THE EMPLOYER'S BRAND UTILIZATION FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS BY PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN TEHRAN

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Abstract

Background: Private hospitals in Tehran can build a strong employer brand by partnering with educational institutions, investing in employee engagement, and regularly evaluating their strategy. Internship and residency programs can provide students with hands-on experience and future employment opportunities. Employee appreciation events, performance-based bonuses, and career advancement opportunities can create a sense of loyalty among the workforce. Regularly refining the employer brand strategy through feedback and data analysis can help attract top talent and improve patient care.

Methods: This descriptive study investigated the level of employer branding implementation and the main factors in retaining and attracting healthcare professionals in private hospitals from the perspective of managers. The data was collected through a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews with HR managers or senior executives responsible for HR management. The study found that private hospitals in Tehran can improve their employer branding by partnering with educational institutions, investing in employee engagement, and regularly evaluating their strategy. The evaluation provided valuable insights into the current state of employer branding practices and recommendations for improvement. These insights can help hospitals attract and retain top talent in the highly competitive healthcare industry.

Results: All studies private hospitals managers (n: 11, 100%) were familiar with employer branding strategy to attract and retain healthcare professionals. From managers'' point of view, sufficient income, discipline, and flexible working time were the main factors can help to attracting and retaining healthcare professions in their hospitals. Moreover, access to cutting-edge diagnostic and therapeutic technologies was another important factor in this way. They encounter different challenges such as a shortage of skilled workers and high turnover rates. Some hospitals have implemented initiatives to support their staff, but most lack a clear understanding of the importance of employer branding. To overcome these challenges, hospitals can invest in employee engagement, partner with educational institutions, and evaluate their branding strategy regularly. This can help build a strong employer brand that attracts top talent and improves patient care.

Conclusions: Private hospitals in Tehran were familiar with employer branding strategy to attract and retain healthcare professionals. They face challenges such as a shortage of skilled workers, high turnover rates, and intense competition. To overcome these challenges, hospitals can invest in employee engagement initiatives, partner with educational institutions, and regularly evaluate their branding strategy.

Keywords: *Healthcare professional, employer's Brand, hospital, employee, medicine*

INTRODUCTION

Employer's brand refers to the reputation that an organization has as an employer. It is the perception that current and potential employees have of an organization based on their experiences and interactions with the organization (1). In hospitals, employer's brand is particularly important because the quality of care provided by a hospital is directly linked to the quality of its workforce (2, 3).

A strong employer's brand can help hospitals attract and retain top talent, improve employee engagement and satisfaction, and improve the hospital's reputation in the community. Factors that contribute to a strong employer's brand in hospitals include compensation and benefits, work-life balance, professional development, culture and values, and reputation (4-8)

To build and maintain a strong employer's brand, hospitals should conduct employee surveys, develop a strong employer value proposition, prioritize employee engagement, communicate effectively, and monitor and measure their progress(9). By focusing on these factors and implementing strategies to improve their employer's brand, hospitals can position themselves as desirable places to work and provide high-quality care to patients (5-8).

In today's competitive job market, hospitals are facing a growing challenge in attracting and retaining top talent. One way that hospitals can differentiate themselves from competitors is by building a strong employer brand(10). An employer brand is the image and reputation of an organization as an employer, and it encompasses the organization's values, culture, and work environment (11, 12).

Private hospitals in Tehran are facing a significant shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly in specialized fields such as surgery and intensive care. To attract and retain top talent, hospitals need to establish themselves as desirable employers. A strong employer brand can help hospitals attract the best candidates and retain their current employees (8,11-12).

The first step in building an employer brand is to define the organization's values and culture. Private hospitals in Tehran need to identify what sets them apart from other hospitals and what they can offer employees that other hospitals cannot. This could include a strong commitment to patient care, a supportive work environment, or opportunities for career advancement (11-14).

Once the hospital has identified its unique selling points, it can begin to develop its employer brand messaging. This messaging should be consistent across all channels, including job postings, social media, and employee communications. Hospitals should highlight their strengths and emphasize their commitment to employee satisfaction and development (13-15).

Another important aspect of building an employer brand is creating a positive work environment. Private hospitals in Tehran need to provide their employees with a supportive and collaborative workplace that fosters growth and development(16). This includes offering competitive salaries and benefits packages, providing opportunities for training and development, and creating a culture of open communication and feedback (15, 17).

Private hospitals in Tehran can also leverage social media to build their employer brand. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter offer hospitals the opportunity to showcase their company culture, share employee success stories, and engage with potential candidates. By using social media effectively, hospitals can reach a wider audience and build a positive reputation as an employer (18, 19).

Therefore, private hospitals in Tehran need to focus on building a strong employer brand to attract and retain top talent. By defining their values and culture, creating a positive work environment, and leveraging social media, hospitals can differentiate themselves from competitors and establish themselves as desirable employers. A strong employer brand can help hospitals attract the best candidates, reduce turnover, and ultimately improve patient care. In addition to the strategies mentioned above, private hospitals in Tehran

can also consider partnering with universities and other educational institutions to establish internship and residency programs. These programs can provide students with hands-on experience and exposure to the hospital's culture and values, potentially leading to future employment opportunities (20, 21).

Furthermore, private hospitals can also focus on employee engagement and recognition programs. This can include employee appreciation events, performance-based bonuses, and opportunities for career advancement. By investing in their employees, hospitals can create a sense of loyalty and commitment among their workforce, which can ultimately lead to better patient outcomes (21, 22).

It is also important for hospitals to regularly evaluate and update their employer brand strategy. This includes soliciting feedback from current employees, monitoring social media channels for feedback and engagement, and analyzing recruitment and retention data(23). By continuously refining their employer brand strategy, hospitals can stay competitive in the job market and attract top talent (18, 24).

Overall, building a strong employer brand is crucial for private hospitals in Tehran to attract and retain top talent in the competitive healthcare industry. By defining their values and culture, creating a positive work environment, leveraging social media, investing in employee engagement, and regularly evaluating their strategy, hospitals can establish themselves as desirable employers and improve patient care (15, 19).

Therefore in the present study we assessed the implantation of employer brand in private hospitals of the Tehran city in order to attract and retain healthcare professionals in these hospitals.

METHODS

Study population

Following our previous study on designing an employer brand to attract and retain healthcare professionals in Tehran Hospitals, this descriptive study was conducted on eleven private hospitals in Tehran. The aim of this study was to investigate the level of employer branding implementation in these eleven hospitals in the first stage, and then assess the main factors for attracting and retaining healthcare professionals from the perspective of hospital managers. Private hospitals in Tehran can build a strong employer brand by partnering with educational institutions, investing in employee engagement, and regularly evaluating their strategy. Internship and residency programs can provide students with hands-on experience and future employment opportunities. Employee appreciation events, performance-based bonuses, and career advancement opportunities can create a sense of loyalty among the workforce. Regularly refining the employer brand strategy through feedback and data analysis can help attract top talent and improve patient care.

Data collection

The next step involved an expert using a questionnaire designed by the researcher to evaluate the extent of employer branding implementation among eleven private hospitals in Tehran. In the following stage, the expert used some questions from the questionnaire to investigate the level of familiarity of the hospital managers and executive teams with the employer brand. Finally we questioned them about main factors for attracting and retaining healthcare professionals from the perspective of hospital managers. The questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive literature review and interviews with HR experts in the healthcare industry. It included questions related to the hospital's mission and values, employee value proposition, recruitment and selection processes, employee training and development, employee engagement and retention strategies, and communication channels used to promote the employer brand.

The expert who conducted the evaluation had extensive experience in HR management and had worked with several private hospitals in Tehran. The expert visited each hospital and conducted face-to-face interviews with the HR manager or a senior executive responsible for HR management. The interviews were conducted in a confidential manner, and the responses were recorded anonymously.

The expert also collected relevant documents, such as job advertisements, employee handbooks, and training materials, to gain a better understanding of the hospital's employer branding practices. After completing the evaluation, the expert analyzed the data and provided a detailed report to the researcher. The report included an overview of the current state of employer branding implementation among private hospitals in Tehran, as well as recommendations for improving employer branding practices.

Overall, the evaluation provided valuable insights into the level of familiarity of hospital managers and executive teams with the employer brand, as well as the extent of implementation of employer branding

practices. These insights can be used by hospitals to develop more effective employer branding strategies and improve their ability to attract and retain top talent in the highly competitive healthcare industry.

Statistical analysis

As the present study was a descriptive study, descriptive statistics were also used to analyze the data. The software used in this study was SPSS version 18. The study's findings were presented using mean values and standard deviation (SD) for quantitative variables and percentages for categorical variables. Statistical significance was determined through two-sided design-based tests with a significance level of 0.05. The normality of variable distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Descriptive statistics are a set of statistical measures that are used to summarize and describe the characteristics of a dataset. These measures include measures of central tendency such as mean, median, and mode, and measures of variability such as standard deviation, variance, and range. Descriptive statistics provide important information about the distribution of data, allowing researchers to identify trends, patterns, and outliers in the data.

The use of descriptive statistics and SPSS in this study allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the data collected. By summarizing the characteristics of the data using descriptive statistics, the researchers were able to identify patterns and trends in the data. Overall, the use of descriptive statistics and SPSS in this study provided valuable insights into the characteristics of the dataset and helped to identify important trends and relationships. These insights can be used to inform future research and interventions aimed at improving outcomes in the population under study.

RESULTS

Among the eleven hospitals evaluated in this study, all were familiar with employer brand for attracting and retaining healthcare professionals. However, almost all of the evaluated hospitals were familiar with the concept of employer branding. Nonetheless, almost all hospitals used methods to attract and retain their specialized workforce. For example, one hospital had established a human resources management department to maintain its specialized workforce. This department generally tried to support all of its staff. If a staff member or their family became ill, the hospital provided conditions for their hospitalization. The hospital considered the costs of hospitalizing these patients as free. Additionally, if an unfortunate event occurred for one of the specialists or their family, the hospital followed up on their transfer to the hospital where they worked to provide health services. The study found that only a few private hospitals in Tehran had a well-defined employer branding strategy in place. Most hospitals lacked a clear understanding of what employer branding is and how it can benefit their organization. The managers and executive teams of these hospitals were unaware of the importance of employer branding in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals.

The study also revealed that private hospitals in Tehran face several challenges when it comes to implementing an effective employer branding strategy. These challenges include a shortage of skilled healthcare professionals, high turnover rates, and intense competition from other hospitals.

Main factors for attracting and retaining healthcare professionals from the perspective of hospital managers

When hospital managers were asked about the factors that cause healthcare professionals to stay in a hospital, from their perspective, experienced managers identified receiving adequate pay as the primary factor in retaining healthcare professionals, followed by receiving timely and regular payments. Few hospitals pay their staff on time. One hospital never delayed paying its healthcare professionals, while another hospital had not paid its healthcare professionals for four months. The first hospital was satisfied with attracting and retaining its healthcare professionals, while the second hospital was not. Both managers agreed that adequate and timely payment of salaries is the most important factor in retaining healthcare professionals and attracting new and young professionals to their hospital. Additionally, flexibility in staff work schedules was another influential factor in maintaining and retaining healthcare professionals. One manager expressed that if a nurse or doctor has no concerns other than their work schedule, it will help them stay calm and improve their quality of service to patients. We have tried to ensure that this work security does not occur for staff working in two hospitals, as their shifts are coordinated and they are allowed to choose their own shift flexibility. Furthermore, according to these managers, order is one of the

most important factors in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals. If these professionals see order in all areas, they will trust the hospital more easily and refer their patients more comfortably. If it is ensured that patients receive proper care and receive necessary care in a timely and regular manner, the level of trust of healthcare professionals in the hospital will increase, and their desire to stay in the hospital will increase (Figure 1).
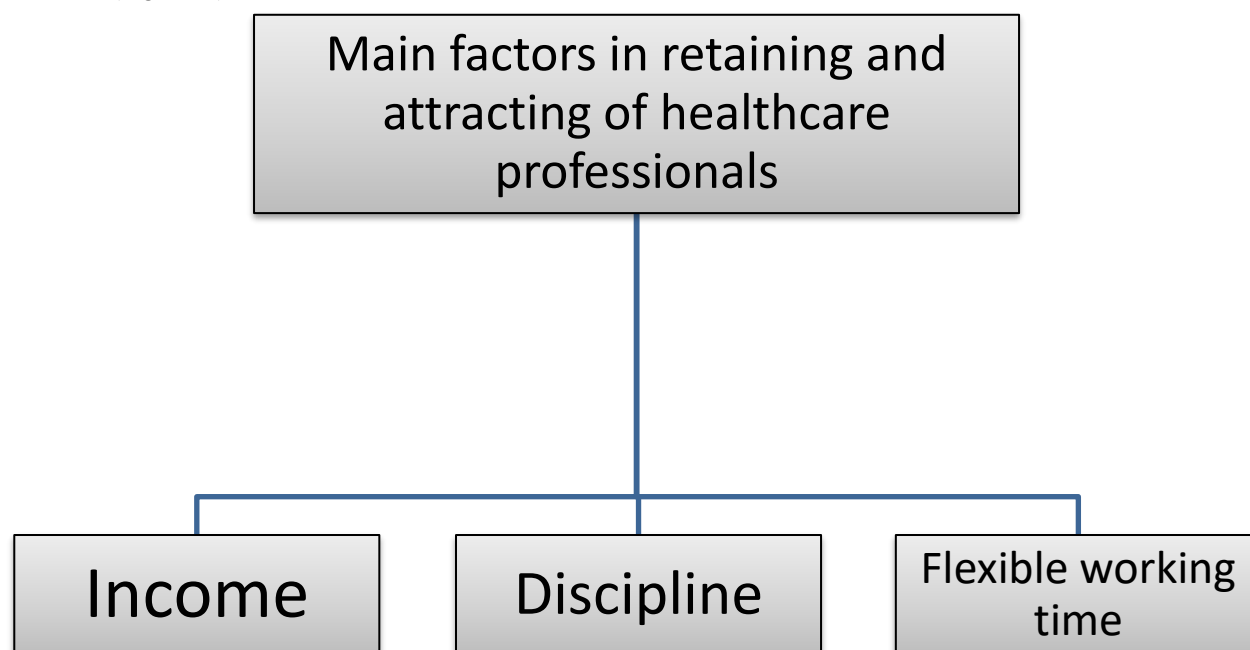

Figure 1. Main factors for attracting and retaining healthcare professionals from the perspective of hospital managers.

Moreover, in addition to all mentioned factors, the presence of cutting-edge diagnostic and treatment technologies is among leading factors in attracting and retaining of the healthcare professionals in these hospitals. Healthcare professionals prefer to work in an environment that is has all advanced instruments for all processes, including precise and timely diagnosis of the disorder, or at least for confirmation of the disorder, for follow-up process and finally for a standard therapeutic intervention.

To overcome these challenges, private hospitals in Tehran need to invest in employer branding initiatives that focus on attracting and retaining top talent. This can be achieved by partnering with educational institutions to provide students with hands-on experience and future employment opportunities. Hospitals can also invest in employee engagement initiatives such as employee appreciation events, performance-based bonuses, and career advancement opportunities.

Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of the employer branding strategy through feedback and data analysis is also critical. This will help hospitals to identify areas for improvement and refine their employer branding strategy to attract top talent and improve patient care.

Indeed, private hospitals in Tehran need to recognize the importance of employer branding in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals. By investing in initiatives that focus on employee engagement, partnering with educational institutions, and regularly evaluating their employer branding strategy, private hospitals can build a strong employer brand that attracts top talent and improves patient care.

Discussion

Employer branding has become an increasingly important aspect of HR management in many countries around the world, including Iran (6-8, 11). While there is limited research on employer branding implementation in Iran, it is clear that private hospitals in Tehran can benefit from improving their employer branding strategies to attract and retain top talent.

Comparing Iran's employer branding practices with other countries, it is evident that some countries have

made significant progress in this area. For example, in the United States, employer branding has become a critical component of HR management, with companies investing heavily in building their brand reputation to attract and retain top talent. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, employer branding has been embraced by many organizations as a way to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive job market (25, 26).

However, it is important to note that employer branding practices can vary significantly across different industries and countries. In some countries, employer branding may not be as important as other factors such as salary or job security. Additionally, cultural differences can also impact the effectiveness of employer branding strategies.

Overall, it is clear that employer branding is an important aspect of HR management that can help organizations attract and retain top talent. While there is room for improvement in Iran's private hospitals, the insights provided by this study can help organizations develop effective employer branding strategies to compete in the highly competitive healthcare industry.

In developed countries, the main factors in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals include competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits packages, opportunities for career advancement, a positive work environment, and access to cutting-edge technology and resources (11, 17-21).

Competitive salaries are essential in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals as they want to be fairly compensated for their skills and expertise. Comprehensive benefits packages that include health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off are also important as they provide a sense of security and work-life balance (19-24). Opportunities for career advancement are crucial in retaining healthcare professionals as they want to continue to grow and develop in their careers. This can include access to continuing education programs, leadership training (27), and mentorship opportunities (29-31). A positive work environment is also important in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals. This includes a supportive culture, open communication, and recognition for a job well done. Healthcare professionals want to feel valued and appreciated for their contributions to patient care (32, 33).

Finally, access to cutting-edge technology and resources is essential in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals in developed countries. Healthcare professionals want to work with the latest technology and have access to the best resources available to provide the highest quality care to their patients (34, 35). In the present study access to cutting-edge diagnostic and therapeutic technologies mentioned as a main factors in attracting and retaining o healthcare professionals in Iran.

Overall, a combination of these factors is necessary to attract and retain healthcare professionals in developed countries. By providing competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits packages, opportunities for career advancement, a positive work environment, and access to cutting-edge technology and resources, healthcare organizations can create an environment that attracts and retains top talent in the industry (31-35).

In addition to allocating resources and personnel to improve their employer brand, hospitals around the world have implemented various strategies to attract and retain healthcare professionals. One such strategy is offering competitive salaries and benefits packages. Hospitals have recognized that healthcare professionals are in high demand and have many options when it comes to employment. Therefore, offering a competitive compensation package is essential to attracting and retaining top talent. Another strategy hospitals have employed is providing opportunities for professional development and growth. Healthcare professionals want to work in an environment that challenges them and allows them to grow their skills and knowledge. Hospitals that offer training and educational opportunities are more likely to attract and retain healthcare professionals who are committed to their careers (29-32).

Additionally, hospitals have recognized the importance of creating a positive work culture. Healthcare professionals want to work in an environment where they feel valued, respected, and supported. Hospitals that prioritize employee well-being and foster a positive work culture are more likely to attract and retain healthcare professionals who are dedicated to providing high-quality patient care (28-32).

Indeed, hospitals around the world have recognized the importance of improving their employer brand to attract and retain healthcare professionals. By allocating resources and personnel to this task, offering competitive compensation packages, providing opportunities for professional development and growth, and fostering a positive work culture, hospitals can create an environment that attracts top talent and retains dedicated healthcare professionals (24-31).

By creating a strong employer brand, private hospitals in Tehran can not only attract and retain top talent but also improve their overall reputation and competitiveness in the market. Some potential strategies that hospitals can implement include creating a positive work culture, offering competitive salaries and benefits packages, providing opportunities for career growth and development, and fostering a sense of community and belonging among employees (11, 17).

Moreover, social media and digital marketing can also be effective tools for building an employer brand. Hospitals can use platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Instagram to showcase their workplace culture, highlight employee success stories, and engage with potential candidates. By leveraging these platforms effectively, hospitals can create a strong online presence that reflects their brand values and attracts top talent (36, 37).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while employer branding may not be a common practice in Iran's private hospitals, it is an important aspect of HR management that can help organizations attract and retain top talent. By investing in effective employer branding strategies, hospitals can improve their overall reputation, competitiveness, and ability to provide high-quality healthcare services to their patients.

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