

INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGIES ON EMPLOYEE TURNOVER AT AGA KHAN HOSPITAL IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: The Aga Khan University Hospital has experienced a significant rate of staff turnover, as leading recruitment agencies have effectively enticed their employees to seek opportunities in other locations. Individuals moving to international destinations are presented with attractive compensation packages, which encompass competitive salaries, substantial allowances, opportunities for career advancement, and comprehensive assistance for relocating their families. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of employee retention strategies on employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi City County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was utilized in the study. A total of 795 participants from 12 departments were involved in this investigation. The technique employed for participant selection was stratified sampling. This means that a fundamental random method was applied to choose the study participants. The sample consisted of 266 respondents. Questionnaires were employed in the study to gather data directly from the participants. To evaluate their effectiveness, the study surveyed 26 hospital employees. The research assessed the content validity of the questionnaires to ensure their precision. The Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient was utilized in the study to evaluate the consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were applied to analyze the data. Additionally, the data was analyzed using inferential statistics, which implemented multiple regression analysis techniques and focused on the relationships between variables. The results were presented using tables. The research indicated that strategies for competitive compensation and professional development initiatives played a significant role in decreasing turnover rates. The findings of the study suggest that an employee recognition program fosters a productive environment where employees feel appreciated and recognized for their contributions. Furthermore, since employees who perceive their personal lives as valued are more inclined to remain in their positions, the work-life balance strategy enhances job satisfaction. The study recommends that the hospital should establish a systematic program that consistently acknowledges staff achievements, and it should focus on implementing flexible scheduling alternatives, such as remote work, reduced workweeks, or adjustable hours. These measures can help employees manage their personal and professional responsibilities more effectively, leading to increased job satisfaction and decreased employee turnover.

Keywords: Employee retention strategy, Employee turnover, employee recognition strategy, work-life balance strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee turnover significantly impacts an organization, as it requires increased recruitment and training costs due to the ongoing necessity to replace outgoing staff. As a result, this scenario strains the organization's financial resources and operational efficiency, while also disrupting workflow and overall productivity (O'Connell & Kung, 2019). Mohammed, Lai, Daskalaki, and Saridakis (2021) argue that when employees witness a continuous departure of their peers, it creates an

environment of instability and uncertainty, which may lead to a decline in job satisfaction and motivation. This situation can further sustain a turnover cycle, as dissatisfied employees are more likely to seek other job opportunities. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to investigate the reasons behind employee departures and address the underlying issues while implementing strategies aimed at retaining top talent and fostering a positive work environment.

Hee and Ling (2021) emphasize that reducing employee turnover requires a proactive and thorough approach that takes into account both the individual needs of employees and the broader organizational culture and practices. As noted by Iqbal (2023), creating effective strategies to prevent employees from leaving their positions is essential for reducing turnover; by focusing on competitive salaries and benefits, opportunities for career growth, a positive organizational culture, work-life balance initiatives, and fostering an inclusive environment, companies can enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty, thereby retaining their top talent and decreasing attrition rates.

Samuel and Chipunza (2019) highlights that employee retention strategies are essential for reducing turnover rates. By fostering a positive work environment and addressing employee needs, organizations can lower attrition significantly. Al-Mamun and Hasan (2022) note that when employees feel valued and recognized, they are more likely to remain loyal to the organization, decreasing their desire to seek other job opportunities. Thus, implementing programs that promote employee well-being, such as flexible work arrangements and professional development, can enhance satisfaction and commitment.

Arokiasamy (2019) highlights that high employee turnover in Turkish healthcare institutions leads to a shortage of skilled professionals and disrupts patient care. However, effective retention strategies can help stabilize the workforce. Sija (2022) notes that Turkish hospitals offer professional growth pathways, training programs, and competitive salaries to attract and retain talent. Additionally, work-life balance initiatives have been implemented to improve retention rates, benefiting both hospitals and patient care quality.

The execution of a personnel retention strategy aimed at reducing employee turnover in healthcare facilities in Pakistan requires a comprehensive and systematic approach that emphasizes enhancing employee satisfaction, fostering a positive work environment, and addressing the underlying causes of turnover (Khan & Aleem, 2020). Siddiqui (2022) indicates that to ensure the personnel retention strategy's effectiveness, systematic monitoring and evaluation will be performed to measure its impact. This may include tracking turnover rates, conducting employee satisfaction surveys, and analyzing feedback obtained from exit interviews. Based on the findings, necessary adjustments and improvements will be implemented in the strategy to ensure its continued effectiveness in reducing employee turnover in Pakistani hospitals.

Abimbola, Olanipekun, and Aina (2020) contend that private healthcare institutions in Nigeria utilize various methods to implement employee retention strategies and maintain their workforce. These methods include outlining clear career paths, providing opportunities for advancement within the organization, initiating programs to recognize and appreciate the hard work and dedication of their staff, and organizing regular employee engagement activities such as team-building exercises, social events, and wellness programs. Nevertheless, Okeke (2023) highlights that a major issue faced by private hospitals in Nigeria is the high turnover rate among healthcare professionals. This situation is often linked to factors such as inadequate salaries, limited opportunities for career progression, poor working conditions, and restricted access to training and development programs.

Bonenberger, Aikins, Akweongo, and Wyss (2018) contend that private healthcare organizations in Ghana successfully manage employee turnover by providing attractive compensation packages and benefits, creating opportunities for career advancement and professional development, fostering a positive work environment, establishing flexible work schedules, and recognizing and rewarding employees for their hard work and dedication. Coudounaris, Akuffo, and Nkulenu (2020) indicate that some hospitals are conducting systematic assessments of employee satisfaction to gather insights and tackle any issues that may be leading to increased turnover rates. As a result, by focusing on the retention of their staff, private hospitals in Ghana can maintain a stable workforce and offer high-quality healthcare services to their patients.

Abubakar and Wainaina (2019) highlight that private healthcare facilities in Kenya struggle with high employee turnover, adversely affecting efficiency and patient care quality. This issue is particularly pronounced among nursing and support staff, leading to increased recruitment and training costs, as well as lower employee morale and patient satisfaction. To combat this, Njuguna, Mugambi, and Kahuthia (2021) report that private hospital management has introduced strategic initiatives aimed at improving employee retention. These include regular staff surveys to identify dissatisfaction causes and a performance-based incentive system to reward dedicated employees.

Chankova, Muchiri, and Kombe (2019) identify a key barrier to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kenya's healthcare sector as the shortage of trained and motivated personnel. Ndeti, Khasakhala, and Omolo (2022) further note that the healthcare provider-to-population ratio is inadequate, compounded by difficulties in retaining the limited workforce in hospitals. This situation adversely affects both public and private hospitals, as many professionals leave for better opportunities. Therefore, private hospitals in Kenya can enhance workforce effectiveness and improve patient care, operational efficiency, and overall success by implementing employee retention strategies.

Employee turnover within an organization refers to the rate at which employees leave the company over a specified period. This occurrence can stem from various reasons, such as improved job opportunities, dissatisfaction with the work environment, lack of chances for career growth, or personal issues (O'Connell & Kung, 2020). Khan (2022) explains that high employee turnover rates can negatively impact an organization, resulting in increased recruitment and training costs, loss of institutional knowledge, decreased morale among remaining staff, and possible disruptions to operational efficiency and productivity. Therefore, organizations need to understand the reasons behind employee departures and develop strategies to retain them, focusing on keeping top talent while promoting a positive organizational culture.

An organization's systematic collection of activities and efforts aimed at retaining its employees and minimizing turnover rates is referred to as its employee retention strategy (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019). As noted by Krishna and Garg (2022), an employee retention strategy represents a proactive measure that companies implement to retain their skilled workforce. This encompasses a range of tactics and procedures designed to cultivate a positive workplace environment that motivates employees to stay with the organization for a longer duration. Consequently, the primary objective of an employee retention strategy is to ensure that key individuals are motivated, engaged, and dedicated to the organization. This approach will enhance productivity, lower recruitment costs, and elevate overall performance.

Founded in 1983, the Aga Khan University (AKU) is recognized as the first private university in Pakistan. Operating as a non-profit organization, it functions under the aegis of the Aga Khan Development Network. In 2000, the university expanded its influence to Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Afghanistan, and the United Kingdom. Originally intended as an institution focused on health sciences, AKU has transformed into a prominent private healthcare provider in both Pakistan and East Africa. Its hospitals were among the first to gain official accreditation from the U.S. Our partnership with the Joint Commission International has had a profound impact on healthcare policies and practices, both locally and internationally. Recently, AKU has initiated new programs aimed at teacher training, the exploration of Muslim cultures, journalism, early childhood development, and the development of government regulations. In September 2023, AKU launched a Faculty of Arts and Sciences, offering programs intended to nurture future leaders across a wide range of fields, with plans to create additional graduate professional schools.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Kenyan healthcare sector struggles with employee retention due to high demand for professionals outpacing supply. This creates a competitive job market where workers can easily switch roles if dissatisfied (Lekartiwa, Rintari & Moguche, 2020). Research by Chankova, Muchiri, and Kombe (2022) shows many healthcare employees feel undercompensated, leading to lower motivation and job satisfaction, which drives them to seek better opportunities. Furthermore, job insecurity and limited career growth options exacerbate turnover rates in the industry. A 2023 study by Kenya's Ministry of Health revealed that employee turnover in private healthcare facilities is a significant issue, with an average rate of 25% per year across 50 hospitals. The turnover varied by job category: nurses had the highest rate at 30%, followed by administrative staff at 25% and physicians at 20%. The study identified inadequate compensation and benefits, limited career growth opportunities, and a lack of professional development as key reasons for the high turnover rates.

Many studies have explored how organizations can retain employees and the causes of turnover. For instance, Yeswa and Ombui (2019) analyzed employee retention in private healthcare facilities in Nairobi County, Kenya, finding that career development, reward systems, and work environment enhance competitive advantage. However, their research was limited to competition among private hospitals in Nairobi from 2015 to 2018. Sang (2021) examined staff retention strategies in the tea industry, concluding that better welfare policies lead to improved employee performance, but the study was limited to James Finlay Kenya Limited. Peggy and Bernard (2022) studied employee retention's impact on hospital performance in Mombasa County, finding that supervisory management significantly affects performance, yet their focus on organizational performance reveals a conceptual gap. Therefore, this study sought to examine the influence of employee retention strategies on employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

General Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study will be to examine the influence of employee retention strategies on employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi City County, Kenya

Specific Objectives

- i. To explore the influence of employee recognition strategy on employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital.
- ii. To assess the influence of work-life balance strategy on employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

The theory of Organizational Equilibrium

The Barnard-Simon Theory of Organizational Equilibrium (TOE) was established in 1938 and is regarded as the first formal theory concerning employee retention within a company. It aids in comprehending the significance of maintaining employee happiness and satisfaction in the workplace. The Barnard-Simon Theory of Organizational Equilibrium (TOE) posits that organizations strive to maintain a state of equilibrium by aligning the needs and expectations of their employees with the long-term objectives and goals of the organization. When this theory is applied to the issue of employee turnover, it can provide essential insights into the factors that contribute to high turnover rates and clarify how organizations can effectively manage and reduce turnover.

Mangolte (2020) suggests that organizations can pinpoint areas for improvement related to high turnover rates by analyzing the TOE, which includes employee motivation, job satisfaction, organizational culture, and leadership effectiveness. For instance, unmotivated or dissatisfied employees are more likely to leave for other opportunities. By addressing these issues and fostering a positive work environment aligned with organizational values, companies can lower turnover and keep top talent. Additionally, Mayer and Schoorman (2023) note that the TOE provides a framework for understanding how external factors like market dynamics and competitive pressures influence employee turnover. By incorporating these insights into strategic planning, organizations can enhance employee retention and maintain a competitive advantage.

The application of the Barnard-Simon Theory of Organizational Equilibrium regarding employee turnover offers organizations a detailed framework for clarifying and tackling the various factors that lead to turnover. By leveraging this theoretical framework, organizations can develop effective strategies to reduce turnover, enhance employee retention, and ultimately achieve long-term organizational success.

Social Exchange Theory

The theoretical framework of social exchange was developed by Homans (1958). The Social Exchange Theory suggests that employees are inclined to resign from their positions when the terms of exchange are breached. These terms can be either explicit or implicit and are agreed upon by both the employer and the employee. The nature of the exchanged goods may include tangible items (such as financial compensation for services rendered) or qualitative factors, such as trust, loyalty, and commitment, among others. As a result, the employer's failure to fulfill a specified set of obligations adversely affects job performance.

Harden, Boakye and Ryan (2018) articulate that, based on social exchange theory, individuals engage in relationships with the anticipation of receiving rewards and benefits in return for their contributions, while concurrently providing attractive rewards and benefits to employees. These rewards may include competitive salaries, extensive benefits packages, and opportunities for career advancement. Avanzi, Fraccaroli, Sarchielli, Ullrich, and Dick (2021) assert that the principles of trust and commitment can be effectively integrated within the context of social exchange theory. When employees perceive that they are appreciated and trusted, they are more inclined to remain with an organization. Trust can be cultivated through strategies such as transparent communication, openness, and involving employees in the decision-making process. Furthermore, social exchange theory underscores the significance of equality in relational interactions.

This framework can help develop strategies to improve employee retention by strengthening the relationship between the organization and its workforce, thus reducing turnover rates. By offering incentives, the organization shows its commitment to valuing employees and fostering a positive work environment. Building a supportive culture, providing development opportunities, and recognizing achievements are key to fostering loyalty. To ensure employees view the relationship as fair, organizations should implement equitable policies, including reward systems and performance evaluations. Addressing feelings of injustice and dissatisfaction can lead to lower turnover rates.

Empirical Literature Review

Employee Recognition Strategy

Mngomezulu et al. (2019) conducted a study on how employee recognition affects talent retention. They distributed 70 questionnaires to employees across various roles. The results showed that managers can implement various strategies to retain top talent, but these may have different effects on individuals. The study also addressed challenges in the business sector, including retention issues due to a skilled labor shortage and lack of recognition for performance. Key factors identified for reducing turnover and attracting quality talent include rewards, acknowledgment, motivation, and effective talent management.

Sitati, Were, Waititu, and Miringu (2019) examined the impact of employee recognition on retention rates in hotels across Kenya. This study utilized a survey method to gather data, concentrating on 213 hotels that are members of the Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers. A systematic selection of 137 hotels was carried out from diverse regions using a stratified random sampling technique. The researchers employed a series of questions to collect information from the participants. The data analysis included both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the Deloitte study revealed a significant relationship between employee recognition and retention within the organization.

Mutisya, Were, and Wabala (2022) conducted a comprehensive study examining the effects of employee recognition on the performance of companies within the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in Kenya. The research utilized a descriptive methodology and focused on the employees of Nairobi Coca-Cola Bottlers Limited. The data gathered was thoroughly analyzed employing various statistical techniques to enhance understanding. The results indicated that employee recognition has a significant impact on organizational performance. It is recommended that FMCGs aiming to maximize the benefits from their human capital should prioritize effective recognition of their employees, as this greatly enhances organizational performance.

Work-Life Balance Strategy

Al-Kabir and Tirno (2018) studied how a good work-life balance affects employee resignation rates. Their research used data from large companies in various sectors, including telecommunications and fashion. They applied statistical methods like One-Sample t-Test, ANOVA, and correlation analysis to evaluate their hypotheses, along with linear regression to model the influence of multiple factors. The findings indicated that employees lacking a satisfactory work-life balance are more prone to resign, while a positive balance can enhance organizational performance.

Kiplagat (2017) examined the impact of programs that assist employees in managing their work and personal life on attrition rates among personnel at public level 4 sub-county hospitals in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The research utilized a design identified as explanatory research to fulfill its aims. The study included 2,631 staff members from three hospitals. A fundamental method referred to as simple random sampling was employed to select 347 employees from the total workforce. Surveys served as the main tool for data collection. Subsequently, quantitative data were analyzed using basic statistical techniques.

In 2023, Karuhi and Aila examined the influence of the equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal life on the turnover rates of employees working in private security firms located in Kisumu County, Kenya. This research encompassed a total of 12,079 security personnel to explore possible correlations among different factors. From this larger group, 387 security guards were chosen for the study using a specific sampling method. Information was collected through interviews and discussions. The findings indicated that many individuals felt a lack of adequate balance between their work and personal life, leading to a considerable number of employees leaving their jobs. The study concluded that attaining a satisfactory balance between work and personal life was a vital factor influencing employees' choices to resign.

Conceptual Framework:

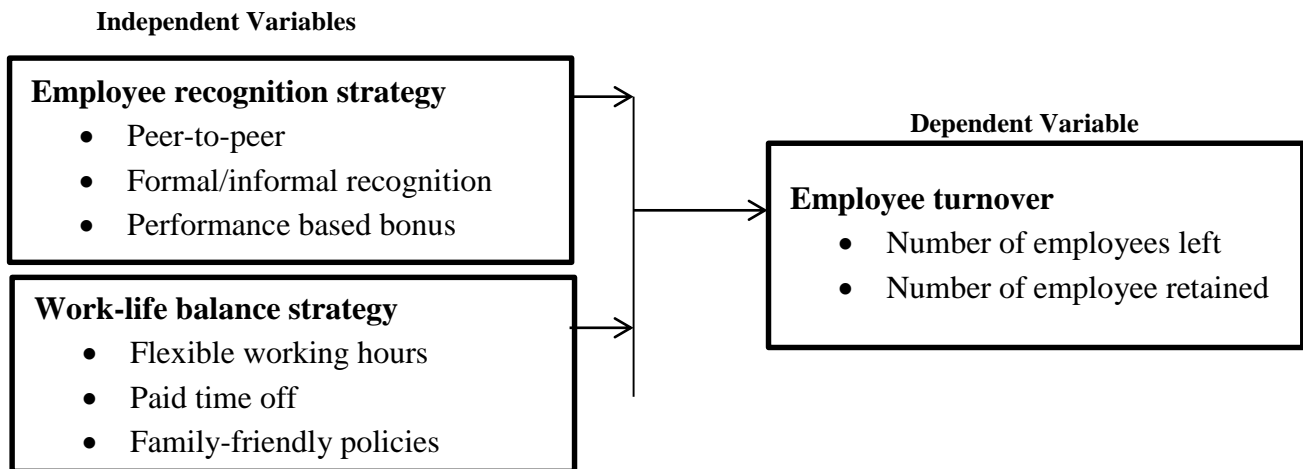


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was utilized in the study. A total of 795 participants from 12 departments were involved in this investigation. The technique employed for participant selection was stratified sampling. This means that a fundamental random method was applied to choose the study participants. The sample consisted of 266 respondents. Questionnaires were employed in the study to gather data directly from the participants. To evaluate their effectiveness, the study surveyed 26 hospital employees. The research assessed the content validity of the questionnaires to ensure their precision. The Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient was utilized in the study to evaluate the consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were applied to analyze the data. Additionally, the data was analyzed using inferential statistics, which implemented multiple regression analysis techniques and focused on the relationships between variables. The results were presented using tables.

5. FINDINGS

Employee Recognition Strategy

The descriptive statistics results on employee recognition strategy are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Employee recognition strategy

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
Peer recognition creates an environment where workers are more likely to establish and maintain good relationships with their coworkers.	4.13	0.87
Employees are motivated to improve their teamwork when they realize that their coworkers value their efforts and actions.	4.63	0.37
Employees are informed of the value placed on their work through financial rewards and recognition.	4.56	0.44
An environment of unplanned gratitude and support can be fostered by offering modest monetary incentives following the accomplishment of particular objectives or exceptional performance.	4.01	0.99
Those who are competitive and motivated to achieve recognition benefit from structured recognition.	4.02	0.98
Employees and their bosses develop a lasting sense of gratitude through informal recognition.	4.05	0.95
Overall mean and standard deviation	4.23	0.77

The results indicate that the employee turnover rate at Aga Khan Hospital was influenced by the approach taken for employee recognition. This method received an average rating of 4.23, with a standard deviation of 0.77, suggesting a relatively high level of satisfaction among employees regarding recognition practices. The low standard deviation implies that most employees rated the recognition method similarly, indicating a consensus on its effectiveness in reducing turnover. The findings are consistent with Mutisya Were and Wabala's (2022) research observation that employee recognition has a significant impact on how well a company does.

Work life Balance Strategy

The descriptive statistics results on work life balance strategy are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Work life balance strategy

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employers can set themselves apart from their competitors and draw in top-tier candidates by providing flexible work options, paid leave, and additional benefits that promote a good balance between work and personal life.	4.57	0.43
Promoting a balance between work and personal life helps reduce the number of employees leaving their jobs and cuts down on costs associated with finding hiring and training new workers.	4.51	0.49
Workers who feel like they have a good balance between their work life and personal life usually feel happier more satisfied and less stressed.	4.55	0.45
When workers can manage their time and energy well between their job duties and personal life they are more likely to feel motivated and committed to their work.	4.31	0.69
Advocating for work-life balance is instrumental in attracting exceptional talent to the organization.	4.58	0.42
By providing flexible work arrangements, paid time off, and other benefits that enhance work-life balance, employers can distinguish themselves from their competitors and attract high-caliber candidates.	3.95	1.05
Overall mean and standard deviation	4.41	0.59

The finding show that the rating on the influence of work life balance strategy on the employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital was overall mean of 4.41 and standard deviation of 0.59. The relatively high mean rating suggests that employees perceive these strategies as beneficial in fostering a supportive work environment, which in turn may lead to increased loyalty and reduced turnover rates. The finding concurs with Karuhi and Aila (2023) research that highlights the critical role of work-life balance initiatives in improving both employee retention and overall job satisfaction.

Regression Analysis Results

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Estimated Std. Error
1	0.899	0.808	0.785	1.0294

The analysis of the model outcomes indicates that the adjusted R-squared value stands at 0.785. This noteworthy result highlights the influence of employee recognition strategy and work life balance strategy on employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital. These findings suggest that the remaining 21.5% pertains to other variables that were not examined.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.781	0.217		3.599	0.004
	Recognition strategy	0.788	0.312	0.0264	2.526	0.003
	Work life balance	0.792	0.209	0.0311	3.789	0.003

The results presented in Table 4 suggest that the constant value is 0.781, which signifies the level of employee turnover at Aga Khan Hospital when recognition and work-life balance strategies are maintained at a constant level. This finding indicates that, under these circumstances, the hospital can anticipate a stable turnover rate, underscoring the significance of these factors in affecting employee retention. The regression equation is articulated as follows;

$$\text{Employee turnover} = 0.781 + 0.788(\text{recognition strategy}) + 0.792(\text{work life balance})$$

The study found that the recognition strategy had a beta value of 0.0264 and a significance value of 0.003, indicating a statistically significant relationship. This suggests that effective recognition practices may help reduce employee turnover. This conclusion supports Mngomezulu et al. (2019), which emphasizes the importance of rewards, recognition, motivation, and talent management in minimizing voluntary turnover and attracting top talent.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The research concludes that an employee recognition strategy promotes a constructive work atmosphere in which employees feel valued and appreciated for their contributions. When staff members are acknowledged for their diligent efforts, it elevates their morale and job satisfaction, resulting in heightened loyalty to the organization. A well-executed recognition program can enhance employee engagement. Engaged employees are more inclined to be dedicated to their responsibilities and the hospital's mission, which in turn decreases turnover rates. Moreover, recognition strategies improve teamwork and collaboration among staff.

The study concludes that a work-life balance strategy enhances job satisfaction, as employees who perceive their personal lives as being valued are more inclined to stay committed to their positions. The work-life balance strategy aids in alleviating stress and preventing burnout. By providing flexible working hours, options for remote work, and adequate time off, employees can more effectively juggle their professional and personal obligations. This decrease in stress contributes to a healthier workplace and promotes longer employment duration. Furthermore, these initiatives elevate employee morale and engagement. When employees feel appreciated, they are more likely to dedicate themselves to their tasks, resulting in heightened productivity and loyalty, which subsequently reduces turnover rates.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research suggests that the hospital ought to establish a structured program that consistently recognizes employee accomplishments. This may encompass monthly awards, acknowledgment during team meetings, or a specific platform for peer-to-peer recognition. It is essential to motivate leaders and managers to convey gratitude and appreciation for the contributions of their team members. This objective can be fulfilled through training sessions that highlight the significance of recognition within the workplace. Additionally, it is important to customize recognition initiatives to align with the individual preferences of employees. Gaining insight into what inspires each employee can amplify the effectiveness of recognition, whether it is through verbal commendation, written notes, or public acknowledgment.

The study recommends that the hospital implement flexible scheduling options, such as remote work, compressed workweeks, or adjustable hours, to help employees balance personal and professional responsibilities, leading to increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover. Additionally, comprehensive wellness programs focusing on physical, mental, and emotional health, including fitness classes, stress management workshops, and counseling services, can support a healthy work-life balance. Training managers in supportive leadership can foster a positive work environment, while promoting open communication and recognizing employee needs can enhance their sense of belonging and commitment to the organization.

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