

Retention Strategies in Healthcare Sector & Reason for Migration of Healthcare workers in Kerala

Nishanth Krishnaraj¹, Dr. Priya Xavier²,

¹Doctoral Research Scholar, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai.

²Asst Professor, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai

Abstract:

Competent employees are the backbone of any successful organization. The organization must effectively use all their strategies to retain their exemplary staff. This paper makes an effort to understand the various strategies used by the organizations to retain it employees. This paper also tries to get an insight on the multiple cause of migration of healthcare worker in Kerala which may provide new outlook for top management during hiring the new recruits and managing their Staff.

Introduction:

Retention is the capability of the employer to retain their best employees from leaving the organization. Retention is one of the major goals of Human resource management. There are indispensable employees in the organization and their vacuum most often creates botheration spot in achieving business goals. The valued employees so called indispensable staff should be engaged completely and their roles must be clearly defined. Appraising expectations with outcome is the starting point of retention. People leave organization not just because of Pay but with other various reasons. The reasons for leaving have to be addressed by the HR team from time to time. People leave the Indian Government sector mainly due to two reasons and are retirement & death. In private sector reason for quitting has a lengthy list and that includes family reasons, health problems, better opportunity to progress, laid off, retirement, death, restructuring and so on.

The healthcare sector is now spoken often over the last one and half years due to pandemic. Healthcare workers are countering their best tirelessly against Covid 19 and their relevance in eradicating the super spreader virus is worth mentioning. We are now witnessing a great drain of skilled Healthcare workers from India towards Middle East and in Europe. In April 2021 as travel restriction were lifted for the care givers. The Indian Hospitals are losing their champion health practitioners as they are being attracted towards lucrative compensation and being hired owing to their excellent patient care skills. The HR department finds it very difficult to fix the leak of their

workforce. There is even short term employment in health sector and Indian nursing community have taken flight to Arab Countries for few months for providing vaccination against Covid 19. The duration of the employment is only for three to six months and many have ventured.

In this article we are discussing the various strategies that can be carried out by organization to reduce the attrition and are the various means of retention activities. In the midst of pandemic and snail pace recovering of recession with a population of 135 billion, we need our healthcare system intact with all life saving drugs and competent healthcare workforce. An employee becomes competent through experience and exposure. Retention is the way forward for having competent workforce in the organization. The health sector has to address all concerns and retain best talents.

Literature Review:

Effective retention strategies can contain the attrition among the workforce and the following are the strategies: (Ref: Harvard Business Review; Employee Retention 6 Strategies to Boost Retention Through the Great Resignation by Frank Breitling, Julia Dhar, Ruth Ebeling, and Deborah Lovich November 15, 2021)

Recognition and value of Service: One of the best motivating factors for an employee is recognition and during these turbulent times recognition from their managers and employers makes the employee at ease. Recognition is also a tool to maintain and improve the performance. Recognition need not be always in monetary terms but it can be through word of appreciation or designing a poster by inscribing their photograph in it. Champion performers expect them to be valued and recognition will make them happy. Happy employees always deliver their best and in turn organization achieves their goals easily.

Work life balance: Productive employees manage their personal and professional life in their best possible ways. The chances of employee leaving an organization depend on work environment as well. The employers have to create a conducive environment wherein workers should feel happy to come and work. Providing breaks during work and encouraging to avail leaves to be with their family reduces stress level. Paying food bill or giving food coupon during employees wedding Anniversary /birthday is a nice indicator of partnering with employees personal moments. Increased work longevity reduces cost of hiring as well as training cost for an organization and these

phenomena can be achieved by helping employees to manage their work life in a better way.

Risk Allowance & Incentive based compensation: The staff working in the critical area especially in Emergency Department, Respiratory ICU & wards are high risk areas and prone to get infected more. It would be nice if the management can pay risk allowance which can be onetime payment or shall be based on patient inflow. Incentives are now paid in healthcare sector and spot incentives can be dispensed for the caregivers and also by clicking their photographs to put in notice will defiantly lifts their level of motivation and is another way of recognition. Healthcare divisions can also think about paying incentives apart from fixed salary to the superlative performers and thus champions will set new benchmarks. The yardstick to measure should be communicated loudly and clearly. So patient will be benefited with excellent quality in care and service and thus institution can meet its desired objectives.

Sense of pride: Employees must feel a great sense of pride and this feeling will make them to spend more years of service in the organization that they are working. Sense of pride will reduce the chances of switching over to other job. It is the responsibilities of employers and managers to inculcate pride in the minds of employee time and again by creating positive work culture, appreciating and adopting best practices.

Delegation of Authority: Setting and meeting the expectations with delegating responsibility is the need of the hour. Micromanagement is not necessary in all cases. Minimum supervision with maximum clarity on roles and job description by delegating authority will bring out the best and employees will feel that they are employers and not employees. Thus delegation brings out creativity and innovation in work and it is often considered as one of the best retention strategy.

Staff patient ratio to be maintained: The caregiver and patio ratio should be with reference to workload and norms set by the government. Complying with the ration will decrease the mortality percentage as well as increase the quality level of patient care. So the occupational stress will be at a manageable extend and this ratio creates a friendly environmental work atmosphere making employees to stay in the organization for a long period.

Reskilling and Upskilling: The front line workers are having a tiring time in recuperating patients from SARS-CoV-2 and protecting themselves from being infected. The so called

front line health workers need to get access and must acquire new skill sets to float above the pandemic. The skills needed may be of a new procedure, protocols, treatment line or movement across the organization. It is now very evident that we have to teach new skills to our front line workers. The skills may be upskilling or retraining. Retraining is acquiring new skills to perform non identical duties from the current job, whereas upskilling is training new skills which make the person to be more productive and efficient in their current roles

Once staff is trained in most appropriate way, the confidence level increases and the employees will be more committed to work. The length of staff stays increase and will result in very few attrition rate.

Staff welfare loan with minimum interest rate. Providing loans at minimum interest rate to the employees are not only welfare measure but also is a strategy to retain the staff in the organization. There are Hospitals which encourages loans for their tenured staff. Service years and work commitment is the main criteria for granting a loan to the staff. This helps the staff to believe that the organization is with them when they are in an urgent need.

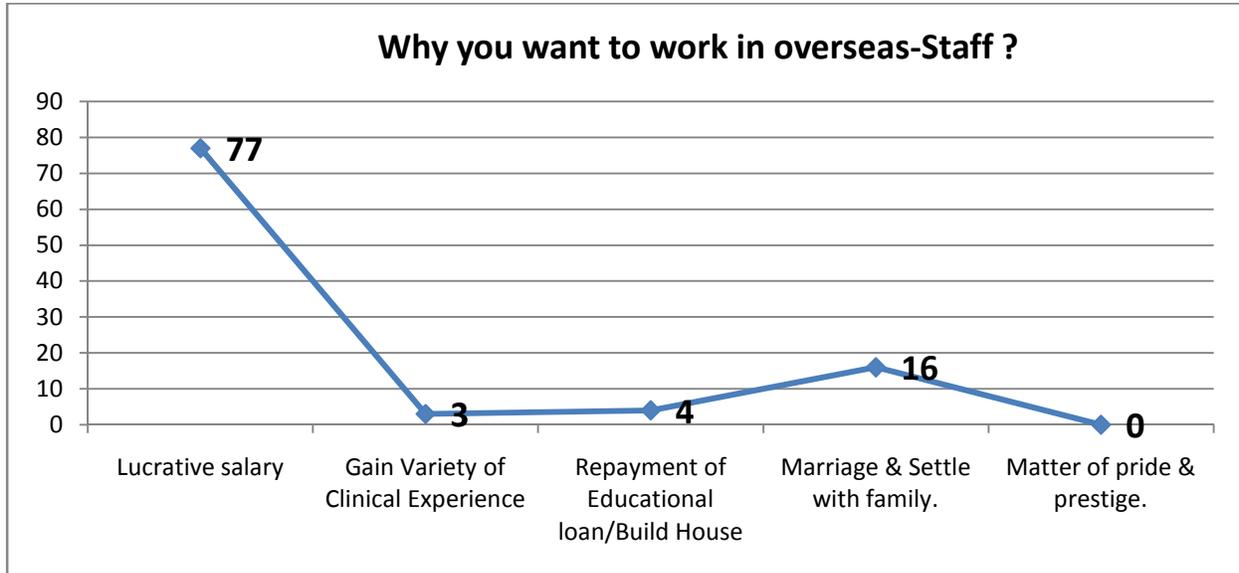
Reasons for migrating of Healthcare workers in Kerala, India

- **Lucrative paycheck:** Indian Health workers are in high demand especially in Middle East and European countries. Tax free exuberant salaries compared to Indian private healthcare sector salary and yearly one time long leaves are a major reason for attrition of quality healthcare workers in Kerala, India.
- **Repayment of Educational loan:** Most of staff have availed educational loans from Banks for their studies and they can repay their loans within a year once they are in a foreign country.
- **Standard of living:** Standard of living improves especially once when a person moves to European countries coupled with wealth, vacation leave, social belongings and so on.
- **Marriage & Dowry:** The majority of the workforce in healthcare sector is ladies and most often family financial burden are on their shoulders. So getting a job in overseas helps them to make money for their marriage which is a trend and will also makes them independent.

- Exposure to foreign clinical experience: Employees are also favoring foreign assignment to gain more clinical experiences as they will master advanced technologies. Career oriented staff would take as a challenge and there is an increased chance for promotions in their career ladder.
- Build a house: Building own house is a status symbol and most often overseas job with a five year employment helps them to build their own house, which is one of the reasons for migration.

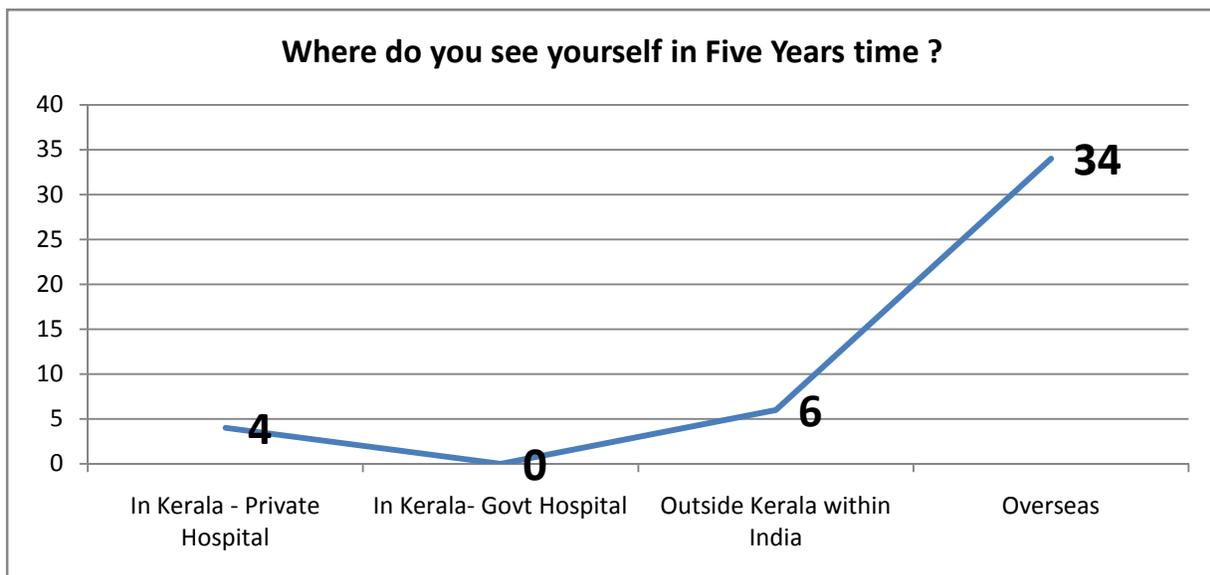
A survey was conducted in Muthoot Hospitals, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India regarding the reason for their staff moving abroad for employment. The details are illustrated below. Muthoot Hospital is one of the leading hospitals in Pathanamthitta, a division of Muthoot Healthcare. Muthoot Hospital has multi-range care for patients. Situated in the heart of Pathanamthitta, Muthoot Hospital under Muthoot Group has been in continuous pursuits of excellence from its inception on 11th July, 2003. This 300 bedded hospital at present has 12 specialties and 7 Super specialties. The cutting-edge technology in Muthoot Hospital includes 24 hours Trauma Care, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Radiology, CT, MRI, Quality and infection control department. The Hospital is having excellent doctors, Nurses, Paramedical and administrative staff and their total headcount is five hundred plus staff. There is also a nursing college that conducts BSc and Post Basic Bsc Nursing courses.

The questionnaire was prepared for the survey and was distributed among the current staff to know the reason for leaving. As of late, staff has resigned and most of them quoted reason for exit were overseas job.



Hundred employees participated in the survey and seventy seven favored lucrative salary for moving abroad. Only three percentages voted for gain of clinical experience in foreign country. Four employees gave importance for repayment of educational loan/Building House. Sixteen percentages opinioned marriage and settle with family as the reason for migration. There was no intake for pride and prestige reason.

Another survey was conducted with Bsc Nursing final year students in Muthoot College of Nursing, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India with respect to their employment ambition. The survey was carried out with forty four students as remaining six were absent.



Similar trend is reflecting in this chart as thirty four students out of forty four wants to work overseas after gaining experience. Only six wants to work in other states in healthcare sector apart from Kerala and four wishes to work in Kerala into private healthcare sector. There are no takers in the survey for Government healthcare in Kerala.

The pandemic has forced many countries to shut its boundaries to migrants but its doors are wide open for healthcare workers especially from India. Indian nurses are the biggest nursing expatriates in the world and are recognized globally. The trend shown in the above surveys correlates to the recognition and acceptance that the nurses receive from the international community. Many nurses travelled in the past have settled with their family and the new recruits have some or other known people in the form of relatives or friends working in the same organization (Hospitals/Clinics), made their travel much easier. There are few Organizations and industries that have closed its business unit or shirked its headcount but in contrast Healthcare industry afloat safely and often are offered lucrative salary to expats. The trend is expected to rise further as healthcare is now being given more importance than before around the globe.

Conclusion:

The great resignation is now spoken from all quarters of the globe and effective strategies are a must to retain the talent. The survey underlines salary as the main reason for healthcare workers in Kerala to migrate to a foreign country and most of countries are now in acute shortage of skilled healthcare employees, which again is a boon for the migrating workforce. Kerala Private Sector Hospitals will not be in a position to match with the compensation given in a overseas hospitals and with the rate of exit of employees due to migration, it is imperative that the Kerala Private Hospitals should hire and train their new employees continuously to avoid scarcity of employees in their organization.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Dr. Jerry John George, Medical Superintendent, Muthoot Hospital, Pathanamthitta and Prof. Dr. Cinu Abdeesso, Principal, Muthoot College of Nursing, Pathanamhitta for allowing to conduct surveys which helped to gather information for this article. My sincere thanks to Dr. Priya Xavier, Asst Professor,

SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, for providing inputs to write this article.

References:

- Effective Strategy for Solving Voluntary Turnover Problem among employees
Roya Anvaria*, Zhou JianFub, Siavash Hosseinpour Chermahinic, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 129 (2014) 186 – 190, ICIMTR2013.
- A historical analysis of critiques in the talent management debate Paul Sparrow
Emeritus Professor of International HRM, Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster LA1 4YW, United Kingdom.
- Quarterly COUNTER-INTUITIVE PERSPECTIVES HR disruption----Time already to reinvent talent management Lisbeth Claus Management and Global Human Resources, Willamette University, Atkinson Graduate School of Management, 900 State Street, Salem, OR 97301, United States.
- Sharma, J., Dhar, R. L. (2016). Factors influencing job performance of nursing staff. *Personnel Review*, 45(1), 161–182. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-01-2014-0007>
Google Scholar
- A Study in the Relationship Between Supportive Work Environment and Employee Retention: Role of Organizational Commitment and Person–Organization Fit as Mediators Shumaila Naz, First Published May 26, 2020.
- *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research (JBRMR)*, Vol. 14 Issue 3 , July 2020 Understanding the impact of reward and recognition, work life balance, on employee retention with job satisfaction as mediating variable on millennials in Indonesia Aga Hutama Tirta.
- Transformational Leadership in Health Care Today, Robbins, Beverly RN, BSN; Davidhizar, Ruth RN, DNS, ARNP, BC, FAAN, *The Health Care Manager: 7/9 2020 - Volume 39 - Issue 3 - p 117-121,doi: 10.1097/HCM.0000000000000296*
- Employee Turnover: Causes, Importance and Retention Strategies Article in *European Journal of Business Management and Research* · June 2021 DOI: 10.24018/ejbmr.2021.6.3.893.
- Employee development and retention of Generation-Z employees in the post-COVID-19 workplace: a conceptual framework; Hasaranga Dilshan Jayathilake, Dazmin Daud, Hooi Cheng Eaw, Nursyamillah Annuar ;

Benchmarking: An International Journal; ISSN: 1463-5771; Article publication date: 29 January 2021.

- *Haward Business Review, To Retain Employees, Give Them a Sense of Purpose and Community, by Ron Carucci, October 11, 2021).*

Employee adjustment and well-being in the era of COVID-19: Implications for human resource management; Joel B. Carnevalea, and Isabella Hatak; *J Bus Res.* 2020 Aug; 116: 183–187 doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.037