preferences of employees in choosing manager and HR as counselor to share their problems. The independent variable of the study is employee counselling whereas dependent variables are demographic factors, employee preference, Manager and HR. In brief, selection of the manager/supervisor as counselor may be because of close availability to speak friendly, or else HR Department may be because of

confidentiality component. However, demographic variables of the respondents have relative importance among the employees in approaching the managers/supervisors and HR for resolving problems.

**III. METHODOLOGY**

The study describes the perception of employees differ with respect to demographic variables such as age, gender and experience. Further, it also compares the preference of employees in undertaking counselling session from counselor and manager. The study followed the quantitative approach for collecting relevant data from respondents. Four IT companies were identified by the researcher, in which ‘level 3’ (L3) grade employees were the sample unit. Stratified sampling method was used to ensure representation of participants from level 3 grades. Twenty seven questionnaires were distributed to each IT company for getting at least 25 responses from each company.

**Measurement**

Data on demographic variables of the respondents and their preferences of selecting counselor were identified through the questionnaire in which ranking method was used to identify the preference of selection of sharing employee problems. Roles performed by the managers and HR in counselling were also included in the questionnaire thereby the respondents will be able to mention the most preferred way of minimizing their problems so that researcher can identify the importance of manager and HR counselling activities.

**Questionnaire Design**

Questionnaire was prepared by the researcher with the help of literature review. Role of manager and HR were measured on five point Likert’s scale ranging from “strongly agree to strongly disagree”. Questionnaire was administrated in four IT companies at Ernakulam district, Kerala, India.

**Data Collection**

Data has been collected through stratified random sampling. 108 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 100 samples seems to be useful.

**Table 1: General Profile of the respondents**

| Characteristics            | Category    | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender                     | Male        | 46        | 45.5    |
|                            | Female      | 54        | 53.5    |
| Age group                  | 20-25       | 19        | 18.8    |
|                            | 26-30       | 33        | 32.7    |
|                            | 31-40       | 39        | 38.6    |
|                            | 41-50       | 9         | 8.9     |
| Employment Type            | Temporary   | 22        | 21.8    |
|                            | Permanent   | 65        | 64.4    |
|                            | Contract    | 13        | 12.9    |
| Work Experience (In years) | Less than 3 | 35        | 34.7    |
|                            | 3-5         | 32        | 31.7    |
|                            | 5-10        | 33        | 32.7    |

(Source: Primary data)

The demographic information of respondents profile is presented in table 1. The gender of the respondents is being categorized into the male and female, 45.5% of the respondents are male, while 53.5 are female. Majority of the participants 38.6% belong to the age of 31-40 years old, followed by the age of 26-30(33%), 20-25 (18.8%) and 41-50 (8.95). 34.7% of the respondents had less than 3 years of work experience while other two groups, 3 – 5 and 5 – 10 possess 32.7% and 31.7% respectively.

**IV. RESULTS**

**Table 2: Index showing the preference of employees in sharing their problems with different persons.**

| Category                                  | Index              | Rank |
|---|--------------------|------|
| Friends/Family                            | 1.67 <sup>a</sup>  | 1    |
| Manager                                   | 2.77 <sup>bc</sup> | 3    |
| External Counsellor                       | 2.57 <sup>c</sup>  | 2    |
| HR  | 2.99 <sup>b</sup>  | 4    |
| $\chi^2$ Value = 60.408**; P-Value <0.001 |                    |      |

(Source: Primary data)

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

Means having same letter as superscript differ significantly

The above table reveals the preference of employees in sharing their problems. Friedmann’s test was carried out to test whether there is any difference in the ranking given to different category in terms of support given by them. Chi square value was found to be significant indicating that there is significant difference in the ranking given to different peoples. Most of the employees preferred to share their problems with friends and family. Pair wise comparison was done between different categories by using Mann Whitney U test. No significant difference was found between the preference to HR and manager and also between manager and counsellors. However significant

difference was noted in the preference given to HR and counsellor.

**Table 3: Perception about Manager’s role in counselling among male and female respondents**

| item  | Male   |       | Female |       | Overall |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|---------|-------|
|   | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk | In dex  | Ra nk |
| Listen to problems/Address Issues                                 | 4.28   | 1     | 4.24   | 1     | 4.26    | 1     |
| Provide Feedback and help counselee to see a different view point | 3.98   | 2     | 4.11   | 2     | 4.05    | 2     |
| Investigate problems/matters                                      | 3.72   | 5     | 3.59   | 6     | 3.65    | 5     |
| Avoid word of mouth and see the root cause with evidence          | 3.78   | 4     | 3.91   | 3     | 3.85    | 3     |
| Suggest/Recommend solutions                                       | 3.89   | 3     | 3.72   | 4     | 3.80    | 4     |
| Observe behaviour and clarify expectations                        | 3.50   | 7     | 3.48   | 7     | 3.49    | 7     |
| Determine right course of action and reach conclusion             | 3.59   | 6     | 3.67   | 5     | 3.63    | 6     |
| Draft plan of action and follow up                                | 2.80   | 8     | 3.37   | 8     | 3.11    | 8     |
| Z = 0.105 <sup>ns</sup> ; P-value = 0.916                         |        |       |        |       |         |       |

(Source: Primary data)

Table 3 displays gender wise data regarding the perception about manager’s role in counseling. After computing the average score, each item was ranked to find out which role is the most important role. As the rank increases the agreement to perception was higher. So ranking was done for those having highest score as the first rank and so on. Mann Whitney U test was carried out to compare the rank given by Male and female about different roles of Manger in counselling.

**Table 4: Perception about HR’s role in counselling among male and female respondents**

| item  | Male   |       | Female |       | Overall |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|---------|-------|
|   | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk | In dex  | Ra nk |
| Need for counselling can be identified by HR  | 3.78   | 2     | 3.59   | 4     | 3.68    | 2     |
| HR discusses the issue with the relevant supervisor and continuously ask for feedback | 3.41   | 6     | 3.67   | 3     | 3.55    | 5     |
| Discuss and agree a plan of action with supervisor                                    | 3.57   | 4     | 3.76   | 1     | 3.67    | 3     |
| Schedule and jointly conduct the counselling session                                  | 3.48   | 5     | 3.46   | 7     | 3.47    | 6     |
| Conclude the counselling session with warning (if required)                           | 3.61   | 3     | 3.59   | 5     | 3.60    | 4     |



|  |      |   |      |   |      |   |
|--|------|---|------|---|------|---|
| Follow-up the action plan and feedback to the supervisor | 3.28 | 7 | 3.54 | 6 | 3.42 | 7 |
| Monitor development                                      | 3.80 | 1 | 3.70 | 2 | 3.75 | 1 |
| Z = 0.448 <sup>ns</sup> ; P-value = 0.654                |      |   |      |   |      |   |

(Source: Primary data)

Gender wise data on the perception about HR's role in counselling displayed in table 4. The Mann Whitney U test was carried out for comparing the ranking given by Male and female to different roles. As the rank increases the agreement to perception was higher. So ranking was done for those having highest score as the first rank and so on. As the Z-value was found to be non-significant; both male and female have the same perception about different roles of HR in counselling.

**Table 5: Perception about Manager's role in counselling among different age groups respondents**

| item  | 20-25  |       | 25-30  |       | 31-40  |       | Above 40 |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|----------|-------|
|   | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk | In dex   | Ra nk |
| Listen to problems/Address Issues                                 | 4.26   | 1     | 4.58   | 1     | 4.10   | 1     | 3.78     | 1     |
| Provide Feedback and help counselee to see a different view point | 4.00   | 2     | 4.09   | 2     | 3.97   | 2     | 4.33     | 2     |
| Investigate problems/matters                                      | 3.05   | 6     | 4.06   | 3     | 4.00   | 3     | 3.56     | 3     |
| Avoid word of mouth and see the root cause with evidence          | 3.26   | 4     | 3.88   | 4     | 3.56   | 4     | 4.00     | 4     |
| Suggest/Recommend solutions                                       | 3.53   | 3     | 3.82   | 5     | 3.97   | 5     | 4.11     | 5     |
| Observe behaviour and clarify expectations                        | 2.79   | 8     | 3.82   | 6     | 3.69   | 6     | 2.89     | 6     |
| Determine right course of action and reach conclusion             | 3.16   | 5     | 3.76   | 7     | 3.72   | 7     | 3.78     | 7     |
| Draft plan of action and follow up                                | 2.89   | 7     | 3.06   | 8     | 3.33   | 8     | 2.78     | 8     |
| $\chi^2 = 4.096^{ns}$ ; P-value = 0.251                           |        |       |        |       |        |       |          |       |

(Source: Primary data)

In the above table 5, Kruskal Walli's ANOVA was carried out for compare the ranking given by the respondents of various age groups to different roles. As the Chi square-value was found to be non-significant, it revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents in different age groups about manager's role in counselling.

**Table 6: Perception about HR's role in counselling among different age groups respondents**

| item  | 20-25  |       | 25-30  |       | 31-40  |       | Above 40 |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|----------|-------|
|   | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk | In dex   | Ra nk |
| Need for counselling can be identified by HR  | 4.26   | 1     | 4.58   | 1     | 4.10   | 1     | 3.78     | 1     |
| HR discusses the issue with the relevant supervisor and continuously ask for feedback | 4.00   | 2     | 4.09   | 2     | 3.97   | 2     | 4.33     | 2     |
| Discuss and agree a plan of action with supervisor                                    | 3.05   | 6     | 4.06   | 3     | 4.00   | 3     | 3.56     | 3     |
| Schedule and jointly conduct the counselling session                                  | 3.26   | 4     | 3.88   | 4     | 3.56   | 4     | 4.00     | 4     |
| Conclude the counselling session with warning (if required)                           | 3.53   | 3     | 3.82   | 5     | 3.97   | 5     | 4.11     | 5     |
| Follow-up the action plan and feedback to the supervisor                              | 2.79   | 8     | 3.82   | 6     | 3.69   | 6     | 2.89     | 6     |
| Monitor development   | 3.16   | 5     | 3.76   | 7     | 3.72   | 7     | 3.78     | 7     |
| $\chi^2 = 7.831^*$ ; P-value = 0.050  |        |       |        |       |        |       |          |       |

(Source: Primary data)

Kruskal Walli's ANOVA was used to carry in order to comparing the ranking given by the respondents of various age groups to different roles. Significant chi-square reveals that there exists significant difference in the perception about HR roles in counselling among different age group. Ranking given by age group 25-30, 31-40 and 41-50 are almost same. However, the ranking given by 20-25 age group is different from other age groups.

**Table 7: Perception about Manager's role in counselling among respondents of different experience**

| item  | Below three years |       | 3-5 years |       | Above 5 years |       |
|---|-------------------|-------|-----------|-------|---------------|-------|
|   | In dex            | Ra nk | In dex    | Ra nk | In dex        | Ra nk |
| Listen to problems/Address Issues                                 | 4.34              | 1     | 4.00      | 1     | 4.42          | 1     |
| Provide Feedback and help counselee to see a different view point | 4.09              | 2     | 3.75      | 3     | 4.30          | 2     |
| Investigate problems/matters                                      | 3.86              | 3     | 3.75      | 4     | 3.94          | 5     |
| Avoid word of mouth and see the root cause with evidence          | 3.29              | 6     | 3.88      | 2     | 4.27          | 3     |

|   |      |   |      |   |      |   |
|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|
| Suggest/Recommend solutions                           | 3.63 | 4 | 3.59 | 5 | 3.73 | 7 |
| Observe behaviour and clarify expectations            | 3.26 | 7 | 3.00 | 7 | 4.21 | 4 |
| Determine right course of action and reach conclusion | 3.57 | 5 | 3.50 | 6 | 3.82 | 6 |
| Draft plan of action and follow up                    | 3.20 | 8 | 2.84 | 8 | 3.27 | 8 |
| $\chi^2 = 4.462^{ns}$ ; P-value = 0.107               |      |   |      |   |      |   |

(Source: Primary data)

Kruskal Walli’s ANOVA was carried out for comparing the ranking given by the respondents of various experience groups to different roles. As the Chi square-value was found to be non-significant, it revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents in different experience groups about manager’s role in counselling.

**Table 8: Perception about HR’s role in counselling among respondents of different experience**

| item  | 20-25  |       | 25-30  |       | 31-40  |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
|   | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk | In dex | Ra nk |
| Need for counselling can be identified by HR  | 3.63   | 4     | 3.47   | 6     | 3.94   | 1     |
| HR discusses the issue with the relevant supervisor and continuously ask for feedback | 3.60   | 5     | 3.13   | 7     | 3.91   | 2     |
| Discuss and agree a plan of action with supervisor                                    | 3.66   | 2     | 3.56   | 3     | 3.79   | 4     |
| Schedule and jointly conduct the counselling session                                  | 3.23   | 7     | 3.50   | 5     | 3.70   | 5     |
| Conclude the counselling session with warning (if required)                           | 3.66   | 3     | 3.66   | 1     | 3.48   | 6     |
| Follow-up the action plan and feedback to the supervisor                              | 3.43   | 6     | 3.50   | 4     | 3.33   | 7     |
| Monitor development   | 3.83   | 1     | 3.63   | 2     | 3.79   | 3     |
| $\chi^2 = 3.893^{ns}$ ; P-value = 0.143   |        |       |        |       |        |       |

(Source: Primary data)

Kruskal Walli’s ANOVA was carried out for comparing the ranking given by the respondents of various experience groups to different roles. As the Chi square-value was found to be non-significant, it revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents in different experience groups about HR’s role in counselling.

**V. FINDINGS**

The result demonstrated that most of the employees would like to share their problems with their family member or friends as they are the first circle of every individual. And yet the problem persists with respondents, seeks the help of external counselor due to confidentiality issues. Managers and HR ranked third and fourth option respectively to share employee’s problems. Managers in IT sector usually conduct periodical interactions and reviews to facilitate

employees to open their problems and prospects. Therefore, some employees preferred their managers as counselor while others opted for HR as counselor to reduce negative repercussion.

When we look into demographic variables of the group, a relative gender balance has been depicted. And both male and female have the same perception about different roles of Manager and HR in counselling as the Z-value was found non-significant. It also indicated that both male and female respondents gave more preference to the item that ‘listen to the problems/address the issues’ in manager’s role in counselling as most of the employees need a good listener to hear their problems (Ray 2011). Moreover, both male and female need to get feedback and make them perceive the problems in different points of view, was rated as second preference of getting support from the manager. It also indicated that the counselees need to get the problems solved from the root cause from their manager

Gender wise perception on the role of HR was almost similar. HR in every organization means the development of their employees, and the same concept has been received in the result of the study. Both male and female respondents gave first preference to monitor their development, as it is considered as HR’s duty. It also indicated the need of counselling service has to be identified by HR, as it can be figures out through the continuous observation.

It also revealed that there was no significant difference in the perception of respondents in different age groups about manager’s role in counselling. Moreover, the overall preference given by the respondents in different age groups is similar as compared with gender wise preference. However, in response of employees perception towards Managers role, significant difference exist in the perception of respondents in the different age groups towards HR role in counselling especially the age group 20-25, as the respondents comprises the mentioned age group are youngsters, so their expectations may be different from others.

It has been clear that experience wise perception towards HR’s and manager’s role in counselling is not significant in the result. Listening to the problems and addressing the issues by HR is the most preferred item rated among the respondents in different experience group as they need a good listener mentioned as before. Manager’s role in counselling is also non-significant, moreover, their perceptions varies based on experiences.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

Most of the employees in the IT sector are more likely to share their problems with friends and family than managers and HR in four of the organizations, without considering the counselling facility provided to the employees. It also concluded that demographic variables of the employees instilled not much difference in the perception towards the

role of manager and HR in counselling in IT sector. The inevitable need of the employees in IT sector as a good listener where their problems is to be addressed. Thus fostering the practice of listening skills among the managers and HR helps the employees to turn to the organizational level of counselling sessions, which may positively helps to clear internal problems within the organization itself.

### Limitations and further Research

The present study is limited to a hundred employees in four IT organizations in Kerala. Different industries are following various types of counselling activities which may add more value to the research thereby the findings shall be generalized. Moreover, the present study gave importance only to three demographic variables and employees' preference of selecting the manager and HR as counselor. Therefore, the results have opened up the scope for future research in exploring other demographic variables of the employees

### VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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