DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN PRIVATE HEALTHCARE

Andrew Sija[i]
University of Technology Sarawak,
School of Business & Management,
Malaysia

Abstract:

The continuous ongoing concern about shortages of healthcare workers in the healthcare industry in Malaysia has brought a significant impact on workforce productivity. The condition gets worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic back in 2020. Private healthcare has reported high staff turnover and caused higher costs to the business which in terms of direct financial losses and lack of continued care. The aims of this study are to identify the root causes of the high resignation rate in private healthcare. Five key factors (job satisfaction, work environment, compensation and benefits, work-life balance and employee recognition) were successfully identified and measured as significant contributors towards employee retention of selected private healthcare in Malaysia. A quantitative study was conducted via survey for obtaining primary data and information needed. There were 123 respondents and data were collected from the selected private hospitals in Sarawak, Malaysia. Based on rigorous reviewing of the literature, instrument designing and subsequent pilot testing, the study identified **six (6)** hypotheses which are tested using statistical technique SPSS version 26. The outcome revealed that employee recognition, with the unstandardized coefficients Beta value of 0.359 followed by job satisfaction with a Beta value of 0.295 was a supported and stronger predictor in influencing employees' retention in the private hospitals. Other determinants like working environment, compensation and benefits and work-life balance were not strongly supported however been highlighted by respondents as important factors too. Moreover, some unique factors like training and development, fairness, leadership skills among leaders or managers and hospital facilities and equipment were highlighted by respondents in this study and these factors are regarded as crucial for getting management attention in retaining the talents in the hospitals. This study also contributes both theoretical and empirical value to private healthcare in retaining talent through building trust in their employees and having immense credibility of leaders with a long-term win-win employee relationship.

[i] Correspondence: email dr.rews@yahoo.com

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1. Introduction

The high employee turnover rate especially for nurse positions in the healthcare industry is as high as 13%-37% compared to previous which happen worldwide (Roche et. al., 2015). Continuity of resignation occurred in the selected hospital in this study caused understaffing, drop-in hospital performance and reputation. Referring to World Health Organization (WHO), forecasted by the year 2035, about 12.9 million shortages of the healthcare workforce worldwide. For nurses in some of the developed countries, low compensation and salary packages including lesser incentives trigger higher attrition by 40%. Increasing demands however no new recruitment is placed especially in countries with population growth which increased risk of infectious disease as refer to WHO (2013). Recent pandemic affecting world economic become worst which give strong impact towards daily living compared to before for example increase of jobless rate worldwide. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimate nationally, by 2020, hospitals will face a shortage of almost 800,000 nurses, 29% vacancy rate up from the current rate of 8%. The nursing workforce is "aging out" of its profession, shrinking the healthcare workforce; meanwhile, patient volume continues to grow as baby boomers demand more services (Sue, 2006). ICU nurses especially have a large turnover, not only because of the alarm fatigue but because of the desire to have lower risk or career advancement, the healthcare system is asking retired nurses to return to work, triaging non-emergency surgeries, and opening a new building to deal with the surge (Liana, 2020). In Malaysia, the number of nurses has soared by more than 50% from 2005 (400 nurses) to 2010 (1,049 nurses). In addition, according to Siew et al. (2011), Malaysia is also facing the problem of nurse immigration, a turnover rate of 400 per year, especially in English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. Before the COVID-19 Pandemic outbreak, there was a time overproduced registered nurses, increasing the rate of jobless although bonded with Government. To solve the problem of the registered nurses being overproduced, the Malaysian Ministry of Health has reduced the number of intern nurses from 2,274 in 2016 to 1,742 in 2017 (decreased by 23%). After the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, "*Malaysian hospitals are understaffed, overcrowded, underfunded*" (Khairie, 2019). Malaysia lacks nurses, given a ratio of one nurse per 300 patients, as opposed to the World Health Organization's optimum number, which is one nurse per 200 patients (Athira, 2019). The demand for medical staff tremendously increased, as in May 2020, there were 7,629 confirmed COVID-19 cases and the number is increasing day by day.

According to Vindrola et al. (2020), some factors influencing the behaviour of healthcare workers during epidemics were fear of contagion, concern for family health, interpersonal isolation, quarantine, trust and support from their hospital, information about risks and what is expected of them, and stigma. During an outbreak, health care workers work long hours under pressure, often without adequate resources and while

accepting inherent dangers. These conditions can also cause discomfort with government policies and guidelines. Other healthcare workers are also facing widespread shortages, but nurses are at the forefront of direct patient care (Lianna, 2020). Shortage of nurses such as the United States of America, Canada, England, Scotland, Germany and the Philippines (Aiken et al., 2001). Many industries facing the same issue which is a high turnover rate refers to Fibuch & Ahmed (2015) & Lopes et al., (2017). Employees are the most valuable corporate asset. Retaining employees is a crucial issue because of fierce competition among competitors hunted for talented and experienced employees. The cost of employee turnover is up to 2.5 times the employee's salary and higher if involve experience staff. High training costs with low productivity for new recruitment before could be independents. It also will cause a lack of knowledge to be retained especially high attrition among experienced staff. Extra work left over will be shared among remaining staff, therefore increasing workload, increase stress which may increase absenteeism due to tiredness or decreased level of commitment, therefore level of productivity will be decreased (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011). Resignation in peers may trigger others to think of resignation due to overstress and unhappiness to continue further. The workload of existing employees will be significantly increased, causing low productivity due to low morale. Negative impact on employees due to high turnover rate affect drop in quality provided and affecting hospital performance (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011).

1.1 Rationale for the Study

Due to continuous resignation occurred in the selected private hospitals at Sarawak in the year 2019 (refer to Table 1.1), and leading to a problem of shortages of staff has caused existing employees to work overtime mainly to cover the empty load left by those who were leaving the hospitals. The overtime work has not only increased the amount of workload but the level of stress among existing healthcare employees in the hospitals. Table 1.3 reveals that the overtime costs have increased by 38% in 2018 compared to the year 2020. As such, the private hospital is facing an uphill task in retaining its employees. Overall job satisfaction in the selected private hospitals was reported to be reduced and increased in workload due to lack of staffing. Moreover, the high attrition rate in the hospitals concerned was directly impacted the hospital's profitability and this had been proved in the study done by Yin and Yang (2002) that high attrition rate happening in nurse group because of an increase in work stress and overwork. We also discovered the process of recruiting new and qualified staff will take sometimes with lower productivity. The total number of in-patients also drop in figures by 10% in total compared with the year 2019 (refer to Table 1.2) and this would affect entire hospital revenues. Furthermore, the quality of patient care would be threatened further if high attrition triggered by heavy workloads caused by less workforce in the healthcare industry. According to Atefi et al. (2013), the demand for health care workers especially experienced nurses had been increased globally and this has caused a high attrition rate for experience nurses in the hospitals. Additionally, high competition among competitors either locally or overseas contribute to high turnover in private healthcare. Reasons being the workers have an

opportunity and more choices on to which hospital they prefer to work with, their expectations have shifted due to growing concerns about COVID-19 and they are expecting on the attractive package offered. At this time, private healthcare has to prioritize safety, flexibility, transparency, and technology when trying to grab job seekers to maintain their workforce. Any employer who was found attempted to force its workers into an unsafe environment will struggle to retain them.

Table 1.1: Number of Resignations for the Year 2018 – 2020

Number of staff resigned	2018	2019	2020
Nursing team	7	15	3
Allied health team	2	1	5
Support team	3	11	6
Total of resignations	12	27	14

Source: Human Resource Services

Table 1.2: Number of In-Patient

Year	2019	2020
Number of in patient	5,627	5,047

Source: Admin services

Table 1.3: Overtime Cost

Year	2018	2019	2020
Amount (RM)	59,526	68,109	81,922

Source: Human Resource Services

In 2020, it was reported that many nurses walked away from the profession because of experiencing burnout from the flood of extremely ill COVID-19 patients and heavy workloads. Long time nurses opted for early retirement, and choose another profession. According to Kenny (2021) in his study, nurse retention was a global issue before 2020, and nurse shortages have been among the biggest threats faced by the healthcare industry during pandemics. The report further elaborated that huge impact on the size of the nursing workforce, which is already heading for a 10 million deficit, and even if only 10% to 15% of the current nursing population quits because of the devastating effect of COVID-19, the healthcare industry could have a potential shortfall of 14 million nurses by 2030, and this is equivalent to half of the current nursing workforce. Other issues we discovered in this study were the increase of infection rate due to busy schedule as consequences of failing in practicing proper prevention and high medication error as lesser checking process been enforced due to heavy workload. Although there were efforts done by Human Resource in upgrade the salary package and increase the activity to motivate and increase of staff morale however it is still not able to solve the turnover issue. As the healthcare sector is losing nursing professionals for various reasons and it becomes critical to investigate the determinants of the retention and to find out the root cause in a short period of time to reduce the resignation rate. The main purpose of this study is to rule out determinants causing continuity staff resignation in the selected private hospitals in Sarawak, by referring to the 2018-2020 statistic, giving a serious

intimate to management, to investigate the cause before it becomes more serious especially during a pandemic.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Retention

According to Sinha and Sinha (2012), the concept of employee retention is a complex one and there is no single recipe for keeping employees. There were various definitions of employee retention. Hom and Griffeth (1995) define retention as a process whereby high royalty among employees to their organization. In order to gain royalty, it involved all the strategies, efforts been implemented and sustained by the organization in all aspects to retain the talent. The retention of employees is a priority of every organization to compete, attract and retain talented staff (Naris & Ukpere, 2010). The reasons for retaining employees are for organizational success and sustainability (Olekers & Du Plessis, 2012). This is further supported by Osteraker in his study conducted in 1999 that employee retention is crucial to determine the success of an organization. Additionally, Hughes and Rog (2008) revealed retention as "*ways of keeping talent within organization*". Rhule (2004) added that organizations need to develop and implement relevant strategies to ensure the retention of a talented workforce. There were a few reasons for employees' staying in an organization such as compensation and benefits, training and development, work-life balance, work environment, job content and career advancement. However, employers realized that some individual reasons were varied due to different organizations and influenced by the organization's culture, organizational management and the nature of the organization. Nurses play a crucial role in any country healthcare system, be it in public or private hospitals. The retention of these nurses is a great challenge due to many factors such as increased workload, working long hours, challenging tasks, low salaries and poor working environment. Kaestner (2005) highlighted that human resource management in every hospital must ensure the required workforce of nurses is well maintained particularly to cope with the growing demand for clinical service. The healthcare industry may take an integrated HRM approach to enhance retention strategies. For instance, research showed that a greater retention rate saves the expenses incurred on staffing and training of the new employees, the cost could be used for the purpose of employees' performance improvement measures (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000).

2.2 Job Satisfaction

According to Smith et al. (1969), job satisfaction is best defined as the feeling an individual has about his or her job. Guest (2002) considered job satisfaction to be mediation or intervention in any positive link between human resources (HR) practices and organizational performance. It is a pleasurable emotional state, which results from the evaluation that one has of his work and the realization of what this evaluation allows concerning the satisfaction of important values. Cited from some researchers, job satisfaction described the extent to which an employee enjoys his/her job (Kumar & Kaur,

2016; Lephalala, Ehlers, & Oosthuizen, 2008). Job satisfaction impact strongly in identifying how good is the quality of care provided by nurses according to McNeese-Smith in his 1999 studies. It is also to express the emotional feelings and behaviour of a job in the organization. Job satisfaction among healthcare workers is important especially in a nurse who rarely have high job satisfaction which triggers intention to leave (Murray, 2020). Moreover, the job satisfaction of nurses was affected by intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation values (Khanal, Choulagai, Acharya, & Onta, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is related to doing something inherent for fun or enjoyment, but extrinsic motivation is related to doing something for an economic outcome (Tsgaye, 2017). As a key determinant of the health system, job satisfaction can influence the efficiency and productivity of healthcare human resources and become a significant factor and vital element for nurses due to the fact that every healthcare professional had contributed high-quality healthcare service and delivery systems around the world (Al Sabei et al., 2020; Payne, Koen, Niehaus, & Smit, 2020). With the above assertion, we developed the first hypothesis as:

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between job satisfaction and employee retention.

2.3 Working Environment

According to Cowden et al. (2011), leaders in the nursing profession need to foster better working environments and ensure that nurses' individual needs are met, which are likely to increase their intention to stay and could lead to retention. Joseph et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of a healthy work environment. They described that even though if the organizations have a good strategy in employee retention, but very poor in working place condition and moreover the issue of staff health and welfare were not seriously taking care and when staff fall sick, these conditions would definitely give high impact on the availability of workforce, affect on productivity and would damage the quality of services in the business. The work environment should provide a sense of belonging. The organization needs to consider employee health by providing an environment that is free from health hazards, offers a level of privacy, noise control and also takes into account the individual needs of each employee. In addition, an attractive working environment incorporates a safe working environment, employment security and secured income with a possibility to increase salary by own initiatives and work efforts (Carsson et al., 2014; Josefsson et al., 2011). Referring to Haina and Fadilah study in 2021, the work environment has a significant impact on employee loyalty and research also confirmed the assumption of a high-quality working condition and environment proved a positive relationship to retain loyalty (Wiebell's, 2019). To this assertion, we agreed to construct the second hypothesis as:

H2: Working environment shown positive and significant relationships influence employee retention.

2.4 Compensation and Benefits

Most employees perceive their compensation like pay as being fair if it matches their contribution and performance in the organisation they served (Rambur et al., 2005). Salary and benefits can directly influence an employee's intention to stay (Luna-Arocas & Camps, 2008). It is likely that if the number of salaries offered is reasonable, employees will be motivated to stay on, which in turn increases job security. High retention of employees can be achieved if compensation such as salary is transparent and commensurate with the performance and effort (George, 2015). Likewise, Kossivi (2016) found that a full compensation package is the main factor to attract employees' loyalty. Kossivi's findings were further supported by Tangthong et al. (2014) in which their study mentioned about high pay is crucial in retaining a productive employee. Moreover, the study done by Muhoho (2014) about staff retention in Tanzania's public and private sector shown that factor affecting high turnover is low salaries. Meanwhile, Grace (2016) in her study found that benefits offered by Geita District Hospital to keep staff staying with them are salary package which include several types of allowances. All of these salaries package as according to Kigathi (2017) were vital and described as motivation factors that impacts the workforce and keeping staff. Based on this assertion, we managed to construct two hypotheses which were:

H3: Compensation and benefits shown positive and significant relationship influence employee retention.
H4: Compensation and benefits offered is most likely the strongest predictor of employee retention

2.5 Work-Life Balance

The research found that in retaining employees at work, it requires employers to have a positive balance between work and personal life (Leners et al., 2006). Deery (2008) in his/her study has concluded that organizations should provide a more holistic experience for employees and focus on creating a balance between their work environment and their home life. The reason many professional workers considered the importance of work-life balance in work is because it shows the ability of employees to handle their work and family responsibilities as well as other activities in their lives (Parkes & Langford, 2008). Due to the shift work and workload nurses face, they need to have time for their families and their personal lives. By allowing healthcare workers such balance increases their commitment to the hospitals (George, 2015). In addition, research done by Alamzeb et al. (2016) in medical line has discovered and proved that by practiced of work-life balance could increase job satisfaction. Moreover, Panda (2020) in his report mentioned also work-life balance proved a positive relationship with retaining professional groups. Hence, based on the discussion, another hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Work-life balance shown positive and significant relationship influence employee retention.

2.6 Employee Recognition

Romero and Kleiner (2000) found that recognition encourages higher levels of employee performance, especially in tight financial times. According to Bakker et al. (2007), appreciation for work done and efforts made increase employee's engagement level. Armstrong and Murlis (2007) have asserted that recognition is one of the most powerful tools to reward people. Recognition not only reinforces good performance but also evokes employees' feeling like times, efforts and ingenuity they give, this feeling enhances their level of engagement (Brown, 2011). Jackson et al. (2012) further asserted that rewarding of high performers by leaders encourages and uphold their performance levels and hard work; recognition given towards any tasks may further motivate an employee to double more efforts to accomplish the tasks. As refer to research done by Subraminiam et al. (2019), employee recognition had a significant impact on employees' willingness to remain with their employer. Also, in Wong et al. (2020) study, they discovered that to lower the turnover rate of nurses, it is important of having a good leadership strategy towards nurses by recognizing their contribution as an organization's "asset" or valuables to improve their satisfaction and well-being. Research by Longmore (2021) concluded that nurses were undervalued, were thinking of handling usual jobs although in the pandemic, which trigger turnover intention. With the prevalence of substantial review above, we formulated the final hypotheses as:

H6: Employee recognition shown positive and significant relationship that influence employee retention.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Population and Sample

The population for the study was healthcare workers of two selected private hospitals in Sarawak, Malaysia. The participants were employees from three different departments namely, nursing service, allied health service and support service. A probability sampling technique was used, the selection of sample being on the basis of simple random sampling. Based on reliable sources from Human Resource Service and Admin Unit in that hospitals, the total numbers of healthcare employees were about 170. After cross-checking and final confirmation, we agreed with 180 sets of questionnaires distributed for all three departments. The questionnaires were administered by professionals in full care and conscientiousness due to the data collected being subject to the privacy of the respondents and the Covid-19 pandemic. Of these, 123 respondents were considered for analysis, on ignoring some non-response. This sample size of 123 was selected to represent the total population found to be adequate. The assurance of challenge size was founded on Krejcie and Morgan's table where a sample size of 123 is acceptable as where the given population of 170, a sample size of 113 would be needed to represent a cross-section of the population. From the samples, the majority of the respondents (41.5 percent) are less than 31 years of age; 39 percent fall in the age group of 31-40 years; 13.8 percent counted for age group of 41-50 years and the rest 0.8 percent

and 4.9 percent are for the age group below 20 years and above 50 years. The male-female ratio was a little bit skewed with 87 percent of the respondents being males. Only 19 percent of the respondents have been with the hospitals for more than fifteen years, while the majority (38.2 percent) has been with these hospitals for less than 5 years. Hence, this is a sign of a high attrition rate in the current hospitals and clearly, a proactive retention strategy is needed.

3.2 Measurement Instrument

This study is to use a quantitative approach and assisted with SPSS version 26. A structured questionnaire was designed to elicit all responses on different aspects of employee retention. Each of the variables used in the extant literature on the determinants of employee retention includes job satisfaction, work environment, compensation and benefits, work-life balance and employee recognition. All of these determinants were reviewed by the human resource unit of the two hospitals studied in light of their significance and relevance. Some of these determinants were even encountered minor modifications by HR unit to suit the entire context of the study and finally, the finalized items for each determinant were drawn out. A pilot test on 20 respondents was also conducted for a more in-depth confirmatory study. In doing this, a set of similar questionnaires had been given to random employees of hospitals from different branches. The data obtained were analyzed and a reliability test was carried out. The internal consistency found from the reliability test was high. The questionnaires collected information about employee retention determinants namely, job satisfaction, work environment, compensation and benefits, work-life balance and employee recognition. There were three sections in the questionnaires. Section: Demographic factors; Section B: Independent variables and Section C: Dependent variable. For section A, a set of nominal scale questions has been developed for identifying respondent's profile and demographic data which includes gender, age, level of education, marital status, department, experiences and monthly salaries. For Section B and C, all items in the scale were presented with a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 1 deliver the psychometric properties for reliability which were statistically assessed by conducting reliability analysis and analyzing the Cronbach's coefficient α. The retention determinants have acceptable α. job satisfaction = 0.826; working environment = 0.861; compensation and benefits = 0.836; work-life balance = 0.850; employee recognition = 0.836 and employee retention = 0.918. The study used 0.75 as the level of acceptance when assessing internal consistency (Pallant, 2010). A value that indicates less than 0.6 is poor. From Table 1, the result of the reliability test with the value of Cronbach's Alpha of all six variables indicates high reliability. The value shows the questionnaire was reliable as the closer the value to 1, the more reliable the questionnaire.

Hence, it is concluded that all six variables have reliability and are acceptable for further analysis.

Table 1: Reliability statistics

No	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Items
1	Job Satisfaction	.826	5
2	Working Environment	.861	5
3	Compensation and Benefits	.836	5
4	Work-Life Balance	.850	5
5	Employee Recognition	.836	5
6	Employee Retention	.918	5

Source: Author

4.2 Frequency Analysis

Table 2: Summary of the respondent according to their profile

Category	Frequency	%	Category	Frequency	%
Gender			**Education Level**		
Male	16	13.0	SPM	42	34.1
Female	107	87.0	Diploma	49	39.8
Age			Post Basic/Adv Dip	12	9.8
<20 years	1	0.8	Degree	14	11.4
21 – 30 years	51	41.5	Master	2	1.6
31 – 40 years	48	39.0	Others	4	3.3
41 – 50 years	17	13.8			
>50 years	6	4.9			
Experience			**Monthly Salary (RM)**		
0–4 year	47	38.2	1,000 – 1,700	64	52
5–9 years	29	23.6	1,701 – 2,300	32	26
10–14 years	28	22.8	2,301 – 3,000	11	8.9
15–19 years	12	9.8	3,001 – 4,000	4	3.3
>20 years	7	5.7	Above 4,001	12	9.8
Marital Status			**Department**		
Married	73	59.3	Nursing	64	52.0
Single	41	33.3	Allied Health	14	11.4
Divorse	9	7.3	Support	45	36.6

As shown, most of the respondents were female which were 87 percent and 13 percent represent by male staff. For marital status, 59.3 percent reported married, 33.3 percent were single and the remaining 7.3 percent were diverse respondents. Respondents came from three departments, with majority 52 percent from Nursing, 36.6 percent from Support Service and 11.4 percent were from Allied Health. For the age, the majority of the respondents' age was between 21-30 years accoutered for 41.5 percent. Followed by the age range of 31-40 years for 39 percent. It was also found that 13.8 percent and 4.9 percent were age range of 41-50 years and above 50 years respectively. For the age range below 20 years, it was only 0.8 percent. In terms of educational level, most of the respondents had SPM and Diploma qualifications with 34.1 percent and 39.8 percent

respectively, followed by Degree holders with 11.4 percent. About 9.8 percent of respondents had Post basic/Advance Diploma while 1.6 percent had Master Degree. The remaining 3.3 percent comprised of other qualifications. The review result of years of working experience displayed that majority of respondents had been in service for less than 5 years, i.e. 38.2 percent. A figure of 23.6 and 22.8 percent were for those having been worked for 5-9 years and 10-14 years respectively. About 9.8 percent of respondents been working for 15-19 years and only 5.7 percent for those serving more than 20 years. On their monthly salary, the highest frequency was for those earning from RM1,000-RM1,700 with 52 percent, while the lowest frequency was those earning RM3,001-RM4,000 represented by only 3.3 percent respondents. About 26 percent and 8.8 percent were for those earning from RM1,701-RM2,300 and RM2,301-RM3,000 respectively. The remaining 9.8 percent were for those earning more than RM4,001 monthly.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for retention determinants

Dimension	N	Mean	95% confidence interval for mean		SD	Min	Max
			Lower bound	Upper bound			
Job satisfaction	123	3.89	3.78	4.01	.650	2	5
Work environment	123	3.56	3.43	3.70	.756	1	5
Compensation & benefits	123	3.16	3.04	3.29	.714	1	5
Work-life balance	123	3.36	3.21	3.51	.824	1	5
Employee recognition	123	3.45	3.33	3.57	.691	2	5
Employee retention	123	3.67	3.53	3.81	.796	2	5

As shown in Table 3 above, the study identified job satisfaction as an important retention determinant for healthcare workers (mean=3.89). This was followed by employee retention and work environment with values for their means, respectively (mean = 3.67, 3.56). Employee recognition and work-life balance followed, with mean values of (mean = 3.45, 3.36). Compensation and benefits can be said to be the least important retention determinant for healthcare workers (mean = 3.16).

4.4 Pearson correlation

Table 4 illustrates the relationship between the variables studied measured by Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Notably, a correlation of 1.0 means that there is a perfect relationship between the variables regardless of the direction of the relationship. The closer the *r* value to 1.0, they're more satisfied the employees are with the retention determinants and the more likely they are to experience a higher level of retention. The *r* value ranged from (0.498-0.733, *p* < .05) representing a moderate to a strong relationship (Evans, 1996) and hence, the results show that the independent variables were statistically significant correlated with employee retention. In details, hypotheses that were accepted were: job satisfaction, *r* = .580, working environment, *r* = .560, compensation and benefits, *r* = .521, work-life balance, *r* = .497 and employee recognition,

$r = .623$. From Table 4, it is evident that employee recognition is most significant and highly correlated to employee retention.

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis between variables studied

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
R						
1	1	.733	.580*	.498*	.566*	.580*
2	.733*	1	.641*	.600*	.701*	.560*
3	.580*	.641*	1	.546*	.622*	.521*
4	.498*	.600*	.546*	1	.642*	.497*
5	.566*	.701*	.622*	.642*	1	.623*
6	.580*	.560*	.521*	.497*	.623*	1

Note: 1 = Job Satisfaction, 2 = Working Environment, 3 = Compensation & Benefits,
4 = Work Life Balance, 5 = Employee Recognition, 6 = Employee Retention

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict employee retention based on retention determinants. A signification equation was determined F (21.062) = 36.651, *p* <0.05, with R² value of 0.474. Table 5 illustrates the variance in the dependent variable (employee retention) explained in the model as 47.4 percent. A significance value of 0.000 indicates there is a significant difference among the mean scores of the dependent variable because the score is less than 0.05 (Pallant, 2007). The multiple regression analysis relative contribution of each of the job satisfaction, work environment, compensation and benefits, work-life balance and employee recognition to the variance in the employee retention. The rule of thumb mentioned any t-value greater than +2 or less than -2 is acceptable. The higher the t-value, the greater the confidence in the coefficient as a predictor. This study highlights that job satisfaction and employee recognition demonstrated to be significant to Employee Retention (Job satisfaction, *β* = .361, *t* = 2.913, *p* <0.05 and Employee Recognition, *β* = .414, *t* = 3.416, *p* < 0.05), while other variables (working environment, compensation and benefits and work-life balance) were not significant (*p* > .05). The Standardized Coefficients (β) show that Employee Recognition has the largest absolute value, 0.359, followed by job satisfaction, 0.295, compensation and benefits, 0.093, work-life balance, 0.077 and working environment, = -0.014. This suggests that Employee Recognition is the strongest predictor of employee retention in hospitals. Hence, hypothesis 4 is rejected. Compensation and benefits offered is most likely the strongest predictor of employee retention.

Table 5: Relatives Contribution of Job satisfaction, Working environment,
Compensation & benefits, Work life balance, Employee recognition
(independent variables) and Employee retention (dependent variable)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
1	(Constant)	.311	.344		.905	.367
	Job satisfaction	.361	.124	.295	2.913	.004*
	Working environment	-.015	.125	-.014	-.117	.907

	Compensation & benefits	.104	.106	.093	.985	.327
	Work life balance	.074	.089	.077	.832	.407
	Employee recognition	.414	.121	.359	3.416	.001*

*significant level is at .05 ($p < .05$).

Moreover, in Table 6 of the model summary, the R-Squared (R^2) represents the value of 0.688. The value explained that 69% of the variation in this model was able to be explained by all the independent variables whereas the remaining 31% was unexplained. In this study, it can be concluded that among five independent variables, employee recognition played the most influential role in deriving employee retention during pandemic Covid-19. This was supported based on the highest t-value and beta score as compared to other independent variables used in this study.

Table 6: Model Summary of correlation between Job Satisfaction,
Work Environment, Compensation and Benefits, Work-life Balance and Employee
Recognition (independent variables) and Employee Retention (dependent variable)

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	R^2 change	F change
1	.688ᵃ	.474	.451	.590	.474	21.062
a. Predictors: (Constant), Job satisfaction, Working environment, Compensation & benefits, Work life balance, Employee recognition						
b. dependent variable: Employee Retention						

4.5 Discussion

The main purpose of this study firstly is to determine which retention determinant best predict employee retention in selected private hospitals in East Malaysia. Secondly, to quantify the relationship among the variables used and measure the level of significance. Notably, this study established that a relationship between the retention determinants and employee retention does exist. The discussion which ensues provide further overviews into the above and frequency analysis on how healthcare professionals perceived the retention determinants and retention.

4.5.1 Perceived retention determinants of healthcare professionals
A. Job satisfaction

An average mean value of 3.89 (Maximum = 5) was obtained. This shows that healthcare employees agree that they are satisfied with their current job even though they received a great amount of pressure at work during the Covid-19 pandemic. With all kinds of pressures, they have made the job good for acquiring new skills and abilities, getting more involved in decision making and feeling great and encouraging for new ways of doing things. According to Murray (2020), job satisfaction among healthcare workers is important especially in nurses who rarely have high job satisfaction which triggers intention to leave.

B. Work environment

An average mean value of 3.56 (Maximum = 5) was obtained. This indicates that employees in the hospital are excited to work in a fairly supportive environment. According to Joseph et al. (2014), the work environment should provide a sense of belonging. The organization needs to consider employee health by providing an environment that is free from health hazards, offers a level of privacy, noise control and also takes into account the individual needs of each employee. Findings revealed that the relationship of healthcare employees with the management in the hospitals are good due to transparency practiced in the hospitals they served and employees feel free to express their opinions.

C. Compensation and Benefits

An average mean value of 3.16 (Maximum = 5) was obtained. Some healthcare employee feels that they are least concerned about compensation and benefits compared to other retention at the private hospital could provide them with much better pay, rewards and benefits within the profession. Cited from Grace (2016) in her study found that benefits offered by Geita District Hospital to keep staff staying with them are salary packages which include several types of allowances. From this study, it's revealed that employees in the hospitals are prioritized they're concerned about having a competitive healthcare package and benefits from the management.

D. Work-life Balance

An average mean value of 3.36 (Maximum = 5) was obtained. This illustrates that healthcare employees are concerned about their balance between work and personal lives. Items such as flexible working hours, family responsibility and work autonomy are special complementary added on employee's workload in private healthcare which was considered vital in providing them with a balanced lifestyle. As pointed out, the reasons for many professional workers considered the importance of work-life balance in work because it shows the ability of employees to handle their work and family responsibilities as well as other activities in their lives (Parkes & Langford, 2008).

E. Employee Recognition

An average mean value of 3.45 (Maximum = 5) was obtained. The findings proved that healthcare employees are very concerned about their professionalism. For instance, from the participant's perspective, nursing is one of the most stressful jobs because of working and dealing with patients. Thought, stressors are common and unavoidable in the healthcare workplace. Realizing the challenges, skills, knowledge and professional performance delivered, therefore professional healthcare is expecting the management to value and recognize their contribution at work. Asserted by Jackson et al. (2012), rewarding of high performers by leaders encourages and uphold their performance levels and hard work; recognition given towards any tasks may further motivate an employee to double more efforts to accomplish the tasks.

4.5.2 Determinants and Employee Retention

Depicted from the results of Pearson Correlation Analysis suggested that employee recognition is the most influential determinant correlated with employee retention followed by job satisfaction, work environment, compensation and benefits and work-life balance. We conducted a further analysis using Multiple Regression and the outcome revealed that two independent variables were significant in this analysis which was employee recognition and job satisfaction while work environment, compensation and benefits and work-life balance variables were not significant. On the strongest determinant of employee retention at this time, again the result from the multiple regression depicted that employee recognition was the most dominant determinant impacting employee retention at selected private healthcare in East Malaysia. The result of this study was reliable as it is similar to the result found in the study conducted by Subraminiam et al. (2019), they concluded that employee recognition had a significant impact on employees' willingness to remain with their employer. The result was also in line with the study done by Wong et al. (2020), they discovered that to lower the turnover rate of nurses, it is important of having a good leadership strategy towards nurses by recognizing their contribution as an organization's "asset" or valuables to improve their satisfaction and well-being. On supporting this, we refer to the "Trendicators Best Practice Report, 2020" on the employee recognition trends, the report on employee preferences revealed that about 89% of employees say receiving recognition for performance increases engagement, 85% say recognition makes them feel more valued and 67% of employees believe that being recognized or praised during onboarding is important. So, it is clearly understood that employee recognition plays a vital role in improving employee retention, engagement and performance. However, while employees believe recognition is crucial, there continues to be misalignment between employee preferences and workplace realities. Even Maslow's theory of needs pointed out that each individual requires appreciation and a sense of acknowledging from peers, colleagues or superiors and this could be the reason why employee recognition was the strongest predictor of employee retention in private healthcare at this time. As such, this study provides crucial insights into determinants that affect these healthcare employees' retention and suggest a mechanism to improve their retention.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Finally, our study contributes to a better understanding of retaining healthcare professionals in private healthcare institutions. We also concluded that the primary focus of this study is on determinants that predict employee retention rather than identifying employees who are likely to stay or leave. The implication of this study provided two incredible findings which were on healthcare employee recognition and secondly on their job satisfaction. Employee recognition is regarded as the strongest predictor for employee retention among healthcare professionals. As we refer again to the "Trendicators Best Practice Report, 2020" on the employee recognition trends, the report on what do employees want to be recognized for, revealed that about 40% of employees say they

wanted "success", followed by "knowledge or expertise" accounted for 24%, "Effort" was 20% and for 16% for "living care values". Based on this, a disparity exists between what employees want to be recognized for and the prevalence of performance recognition programs in healthcare institutions. On the second implication, the study revealed the impact of job satisfaction on employee's retention which was relevant if measured by itself and it may be significant if other elements or variables used in this study were not to be encountered altogether. This considered that the job satisfaction needs and concerns are increasing for the healthcare employee in private healthcare at the moment. Job satisfaction among employees such as nurses in private healthcare is one of the most important factors in quitting their jobs which increase the need for more nurses and subsequently, arguments the workload of current nurses, leading to their dissatisfaction. All healthcare institutions are struggling to retain the scare skills of their healthcare professionals. Inherent to this study is that retention determinants can predict employee retention. It is essential that the managers of human resources or managers of Nursing, Allied Health and Support Unit in the hospitals concerned are cognizant of those retention determinants which can lead to retention of employees. Some brief recommendations to the human resource unit include: enhancing employee recognition program, promotion opportunities and knowledge development, good rapport and leadership skills among the head of department, practice work-life balance with a flexible schedule, adopting new analysis software to keep track of attrition and etc. For critical departments like nursing, the nursing directors and managers need to determine the effective factors on nurses' job satisfaction and they need to control the factors and take some measures to increase their satisfaction levels. Also, they need to consider the managerial job and environmental factors in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their measures periodically to improve job satisfaction. Therefore, the results of this study can be very helpful in developing managerial programs in order to foster the critical determinants affecting healthcare professionals' job satisfaction and how it can be promoted.

5.1 Future Research Direction

Notably, the findings of this study are limited only to selected private hospitals in East Malaysia, thus it should not be generalized across all healthcare institutions (private and public). Research in the future should aim to investigate the reasons for the healthcare professional intention to quit and seek to assess the relationship of these determinants on human resource policy and practice. It is also suggested that the sample be increased for a higher survey response rate. In addition, a qualitative research approach is taken in future in order to generalise actual feelings on retention and job satisfaction. Moreover, a comparative study on private and public hospitals could also be conducted in future.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author can assure, confidently express that no conflicts of interest possibly linked with this research, and there has been no significant financial aid received for this study,

authorship and publication that could have influenced the study's outcome. The author affirms that this research is original and has not been published in the past or elsewhere.

About the Author

Dr. Andrew Sija is a lecturer at University of Technology Sarawak, Malaysia. He has more than 20 years of experience in various sectors within the education and financial services industry. He holds a Doctorate Degree in Business Administration, a Certified Trainer in Business Accounting, PSMB (Malaysia) and a Certified Instructor on Accounting for Hospitality Industry, AHLEi (USA). His research interest is in accounting, banking, education and business management.

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