

Autocratic Leadership and Employee Performance: Moderating Role of Age Group

ANISHA SHRESTHA | NABIN PANDEY | BIMLA KUMARI GURUNG | SAGAR KHAREL

*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Anisha Shrestha

Kathmandu Model College, Kathmandu

anishashrestha497@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance is crucial for organizational effectiveness, quality and efficiency at the task level. This study aims to provide an inclusive understanding on how autocratic leadership (AL) impacts on employee performance (EP) and whether age moderates this impact. It develops a simple regression model and accesses the dummy indicator regression of the variable used and discusses the result of the analysis of Autocratic Leadership and Employee Performance. This study uses primary data collected through likert scale and analyses using IBM SPSS statistics version 25. Similarly, the secondary data were collected through books, journal articles and websites. This study finds that AL has a positive and significant impact on EP with the value of coefficient of multiple determinations 0.111. Furthermore, this study successfully confirms that the moderating variable, age group, had no role on effects of AL on EP shown by the dummy indicator regression analysis. Finally, this study emphasizes the need for further rigorous research to understand the impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance, offering insights beneficial to both academics and organizational managers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the recent past years, leadership has engaged as a new effective approach for managing the employee and organization at large. The traditional concept of personnel administration has gradually replaced with the human resource management. This give importance to the strategic integration of new leadership styles into effective management of employees and to improve the employee performance. Leadership style is the most important issue in the

leadership process because managers develop leadership styles through their education, training and experience (Hersey et al., 2001). Effective management style will increase productivity, inspire, enhance morale, encourage workers and make a positive contribution to the company and so on (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The theoretical connection between autocratic leadership and employee performance has been advanced by many researchers (de Hoogh et al., 2015, Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Rast, et al., 2013; Harms et al., 2018). There is

research to show that even when teams are performing well, individuals will quit these team if they are led by an autocratic leader. One reason for this is that autocratic leaders increase negative affect in subordinates, including fear and anger (Harms et al., 2018). Most of the research on autocratic leadership has shown that ultimately subordinates dislike managers who have an autocratic leadership style and experience more job stress when being managed by such an individual (Harms et al., 2018). This growing body of literature on AL and EP advocates that autocratic leadership has a major impact on employee performance.

Similarly, Harms et al. (2018) have shown that autocratic leaders increase negative affect in subordinates. Many researches, in the past examined the performance and factors affecting employee performance. One of the dominant key factors that have been discussed in the past researches was autocratic leadership. Moreover, because autocratic leaders are less likely to value creative ideas from subordinates, employees might feel less valued and this has the potential to increase employee turnover. So, many researches were done to examine the performance and how it was affected by leadership style like autocratic leadership. Most of the studies were highly lacking data and analysis on the effect of autocratic leadership on employee performance. The result is inconclusive whether the employee performance is affected positively or negatively by autocratic leadership. In such situation where managers are seeking for solution, question arises on what relationship does exist between autocratic leadership and employee performance? Can managers consider leadership style while creating employee performance? Similarly, does age group moderate the relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance? Hence, this study has sought to give the answer of these research question by setting the objective as: 1) To analyze the degree of impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance. 2) To

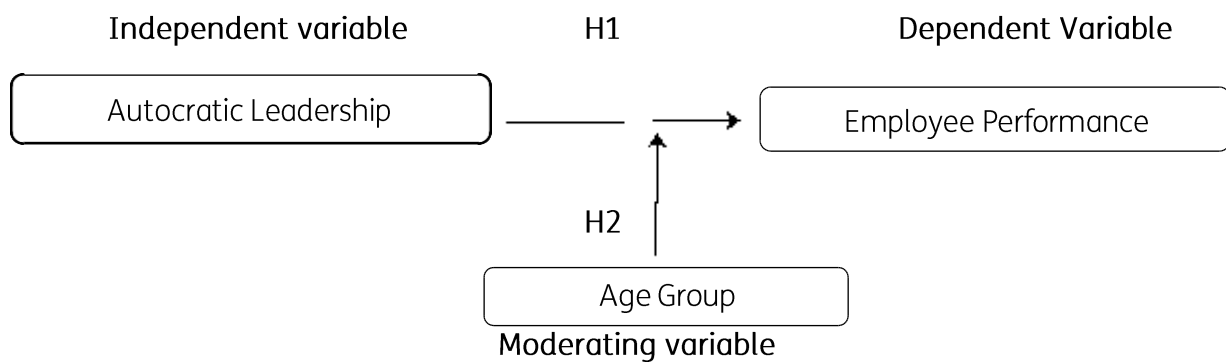
test whether the age group is moderating this impact.

This study contributes to the literature in a number of ways. First, how the behavior of leader effects on retention and performance of his followers in the organization. Janse (2018) found when the results are disappointing, or when the leader expects this to happen, the authoritarian leader will use his power to threaten sanctions such as dismissal so that undesirable behavior can be prevented. His findings revealed that the authoritarian leader prefers to focus on results and tasks rather than on the employees who make the results possible. This supreme ruler assumes that employees have little ambition, prefer to avoid responsibility and only strive for individualist goals. Similarly, Harms et al. (2018) stated that autocratic leadership has shown that ultimately subordinates dislike managers who have an autocratic leadership style and experience more job stress when being managed by such an individual. So, by empirically examining the relationship between AL and EP, this study extends previous EP research. Second, how the organizations can achieve effective employee performance. Different researchers have suggested different variable that are majorly influential for employee performance. One group of experts has suggested autocratic leadership as prime variable for effecting employee performance. On the other hand, other groups of experts have suggested not autocratic leadership but creating a need and urgency for change, communicating change message, participation and involvement are some prime variables that are majorly influential for creating effective employee performance. Third, this study extends previous work in this area by proposing integrated model of employee performance influence by autocratic leadership in the workplace, as shown in Fig.1, along with examining the moderating effect of age of the employees. The practical implication of this contribution is to give suggestions to organizational leaders regarding the impact of leadership style on employee performance so that managers can improve leadership style to

achieve high level of employee performance. The feedback autocratic leader gives to their employees is often negative, not very constructive and is sometimes accompanied by overt anger (Janse, 2018). Because the authoritarian

leader decides everything themselves and executes it in their own way, they don't give the employees the chance to give their spin on the tasks to be performed. Thus, following conceptual framework is developed:

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Janse (2018)

In this study, autocratic leadership is the independent variable affecting employee performance, the dependent variable. The age group acts as a moderating variable, modifying the relationship between these two variables. Younger employees might show reduced performance under autocratic leadership due to a preference for more participative styles, while older employees could be less affected due to their familiarity with hierarchical structures.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

1.1.1 AL AND EP

A good leader used to care about not only profit maximization but also welfare of the employees and community. Therefore, leading is very interesting part and should be analyze very carefully. Leadership plays a critical role for the progress of organization. Adair (2004) stated that a leader is the kind of person (with leadership qualities) who has the appropriate knowledge and skill to lead a group to achieve its ends willingly. Further researches on the autocratic leadership and employee performance propose that the authoritarian leader prefers to focus on results and tasks rather than on the

employees who make the results possible. The feedback this leader gives to their employees is often negative, not very constructive and is sometimes accompanied by overt anger (Janse, 2018).

Autocratic leadership marked by a leader's centralized decision making and limited subordinate input, has been extensively studied in organizational behavior. Research exemplified by Smith and Johnson (2018) suggests potential positive outcomes like efficient decision-making enhancing task performance. Conversely, studies such as Anderson et al. (2019) propose that the authoritarian nature of autocratic leadership may stifle employee morale and innovation, thereby negatively impacting overall performance. The literature emphasizes the importance of considering contextual factors such as organizational culture and industry specifics when assessing the relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance.

Certainly, the impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance is significant and context dependent. Scholars like Chen and Huang (2020) have explored into the psychological aspects highlighting that autocratic leadership can evoke feelings of disempowerment and reduced

job satisfaction among employees. Additionally, studies by Wilson and Adams (2021) emphasize that the effectiveness of autocratic leadership depends on the nature of tasks; it may enhance efficiency in routine, well-defined tasks but could hinder innovation in creative or complex tasks. Furthermore, the work of Lee et al. (2022) explores the role of communication in mitigating potential negative effects. They argue that effective communication from autocratic leaders can mitigate perceived injustice, fostering employee commitment and performance. Thus, while autocratic leadership elicits both support and criticism in the literature, its outcomes are intricately linked to factors such as communication strategies, the nature of tasks and the psychological impact on employees.

Additionally, further research by Wang and Li (2023) has examined into the cultural dimension of autocratic leadership and its implications for employee performance. They argue that the acceptance and effectiveness of autocratic leadership styles may across cultures, emphasizing the need for a culturally sensitive approach to leadership studies. Moreover, studies by Kim et al. (2024) highlight the potential moderating role of organizational climate, suggesting that a positive and supportive organizational climate may buffer the negative effects of autocratic leadership on employee performance, fostering a more conducive working environment.

Coupling the observations mentioned above, this study presents the following hypothesis:

H1: Autocratic leadership is negatively associated with employee performance.

H2: Age group would be moderating the impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance.

2. METHODS

2.1 SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Twenty-one commercial banks in Nepal formed the population of the study. Out of which, 6 banks providing highest fixed deposit interest rate were selected as

sample purposive sampling technique. The questionnaires were distributed to 110 respondents and only 94 responses were received, and after excluding missing data, 87 of the 94 respondents were included in the sample for analysis. The average age of the participants was 25.41 (SD=2.32) and had an average of

4.01 years of tenure (SD=2.47). Among them, 59.77% were male, and 68.96% of them had earned their bachelor's degrees and above.

2.2 MEASURES

All substantive variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Agree; 5=Strongly Disagree).

2.3 AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP (AL)

The AL scale developed by Smith and Johnson (2018) was used to measure autocratic leadership which included 10 items. The scale contains three dimensions of autocratic leadership which include participation, motivation and power & authority. The sample items: "include my team members in decision making authority" and "asks for ideas and input on upcoming plan and projects." The coefficient alpha was 0.831.

2.4 EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE (EP)

EP was assessed based on the 6-item scale developed by Tian & Sanchez (2017). Participation, commitment, attitude, responsibility, adaptation and coordination dimensions of employee performance was included in the items. Sample items: "actively participate in work meetings" and "effectively collaborate with colleagues from different department." The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.930.

2.5 CONTROL VARIABLES

Spector and Brannick (2011) and Atinc et al. (2012) discussed the appropriate use (and potential misuse) of control variables in non-experimental research. They recommended that before using any extraneous control variables, previous findings and theory should be considered. Therefore, this study controlled for employee age (1= 18-22 years, 2= 22-26

years and 3= 26 and above); Kish-Gephart et al. 2010; Umphress et al. 2010; Thau et al. 2015. Respondents having age between 18 and 22 were only one (3.44%). Similarly, respondents having age between 22 and 26 were more (51.72%) to the respondents having age of 26 and more (44.84%). This shows that the version of employees having age between 22 and 26 is more in the findings.

2.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

Correlational Research design was adopted in which simple regression was performed to analyze the impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance. With this the research objective was achieved and the proposed hypothesis was tested to find the result. A correlational research design was adopted to assess the relationship between AL and EP to achieve the first research objective in which regression analysis was performed. The collected data were analyzed by using IBM SPSS statistics version 25. Under the correlation analysis, Pearson correlation

coefficient and simple linear regression analysis were performed. Pearson’s ‘r’ has been calculated to test the first hypothesis. Similarly, dummy variable regression analysis was performed to test whether age is moderating the relationship between AL and EP.

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND INTERCORRELATIONS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations. As expected, AL was strongly related to employee performance. In particular, AL (r = .333, p < 0.01) was positively correlated with employee performance. Similarly, the mean of AL is 2.87011 (SD=0.698689). AL shows modest correlations with EP. The implications for this are presented in the “Discussion” section.

3.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AL AND EP

Pearson’s correlation Coefficient is calculated, the result on this coefficient is present in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistic

| | Mean | SD | AL | EP |
|----|---------|----------|--------|----|
| AL | 2.87011 | 0.698689 | 1 | |
| EP | 1.83448 | 0.701631 | .333** | 1 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

As indicated by the results presented in Table 1, autocratic leadership style has positive relationship with employee performance and correlation is significant at 0.01 since p value is less than 0.05.

3.3 IMPACT OF AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

To achieve the first research objective and the first research hypothesis, simple regression model was used; the results are presented in following tables:

The results on coefficient of multiple determinations (R square) are presented in Table 2. This shows the total variation in EP explained by AL.

Table 2: Variation in EP Explained by AL

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .333 ^a | .111 | .100 | 6.65463 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic Leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: SPSS Output

As shown in Table 2, the value of coefficient of multiple determination was 0.111. This implies that the variation in EP can be explained by AL is 11.1%.

For the goodness-of-fit of regression analysis, analysis of variance test was made. The results of this test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Goodness of Fit of Regression

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 469.512 | 1 | 469.512 | 10.602 | .002 ^b |
| | Residual | 3764.143 | 85 | 44.284 | | |
| | Total | 4233.655 | 86 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic Leadership

Source: SPSS Output

As indicated in Table 3, the alternative hypothesis was accepted since p-value was significant (0.002). This implies that AL contribute to EP.

The constant value and regression coefficients for the analysis of regression were calculated; the results of these values are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of EP on AL

| Model | | Unstandardized | Standardized | Beta | T | Sig. |
|-------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|------|-------|------|
| | | Coefficients | Coefficients | | | |
| 1 | | B | Std. Error | | | |
| | (Constant) | 8.747 | 3.033 | | 2.884 | .005 |
| | Autocratic Leadership | .334 | .103 | .333 | 3.256 | .002 |

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

Source: SPSS Output

As indicated in Table 4, the degree of impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance is significant since p-value (0.002) is less than 0.05. The regression equation of employee performance on autocratic leadership in line with the equation $Y = a + bX$ is given by:
 Employee Performance = 8.747 + 0.334 (Autocratic Leadership)

Where,

Y = Dependent Variable (Employee Performance)

X = Independent Variable (Autocratic Leadership)

a = Constant (8.747)

b = Slope of the regression line (0.334)

3.4 MODERATING ROLE OF AGE GROUP ON IMPACT OF AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

To test whether the age group is playing moderating role on impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance, dummy or indicator variable regression analysis was performed. The results on this are presented in subsequent tables.

Table 5: Variation in AL Explained by EP (Age Group Wise)

| Age Group | Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|--------------|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 22-26 | 1 | .358 ^a | .128 | .107 | 8.12106 |
| 26 and above | 1 | .418 ^a | .174 | .152 | 3.47676 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic Leadership

Source: SPSS Output

As shown in Table 5, the values of coefficients of multiple determination for age group 22-26 and 26 and above were 0.128 and 0.174 respectively. This implies that the variation in AL explained by EP is different in different sizes of the firms.

For the goodness -of-fit of dummy regression analysis, analysis of variance test was made. The results of this test are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Goodness of Fit of Regression

| Age Group | Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | |
|--------------|-------|----------------|----------|-------------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| 22-26 | 1 | Regression | 397.661 | 1 | 397.661 | 6.030 | .018 ^b |
| | | Residual | 2704.014 | 41 | 65.952 | | |
| | | Total | 3101.674 | 42 | | | |
| 26 and above | 1 | Regression | 94.441 | 1 | 94.441 | 7.813 | .008 ^b |
| | | Residual | 447.252 | 37 | 12.088 | | |
| | | Total | 541.692 | 38 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic Leadership

Source: SPSS Output

As indicated in Table 6, the alternative hypothesis was rejected since p-value were significant in all age group; 22-26 (0.018), 26 and above (0.008) of firms. This implied that there was no significant difference between age group when it came autocratic leadership on employee performance. This didn't show the age group as moderating variable on impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance.

3.5 HYPOTHESES TEST

The study had proposed to test two different hypotheses. They were tested based on simple and dummy variable regression model.

H1: Autocratic leadership would be negatively associated with employee performance.

For testing the first hypothesis, simple regression model was performed. The regression equation of EP on AL showed that AL has significant positive impact on EP. This rejected the proposed hypothesis.

H2: Age group would be moderating the impact of autocratic leadership and employee performance.

Referred to Table 6, the age group was not moderating the impact of AL on EP, which rejected the proposed hypothesis.

4. DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance in the organization.

This study furthermore focused on the potential underlying role of age group as moderating variable in the relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance.

As opposed to the expectation, the significant positive relationship was found between AL and EP. Contrary to conventional wisdom that autocratic leadership is negatively associated with employee performance, evidence suggests that autocratic leaders often provide clear direction, decisive decision making and strict oversight which can lead to improve efficiency and productivity in certain environments, such as highly structured or crisis situations (Lam et al., 2017; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Furthermore, autocratic leaders can be effective in driving results when employees lack expertise or experience, as they provide guidance and structure (Choi et al., 2015). In addition, autocratic leaders provide clear direction and goals which can enhance employee performance by reducing ambiguity and facilitating goal attainment. In this study, it is found that autocratic leadership can also contribute to improve employee performance in certain contexts where its effectiveness depends on various factors including the nature of task, the expertise of employees and organizational culture. Similarly, by closely monitoring and directing their work, autocratic leaders can help them learn and improve more rapidly, which can lead to enhance overall team performance. Research by Lam, Huang and Janssen (2017) suggests that autocratic leadership can contribute to increase efficiency and productivity particularly in contexts where quick decisions and actions are necessary. In addition, autocratic leaders often prioritize task accomplishment and compliance with established procedures leading to improve performance outcomes as highlighted by Choi, Sung, Lee and Cho (2015). These examinations support that autocratic leadership can have a positive impact on employee performance in various contexts. However, it's essential to acknowledge the potential downsides and consider the situational appropriateness of autocratic

leadership styles. Overall, these discussions fully rejected the proposed hypothesis that autocratic leadership is negatively associated with employee performance in establishing the possibilities that autocratic leadership can contribute to the employee performance.

The disconfirmation of second hypothesis showed that the age group is not moderating the relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance. This indicates that the positive relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance was same in employees having different age groups. It means age group has no significant impact on relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance. Different age groups may have varying expectations and preferences regarding leadership style. A study by Ng and Feldman (2014) found that older employees tend to value autonomy and control over their work environment, and they may perceive autocratic leadership as constraining or limiting their ability to perform effectively. In contrast, younger employees may not perceive autocratic leadership as negatively impacting their performance to the same extent. In this study, the perspective of employee might be similar on the relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance regardless of their age group. In regard, a study by Fernandez-Mateo & Kaplan (2018) found that in innovative or creative organizations where autonomy and collaboration are highly valued, autocratic leadership may not align with the organizational culture, leading to decrease employee performance across all group. Similarly, when the results are disappointing, or when the leader expects this to happen, the authoritarian leader will use his power to threaten sanctions such as dismissal so that undesirable behavior can be prevented (Janse 2018).

5. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research makes several theoretical contributions. Firstly, it addresses a gap in the literature by exploring how autocratic leadership (AL)

influences employee performance (EP), an area previously under researched (Choi et al., 2015; Lam, Huang & Janssen, 2017). Secondly, it examines the antecedents of EP influenced by AL, providing detailed insights into how AL affects employee performance within organizations. The findings indicate that AL has a significant impact on EP, thus extending previous empirical research in this area. Thirdly, it investigates the moderating role of age group on the relationship between AP and EP, showing that the impact of AL varies across different age groups. Lastly, it explores mediating variables like reward and punishment, discipline, and quick decision-making highlighting how AL can positively affect EP. This study contributes to leadership theory by showing how close monitoring and direction under AL can enhance employee performance.

6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the present study have significant consequences for management practices which are addressed below:

Firstly, organizations can enhance performance by adopting suitable cultures and structures, focusing on leadership development, communication, involvement, engagement and rewards.

Secondly, management should foster a supportive and collaborative work environment which help to improve the employee performance. Involving employees in decision making and providing feedback and recognition increase productivity. Similarly, establishing clear communication channels can mitigate the negative effects of autocratic leadership.

In order, managers should align leadership with organizational values and adapt styles to situational needs. Autocratic Leadership can guide inexperienced employees and improve efficiency through clear direction and oversight. Therefore, balancing the work environment and employee performance is essential in an organization.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

While the study made the above outlined contributions to the existing

literature, it also has some limitations. First, this study can be suffered from common method bias. Although reliability check was carried out before verifying the hypotheses, all data were from the same respondents at a single point in time, which could still lead to common method bias. Common methods bias was presented as an inflated correlation between two variables due to the fact they were measured using the same method. Nonetheless, future research should still be conducted with precautions. For instance, in order to control common methods bias, further research needs to validate the model presented in this study. In other words, future researchers are encouraged to examine the role of gender, age, position, and tenure as moderators in respondents and test the direction and strength of influence of these characteristics on the model. The other aspect is about all data collected at a single time point, which hindered the investigation of possibility of reverse causality between dimensions of AL and EP.

Secondly, large sample was not taken for study because of time and cost constrains. Hence, finding of this study may not represent the whole population. So, future researchers can go for more rigorous sampling and study the diverse population. In order, the further study of service sectors and corporate organizations can be studied on the same topic.

Thirdly, the data used for the study were collected through questionnaire. Questionnaire cannot determine the actual attitudes of employees. So, future researchers can conduct interviews with managers and supervisors to secure the content validity.

Lastly, study may not be able to demonstrate record changes over time as it has used a cross sectional design. So, prospective investigations may employ longitudinal or experimental methodologies to examine the causative connections between autocratic leadership and employee performance.

8. CONCLUSION

This study provides an empirical investigation of autocratic leadership on

employee performance which provides valuable insights into the dynamic of leadership within organizational settings. Thus, it demonstrates the mediating variables like reward and punishment, quick decision making, clear direction, discipline and so on influence employee performance through autocratic leadership. Similarly, autocratic leadership emphasizes strict control and centralized decision making which may yield to positive outcomes on employee performance. Previous research suggests that these variables positively influence productivity and efficiency of employee that are valuable for functioning of organization (Lam et al., 2017; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). In order, this paper maintains that decision makers should not be worried about the age group regarding the performance of employee through autocratic leadership. Therefore, organizations can execute positive impacts of autocratic leadership while moderating its negative impacts on employee performance.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Anisha Shrestha

Student, BBM 4th Semester
Kathmandu Model College, Kathmandu

Nabin Pandey

Kathmandu Model College, Kathmandu
nabin@kmcen.edu.np

Dr. Bimla Kumari Gurung

Kathmandu Model College, Kathmandu
bimlagurung25@gmail.com

Sagar Kharel

Kathmandu Model College, Kathmandu
sagar@kmcen.edu.np

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