

**EMPLOYEE WELFARE AND HEALTH WORKERS' TURNOVER IN BUNGOMA COUNTY,  
KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The turnover rate of employees is the greatest puzzling concern of contemporary establishments' situation. More often employee turnover causes deterioration of quality of service rendered by a given organization over time. The study sought to find out how the compensation to the employees influences the turnover among the health workers in Bungoma County. The study was anchored on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, expectancy and equity theories. The research adopted a descriptive survey research design and employed cluster and simple random sampling techniques to obtain the requisite sample from 594 healthcare workers. The sample comprised of head of health facilities in the county, medical superintendents, medical doctors, sub county directors of health, 22 hospital administrators and further from the county and sub county referral hospitals, clinicians, nurses, support staff and the heads of departments in the human resource County Government of Bungoma. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire while secondary data was obtained from previous studies, libraries, journals and journal articles as well as the worldwide web. The questionnaire was piloted in Kakamega County to test for validity and reliability. Data analysis was done with the help of SPSS, with mean and the standard deviation being the main descriptive statistics used. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. The analysed data was presented using bar graphs, pie charts, percentages and frequency tables. The study established that Bungoma County was facing a moderately high turnover of highly experienced and dynamic health workers which negatively affected service delivery. The study found that the county lacked proper health workers' retentions systems which were a recipe for employees exiting and some has intentions to exit. The study also established that it took long for the replacement of employees who had exited, thus affecting service delivery. The study established that the delay in salary payment, lack of proper structures for carrier progression, some qualified employees being put on short casual contracts of three months or longer and inadequate working facilities contributed significantly to staff turnover. The study recommended the upgrading of working conditions such as annual increase and timely payment of salaries, promotion of staff after a specified working period of time and provision of necessary working tools and equipment.*

**Keywords:** Employee Turnover, Compensation, Bungoma County

## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The global health workers' predicament combined with low health workers' performances in developing countries continue to attract global attention (World Health Organization, 2013). Employees' leaving one organization to the other reveals the level of lack of a conducive working environment to the employee.

Workers should access required instruments in order to carry out their work effectively. They comprise of correct instrumentation, machines, information processing system and adequate working space and furniture. Unfortunate conditions attributed by poor working equipment and environment leads to job discontentment. According to Rajapaksa (2015), the role of an organization is considerably affected by employees' turnover. Thus, most establishments are considering appropriate techniques to aid organizational employees to be happier and productive with the main objective of retaining them and avoiding turn over.

In the African continent, there are recurrent reports of growing cases of skilled and experienced healthcare work forces exiting public sector hospitals in Kenya and migrating to work in foreign countries like Namibia, South Africa's, Somalia and South Sudan (Okeyo, 2018). The aspect of employee turnover in an organization is quite dynamic as it may cause break down in operations in crucial sectors like health if not well taken care of. Similarly, another section of healthcare specialists exits public hospitals for the medical institution that offer better terms (Kigathi, 2018).

Thus, employee retention is critical to any organization as it expands significance to the investment an organization makes in training and mentoring new employees to style them to fit in a given corporate culture to make ready materials and put them at parity with organization's set procedures and strategies (Connolly & McGing, 2017). Basing on the findings of Sung and Choi (2012), most organizations suffer losses when they are confronted with the issues of most employees resigning their jobs before their contracts expire or even reach half way in one organization to take up comparable jobs in other organization with better working terms after they have been fully trained. They note that the average workers within (18-37) age brackets are changing jobs about ten times. Employee retention therefore is a vibrant human resources tactic aimed at improving the output of workers in public institutions (Crick & Spencer, 2011).

Schuler (2015) noted that in 1990's, most establishments started feeling the effect of labor turnover resulting from the effects of labor movements that had adversely compressed on job performance and the consequent drop in the productivity of an organization. Similarly, Zerga (2016) noted that, many workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century do not have the obligation demonstrated by employees of the nineties

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many factors have been attributed and correlated with the health employee turnover in devolved units. Some of the factors a fore mentioned include; lack of job satisfaction, lack of career growth opportunities, workloads, lack of proper communication strategies among many others. The key concern is the role of these factors and how they correlate with employee turnover specifically in the devolved governments.

The research focused primarily on role of employees' compensation, employee welfare, medical equipment, role of leadership and supervision on the employee turnover in Bungoma County. When health employees leave, the county governments bear the expenses of advertising, recruiting, training and placing new health employees to fill the gaps. That is the reason why the study focused on the role as opposed to the real factors in isolation. County employee turnover does not only cost the counties colossal financial resources, but it also interrupts the smooth flow of labor force and service to the community. Each time an employee resigns from their jobs, a considerable expertise opening is left, thus encumbering the remaining team with extra responsibilities as they work to cover the missing gap. Mulera (2012) established that it is challenging for county governments to implement employee retention strategies due to the competitive nature of the corporate environment. Frequency in employee turnover leaves the medical facilities struggling with shortage of personnel. The higher employee

turnover of health workers in the public health facilities negatively influenced the realization of the nation's SDG number 3 which seeks to guarantee better healthcare and the well-being of citizens (Wanjala, 2018).

### **Justification of the Study**

Despite the devolution of health functions and docket to counties that could be easier in management of medical staff, because of the homegrown apathy, there is still much issues pertaining health staff. Bungoma County has experienced more strikes due to reasons related to working environment. On 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015, all health workers in the county downed their tools due to poor salaries and lack of proper facilities. On 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, Bungoma county health workers protested as a culmination of a week-long go slow of health workers due to two months delayed salaries.

The research ascertained why the frequency of workers strikes in the health department. The study has significance for policy formulation to assist HR personnel to appraise and understand further the factors that attribute to employee turnover especially in the health sector and how to manage it. The findings of the research add to existing data as well establishing research gaps for further studies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Empirical Review**

Nyaga (2015) conducted a study research on the analysis of turnover of employees on the organization's effectiveness (ILRI) Kenya using descriptive inquiry technique on 420 employees and applied random stratified sample technique to select a sample size of 42 respondents. The research established that the establishment experienced higher instances of workers' turnover rate, which in turn affected the organizational productivity. The research singled out lack of staff training denying employees skills development, thus lowering their staff employment progression and promotion leading to employee turnover. The study poses a gap in that it did not look at the overriding factors across the departments sampled, thus this study proposes to asses other intervening factors associated with on job training as welfare to the employee.

Keitany (2014) conducted a research survey on the existing relation between employee's social welfare programs and their performance in the Kenyan Pipeline Company employing descriptive inquiry technique with a population target of 1700. The study applied stratified sampling technique to sample 170 respondents. The study established that welfare plans have constructive bearing on the employee performance by the upsurge of their powers to perform on their job responsibility, realizing set goals, commitment to the Organization, persistence, right social connection, and self-initiative to take on assigned duties. The study too, found out that endowment of employee welfare programs had positive effect on workers' execution of duties. The existing space in the survey was that different sectors called for different employee welfare; thus this Study ascertained the welfare programs in heath sector.

Bosibori, Munene, Nyakundi and Akimbo (2012) conducted a research on the Role of Employee Welfare Services on Performance of the National Police Service Kenya: A Case of Kisii Police division. This survey engaged a descriptive study technique with 382 police officers as the population target. Out of this population 115 respondents were sampled which is 30% of the study population. This research found out that, minimal existence of correct plans of action of workers' social welfare facilities in the central District of Kisii, and those that existed were incorrectly enforced, nonetheless they posed leading role on the operation of the national police service and it therefore posed challenges on service delivery. The study posed a gap, in that it recommended for a similar study in other areas, thus this study.

According to Pardimin (2016), the aim for welfare establishment of amenities and service was to create a conducive work environment and the work life of staffs better by raising their standards of living. Manju and Mishra (2012) elucidates that Employee welfare was a broad term that discussed different services, benefits and facilities offered by employers to employees to keep them contented and gratified in their work, Lack of

employee welfare, had attributed to many workers exiting from one organization to the other that offered better welfare services to its employee.

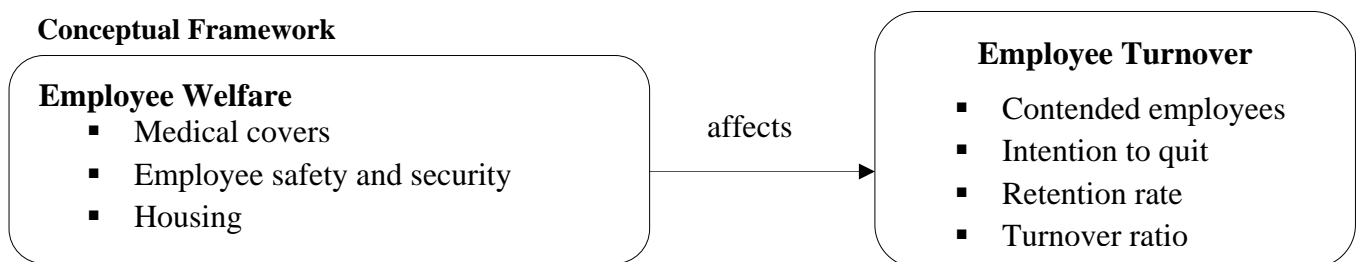
Employee welfare is very wide-range of aspects which comprises almost all features that relate to employee wellness and individual employee growth in the work place (Manzin & Guandure, 2014). Rationally the provision of welfare schemes is to generate an effective, well-being, dedicated and satisfactory labor force for an organization.

### Theoretical Review

John Adams Smith (1965) proposed equity theory, designed on the opinions that an employee formed about how he or she was treated in an organization in comparison to other employees of the same organization. This theory, suggested that workers in a given organization pursued to uphold ‘equity’ concerning the work effort they put in their occupation and the outcome they received from the efforts they had put in compared to the inputs and outcomes of other workers in the same organization. The perceived input included; (experience, the level of training, level of skills, knowledge, work obligation and the time committed to work). The expected outcome on the other hand included (salary increase, special allowances, appreciation and promotion). Disappointment brought about inequality attracted a number of negative actions by employee, the main one being intentions to exit the organization and sought employment where there was perceived equity.

The equity theory was practical to this research as it elucidated how employee welfare could instigate workers job contentment and therefore enlisting the employee’s resolution to remain or exit the organization. Most organizational Work forces ordinarily equated the employee welfare with the paybacks they get from the organization; the discoveries may lead the employees to either stay or exit the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

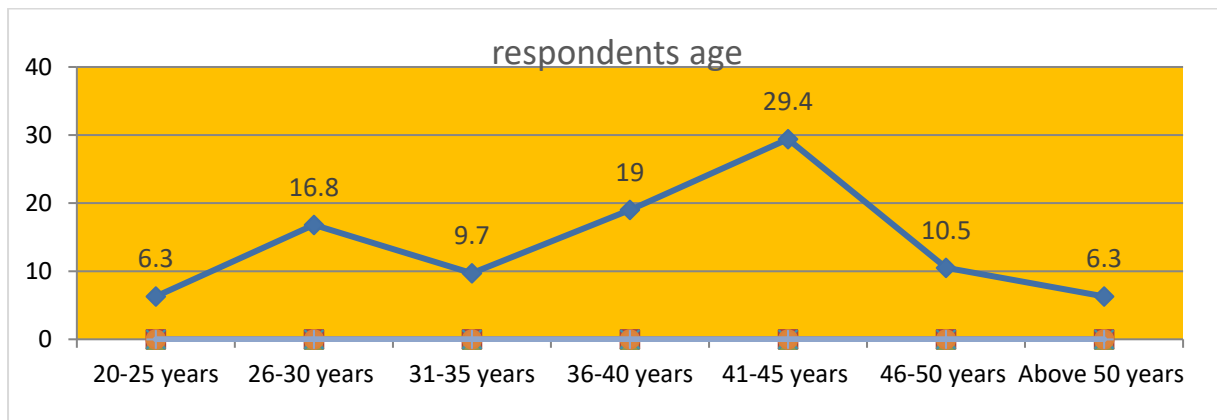
Source: Researcher (2023)

### METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive research design because it was imperative on the role of working environment on employee turnover. The design is appropriate to get data that concerns contemporary state of a given affair, as it exists with regard to variant or situation in question or under investigation (Sekaran, 2003). The study was conducted in Bungoma County, Kenya with 244 health facilities, 184 of which are public facilities. The study sampled 120 health workers from a stratified population of 594 including support staff, clinical officers, nurses, medical officers, the medical superintendent and the Heads of departments. The identification of the sample was done using simple random. The questionnaire was used to collect primary data because it was suitable for a large but dispersed population (Kothari, 2011). The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability through a pilot study which was conducted in Kakamega County using 12 respondents (10% of the study sample). The collected data was analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and the standard deviation) while qualitative data was analysed using thematic (content) analysis. Anonymity, informed consent, objectivity and confidentiality were taken into consideration as the ethical standards throughout the study.

## FINDINGS

The study achieved a response rate of 79.1% which was sufficient and adequate and enabled data analysis. The age distribution of the respondents is as presented in the figure 2 below;



**Figure 2: Respondents by Age**

**Source: Research Data (2023)**

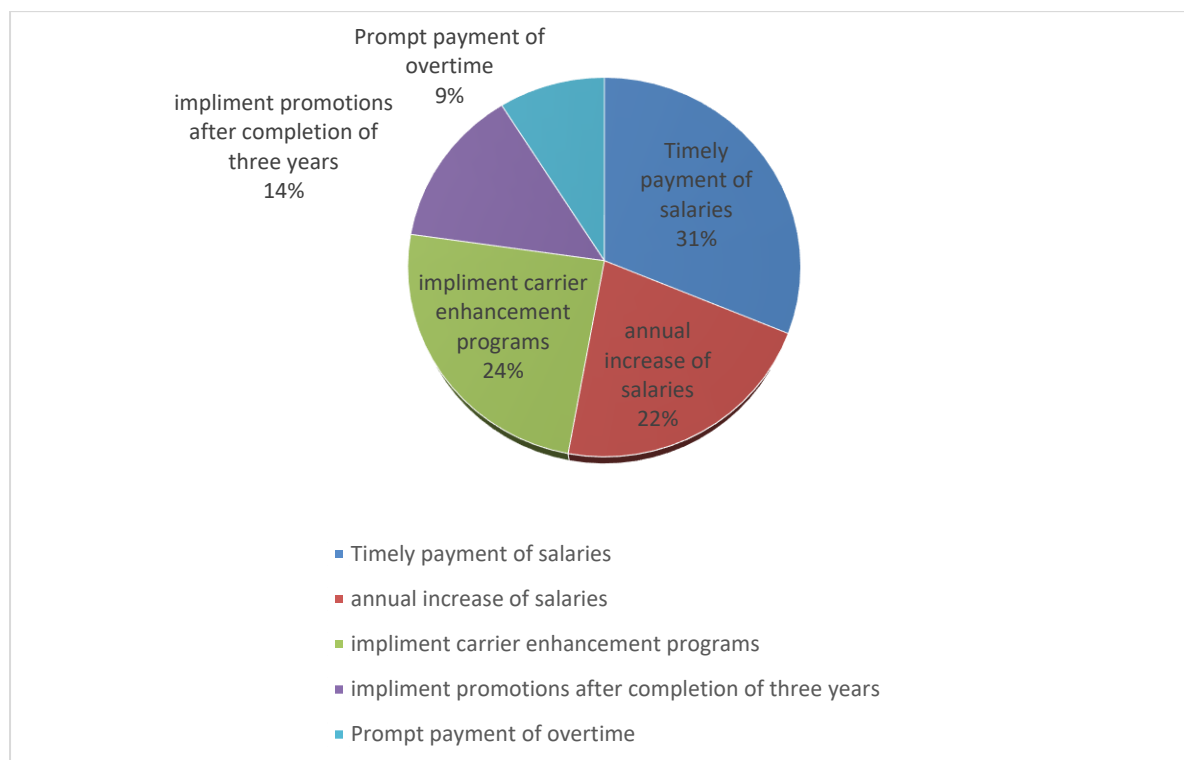
The results shows that majority of the workers are middle aged, thus very sensitive to working environment and turnover and are easily affected by the prevailing environment. These findings conform with studies done by Mule (2020) that found out that (20-40) years old were the majority of the respondents of the study carried out in Meru county that after analysis implied that the young population were much more prone to changing jobs. Most of the respondents were female (54.5%) while the male represented 45.2% showing the attainment of the constitutional requirement of the two-thirds gender rule. It also shows that the majority of the staff in the health sector is female. Thirty one respondents (32.6%) had worked for between 1 and 5 years in the County while another 24 respondents (25.2%) had worked for between 6 and 10 years. In terms of the professional and educational qualifications, majority of them (41.05%) held a Diploma while 20% of them had professional certificates, 18.94% had bachelors degree while 16.8% had high school (KCSE) certificate. These results agree with the findings of Hassan (2021) in Garissa County where the majority of respondents had equally a diploma as the highest level of education at 55% and that of Wakio (2019) that indicated that 49.26 % of the total respondents were diploma holders

### Employee Turnover

The study sought to know the distribution of turnover within the health sector in Bungoma County with 57.89% of the respondents indicating that they knew of a person or two who had left the service over the past 6 months. Only 40 respondents (42.11%) indicated that they did not know any employee who had left the service. The reasons indicated for the exit included exiting to other organizations offering better pay, better employment terms, offer of fringe benefits, better working environment, and some percentage attributed the exit to securing green card to the USA, which still is for the reason of better living and remuneration terms. When asked about their intention to quit, 62.1% asserted their intentions to quit, given a better offer elsewhere but the remaining 37.9% had not contemplated leaving. The results confirms that the employees were not satisfied with the current working environment, which agrees with the findings of Mendis (2017) who found out that superior monetary and non-monetary rewards bear sturdy bearing on workers' turnover intentions. The study found that delay in salaries led the pack as reasons for the intentions to quit (44.1%), poor pay (18.7%) and lack of permanent and pensionable appointments for a prolonged period (15.3%). Other reasons included the lack of clarity in the promotion policy (11.7%) and the lack of career progression prospects within the service (10.2%). These findings agreed with the findings of Hassan, Jambulingam and Narayan (2021) and Mule (2020) who established

that salary payment is key in employee retention and that the end of the month salary and holiday compensation are the greatest indispensable features of payment augmenting workers' retention in Meru County. The study also found out that the most workers (31.1%) took issue with the timely salaries as a critical factor that could precipitate staff in the health department to exit from the current employer followed by lack or minimal annual salary increase. These findings are in tandem with those of Brannick and Harris (1999) who posited that remuneration is the most significant component in employment that retains employees for a lengthier period.

When asked about the possible mitigation strategies, the respondents indicated various measures including the timely payment of salaries (31%), implementation of enhancement programs (24%), the annual salary increments (22%), implementation of promotions after completion of 3 years (14%) and the prompt payment for overtime (9%)



**Figure 3: Respondents on Payments**

Majority of the respondents (56.84%) indicated that there were no measures put forward by their employer to control the turnover of employees in the health department, whereas 43.16% indicated that there were measures in existence. These results show that even if there were measures in place by the County Government, they were not working well for the employer, the employees was not even aware or that the employees did not feel the strategy. The results were also corroborated by the findings that 41% of the respondents reiterated that measures put forward to mitigate the turnover were ineffective, 28.42% indicating that the measures were very ineffective while 13.6% indicated that the mitigation measures were effective. The remaining 11.5% and 5.5% indicated that the mitigating measures were highly effective and very highly effective respectively.

**Employee Compensation and Turnover Health Workers**

The research study used a five-point Likert Scale to ascertain the level of agreement or disagreement on the following statements pertaining employee satisfaction with the working environment of employees' welfare that could affect employee turnover, where 1- Strongly disagree (SD) ,2-Disagree (D),3-Neutral(N),4-Agree (A) and 5-strongly in agreement(SA). The findings were tabulated below;

**Table 1: Employee Compensation**

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Employee salaries are paid on time and it's a motivating factor	33 34.74%	37 38.95%	21 22.11%	3 3.16%	1 1.05%
Employee's pay level of compensation is based on qualification and experience.	8 8.42%	20 21.05%	37 38.95%	11 11.58%	19 20.00%
Workers on call are paid extra reimbursement for the time put in	6 6.32%	17 17.89%	36 37.89%	20 21.05%	16 16.84%
Workers who work during holidays are compensated	10 10.53%	11 11.58%	14 14.74%	36 37.89%	24 25.26%
There is salaries increase on yearly basis that motivates workers	3 3.16%	16 16.84%	30 31.58%	27 28.42%	19 20.00%

**Source: Research Data (2023)**

The respondents disagreed that the employee salaries are paid on time and it's a motivating factor with 70 of them (73.68%) strongly disagreeing and disagreeing while only 4.21% agreed. This implies that monthly salaries in Bungoma County delayed in many instances and could be a recipe for employee turnover. This outcome was in agreement with the ones of Trizazu, (2015), which established that salary had a positively significant influence on employee retention and turnover. When asked if the employee's pay level of compensation was based on qualification and experience, majority of them indicated that they did know (38.95%) while 21.05% of them disagreed. Correspondingly 20(21.0%) and 16 (16.8%) of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that Workers on call were paid extra reimbursement for the time put in, whereas 27(28.4%) and 19(20.0%) of the respectively of the respondents approved that there were annual salaries increase that motivates them to stay. The findings were in agreement with the study outcomes of Mule (2020), whose findings on the on the relation between reward management practices and retention of workers in Meru County established that there was positive and significant relationship between employee compensation and workers' remaining in the organization, thus reducing turn over.

Additionally, 32.6% and 29.5% of the respondents indicated that the employees were not given opportunity for on job skills development a factor could led to employee intention to quit. The findings concurred with the study outcomes by Nyaga (2015), who conducted a study research on the analysis of turnover of employees on the organization's effectiveness (ILRI) Kenya, and established that the organization had experienced higher instances of workers' turnover rate, which in turn affected the organizational productivity.

The research singled out lack of staff training denying employees skills development, thus lowering their staff employment progression and promotion leading to employee turnover. The findings also support the outcome of a study by Keitany (2014), who conducted a research survey on the existing relation between employee's social welfare programs and their performance in the Kenyan Pipeline Company and established that welfare plans have constructive bearing on the employee performance by the upsurge of their powers to perform on their job responsibility, realizing set goals, commitment to the organization, persistence, right social connection, and self-initiative to take on assigned duties. The study too, found out that endowment of employee welfare programs has positive effect on workers' execution of duties and by extension reducing employees turn over.

When the respondents were asked to suggest what needs to be done concerning the welfare of the employees so as to reverse the turn over, the responses varied as tabulated below.

**Table 2: Employees' Welfare**

Respondents Suggestion on Employees' Welfare	Percentage
Providing enhanced medical cover for medical workers and their families	20.7%
Enhancing pension schemes for employees	10.5%
Providing decent housing for medical personnel especially doctors for easy response during on call emergencies	41.2%
Giving employees equal opportunities for on job skills development	27.6%

**Source: Research Data (2023)**

The results above shows that the majority of the respondents suggested better housing for them (41.2%), followed by giving employees equal opportunities for career skills development (27.6%) and providing enhanced medical cover for medical workers and their families (10.5%). The findings concur with the outcomes Pardimin (2016), whose research findings indicated that the aim of welfare establishment of amenities and service was to create a conducive work environment and the work life of staffs better by raising their standards of living that could reduce employee turnover

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research concluded that bulk of the responses 41% reiterated that measures put forward to mitigate employee turnover in Bungoma County were ineffective, similarly 28.42% felt that the measures were very ineffective bringing the total to 69.4% ineffective, thus exposed workers to turn over.

The study too, concluded that most of the respondents who were workers dealing with health care provision at the county level received their salaries late most of the time, occasioned by delay in salaries payment an aspect which was a recipe for intentions to quit and their turnover for employers who paid salaries on time. Basing on the above findings the study concluded therefore that untimely payment of salaries had a significant positive effect on health workers' turnover.

The study recommends that the County Government should put out salaries structure that matches with the qualification and experience of the employees by availing relevant and accurate pay structure brochures accessible to every employee. This will aid in eliminating the perception by some employees that some new employees are being preferred in terms of remuneration, thus creating unnecessary intentions to quit for other organization.

The study also recommends that the special pay packages and allowances for health workers like overtime should be paid promptly. Additionally prompt disbursement of appropriate salaries would guarantee contentment from the employees in the health sector within the county. The salary package should include all the necessary components including leave allowances, pension, and medical and housing allowances

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