



## Global Scientific and Academic Research Journal of Economics, Business and Management

ISSN: 2583-5645 (Online)

Frequency: Monthly

Published By GSAR Publishers

Journal Homepage Link- <https://gsarpublishers.com/journals-gsarjebm-home/>



### Understanding the Factors of High Employee Turnover in Nonprofit Organizations: A Qualitative Case Study

BY

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#### Article History

Received: 16/09/2023

Accepted: 20/09/2023

Published: 22/09/2023

Vol – 2 Issue – 9

PP: -38-48

#### Abstract

*High-rate employee turnover remains a pressing concern for organizations, including nonprofit organizations that foster migrants and refugees needing resiliency, self-sufficiency, and access to opportunities. Despite their worthy objectives, nonprofit organizations have been grappling with a high employee turnover rate due to several factors. This study examined the reasons behind employee turnover in the DMV area (DC, Maryland, and Virginia), including pay rate, work environment, and factors such as racism, religion, and fraud that led to injustice or favoritism. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study aimed to shed light on the root causes of the high rate of employee turnover in nonprofit organizations and their impact on the organization's viability and productivity. By understanding these factors, the study provided insights that can guide the development of effective strategies to mitigate turnover, such as enhancing employee wages or salaries, promoting a healthy work environment, and banning injustice or favoritism. These strategies would contribute to meeting stakeholder satisfaction and support nonprofit organizations in achieving their mission of fostering positive social change by developing society and improving the lives of migrants or refugees in the local communities.*

**Keywords:** Employee Turnover, Effective Strategies, Stakeholder Satisfaction.

#### Introduction

Employee turnover is a critical concern for any organization as it impacts productivity and long-term growth or success. DeSimone and Roberts [1] argued that to promote nonprofit organizations' development, nonprofit leaders or managers should promote positive social change by improving the quality of life for others at local, state, national, or even global levels. Kaplan [2] added that nonprofit organizations are not dedicated to financial profits but to advancing the public interest. In the case of nonprofit organizations dedicated to empowering individuals in need and fostering resilient, self-sufficient communities, the high rate of employee turnover poses significant challenges. Despite nonprofit organizations' noble mission of creating a positive environment and facilitating access to opportunities, they have grappled with several factors contributing to employees leaving their jobs

[3]. This paper explored the primary reasons behind the high employee turnover in nonprofit organizations, which may have different causes, such as low pay, an unhealthy work environment, and issues related to racism, religion, fraud, and the prevalence of favoritism. Identifying and understanding these factors may be significant for nonprofit leaders or managers to develop strategies to mitigate turnover, improve employee satisfaction, and enhance nonprofit organizations' ability to fulfill their missions.

#### Research Objective

This qualitative multiple case study explored effective strategies nonprofit leaders or managers need to reduce the high rate of employee turnover in their organizations to reach their missions or goals. To respond to this question, this study analyzed real factors that motivate nonprofit employees to quit their jobs.



## Literature Review

Employee turnover is a complex issue that can significantly affect organizational success, productivity, and viability. This literature review explored existing research and scholarly works on employee turnover in nonprofit organizations. By examining the factors contributing to high turnover rates, this review provided a comprehensive understanding of the problem analyzed and offered insights for potential solutions. In the following literature review, we explored the conceptual framework of job embeddedness theory and the supporting leadership theory to reduce voluntary employee turnover in nonprofit organizations. We also explored the causes of employee turnover, work environment, ethics and regulations, and the role of nonprofit organizations.

## Job Embeddedness Theory

The job embeddedness theory was the conceptual framework of this study. Mitchell et al. [4] developed the job embeddedness theory to demonstrate that connection, position, and sacrifice are the three primary factors that justify employee retention. Per Mitchell et al. [4], job embeddedness theory is the combination of three elements: (a) links, (b) fits, and (c) sacrifices that contribute to organizational employee retention or reduce employee turnover. Per Mitchell et al. [4], there is a relationship between individuals' alignment with organizational goals, their perception of an organization, and the sacrifice that employers offer to motivate employees to remain or quit an organization. Mitchell et al. [4] added that employees develop social, psychological, or financial aspects that benefit an organization's viability. Therefore, employees and organizations should be related and have a positive relationship for the organization's success. On the contrary, failure to promote significant work relationships between employees and employers could lead to higher employee turnover [5].

In addition, job embeddedness theory can significantly reduce employee turnover because it refers to the web of connections and factors that make employees feel connected, invested, and committed to their organization and community. Ni et al. [6] argued that nonprofit organizations often operate within specific communities, have a solid connection to the people they serve, and emphasize the importance of community integration. When employees feel a sense of belonging and link to their community, they are more likely to develop a more profound commitment to the organization and its mission [6]. Per Chagadama et al. [5], managers or leaders should promote community integration by encouraging employees to engage with community members, participate in community events, and foster relationships with stakeholders.

Moreover, many researchers argued that job embeddedness theory recognizes the significance of organizational fit in retaining employees [5, 6]. Chagadama et al. [5] added that managers or leaders should focus on aligning employees' values, interests, and skills with the organization's mission and values and ensure that employees feel a strong sense of alignment and purpose in their work to reduce the likelihood of turnover. Ni et al. [6] opined that solid social connections

within the workplace are essential for job embeddedness because they foster a sense of camaraderie, trust, and support in organizations that can reduce turnover. As job embeddedness theory recognizes the influence of job satisfaction on employee retention, nonprofit organizations can focus on providing opportunities for employee autonomy, recognizing meritocracy, rewarding productive employees, and offering competitive compensation and benefits. Employees feel satisfied with their jobs and believe their work is valued and appreciated. This is likely a factor that may increase employee motivation to remain committed to the organization.

Nonprofit organizations can also work to increase employees' perceived sacrifices associated with leaving the organization, such as losing social connections, meaningful work, or growth opportunities. They can also provide employees with a clear understanding of the unique benefits and opportunities of being part of the organization, making the perceived alternatives less attractive. Mitchell et al. [4] stated that job embeddedness theory could be valuable in reducing employee turnover and retaining employees in organizations by focusing on community integration, organizational fit, social connections, job satisfaction, and perception of alternatives and sacrifices. Furthermore, nonprofit organizations can enhance job embeddedness and create an environment where employees feel connected, committed, and motivated to stay with the organization. To sustain nonprofit organization viability, nonprofit leaders or managers might explore the benefits of job embeddedness theory to implement effective strategies to retain devoted employees for high performance, especially in the current business environment where competition has increased because of globalization and technological innovation.

## Supporting Theory of Leadership

Leaders or managers of nonprofit organizations may use leadership theory to increase employee retention or reduce turnover. Job embeddedness theory primarily focuses on employee retention. In contrast, leadership theory focuses on how managers or leaders may lead followers or employees to improve their skills and align with the mission or vision of the organization to reach organizational goals [4]. Job embeddedness theory provided a solid theoretical framework for this study; nonprofit leaders or managers may also use leadership tenets to support increasing employee retention or mitigating turnover in nonprofit organizations [4,6].

Effective leadership sets the tone for the organizational culture, creates a supportive work environment, and fosters employee engagement and satisfaction [7]. Jaman et al. [7] argued that influential leaders should be able to shape an organization's culture by fostering a positive work culture that promotes open communication, frank collaboration, and employee well-being. Leaders can create an environment where employees feel valued, respected, and motivated to stay with the organization. Nonprofit leaders or managers should build a strong, cohesive team to achieve organizational missions efficiently.

Real leaders should improve employee motivation and retention by creating, maintaining, and ensuring a team's success [4]. For instance, utilizing a suitable leadership style in nonprofit organizations is crucial to increase customer satisfaction and reduce employee turnover. Jaman [7] opined that leaders or managers could use transactional, transformational, or *laissez-faire* leadership to establish substantial mutual benefits between organizations and customers and restore the organization's image, which may be beneficial for reducing employee turnover.

Similarly, Mohd Zin et al. [8] used an empirical study to examine the influence of transformational leadership, job enrichment, and recognition on employee job satisfaction in nonprofit organizations. The authors found that enrichment, transformational leadership, and recognition significantly increased job satisfaction. Their results also indicated that transformational leadership is critical in promoting job enrichment, and employee recognition, reducing voluntary turnover. Therefore, nonprofit leaders may use transactional leadership theory to reward and motivate employees who desire to remain or stay in the organization.

In addition, transactional leadership is critical for leaders to assess employees' work or production. According to Jaman et al. [7], using transactional leadership theory promotes a positive change in employee behaviors and attitudes. Similarly, Febrian et al. [9] used qualitative analysis to examine the impact of transactional leadership on performance in nonprofit organizations. Febrian et al. [9] found that transactional leadership in nonprofit organizations aligned employee and organization performance. Hence, leaders use transformational and transactional leadership to meet organizational goals. Nonprofit managers or leaders might use transactional leadership to motivate employees, promote a positive mutual exchange between employees and employers, and reduce turnover.

In conclusion, combining job embeddedness and leadership is strategic to mitigate employee turnover in nonprofit organizations. Influential nonprofit leaders or managers should create a positive work culture, provide clear direction, promote employee development, build trust and relationships, address concerns, and lead by example. By focusing on appropriate or effective leadership practices, nonprofit organizations can cultivate a supportive and engaging environment that retains talented employees and contributes to long-term success.

### Causes of Employee Turnover

The causes of employee turnover in organizations may arise from diverse sources. Chagadama [4] stated that employee turnover might be voluntary or involuntary based on the causes or origins. Per Chagadama et al. [4], voluntary employee turnover is when an employee decides to quit by resigning, retiring, or involuntarily when an employer forces an employee to leave the organization. Jaman et al. [7] argued that the causes of employee turnover can vary depending on the specific context and organizational dynamics. Nonprofit organizations often struggle with limited financial resources,

resulting in lower salaries and benefits than for-profit organizations. Yidaan and Boateng [10] stated that inadequate compensation could lead to dissatisfaction and increasing turnover. Yidaan and Boateng [10] added that nonprofit organizations often lack formal career advancement structure and development compared to profit organizations, which may motivate employees to leave their organizations. Also, the lack of professional growth and development opportunities can discourage employees from staying long-term, especially those with specific skills and qualifications [10].

Moreover, nonprofit organizations often operate with limited staff and human resources, which may lead to heavy workloads and high stress levels. Per Jaman et al. [7], the demanding nature of the work and a sense of urgency in serving the organization's mission can contribute to burnout and prompt employees to seek positions with a better work-life balance. Additionally, poor leadership, ineffective communication, and a negative organizational culture can negatively impact employee morale and job satisfaction, especially when employees feel undervalued, unsupported, or disengaged because of a toxic work environment [7]. Chagadama et al. [4] added that the lack, for instance, of recognition and reward can result in diminished job satisfaction and increased turnover because employees may feel unappreciated or undervalued if their efforts and achievements are not acknowledged. Luamba et al. [11] opined that a specific mission and values drive nonprofit organizations. When employees' values and expectations do not align with the organization's mission or culture, they may feel disconnected and seek other job opportunities that better align with their beliefs and goals.

Limited Resources and Support are also a big concern in nonprofit organizations operating on tight budgets with limited resources. Some researchers argued that insufficient training, lack of professional development opportunities, and inadequate support systems could contribute to dissatisfaction and turnover [7, 11]. Jaman et al. [7] discussed that improving compensation and benefits, creating opportunities for career growth, promoting work-life balance, fostering a positive organizational culture, and enhancing resources and support for employees are factors that nonprofit managers or leaders need to address to reduce turnover and retain talented employees who are committed to their mission. As nonprofit organizations face unique challenges contributing to higher turnover rates than their for-profit counterparts, previous studies have shown that limited resources, low salaries, and a lack of organizational stability can negatively impact employee retention [11, 12]. Additionally, nonprofits often have trouble offering competitive compensation packages, leading to employee dissatisfaction and increased turnover.

### Impact of Work Environment on Employee Turnover

Improving the work environment is crucial for reducing voluntary employee turnover. Chagadama et al. [5] argued that a positive work environment impacts employees'

decisions or desire to leave or stay in the organization. Chagadama et al. [5] added that the work environment might be physical or nonphysical and can affect employees directly or indirectly with factors such as lighting, air temperature, working space, security, or cleanliness. Then, creating the right work environment is paramount to reducing employee turnover [5]. Using the conceptual model and surveys, Nassar et al. [13] analyzed the influence of work-life balance and workplace fun on employee retention and the mediating effect of perceived organization and co-worker support in international nonprofit organizations. Nassar et al. [13] found a good correlation between workplace fun and work-life balance, and the association between workplace fun, work-life balance, and employee retention was mediated by the supervisor with co-worker support. In their analysis, Fallatah et al. found that an excellent work environment allowed employees to be performant, productive, and committed to the organization, increasing retention. Jaman et al. [7] opined that a toxic work environment may affect employee behaviors because it can lead to stress, fatigue, depression, and anxiety. Factors such as high workload, lack of work-life balance, poor management practices, and insufficient support systems can lead to employee dissatisfaction and subsequent turnover [5].

On the contrary, Slatten et al. [14] argued that an excellent work environment creates happiness, increases productivity, and enhances retention. Chagadama et al. [5] added that a comfortable work environment positively impacts employee morale and reduces voluntary turnover. Employee perception of their working environment significantly affects their physical and psychological health [13]. Santosa and Mubarak [15] analyzed the effect of organizational factors, compensation, and work environment on employees' performance. Using a descriptive methodology of the t-test, Santosa and Mubarak found that a positive work environment should comprise all aspects, including an employee's body and mind. Numerous researchers confirmed that improving a positive work environment may reduce voluntary employee turnover and promote high organizational commitment [5, 7, 14]. Many researchers suggested that implementing a positive work environment characterized by open communication, supportive leadership, and opportunities for growth and development can significantly reduce employee turnover rates [5, 7, 13, 14]. Nonprofit managers or leaders should create favorable working conditions to influence employees' spirit of responsibility in the workplace, which may motivate them to stay in the organization and contribute to reducing turnover.

### Ethics and Regulations Compliance

Ethics and regulations are valuable factors that promote transparency and positive organizational behaviors. Luamba et al. [11] argued that federal and state governments had established regulatory enforcement and compliance frameworks to conduct businesses reasonably and fairly and prevent harmful practices. Complying with ethical values and legal and regulatory frameworks is crucial for employers and employees to avoid misconduct practices such as fraud, penalization, corruption, money laundering, conflict of interest, harassment, and other negative behaviors that can

negatively affect performance [12]. Ethical and regulatory frameworks are also managerial tools for assessing the management team's responsibility and ability to mitigate the risk of noncompliance [11, 12].

In nonprofit organizations where the relationship between stakeholders is based on trust, it is essential to promote ethical values and regulations to prevent factors such as racism, religion, and favoritism that often occur. Moreover, discrimination and unfair treatment based on race, religion, or personal connections can devastate employees' and nonprofit organizations' overall functioning. Then, the involvement of the government, the organization itself, and adherence to ethical norms are essential because:

(a) Government bodies can play a crucial role in addressing discrimination and unfair practices and enforce legislation that protects individuals from discrimination based on race, religion, or other personal characteristics [12]. Also, laws and regulations should be established to ensure equal employment opportunities and prevent favoritism within organizations [11]. Furthermore, government agencies can also provide oversight and investigate instances of fraud or unethical behavior, imposing penalties and promoting accountability.

(b) Organizational policies and procedures must proactively develop and implement comprehensive policies and procedures that explicitly prohibit racism, religious discrimination, fraud, and favoritism by establishing fair recruitment, promotion, and decision-making processes, ensuring transparency and equal opportunities for all employees. Also, leaders or managers of nonprofit organizations should implement a culture that promotes diversity, inclusion, and ethical behavior, with zero tolerance for discrimination or fraud [12].

(c) Ethical norms and codes of conduct should be adopted and promoted to reflect organizational values and commitment to fairness, equality, and integrity [11]. These codes should explicitly address issues related to racism, religion, fraud, and favoritism by outlining expected behaviors and consequences for any violations. Also, regular training and awareness programs should be conducted to educate employees about ethical standards and ensure their adherence throughout the organization.

To mitigate negative behaviors in nonprofit organizations, Bye and Luamba [12] advised that nonprofit managers should have strategies such as promoting diversity and inclusion by implementing recruitment strategies that prioritize diversity, providing training on cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias, encouraging diverse perspectives, and ensuring equal opportunities for growth and advancement. Blye and Luamba [12] added that nonprofit leaders or managers should establish mechanisms to encourage employees to report fraud, discrimination, or unethical behavior without fear of retaliation. For instance, implementing whistleblower protection policies safeguards those who come forward with information about wrongdoing. Also, establishing confidential reporting channels, independent investigations, and appropriate disciplinary actions are crucial for creating an



environment where employees feel safe to speak up against discriminatory practices or fraud.

To effectively achieve its mission and serve the community, government bodies, nonprofit organizations, and adherence to ethical norms can work together to mitigate the impacts of racism, religion, fraud, and favoritism. Creating inclusive and ethical work environments is crucial for employees and all stakeholders involved in nonprofit activities.

## Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations, also known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or not-for-profit organizations, operate for purposes other than generating profit [11]. Luamba et al. [11] argued that nonprofit organizations are typically focused on serving the public or a specific cause, such as charitable, educational, scientific, religious, or social purposes. Nonprofit organizations use their revenues to accomplish their mission rather than distributing profits to owners or shareholders, which is the opposite of profit organizations [12].

Moreover, the primary differences between nonprofit and for-profit organizations are sources of income or revenue and how they use their financial resources. Profit organizations aim to generate profit for their owners or shareholders, while nonprofit organizations serve the public interest or advance a specific cause [12]. Nonprofits rely on various funding sources, including grants, donations, and fundraising activities, to support their operations and pursue their mission. Furthermore, nonprofits do not have owners or shareholders who receive dividends or profits from the organization but typically have a board of directors or trustees who oversee the organization's activities and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements [12]. Nonprofit organizations are tax-exempt status.

On the other hand, profit organizations aim to maximize profits for their owners or shareholders, and any surplus revenues are reinvested back into the organization to realize its mission and programs. For-profit organizations pay certain taxes on their income and assets and have a leadership structure that includes executives and shareholders who make decisions to maximize profitability [12]. For-profit organizations follow financial reporting standards to provide information to shareholders and investors. They can access capital through various means, including equity financing, loans, and investment from shareholders or investors [11].

It's important to note that while nonprofit organizations are focused on their social or public mission, they still require effective management and financial sustainability to fulfill their purpose and positively impact their clients and local communities.

## Qualitative Methodology

To gain a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to high employee turnover in nonprofit organizations, a qualitative methodology and case study design approach using interviews with individuals who have left the organization can provide valuable insights. Yin [16] argued that qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of individuals'

experiences, perceptions, and subjective viewpoints, which can provide rich and nuanced information on the reasons behind high rate turnover. Per Yin [16], researchers may also use other methodologies such as quantitative, which is based on collecting data that can be measured to test hypotheses, or mixed method, which is very complex because it combines both qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative and mixed methods were inappropriate for this study because we did not collect measurable data. Researchers may also use several designs, such as case studies, phenomenology, or narrative [16]. This study used a case study design because it allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific case. As Yin [16] stated, narrative and phenomenology were unsuitable because narrative design interprets stories to understand why people perceive their experiences.

In contrast, phenomenology research involves using people's lived experiences to investigate a phenomenon. By conducting interviews with different people from different locations, researchers can gather detailed information and capture the multifaceted nature of the issue. Using interviews will also enable the researchers to delve into the complexities of the organizational culture, work environment, and specific incidents that may have influenced the decision to leave. Through qualitative interviews, researchers can also gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of former employees and uncover insights that quantitative methods may not capture.

## Population and Sampling

Finding an appropriate population or sample in qualitative research is paramount to getting credible information from individuals or groups who understand the phenomenon analyzed [16]. Many people have left nonprofit organizations for various reasons or causes; we used the sampling method to select a representative sample of 8 participants who met the eligibility criteria, which were being a former full-time employee for more than three months in a nonprofit organization fostering migrants or refugees located in the DC Metro Area, which includes the state of Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, DC. Yin [16] suggested that a representative sample size of a minimum of 5 participants is acceptable in qualitative analysis. For this study, participants were selected using the purposive sampling method based on their experience working in nonprofit organizations that promote self-sufficiency and positive social change for migrants or refugees in the local communities. To identify and select a representative sample of participants for this multiple case study, we used the Internet and Google search engine to search in socio-media for the potential participants who worked in the DC metro nonprofit organizations. The initial sample included eight participants from different locations in the DC Metro area (see Table 1) who met the eligibility criteria. Participants agreed to participate freely without compensation and understood the benefits of this study.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Data of Participants*

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Work Experience/Yr</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of Job</i>
P1	1Yrs 6 Months	VA	
P2	6 Months	VA	
P3	1 Yr 3 Months	MD	
P4	4 Months	DC	
P5	11 Months	MD	
P6	10 Months	VA	
P7	1 Yr 7 Months	MD	
P8	1 Yr 11 Months	DC	

Note.

P=Participants (1, 2, 3, ...,8)

## Procedures

The primary research question was: What strategies do nonprofit leaders or managers need to reduce the high employee turnover rate?

### Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your experience working at your former NGO job and why you left the organization?
2. How did the level of compensation at your former NGO job impact your job satisfaction and contribute to your decision to leave?
3. In what ways did the work environment at your former NGO job contribute to your decision to leave? Can you provide specific examples?
4. Did you experience unethical behaviors during your time at your former NGO job? If so, how did it affect your job satisfaction and decision to leave?
5. Were you observed or experienced other misconduct practices at your former NGO job? How did these incidents impact your decision to leave?
6. Did you perceive unfair treatment regarding promotions, assignments, or decision-making processes at your job? How did this influence your job satisfaction and decision to leave?
7. Do you have any other suggestions regarding your experience at your former NGO job?

The responses from former full-time employees to these interview questions may provide valuable insights into the challenges and experiences that have influenced their decisions to leave their job.

The interviews were organized at the participants' agreed locations. All participants responded to the same questions within 30 to 40 minutes. After the interviews, we used member checking for data reliability and credibility. We collected additional information from the public and other official sources for data triangulation and consistency. We confirmed validity and reliability to establish credibility by mitigating bias and ensuring trustworthiness in the data analysis.

## Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process that converts raw data into a message that meets the researcher's conclusion, interpretation, or understanding of a topic [16]. As described by Yin [16], data analysis has five processes: (a) data compiling, (b) disassembling of data into subsets, (c) reassembling data into patterns/themes, (d) interpreting of the data, and (e) developing of conclusions. For this study, we followed the five-step process and used methodological triangulation for data analysis.

We also used methodological triangulation from multiple external sources, such as interviews, companies' and official sources, to validate the study's processes. Yin [16] argued that methodological triangulation might help mitigate bias and misinterpretation of the data. Per Yin [16], qualitative researchers must use multiple sources to explore a phenomenon's various levels and software such as NVivo to improve the quality of data analyzed. NVivo is also used to code and categorize emerging themes and data similarities. This study used NVivo 12 to sort, code, organize, and analyze data. NVivo 12 also helped to create codes based on the research question and conceptual framework. NVivo 12 was also used to identify patterns and themes and reorganize emerging themes that enabled answers to the overarching research question. The three major themes that emerged from data analysis were (a) Low pay wages or salary, (b) unhealthy work environment, and (c) favoritism based on religion and racism.

## Presentation of Findings

### 1.1. Theme 1: Low Income from Wages or Salary Payment

The first theme that emerged was low income from wages or salary. Responses for low-income programs came from interview questions 2, 5, and 6, which focused on income and salary compensation based on job assignments. All participants agreed that inadequate job compensation increased their desire to live because of the higher cost of living in the DMV area. Jaipong et al. [17] used a systematic documentary review method to analyze employee turnover. In their analysis, Jaipong et al. [17] found that competitive compensation is crucial in increasing the motivation to belong to the organization and the productivity of the company's workforce, resulting in greater job satisfaction. Chagadama et al. [5] attested that a competitive remuneration strategy increases employee commitment and retention. The participants also revealed that low income negatively affected their daily living conditions because they could not cover basic expenses such as paying rent and other utility bills. P3, P4, P6, and P8 noted that having an adequate salary is essential because it may cover the basic needs expenses and prevent bankruptcy. All participants also agreed that having a fair or competitive wage is critical to increasing job satisfaction and motivation to remain working in the same organization.

P1, P2, and P5 added that a fair salary should help save money for investment and cover unexpected expenses such as

returning to school or paying additional bills. Chagadama et al. [4] opined that employers must offer compensations that meet employees' needs based on the real fact of life to increase employee retention. Failure to pay essential expenses may lead to lower credit scores and affect employee morale. For example, P7 stated, "I wanted my job since when I was hired, but when I saw the salary gap between other colleagues for the same job category, in the same industry and location, I was shocked and understood that my NGO does not pay well. I decided to look to other opportunities." P2 echoed, "I got paid 7 hours daily in an NGO while profit organizations pay 7.5 or 8 hours daily. I feel like I am losing my salary every day by working in nonprofit organizations". P3 stated, "I always believe in my organization's missions and values to improve client satisfaction. That's why I worked longer than other colleagues who left just after 3 or 6 months of work. I sometimes spent my money solving clients' urgent issues such as transportation, food, or medicines. However, some of my reimbursement requests have never been paid or paid late, while we have low pay in the industry. The lack of my leaders or managers to implement strategies to pay salaries based on the real business environment has discouraged me and motivated me to leave the organization."

P4 added, "The salary in nonprofit organizations is not always based on education or experience. I have a master's degree and get paid the same salary as those with an associate's or high school degree. Also, some people got hired using fake foreign school degrees and get paid the same salary as those who meet the job qualification." All participants confirmed that the organization should have a fair pay policy based on job qualification and experience to mitigate voluntary employee turnover. P1, P2, P4, P7, and P8 stated that for economic reasons, they have two jobs and live in high debt conditions to cover all their basic expenses. Their statements align with job embeddedness tenets, requiring managers or leaders to align the job with competitive compensation to increase employee link and retention and reduce voluntary turnover. All participants' statements also aligned with job embeddedness theory and leadership tenets, which sustain paying a competitive salary to increase the sense of belonging to the organization. Managers or leaders in nonprofit organizations should use the job embeddedness theory to align job qualification with salary, increase job satisfaction, and reduce employee turnover.

### 1.2 Theme 2: Promoting a Healthy Work Environment

The second emerging theme was promoting a healthy work environment where employees feel happy and welcome. Responses for the impact of the work environment on high turnover came from interview questions 3 and 5, which focused on improving working conditions. DeSimone and Roberts [1] argued that nonprofit agents in social services are essential to assist needy people in being self-sufficient or increasing living satisfaction. They are vital to relieving people from suffering, fighting for social justice, and improving lives in local communities [1]. However, with the increasing cases of poverty caused by social injustice and

economic impacts, social workers are under pressure because of the rising number of needy people who need social assistance [12].

Moreover, with insufficient resources and limited access to appropriate financial capital, nonprofit organizations often face poor leadership, leading to inadequate working conditions [11]. Furthermore, the proper administration to align people to the organization's mission is essential to help people without consideration of gender, religion, or race; however, some managers or leaders take advantage of poor leadership conditions to impose a dictatorship, mitigate trust, which lead to worsening the working conditions. In promoting a healthy work environment, managers or leaders are more likely to increase job satisfaction and employee retention [5].

The roles of job embeddedness and leadership tenets are crucial for promoting a healthy work environment and reducing turnover in nonprofit workplaces. For example, P2, P5, P6, and P7 argued that the lack of appropriate managerial strategies to promote a positive work environment deteriorated the attachment to their organizations and increased their voluntary desire to leave their companies. Participants P1, P3, P4, and P8 attested that many nonprofit managers are sometimes confused about leading people and managing things, which leads to noncompliance with organizational policies. P2, P5, and P7 shared their experience of many workplace religions, politics, harassment by supervisors or clients, lack of recognition for achievements, and discrimination based on ethnicity or gender. It reduced their morale and productivity, and they felt unsafe and uncomfortable and ultimately decided to resign. P7 opined, "I am stressed to see every day my colleagues and supervisors at work speaking their native languages all day, even in meetings. They are also from the same race. I found it racist and decided to resign for a better work environment." P3 stated, "Most of my colleagues are from the same religion and culture, and the fact that the organization hires only people from the same culture instead of promoting diversity has increased my frustration at work. Also, I saw people laughing at me when talking about politics or religion. This negatively affected my morale at work, so I decided to move to another better work environment." P1, P4, and P6 attested that they experienced many cases of supervisors who misused and mislocated organization assets allocated to buy, such as office furniture, to improve working conditions. For P1, P4, and P6, the managers or supervisors used organizations' assets for personal use while employees needed those items to perform their tasks. P8 added, "The influence of religion is increasing and making the NGO work environment insane. For instance, the fact that people pray everywhere, in the office, bathroom, hallway, breakroom, etc., makes the work environment related to a particular religion.

Moreover, I even saw some people jumping into the bathroom sink to wash their legs. I reported it to my supervisors, but no action was taken. Because it was often and often, I decided to live the organization and have peace of mind." Furthermore, P2 argued that " Noncompliance with governmental regulations is another fact that affects our work environment.

The hiring managers use race, religion, native language, or country of origin as hiring criteria. I also experienced one top manager explaining his religion in an official meeting. I found it unethical because the discussion of religion and political matters are not allowed according to the USA Federal laws". P7 added, "I experienced many times some supervisors' allowing benefits to only clients from their obedience and opposed to other clients because of culture, race, or religion membership." P8 argued, "The lack of promoting diversity has created division and conflict between people because of religion, race, or culture. Because no one acted, I moved to another job opportunity for a better work environment." P6 also argued, "Because of the influence of foreign culture on organization values, some colleagues were even trying to oppose employees with clients by sharing some decisions or strategies taken in the meeting." Based on the above facts, nonprofit leaders or managers should use job embeddedness and leadership tenets to promote transparency and diversity, increase trust among employees and managers, and cultivate a healthy work environment.

### 1.3. Theme: Injustice or Favoritism

The third emerging theme was the increasing cases of negative behaviors such as injustice and favoritism. Responses for the impacts of injustice or favoritism came from interview questions 1 and 6, which focused on experiencing injustice and partiality at work or while dealing with clients or colleagues. Nonprofit organizations encompass various services and have many opportunities for career growth or benefits [11]. Nonprofit organizations have implemented policies and regulations that everyone without exception needs to comply with to enforce policies and promote effectiveness [12]. Blye and Luamba [12] argued that negative behaviors such as injustice and favoritism would likely destroy the organization's image and stakeholder trust. However, promoting ethical values should be the primary role of nonprofit leaders to increase transparency and sustain the organization's longevity. Several initiatives have been undertaken to prevent negative behaviors, such as the code of ethics and encouraging compliance with federal and state regulations [11, 12].

The data collected from interviews and public reports indicated that the success of a nonprofit organization depends on top managers' strategies to mitigate negative or unethical behaviors such as injustice or favoritism. However, because of weak management practices, some leaders or managers take advantage of their position to promote or cultivate injustice or favoritism at work. P1, P3, P4, P7, and P8 indicated that unfair hiring and promotion processes occurred several times, affecting their morale and job satisfaction. All participants agreed that favoritism and injustice happened often, even in some minor cases. For instance, P2 stated, "Based on my job experience and qualifications, I applied three times for higher open positions and never offered the positions. I don't know why. Instead, one position was offered to a colleague friend of the director and the other to family members close to the director. It was too much for me. I was disappointed and quit the organization because I couldn't support that injustice and

favoritism." P1 opined, "I found out that two of my recently hired colleagues were promoted because they were close relative to the hiring manager and director. The two colleagues disclosed that they had a job promise before coming to the USA. I was surprised to see that because I was training them for the job, but they became my supervisors. That was why I decided to quit my job for a profit organization where promotions are mostly based on employee productivity than favoritism. ". P5 added: "I have an American bachelor's degree, which matches my job qualification. My supervisor rejected my request for another position and promoted a colleague from his country of origin and religion. Moreover, the colleague was hired and promoted with his foreign degree, which is not recognized in the USA education program. I found it as a favoritism act and unjust behavior and decided to quit."

P6 echoed, "I saw the hiring managers holding job interview meetings in their foreign languages instead of English. They even laughed at me to show that their language is more important than speaking English. The colleague who was hired and who didn't speak English well was writing his reports in his native language and used Google translator to present his reports ". P5 added, "I was surprised to see some of my colleagues who just arrived in the USA as our clients, with parolee status, still learning English and American culture got hired and promoted even at the director level, while it took me six months working as a volunteer before getting hired. I have also never been promoted while I was teaching them all the job. Moreover, our company policies do not allow hiring former clients. Seeing my organization violate its policies and use unfair practices surprised me. Also, I know people who are actively applying for jobs and never have that chance to be hired." P8 disclosed, "I learned from my peers that the lack of an efficient audit and control was one of the factors that promote injustice and favoritism." Previous researchers argued that misconduct practices or unethical behaviors often occur when the organization has weak control or audit [11, 12].

All participants agreed that injustice or favoritism is a real problem in the management system. Participants also attested that unfair hiring, promotion, and resource allocations have increased and created the desire to quit their organization. Their arguments aligned with the findings of Blye and Luamba [12], who argued that effective managers should have appropriate management and leadership to implement transparency, increase trust, and mitigate unethical practices and behaviors in nonprofit organizations. The findings of this study indicated that the key factors to minimize turnover are paying a competitive salary, promoting a healthy work environment, and ethical practices. However, finding appropriate solutions to these three significant factors would efficiently retain employees or reduce employee turnover for a long-term career in nonprofit organizations. The participants also identified several challenges managers should address to increase trust. These include affecting the right people at the correct positions, verifying foreign degree authenticity, and



using employee surveys to assess their managers' relationships.

**Table 2**

*Degree of Participants' Adherence to the Themes*

Nodes/Themes	Number of Participants	% of Participants Agreement with the Themes
Increasing wages or salary	8	100
Improving work environment	7	88
Banning injustice and favoritism	7	88

**Discussion**

The issue of high employee turnover due to factors such as low pay, an unhealthy work environment, racism, religion, fraud, and favoritism in nonprofit organizations is a significant concern that needs to be addressed. The discussion surrounding this topic involves recognizing the detrimental impacts of these factors and exploring potential solutions to mitigate turnover and create a more positive work environment.

Firstly, the detrimental impacts of these factors cannot be understated. Low pay can lead to financial stress and dissatisfaction among employees, ultimately driving them to seek higher-paying opportunities elsewhere. An unhealthy work environment characterized by excessive workload, lack of support, and poor management practices can negatively affect employee well-being, motivation, and job satisfaction. Discrimination based on race, religion, or personal connections creates a hostile work environment, erodes trust, and hampers team dynamics. Instances of fraud undermine organizational integrity, erode trust among employees, and can have legal consequences. Favoritism leads to perceptions of unfairness, inequality, and a lack of meritocracy, which can breed employee resentment and frustration.

To address these issues, organizations can implement a range of strategies. Improving compensation and benefits packages can help attract and retain talented employees. Creating a positive work environment entails fostering open communication, providing adequate support, promoting work-life balance, and nurturing a culture of respect and inclusivity. Organizations should actively work to eliminate discrimination and bias through training, awareness programs, and the establishment of policies that promote diversity and inclusion. Robust ethical standards, codes of conduct, and whistleblower protection mechanisms should be in place to prevent fraud and encourage reporting of unethical behavior.

Additionally, organizational leaders should prioritize employee feedback, engagement, and professional development opportunities. Regularly seeking employee input, listening to their concerns, and acting upon feedback can enhance job satisfaction and morale. Providing growth opportunities, recognizing employee achievements, and

offering clear career paths can contribute to a sense of value and purpose within the organization.

The discussion surrounding high employee turnover in nonprofit organizations due to factors such as low pay, an unhealthy work environment, racism, religion, fraud, and favoritism is critical. By acknowledging the detrimental impacts of these factors and implementing strategies that address them, organizations can foster a more positive and inclusive work environment, reduce turnover rates, and ultimately enhance their ability to fulfill their mission. It requires a collective effort from government bodies, organizations themselves, and adherence to ethical norms to create a supportive and equitable work culture that attracts, retains, and empowers employees to contribute to the organization's success.

**Recommendations**

1. **Improve Compensation:** Addressing the issue of low pay should be a priority for nonprofit managers or leaders. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the organization's budget to identify potential areas for reallocation and consider seeking additional funding sources to provide competitive salaries. By offering better compensation packages, nonprofit organizations can attract and retain talented employees and reduce turnover.
2. **Enhance Work Environment:** Creating a positive and supportive work environment that values employee well-being is crucial for an organization's success. Implementing measures to promote work-life balance, providing adequate resources and support for employees, and frequent open communication and collaboration should be a priority for top nonprofit managers or leaders to assess the organizational climate and address any issues that may contribute to a toxic work environment.
3. **Foster Diversity and Inclusion:** managers or leaders should develop appropriate policies and training programs to address racism, religious discrimination, and favoritism. Promoting diversity and inclusion within the organization, ensuring equal opportunities for all employees, establishing a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory behaviors, and creating a safe and inclusive environment for employees must be a priority for nonprofit managers or leaders to thrive.
4. **Strengthen Ethical Practices:** Nonprofit managers or leaders should implement rigorous ethical standards and anti-fraud measures to ensure a healthy work environment. Nonprofit leaders or managers should also Conduct regular audits and internal reviews to detect and address fraud or unethical behaviors. Encourage employees to report any suspicions or concerns and ensure there are appropriate channels for whistleblowing.



## Suggestions

1. Employee Feedback and Engagement: Implement mechanisms for regular employee feedback and engagement, such as anonymous surveys, suggestion boxes, or focus groups. Actively listen to employee concerns, suggestions, and ideas, and take appropriate action based on their feedback. This approach will help identify areas for improvement and make employees feel valued and heard.
2. Professional Development and Growth Opportunities: Provide opportunities for professional development and career growth within nonprofit organizations. Offer training programs, mentorship initiatives, and clear pathways for advancement. Investing in employees' skills and personal growth can increase job satisfaction and foster organizational loyalty.
3. Performance Recognition and Rewards: Establish a system for recognizing and rewarding employee performance and achievements. Implement fair and transparent processes for evaluating and acknowledging employees' contributions. Recognizing and rewarding employees' efforts can boost morale and motivation, reducing turnover.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, high employee turnover poses a significant challenge for nonprofit organizations, impeding their ability to foster resilient, self-sufficient, and welcoming communities. This study has identified several key factors contributing to turnover, including low pay, an unhealthy work environment, issues related to racism and religion, instances of fraud, and favoritism. By implementing the recommendations and suggestions outlined above, nonprofit managers or leaders can work towards mitigating turnover and enhancing employee satisfaction. Improving compensation, fostering a positive work environment, promoting diversity and inclusion, strengthening ethical practices, and prioritizing employee feedback and growth opportunities are crucial in reducing turnover and creating a supportive and engaged workforce. By addressing these issues, nonprofit managers or leaders can cultivate a culture that values employees, retains talent, and better serves its mission.

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