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An Evaluation of Retention Strategies in Educational and Private Hospitals in Benghazi: Insights from Healthcare Providers' Satisfaction and Administrative Perspectives

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Job satisfaction and effective retention strategies are essential for the stability of health systems (HS), stable systems are the basis for consistent, high-quality care and equitable access to services. Aim: To assess the presence of anefficient retention strategy in public and private hospitals in Benghazi. To measure HCWs' job satisfaction rate. Materials and Methods: This study is a descriptive quantitative, cross-sectional study done in four public and two private hospitals in Benghazi, which are the biggest teaching hospitals that agreed to participate in the study, during two months from January and February 2024. Ethical approval (IRB) was obtained from the research ethical committee (REC) of the Libyan International University (LIMU). Two questionnaires were used: The first questionnaire was used for HCWs (doctors and nurses) to examine the satisfaction rate. The second questionnaire for the administrators of the six hospitals to asses the presence or absence of retention strategy. Results: Despite the results of the research indicating that there is a retention strategy in two-thirds of hospitals (66.6%), the overall job satisfaction rate of doctors and nurses in these six hospitals (public and private) was satisfactory (2.49. The lowest satisfaction rates were recorded in the doctor's resting place, and the highest satisfaction rates in the study. Conclusion: The research results indicated a satisfactory job satisfaction rate of HCWs in both public and private sectors, although there is a retention strategy in more than half of the facilities. The discrepancy in the results can be due to either the retention strategic plan being deficient, not well applied. Also in the private sector, which was suffering from noticeable dissatisfaction, which was due to the higher expectations of its employees than in the public sector.

Keywords: Healthcare retention, job satisfaction, hospitals, Benghazi, workforce stability.

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INTRODUCTION:

Health Systems (HSs) are increasingly assuming a crucial and influential role in individuals' lives, surpassing previous levels of significance. The presence of a proficient health workforce is recognized as one of the six fundamental components of robust and efficient healthcare systems[1]. The operation of HSs hinges on the presence of healthcare professionals; enhancement of health service inclusivity and the realization of the entitlement to optimal health standards are contingent upon factors such as their accessibility, availability, acceptability, and calibre [1]. According to WHO, there is a forecasted deficit of 10 million healthcare workers (HCWs) by 2030, predominantly affecting nations with low to lowermiddle income brackets. Nevertheless, countries across all strata of economic development encounter challenges of varying extents in aspects like training, recruitment, placement, retention, and effectiveness of their workforce[1].

Healthcare personnel, commonly referred to as HCWs, are fundamental components of any healthcare facility. They are defined as individuals who deliver care and support, whether directly or indirectly, to the ill or ailing, drawing upon their formal training or practical experience[1]. Further emphasized is the retention of proficient HCWs as a critical responsibility of human resource departments within any organization[2]. This responsibility is paramount as the provision of continuous medical services hinges upon the presence of skilled healthcare personnel within healthcare establishments[3].

The well-being of healthcare providers, including doctors, holds significant importance within the realm of healthcare services. The impact of stress and excessive work burdens is undeniably detrimental to the level of care extended to patients, consequently affecting the overall health and wellbeing of HCWs[4]. Various research works have compellingly demonstrated that the enhancement of HCWs' well-being positively correlates with improvement in care quality, productivity levels, as well as the satisfaction levels of both providers and patients[5]. The healthcare sector stands out as one of the most perilous working environments, as workers in this industry are consistently exposed to a diverse array of health and safety risks throughout the course of their duties[6].

HCWs' job satisfaction is a crucial parameter that significantly influences both productivity and the quality of work[7]. This intricate phenomenon entails an individual's attitude towards their occupation, which not only affects motivation but

also plays a role in career advancement, well-being, and interpersonal relationships within the workplace[8]. The satisfaction of HCWs has a noteworthy impact on the quality of service, efficiency, and dedication to their tasks, while also influencing factors such as absenteeism, staff turnover, and ultimately impacting healthcare expenses[9].

Nkomazana et al[10]. highlighted the presence of a well-documented global deficit exceeding two million healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and midwives. It is noteworthy that 36 out of 57 nations facing a critical shortage of HCWs are situated in sub-Saharan Africa[6]. Remarkably, despite constituting merely 1.3% of the worldwide health workforce, this region bears a substantial 25% of the global disease burden, primarily stemming from infectious diseases[12]. The insufficiency of HCWs in developing nations can be attributed to multiple factors. Firstly, the disparity in wages is notable, as healthcare professionals in these regions often receive significantly lower remuneration compared to their counterparts in high-income countries (HICs), consequently leading to discontentment and elevated turnover rates[3]. Secondly, the constraint on resources poses a significant challenge. Budgetary restrictions limit the procurement of essential medical supplies, equipment, and infrastructure, thereby hindering HCWs from carrying out their responsibilities with efficacy[6].

The notion of a retention strategy is defined as a comprehensive framework of methodologies, regulations, and overarching approaches that are directed towards the safeguarding of personnel, minimization of employee attrition, and avoidance of turnover[2]. The retention of HCWs stands out as a crucial facet within the realm of human resource management (HRM) across both private and public sectors[6]. Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognize that turnover and mobility among HCWs represent a prevalent occurrence on a global scale[11]. The substantial demand for proficient HCWs across various sectors of the economy has resulted in a heightened turnover rate within organizations lacking a conducive working milieu[8]. Consequently, this situation has directly and indirectly impacted employers, as well as the productivity and financial viability of such entities[5]. Consequently, the retention of HCWs has emerged as a critical catalyst for organizational triumph, alongside the curbing of unnecessary expenditures and the enhancement of motivation and capabilities among healthcare workers[9]. Conversely, the retention of HCWs has been pinpointed as a major hurdle in the contemporary era, particularly within the hospitality domain[6]. Healthcare worker retention and job satisfaction play crucial roles in the success and longevity of any organization. Various factors influence the level of satisfaction among HCWs in their workplace. These factors constitute essential elements of a retention strategy for healthcare workers, encompassing work environments, career advancement opportunities, interpersonal relationships, well-being, and compensation[7]. Job satisfaction is pivotal in retaining skilled healthcare workers. Modern organizations are currently grappling with the dual challenge of effectively managing their workforce while also meeting the needs and retaining their employees[1].

In the context of post-conflict nations, the ruin of infrastructure and the scarcity of human resources caused by violence often result in significant and enduring harm to healthcare systems. These environments exhibit a deficiency in standardized service packages and confront a decline in public confidence⁽¹¹⁾. The presence of HCWs is crucial for dispensing healthcare services in conflict-stricken regions and in the subsequent reconstruction of healthcare systems post-conflict. Nevertheless, HCWs operating in conflict zones globally are facing threats, detentions, and fatalities[6].

Libya, being a nation in the aftermath of conflict, is currently encountering a multitude of challenges within its HS. There is a prevailing perception among the general population that the HS is inadequate, if not substandard, leading to dissatisfaction across all levels of healthcare services(1). Consequently, has it become increasingly common for individuals to personally finance their treatment in the private healthcare sector or seek medical care abroad⁽¹⁾. Despite witnessing certain advancements in healthcare quality and overall population health in recent decades, Libya's healthcare system is evidently constructed upon the conceptual frameworks of the WHO. However, the applicability of these frameworks to Libya remains uncertain, given that a comprehensive evaluation of the HS status and healthcare provider quality has yet to be conducted. The aim of our study is to explore and summarize the main factors influencing HCWs' (doctors and nurses) job satisfaction rate in public and private Libyan hospitals and to clarify the association between job satisfaction of health care workers and the presence of well-designed and implemented retention strategies at health institutions.

Materials and Methods:

Study Design and Participants

The study is a quantitative descriptive, crosssectional study conducted during the period of two months (January and February of 2024). The survey was conducted in a total of six hospitals that agreed to conduct the research at their premises (Appendix 1)List of Educational Hospitals in Benghazi: Benghazi Medical Center, Pediatric Surgery and Medicine Hospital, Al-Jalaa Hospital for Surgery and Accidents, Eye Hospital, Al-Hawari General Hospital, Kuwaifiya Chest Diseases Hospital, Specialized Surgeries Center – Al-Hawari, Benghazi Cardiac Center, Kidney Center - Al-Hawari, Al-Keesh Polyclinic, Al-Sabri Polyclinic. List of Private Hospitals in Benghazi, which includes Dar Al-Shifa Hospital, Al-Tariq Hospital, Eben Sena Hospital, Al-Haram Clinic, and Venice Hospital.

The examined hospitals are six, four of which were academic public hospitals (Benghazi Medical Center, Al-Jala Hospital, Al-Hawary General Hospital, and the Center of Special Surgeries Al-Hawary). Two non-academic general private hospitals (Venesia & Eben Sena hospitals), all located in Benghazi, Libya.

One hundred and sixty HCWs participated (96 doctors and 64 nurses). The participants from private hospitals were forty, and one hundred and twenty from public hospitals. Six administrators were also interviewed.

Ethical approval

The research was revised by the research committee, and ethical approval was given by the ethical committee at Libyan International University.

Statistical analysis

The data from the above questionnaires were gathered and analyzed through the SPSS version 26 program for the descriptive analysis. The satisfaction rate by using 5-point Likert scale data was analyzed as interval data, where the mean is the best measure of central tendency, as mentioned above. The chi-square test was used for statistical differences at α < 0.05.

RESULT:

When it comes to Health Insurance and Bonuses, it is evident that a significant number of hospitals (5 out of 6) opt for health insurance as part of their retention approach, although there is a slightly lower utilization rate for bonuses (4 out of 6). Regarding Salary Alignment, while a considerable portion of hospitals (4 out of 6) state that they align salaries with qualifications, there remains room for enhancement in this particular aspect. As for Flexible Schedules, a moderate level of adoption is observed, with 3 out of 6 hospitals incorporating this strategy.

Similarly, a Rewarding System is established in 3 out of 6 hospitals. In terms of Communication and Training, effective communication channels between management and staff are given priority, with all hospitals implementing this tactic. Furthermore, training initiatives are provided for both nurses and doctors in the majority of hospitals (5 out of 6). Notably, a Well-Defined Retention Strategy is formalized in only 3 out of 6 hospitals, signaling an area that could benefit from improvement.

The overall depiction underscores the varying degrees of implementation of diverse retention strategies across the six hospitals. While certain strategies like health insurance and communication are widely embraced, others, such as well-defined retention strategies and salary alignment, necessitate further attention.

Considerations and Implications

Retention Strategy for Six Hospitals" provides an overview of the adoption of various staff retention measures across six healthcare facilities. Each strategy is evaluated based on whether it was implemented ("Yes") or not ("No") and measured across all six hospitals. Notably, some strategies, such as a rewarding system, communication between management and staff, and a well-defined retention strategy, were unanimously adopted by all hospitals. This highlights their universal

recognition as critical tools for fostering employee satisfaction and reducing turnover. Similarly, training programs for nurses and doctors were widely implemented, with five hospitals prioritizing professional development as a key element of their retention efforts.

Other strategies, such as health insurance, salary alignment with qualifications, and flexible schedules, were moderately adopted, with four hospitals implementing each. These findings suggest that while these measures are recognized as valuable, some hospitals may face resource constraints or differing strategic priorities that limit their adoption. Interestingly, only half of the hospitals implemented bonuses, reflecting mixed perceptions of their feasibility or effectiveness as a retention tool.

A striking observation is the lack of focus on directly lowering employee turnover, as no hospital reported adopting this as a specific strategy. This could indicate challenges in addressing turnover directly or a preference for addressing underlying factors through broader initiatives like professional development, improved communication, and structured reward systems. Overall, the data underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to staff retention, with certain universally adopted measures complemented by more selectively implemented strategies Figure 1.

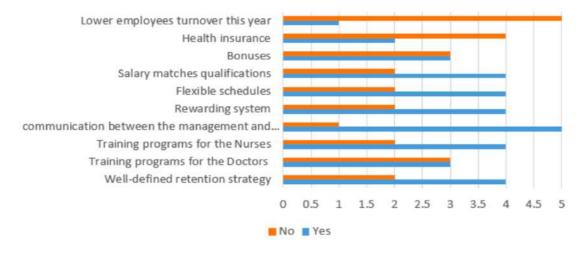


Figure 1: The retention strategy in the six hospitals.

Satisfaction rates

A summary of overall satisfaction rates among healthcare workers (HCWs) across various aspects of their workplace experience. The mean satisfaction scores indicate significant variations in the evaluation of different aspects. The highest-rated factor is "How was your work environment?" with a mean score of 3.18, categorized as "Good"

and ranked first. This suggests a relatively positive perception of the work environment. Following this, "How was your salary appropriate based on your experience?" scored a mean of 3.04, also ranked as "Good."

On the other hand, teamwork within the job received the lowest rating, with a mean score of 1.86, categorized as "Poor" and ranked last,

indicating significant dissatisfaction in this area. Similarly, the cleanliness of doctors' resting places (mean score 1.53) and the adequacy of hospital supplies for doctors' needs (mean score 1.70) were rated poorly, highlighting these as areas of concern. The mean of all scores across the 12 questions is 2.49, indicating an overall satisfaction level close to

"Satisfactory" but with significant variability. The findings highlight a need for targeted improvements, particularly in teamwork, resting place conditions, and provision of necessary supplies, while maintaining positive elements like the work environment and salary considerations Table 1

Table 1: The Summery of overall satisfaction rate among HCW

Q NO.		F %	Poor 1	Satisfac tory 2	Good 3	V Good 4	Ex 5	Mean	SD	Total %	Sample orienta tion	Q Rank
Q-1	How was the training that you received?	F	38	30	44	33	15	2.73	1.2 9	100	Good	6
		%	23.8	18.8	27.5	20.6	9.4					
Q-2	How was your job discerption?	F	26	35	52	35	12	2.82	1.1 6	100	Good	5
		%	16.3	21.9	32.5	12	7.5					
Q-3	What were the working conditions in your workplace (challenging and interesting)?	F	27	45	51	26	11	2.68	1.1	100	Good	7
		%	16.9	28.1	31.9	16.3	6.9					
Q-4	How was your salary is appropriate based on your experience?	F	83	31	31	11	3	1.92	1.2 9	100	Satisfac tory	9
		%	51.9	19.4	19.4	6.9	1.9					
Q-5	How was your contributions are rewarded?	F	16	32	61	31	20	3.04	1.1	100	Good	2
		%	10.0	20.0	38.1	19.4	12.5		4			
Q-6	How respectful was the administration?	F	30	28	41	48	13	2.91	1.2	100	Good	3
		%	18.8	17.5	25.6	30.0	8.1					
Q-7	How was your performance is evaluated?	F	31	28	45	39	17	2.89	1.2 7	100	Good	4
		%	19.4	17.5	28.1	24.4	10.6					
Q-8	How was the support and guidance from your supervisor?	F	32	34	61	21	11	2.65	1.1	100	Good	8
		%	20.0	21.3	38.1	13.1	6.9					
Q-9	How was your work environment?	F	16	26	54	41	23	3.18	1.1 7	100	Good	1
		%	10.0	16.3	33.8	25.6	14.4					
Q-	How was the team	F	93	23	20	18	5	2000 (Sept 1980)	1.1	100	Poor	10
10	work within your job?	%	58.1	14.4	12.5	11.3	3.1		9			
Q- 11	How clean was the doctors resting place?	F	116	14	22	5	3	1.53 0	0.9	100	Poor	12
		%	72.5	8.8	13.8	3.1	1.9					

Sectoral Differences:

The distribution of the rewarding system ratings among private and public hospitals. The table reveals that a higher proportion of respondents from public hospitals rated the rewarding system as "Good" (40.8%) compared to private hospitals (30%). Similarly, public hospitals had a higher percentage of respondents rating the system as "Very Good" (20% vs. 17.5% in private hospitals). Conversely, private hospitals exhibited a slightly 2.91, df = 4, p = 0.579) indicates that these differences are not statistically significant, suggesting no meaningful association between hospital status (private or public) and perceptions of the rewarding system. This implies that the rewarding systems in both private and public hospitals are perceived similarly overall Table 2.

Table 2: Rewarding System according to hospital status

Age groups / years	Number	Percentage
Less than 30	25	15.6
30-40	110	68.8
41-50	16	10.0
More than 50	9	5.6
Total	160	100

DISCUSSION:

This study set out to explore whether the comprehensive retention strategies implemented at hospitals can enhance healthcare workers' (HCWs) job satisfaction and reduce their turnover in these hospitals. In other words, to prove that there is a positive relation where satisfied employees are more likely to stay, and effective retention efforts contribute to greater job satisfaction.

The results revealed that in both public and private hospitals in Benghazi, there was an overall satisfactory job satisfaction rate among HCWs (doctors and nurses), although two–thirds of hospitals stated that they have retention strategies. Nearly all of these hospitals had high HCWs turnover over the past year. The main factors of satisfaction which had collectively the lowest satisfaction rates were the cleanness was the doctors' resting place, the hospital's supply, teamwork, salary, the support and guidance from

greater proportion of respondents rating the system as "Excellent" (17.5% vs. 10.8%) and "Satisfactory" (25% vs. 18.3%). Both sectors had an equal percentage of respondents rating the system as "Poor" (10%). The chi-square test result ($X^2 = X^2 + X^$

hospitals, the majority of respondents rated the supplies as "Poor" (62.5%). In private hospitals, the next most frequent ratings were "Good" (17.5%) and "Satisfactory" (12.5%), with "Very Good" rated by only 7.5%, and none rating it as "Excellent." Similarly, in public hospitals, 19.2% rated the supplies as "Good," 12.5% as "Satisfactory," and smaller proportions rated them as "Very Good" (3.3%) or "Excellent" (2.5%). The chi-square test result $(X^2 = 1.92, df = 4, p = 0.785)$ indicates no statistically significant difference in perceptions of hospital supplies between private and public hospitals. This suggests that perceptions of hospital supplies are broadly similar across hospital types, with the majority of respondents in both settings viewing the supplies as inadequate Table 3

Table 3: Hospital supplies of doctors' needs according to hospital status

Hospital supplies of doctor's needs	Hospital status					
	Private	Public No.				
	No. (%)	(%)				
Excellent	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.5%)				
Very Good	3 (7.5%)	4 (3.3%)				
Good	7 (17.5%)	23 (19.2%)				
Satisfactory	5 (12.5%)	15 (12.5%)				
Poor	25(62.5%)	75 (62.5%)				
Total	40 (100%)	120 (100%)				

your supervisor, followed by working conditions, training, job description, performance evaluation, Respect for administration, and working environment.

These findings of low job satisfaction and high turnover of HCWs in all six researched hospitals indicate that either the retention strategies in these hospitals were not well-applied or they were deficient. The research results also clarified the factors that can effectively improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover. It pointed out that HCWs valued the physical environment, career development opportunities, and well-being, as well as financial incentives.

The implications of this study suggest that hospitals should invest in the planning and the comprehensive application of retention strategies to enhance healthcare worker satisfaction and reduce turnover. These strategies not only improve individual job satisfaction but also contribute to the overall stability of the healthcare system. Future research could explore the long-term effects of these strategies and their impact on patient care outcomes."

According to the chi score, which emphasizes the significance of the presence of training programs and HCWs satisfaction, Alharbi and Aloyuni [12] and Hussain et al [13] stated that from a psychological standpoint, training involves the alteration of behavior to meet job requirements. The emphasis lies on the processes of shaping and modification within the learning framework. The training process initiates with individuals employing specific methods, which refined subsequently for situational appropriateness.

Effective organizations prioritize the human element in organizational success, emphasizing the development, satisfaction, commitment, and motivation of individuals to attain objectives.

Also, our findings focusing on the respect from administration and its importance in increasing HCWs satisfaction and commitment, Zhou et al. [14] and Chen et al. [11] stated that high professional respect from colleagues signifies individuals' development and achievement of goals, thereby fostering a sense of personal efficacy.

Trust positively influences employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and productivity, while fostering cooperation, centralized issue resolution, effective communication, and information sharing, thus mitigating employee limitations.

The emphasis on the investment made by HCWs who are highly satisfied and the importance of reducing turnover has been highlighted by Alameddine et al. [15], who asserted that human resources for health (HRH) play a crucial role in the effectiveness of healthcare systems. A fundamental requirement for the establishment of a well-functioning. HS is the recruitment and retention of a sufficient number of well-trained and competent HRH. Alsawahli[16] underscores that HR serves as the fundamental mechanism for delivering healthcare services of high quality.

Buchan et al [17] affirmed that a significant level of turnover can diminish the number of staff available and the time they spend with patients; it can also lead to increased costs for organizations, such as paying overtime to cover for departing employees and the expenses incurred in recruiting replacements.

Moreover, it can hamper both individual and organizational performance by depriving them of experienced personnel and disrupting teamwork. This viewpoint is further supported by de Vries et al [18], who contended that hospitals in the European Union (EU) of behavior to meet job requirements. The emphasis lies on the processes of shaping and modification within the learning framework. The training process initiates with individuals employing specific methods, which are subsequently refined for situational appropriateness.

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In their study, Bou-Karroum et al [20]. Emphasized the indispensable role of healthcare workers in

providing health services in regions affected by conflict and in the subsequent reconstruction of healthcare systems. Nevertheless, HCWs operating in conflict zones worldwide are encountering threats, arrests, and fatalities. Lin et al. [21] further supported these assertions by highlighting the multitude of challenges faced by populations affected by conflict in accessing healthcare, such as limited resources, escalating incidence of noncommunicable diseases and mental conditions, along with issues like corruption, inadequate regulation, and substandard management. The devastation of infrastructure and the depletion of HR due to violence often result in enduring and profound harm to healthcare infrastructures.

In Libya there is an urgent need to tackle the medical issues and to face healthcare challenges including the working environment, recruitment of professional health care workers and establishing every effort to decrease the rate of turnover to

alleviate the suffering of the patients and improve the quality of medical services.

CONCLUSIO:

There is a clear link between healthcare workers' job satisfaction and hospitals' retention strategies. Job satisfaction is shaped by daily experiences, while retention strategies involve policies that foster a productive work environment, ultimately reducing turnover. Hospitals should integrate effective retention strategies into their strategic plans to enhance job satisfaction and workforce stability.

In Libya's post-conflict context, financial constraints and low salaries challenge retention. Effective strategies are essential to maintaining a stable healthcare workforce, ensuring consistent medical services, and rebuilding trust in the healthcare system.

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