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Abstract

Employee satisfaction in certain private hospitals in Kenya has been inadequate, possibly leading to cases of negligence. This shortfall in job satisfaction can markedly influence the overall quality of healthcare services delivered. Thus, the study examined the effect of welfare policies on employee satisfaction in private hospitals in Nairobi. The study was based on role stress theory. The research methodology of this study encompassed several different elements. A positivist philosophy was employed to test hypotheses derived from existing theories, specifically through the use of a descriptive research design. This design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data to mitigate the limitations of employing just one type of method. The study was centered on 19 private hospitals in Nairobi City County, specifically those classified as level 4 and 5 hospitals, and included both management and support personnel. Data were collected through questionnaires for the support staff and interviews for the upper management. A sample size of 332 respondents, calculated using Yamane's formula, was distributed proportionally across the categories of management and support personnel. The data collection procedure involved the use of questionnaires, interview guidelines, and the SPSS version 27 for data analysis. The study found that welfare policies are positively and significantly connected with employee satisfaction ($r=.271$, $p=0.000$). The study concluded, when welfare policies are well-designed and well-communicated, they can positively impact employee satisfaction and can be an important retention tool for employers. It is recommended that private hospitals in Nairobi City County should have adequate welfare policies in place to support their employees. The stress theory of welfare suggests that employee stress levels should be addressed through welfare policies. Hence, private hospitals in Nairobi City County should provide support for employees who are experiencing stress due to work-related or personal reasons. The welfare policies in the hospitals such as stress management programs, counseling services, and flexible work arrangements, can help employees manage stress levels and improve their wellbeing.

Keywords: *Welfare policies, employee satisfaction, private hospitals, Nairobi City County, Kenya*

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1.0 Introduction

Employee satisfaction includes the contentment of the employees in an organization. The employees' satisfaction is one of the potent indicators that determine the performance of the employees (Chatterjee, Wadhwa & Patel, 2018). The satisfaction of the employees influences their commitment and morale in meeting the objectives of an organization. The employees' satisfaction can be influenced by compensation, workload, perceptions of management, flexibility and teamwork (Dousin, Collins & KaurKler, 2019). The employees' satisfaction illustrates the employees' perception of whether their desires and expectations are met (Wadhawan, 2019). The perception of happiness of the employees is a crucial determiner of the employees' satisfaction. Happy employees are always more likely to perform well and exercise harmony in their place of work (Gatimu & Kagiri, 2017). The employees' satisfaction can be measured aggregately throughout an organization, department, or even within a single team (Kangogo & Wanambiro, 2019). The employees' satisfaction can be described as the inclination of joy and accomplishment that one encounters when one realizes the work is worthy. According to Dousin, Collins and KaurKler (2019), the employees' satisfaction is paramount and can be defined as a pleasurable or positive passion coming out because of evaluating one's job encounters and appreciation of the efforts put.

The employees' satisfaction in hospitals is critical because hospitals mainly deal with health care provision. Satisfaction can be contended as the employee's overall attitude and approaches towards their working conditions, promotions, recognition and relations in the hospitals setting (Kipkoech, 2018). The employees' satisfaction in the hospitals can be measured through their attitudes, performance, absenteeism, unpunctuality, turnover rate, grievances, among others. However, in many instances, working in hospitals involves working for long hours without rest and sometimes with poor remunerations or allowances (Dousin, Collins & KaurKler, 2019). It is indicated by Kipkoech (2018) that employee satisfaction in hospitals in Kenya has not been adequate with rampant strikes and a high turnover rate. In Kenya, private hospitals have almost 70% control of all the doctors and approximately 45% of all the nurses available in the market (Apinde, 2018). However, the performance of employees within some private hospitals in Kenya has been wanting (Gioko & Njuguna, 2019).

Improving employee satisfaction in hospitals requires addressing the underlying issues such as workload, compensation, working conditions, recognition, and career development opportunities. Implementing measures to promote work-life balance, providing competitive salaries and benefits, fostering a supportive work environment, and offering professional growth and training opportunities can contribute to enhancing employee satisfaction and reducing turnover rates. Thus, the objective of the study was to examine the importance of welfare policies within an organization. Welfare policies include programs that provide financial or other aid to employees (Waititu, Kihara & Senaji, 2017). By providing financial support, healthcare benefits, childcare assistance, and other welfare programs, organizations demonstrate their commitment to the overall welfare of their employees. This, in turn, can enhance employee morale and job satisfaction, leading to increased productivity and reduced turnover rates (Waititu, Kihara & Senaji, 2017).

Welfare policies can help attract and retain talented employees. In today's competitive job market, organizations that offer comprehensive welfare packages have a competitive advantage in

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attracting and retaining top talent. Candidates often consider the benefits and welfare programs offered by an organization when making employment decisions. Having attractive welfare policies can strengthen the employer brand and position the organization as an employer of choice (Talukder, Vickers & Khan, 2018). In addition, it contributes to a positive work culture and employee engagement. When employees feel that their well-being is valued and their needs are taken care of, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. This can foster a supportive and inclusive work environment, leading to increased teamwork, collaboration, and overall organizational success (Waititu, Kihara & Senaji, 2017). The welfare policies within an organization are important for promoting employee satisfaction, attracting and retaining talented individuals, and fostering a positive work culture.

In Kenya, there are over 1000 private hospitals. In Nairobi County, there are fifty-three private hospitals with varying levels. The study will focus on large hospitals based on their levels. The study will only concentrate on the hospitals from levels 4 and 5. The hospitals in level 6 will be excluded because they are national referral hospitals owned by the government. Hospitals from levels 4 and 5 are considered large and thus will be included in the study. In Nairobi City County, there are 18 private hospitals under levels 4 and 5, namely Aga Khan Hospitals, Avenue Hospitals, Coptic Hospitals (Ngong Road), Jamaa Mission Hospitals, St Mary's Mission Hospitals, Medihealth Hospitals Eastleigh, Mercy Mission Health Centre, Meridian Equator Hospitals, Mp Shah Hospitals (Westlands), Nairobi Hospitals, Nairobi South Hospitals, Nairobi West Hospitals, Nairobi Women's Hospitals (Hurlingham), Radiant Group of Hospitals-Pangani, South B Hospitals Ltd, South C Hospitals Limited (South C), St Francis Community Hospitals (Kasarani), The Karen Hospitals and Mater Misericordiae Hospitals.

The employee satisfaction in some private hospitals in Kenya has been wanting, which could have attributed to some negligence (Gioko & Njuguna, 2019). This lack of satisfaction can have detrimental effects on the overall quality of healthcare delivery. For example, in 2020, MP Shah Hospitals was fined Sh3 million for negligence that resulted in the death of a patient (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2020). Furthermore, in 2021, Nairobi Hospitals laid off over 200 workers, citing their involvement in unethical practices (Igadwah, 2021). These incidents highlight the potential consequences of low employee satisfaction within hospitals, including compromised patient safety and compromised ethical standards. It is evident that employee satisfaction in hospitals in Kenya has not been adequate, as indicated by rampant strikes and a high turnover rate (Kipkoech, 2018). These issues necessitate the need for policy formulations to address the underlying causes of employee dissatisfaction and improve the overall quality of healthcare delivery.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The satisfaction of the employees influences their commitment and enthusiasm for meeting the objectives of an organization (Auka & Nyangau, 2020). Nonetheless, the employee satisfaction in some private hospitals in Kenya has been wanting, which could have attributed to some negligence (Gioko & Njuguna, 2019). For instance, in 2020, MP Shah Hospitals was fined Sh3 million for negligence that caused the death of a patient (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2020). In addition, in 2021, it was reported that the negligence of employees at Nairobi West Hospitals led to the death of a patient in its facilities. Moreover, in 2021, Nairobi Hospitals laid off more

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than 200 workers citing involvement in unethical practices (Igadwah, 2021). Further, it was reported by Kiplagat (2017) that some private hospitals have delays in service delivery, especially the ones in critical conditions. The work-related problems, such as stress being one of the most common problems that bedevil most employees, could have led to low employee satisfaction (Auka & Nyangau, 2020; Abdirahman, 2018; Kasau, 2017; Wolor, Solikhah, Fidhyallah & Lestari, 2020). In many instances, working in hospitals involves working long hours without rest and sometimes with poor remunerations or allowances (Dousin, Collins & KaurKler, 2019). It is indicated by Kipkoech (2018) that employee satisfaction in hospitals in Kenya has not been adequate with rampant strikes and a high turnover rate. Conducting a study to investigate the factors contributing to employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction in hospitals would be worthwhile for policy development. Understanding the specific challenges faced by employees in private hospitals, such as long working hours, poor remuneration, and inadequate support systems, can provide valuable insights for designing interventions and policies aimed at improving employee satisfaction. By addressing these issues, hospitals can create a conducive work environment that promotes employee well-being, reduces turnover rates, and enhances the overall quality of healthcare provision. Hence, the study examined the effect of welfare policies on employee satisfaction in private hospitals in Nairobi

1.2 Research Objective

To examine the effect of welfare policies on employee satisfaction in private hospitals in Nairobi

1.3 Hypotheses

H₀: Welfare policies has no significant effect on employee satisfaction in private hospitals in Nairobi

1.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between welfare policies and employee satisfaction. In this framework, welfare policies are considered a crucial factor that may impact employee satisfaction.

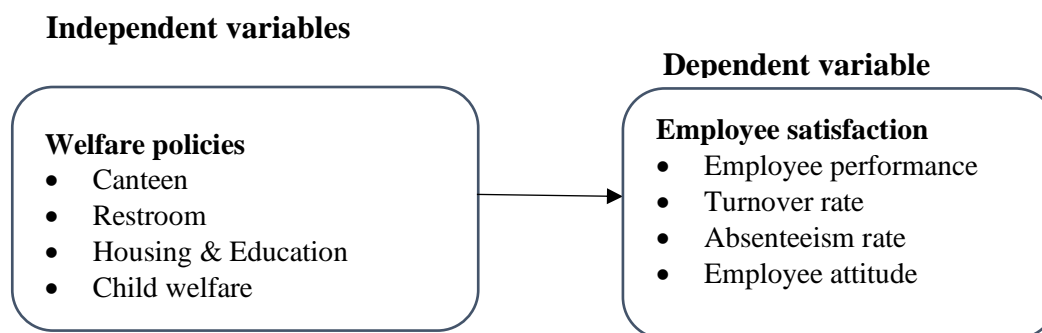


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.0 Literature Review

The study was based on role stress theory. The theory proponents were Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoe, and Rosenthal in 1964. The employees' stress can be reduced significantly by ensuring benefits and facilities given to the employees are conducive to working in a better environment (Kemery, 2006). The theory notes that when there are multiple roles, each role creates stress leading to multiple stresses (Nordenmark, 2004). This implies that the roles individuals occupy at work or elsewhere exist concerning other roles and people who have expectations about the individuals' roles. The theory assumes a limited amount of psychological and physiological resources available to employees to respond to their obligations (Tong & Yin, 2011). The theory shows that expenses connected with stress-related diseases are substantial (Alessi, 2014). Stress and anxiety have been defined otherwise as fatigue, emotional strain, and emotional distress and have been gauged in various methods by evaluating behavior (Goolsby, 2015). The theory shows that welfare practices within an organization are considered vital in influencing the performance of the employees and reducing their stress (Hwang & Cha, 2018).

The welfare policies of the employees within the private hospitals in Nairobi City County could be enhanced by programs such as paid holidays, health programs and employee training. The employees' stress in the hospitals can be reduced significantly by ensuring benefits and facilities given to the employees are conducive to working in a better environment. However, the theory's weakness of its applicability in only informing variable welfare policies led to the examination of other theories to anchor variables flexible working arrangements, leave policies and organizational culture. Therefore, the theory's shortcomings led to the review of spillover theory deemed relevant to inform variable leave policies. The role stress theory has received some criticism from scholars. For instance, theory sideline to establish remedies for those employees who engage in personal activities when given freedom in the workplace (Tong & Yin, 2011). Moreover, the theory sidelined to examine the significance of the involvement of the employees in an organization to help in stress minimization (Wright, Rains & Banas, 2010). The employees are essential in the achievement of the objectives of an organization and when they are not involved, may oppose the decisions made by the management. Thus, the weakness of the theory as presented by the scholar and its applicability in only informing variable welfare policies led to the examining of other theories.

In a 2018 research, Chatterjee, Wadhwa, and Patel looked at how staff performance was affected by welfare programmes at private hospitals in India. The study used a descriptive research approach and was based on three theories: the role stress theory, spillover theory, and institutional theory. The major method of data collecting for the researchers was questionnaires, and they discovered that employee satisfaction programmes, medical insurance, housing assistance, wage increases, and promotions affects worker performance. According to the study's findings, private hospitals must expand their employee welfare initiatives in order to boost staff productivity. Wamunyu (2016) used a descriptive study design with questionnaires as the main data collecting tool to conduct a survey to investigate the variables that affect employee satisfaction in public hospitals in Kiambu County. According to the study's findings, employee happiness is highly impacted by pay, working environment, job description, and career progression. In addition, Chepkemo (2020) did research to examine the elements that contribute to the nurses' increased

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work satisfaction in a subset of Kericho County public hospitals. The Kericho, Kapkatet, Sigowet, Londiani, and Kipkelion District Hospitals provided the respondents for the research. 216 respondents made up the sample size and were chosen at random. Questionnaires served as the study tool utilised to gather the data. The nature of the work environment, training opportunities, promotions, tools and equipment used, compensation, and recognition help nurses feel more satisfied with their jobs.

3.0 Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study encompasses several distinct elements. Utilizing a positivist philosophy, hypotheses rooted in existing theories were tested, specifically through a descriptive research design. This design amalgamated both qualitative and quantitative data to circumvent the constraints of solely using one method. The study revolved around 19 private hospitals in Nairobi City County, specifically focusing on those classified as level 4 and 5 hospitals. Both management and support personnel were included in the study. Data were compiled through questionnaires for the support staff and interviews for upper management. Yamane's formula determined a sample size of 332 respondents, proportionately distributed across the categories of management and support staff. The data collection procedure incorporated the use of questionnaires, interview guidelines, and employed SPSS version 27 for data analysis. Throughout the study, confidentiality and anonymity were upheld to foster honest responses.

4.0 Research Findings

The findings of the study are organized into several key sections. Firstly, the response rate, which denotes the number or proportion of participants who responded to the questionnaires or participated in interviews. Secondly, descriptive statistics are reported, summarizing the data collected. This typically includes measures of central tendency such as the mean, median, and mode, as well as measures of dispersion like the range, variance, and standard deviation. The study also presents the results of diagnostic tests, which were conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Finally, the findings from the inferential analysis are detailed, examining relationships between variables and testing the research hypotheses.

4.1 Response Rate

The number of questionnaires administered to the support staff was 259, out of which 248 were dully filled. In addition, the study interviewed 64 employees out of 73 from the top and middle level management.

Table 1: Response rate

Response	Returned	Unreturned	Percentage
Support Staff	248	11	95.37
Management (top and middle level management)	64	9	87.67
Total	312	20	93.98

The response rate from the support staff was 95.37% and 87.67% for the management (top and middle level management). Ahmad and Halim (2017) reports that a response rates of above 60% of the sample size is sufficient for the analysis and making of inferences.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics do not involve making inferences about a population from a sample, unlike inferential statistics. They help to see the big picture of the data and see trends and patterns. They are useful for discovering patterns and trends in data, as well as spotting outliers and abnormalities. The analytical findings are presented in the following areas according to the aims of the research.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Welfare Policies

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	
								Statistic	Std. Error
The hospital has a well-established canteen.	21.40%	61.70%	2.40%	10.10%	4.40%	2.15	1.01	1.337	0.155
The hospital has a child welfare policy for all employees	29.40%	48.00%	4.00%	8.90%	9.70%	2.21	1.23	1.127	0.155
The hospital provides the employees with a housing and education allowance regardless of their rank	12.60%	55.80%	5.20%	7.70%	18.70%	2.27	1.18	1.183	0.155
The hospital gives the employees equal opportunities to advance their education	37.50%	42.50%	6.70%	11.30%	2.00%	2.03	1.08	0.97	0.155
Professional counselling services are available to employees within the hospitals	19.80%	56.00%	9.30%	8.40%	6.50%	2.26	1.07	1.163	0.155
Average						2.19	1.13		

The study results presented in Table 2 shows that 71.30% (30.20% + 41.10%) of the respondents opposed the claim that hospitals provide enough recreational amenities like restrooms, whereas 21.40 percent held that view and 7.30 percent were undecided. In addition, 83.10 percent of respondents disputed those hospitals had a well-established cafeteria, as determined by the survey, while 14.50% agreed and 2.40% remained neutral. In addition, it was found that 77.40% of the respondents disagreed that the hospitals have a child welfare policy for all employees, while 18.60% agreed and 4.00% remained neutral. In addition, it was found that 80% of the respondent disagreed that the hospitals give the employees equal opportunities to advance their education, while 13.30% agreed and 6.70% remained neutral. Finally, the study established that 75.80% disagreed that professional counselling services are available to employees within the hospitals, while 14.90% agreed and 9.30% remained neutral. The positive skewness statistic in this study suggests that the responses to the survey questions about welfare policies were negatively skewed, with most respondents disagreeing with the statements.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Satisfaction

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	
								Statistic	Std. Error
The turnover rate of the employees in the hospital has been low.	30.60%	41.10%	7.70%	12.50%	8.10%	2.26	1.24	0.905	0.155
The completion rate of the duties set for the employees has been satisfactory	28.60%	39.90%	3.30%	15.30%	12.90%	2.44	1.38	0.717	0.155
There is a low absenteeism rate of the employees in the hospital.	14.50%	65.30%	5.20%	9.40%	5.60%	2.26	1.01	1.355	0.155
The attitude of the employees in the hospital has been positive.	29.10%	52.40%	6.00%	9.30%	3.20%	2.05	1.01	1.215	0.155
The performance of the employees has been determined by the implementation of work-life practices such as leave policies	37.10%	49.70%	2.80%	5.60%	4.80%	1.92	1.03	1.567	0.155
Employees stay in this hospital for long because they are valued well.	29.40%	45.60%	8.90%	12.90%	3.20%	2.15	1.08	0.935	0.155
Average						2.18	1.12		

The study found that 71.70% (30.60%+41.10%) of the respondents disagreed that the turnover rate of the employees in the hospitals has been low while 20.60% agreed and 7.70% remained neutral. The study found 68.50% disagreed that the completion rate of the duties set for the employees has been satisfactory, while 28.20% and 3.30% remained neutral. In addition, it was found that 79.80% disagreed there is a low absenteeism rate of the employees in the hospitals, while 15% agreed and 5.20% remained neutral. Further, the study found that 81.50% disagreed that the attitude of the employees in the hospitals has been positive, while 12.50% agreed and 6.00% remained neutral. Furthermore, the study found that 86.80% disagreed that the performance of the employees had been determined by the implementation of work-life practices while 10.40% agreed and 2.80% remained neutral. The study results established that 75% disagreed that employees stay in these hospitals for long because they are valued well, while 16.10% agreed and 8.90% remained neutral. A positive skewness statistic in this study suggests that the responses to the survey questions about employee satisfaction were negatively skewed, with most respondents disagreeing with the statements.

4.3 Diagnostic Tests

The variables were checked for normality, multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity to ensure the regression assumptions were met.

Table 4: Normality Test

Variables	Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Welfare policies	0.078	248	0.090
Employee satisfaction	0.101	248	0.179

The p-values in Table 4 were greater than 0.05, indicating that the data followed a normal distribution. The reliability, validity, and consistency of the results may be guaranteed by evenly dispersing the data.

Table 5: Multicollinearity Test

Variables	VIF
Welfare policies	1.387

The absence of multicollinearity, as shown in Table 5, since the VIF of the variable is less than ten, implies there was no violation of the linear regression model's assumptions and the results obtained were unbiased, efficient and consistent.

Table 5: Heteroscedasticity Test

Ho: Constant variance		
Variable: Employee satisfaction		
chi2(1)	=	4.09
Prob > chi2	=	0.312

The study determines that with a p-value of 0.312, which is greater than the threshold of 0.05, the data is not affected by heteroscedasticity. Heteroscedasticity refers to the condition in which the variance of the error term, or residual, in a regression model, varies widely. The absence of heteroscedasticity, as confirmed by this p-value, indicates that the linear regression model was appropriately applied in this case. This condition, in which residuals possess a constant variance, is known as homoscedasticity. It's an important assumption for linear regression models as it ensures the reliability and validity of the regression estimations. This result enhances the credibility of the findings, making them more objective and reliable. This absence of heteroscedasticity confirms the robustness of the model used, affirming that the observed correlations in the data accurately represent the underlying relationships.

4.4 Inferential Analysis

Inferential analysis is a statistical approach that allows researchers to draw conclusions and make predictions about a population based on data collected from a sample. Correlation analysis examines the strength and direction of the relationship between variables, providing insights into how they are related. Regression analysis goes a step further by modeling the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables, allowing for predictions and hypothesis testing.

Table 6: Correlation Results

		Employee satisfaction	Welfare policies
Employee satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Welfare policies	Pearson Correlation	.633**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

Table 6 shows that there is a positive and statistically significant between the variables. The magnitude and direction of the correlation between the two variables are represented by their beta values. The greater the beta value, the more robust the association. In this scenario, all beta values are positive, showing a positive relationship between the independent factors and worker happiness. The importance of the correlation is shown by the p values. All p-values are less than 0.05, indicating that there is a statistically significant association. This suggests that the correlations between the independent factors and the degree to which workers are satisfied are not coincidental.

Table 7: Regressions of Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.159	0.103		1.539	0.125
Welfare policies	0.271	0.033	0.355	8.294	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Employee satisfaction

$$Y = 0.159 + 0.271X$$

Where: -

Y= Employee satisfaction

X= Welfare policies

The study found that welfare policies are positively and highly related to employee satisfaction ($p=0.000$; $r=.271$). The study's results support those of Chatterjee, Wadhwa, and Patel (2018), who argued that welfare programmes like medical insurance, house allowances, and pay increases have a favourable and substantial influence on employee performance. According to Wamunyu (2016), factors that influence how pleased individuals are with their occupations include pay, working

environment, job descriptions, and career advancement. According to Mmbusa, rewards, incentives, and competitive compensation all have a positive and significant effect on employees' performance (2019). Chepkemo (2020) asserts that factors such as the workplace's culture, opportunity for advancement, training, tools and equipment, pay, and recognition help nurses feel more satisfied with their jobs.

5.0 Conclusion

It has been shown that a unitary improvement in welfare policies would increase employee satisfaction in private hospitals in Nairobi City County by 0.271 units while all other factors remain constant. Welfare policies, such as health benefits, retirement plans and paid time off, positively affect employee satisfaction. Additionally, welfare policies can also improve job satisfaction by demonstrating that an employer values and cares for its employees. The availability of these policies can also be a major factor in attracting and retaining employees, as they can be a significant factor in employee job satisfaction and commitment. Thus, when welfare policies are meticulously designed and effectively communicated, they possess the potential to catalyze a positive impact on employee satisfaction. Such well-curated policies form an indispensable retention tool in the arsenal of an employer, creating a win-win situation for both parties involved. The employer retains a satisfied and committed workforce, and the employees enjoy enhanced job satisfaction and a conducive work environment, leading to superior service delivery in these private hospitals.

6.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that private hospitals in Nairobi City County should have adequate welfare policies in place to support their employees. The stress theory of welfare suggests that employee stress levels should be addressed through welfare policies. Hence, private hospitals in Nairobi City County should provide support for employees who are experiencing stress due to work-related or personal reasons. The welfare policies in the hospitals such as stress management programs, counseling services, and flexible work arrangements, can help employees manage stress levels and improve their wellbeing. It is suggested that a study be conducted to examine the effect of employee competency, leadership style, teamwork and work complexity on employee satisfaction. Likewise, another study can be conducted in other counties and also consider including public hospitals.

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