NAVIGATING RETENTION RAPIDS: INSIGHTS INTO EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND ATTRITION AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

Daryl F. Quinco

Faculty, Private University, Ozamiz City, Philippines 7200
Corresponding Email: quincodf@lsu.edu.ph

Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of employees retention, attrition factors, and partners perceptions at a private university, aiming to provide valuable insights for strategic decision-making and continuous improvement. The research conducted interviews and focus group discussions with partners from both the academic and professional track units of the university. Different themes emerged such as the sense of community, the desire for professional growth, and the commitment to quality education, as retention factors while there are also significant areas of concern which include the high workload, insufficient communication, challenges in work-life balance, and resource limitations. These findings support the recommendation that improving the dedication and motivation of the university's personnel will help it keep them, which will eventually be advantageous to both the school and its students. This research serves as a valuable resource for educational institutions seeking to enhance employee retention and satisfaction in the higher education landscape.

Keywords: employee retention, attrition factors, higher education, professional growth, work-Life balance, employee satisfaction

1. Introduction

Employee attrition and retention are critical factors that shape the stability and effectiveness of any organization, including academic institutions like LaSalle University. As the higher education landscape evolves and faces unprecedented challenges, understanding and managing the dynamics of employee turnover become increasingly essential. This introductory exploration delves into the intricacies of attrition and retention within LaSalle University.Employee attrition refers to the process of employees leaving an organization, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. The causes of attrition can be multifaceted, ranging from personal career advancements to workplace dissatisfaction or external market forces. On the other hand, employee retention involves strategies aimed at retaining valuable talent, ensuring their long-term commitment to the institution.

LaSalle University, like many educational institutions, faces unique challenges in this regard. As Allen and Meyer (1991) noted in their work on organizational commitment, the academic sector often deals with passionate and mission-driven employees, making their retention and engagement a multifaceted endeavor. One key aspect to consider is the significant role of organizational culture and leadership in the attrition and retention of university employees (Cameron and Quinn 2011). Schein (1991) emphasized the importance of a shared set of values and beliefs within an organization, which can greatly influence employees' commitment and satisfaction. Additionally, effective leadership practices, as discussed by Bass and Avolio (1994), play a pivotal role in inspiring and retaining talent. Moreover, an emerging area of interest in academia is the influence of work-life balance on employee retention. The study by O'Brien and Karin (2016) underscored the importance of creating a supportive work environment that accommodates the diverse needs of employees, particularly in higher education.

In the context of LaSalle University, exploring how these factors interact and impact attrition and retention rates will provide valuable insights into maintaining a thriving academic community. The

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1350

Navigating Retention Rapids: Insights into Employee Satisfaction and Attrition at Private University

Daryl F. Quinco

findings from this research will not only shed light on areas for improvement but also provide actionable insights to enhance overall employee retention and, in turn, contribute to the university's success and mission. In summary, the study on employee attrition and retention within the context of LaSalle University encompasses diverse perspectives, including job factors, university practices, leadership and working environment, and working conditions and benefits. By examining what employees liked best, liked least, and areas for improvement, the study aims to identify key factors influencing employee satisfaction and retention within the institution. The insights gathered through this research will serve as valuable input for enhancing employee experiences and developing strategies to reduce attrition rates at private university.

2. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative research design to comprehensively explore employee attrition and retention at private university by focusing on understanding what employees liked best, liked least, and identified areas for improvement during their tenure at the institution. Qualitative research is well-suited for capturing rich, in-depth insights from employees, allowing them to reflect on past experiences and provide valuable perspectives on their work environment. The primary objective is to gain a holistic understanding of factors influencing attrition and retention within the university.

3. Data Collection

1. In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with former and current employees of private university who had diverse roles and tenures. These interviews took place in a confidential and comfortable setting, allowing participants to candidly discuss their experiences. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions about their time at the university.

2. Focus Group Discussions: Focus group discussions were organized with selected groups of employees from various departments to facilitate interactive conversations. These sessions allowed participants to engage in group discussions, share common experiences, and provide additional context to individual interviews.

4. Participant Selection

A purposive sampling approach was employed to ensure representation across different roles, departments, and levels within the organization. This approach aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. A total of 73 participants were involved in the study. They were grouped according to classification: 25 from the Basic Education Unit, 25 from the Higher Education Unit, and 23 from the support staff of the university.

5. Data Analysis

1. Thematic Analysis: Transcripts from interviews and focus group discussions were subjected to thematic analysis. This process involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and key findings related to what employees liked best, liked least, and areas for improvement.

2. Coding: The data was coded using a combination of inductive and deductive coding techniques. Initial codes were developed based on the research questions and were further refined as new themes emerged during the analysis.

6. Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines to ensure the well-being and confidentiality of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

7. Results and Discussion

In this section, we delve into the results and discussion of our qualitative research endeavor, which sought to comprehensively explore employee preferences and concerns at private universities. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, we garnered valuable insights from current and former employees across various roles and departments. By adopting a qualitative research design, we aimed to unravel the nuanced factors contributing to employee satisfaction and retention within the institution. This section unveils the emerging themes and narratives that reflect what employees liked best, their areas of discontent, and the aspects they believe require improvement. The ensuing discussion delves into the implications of these findings, providing a foundation for recommendations aimed at enhancing the university's work environment, fostering employee retention, and ultimately contributing to the institution's continued success.

1.0 What employees like best about the private university?

In this discussion, we delve into what employees appreciate and value about their experiences at private university. The provided transcripts reflect a rich tapestry of sentiments, highlighting key themes such as personal and professional growth, empowerment, passion for teaching and learning, initiative, and the nurturing of a positive work environment. These insights offer a glimpse into the unique qualities that make the university a place where employees feel not only professionally fulfilled but also part of a supportive and empowering community.

Table 1 Themes on what is liked best about private university

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
- I've grown and learned a lot. - This institution molded me to be the best version of myself and as a teacher. - I was able to grow and develop my passion in teaching. - I have been given the space and opportunities to grow. - I was able to practice and improve my skills as the IT support.	Self-Development	Experienced Personal Growth
- It took me great initiative in managing myself. - the university empowers teachers to improve and maximize their potential. - It teaches me and develops me professionally - The ability to learn and unlearn new things - I love that I get to come to work every day and create something new.	Empowerment	
- To teach and train students. - Honing and nurturing my passion to teach. - Teaching learners, joining competitions, and recollections. - I honestly like how I can touch the lives of the students - Pursuing a passion in the field of teaching.	Passion for Teaching and Learning	

International Journal of Social Science, Educational, Economics, Agriculture Research, and Technology (IJSET)
E-ISSN: 2827-766X | WWW.IJSET.ORG

1352

Navigating Retention Rapids: Insights into Employee Satisfaction and Attrition at Private University

Daryl F. Quinco

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
- I got to apply my knowledge in deciding my lessons and work. - I took great initiative in managing myself,	Taking initiative and Responsibility	
- the university finds ways for the development of professional growth of a teacher. - The professional development - The training provided to us teachers. - A good number of opportunities to understand and be acquainted with the various know-how's of the university. - The seminar's given to the employees for their improvement and knowledge. - Essential training and guidance as an instructor.	Professional Development and Training	Opportunities for Growth
- Various opportunities. - Different opportunities and roles given to me throughout my 5-year of service. - The opportunities granted (grad school & many others) and the incentives & benefits. - It gives me the opportunity to teach students, especially grade 8 about programming. - It was challenging and fulfilling	Career Advancement and Diverse Roles	
- The network and the opportunities it brought to its employees. - I have created a network of individuals that helped me grow as an educator. - The community extensions and the school's social responsibility (Donating, planting trees).	Networking	
- I will be forever grateful for all the support the university has given to me. - The bond that I had with my workmates. -I like the the university community itself since it makes you feel at home. - I found a family during my stay in the university.	Sense of Belonging and Camaraderie	Support of community
- Collaboration between me and my academic assistant. - being able to mingle with different kinds of personalities from students to co-workers. - Co-teaching with colleagues so that the learners can learn and understand the lesson/topic.	Teaching Collaboration	
- Most of the people in the Lasallian community are approachable and always willing to help. - Good colleagues, friendly staff, and the right environment.	Supportive Colleagues	

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
- The people in my office who are like my mother and father. - Welcoming environment, especially in my assigned department. - The companionship and camaraderie I built with my colleagues.		
- I thoroughly enjoyed working with my co-workers - My co-teacher/co-workers who have become like family to me in a non-toxic environment. - I like the working environment and the salary. - It's the environment itself. - the university has a good working environment. - We all treat each other like family.	Positive Work Environment	Good working environment
- Flexible working hours. - The proximity and convenience. - It provides me with a great opportunity to work near my home place in which I don't need to travel far. - it's conveniently located.	Proximity and Convenience	
- Being loved by the community for who I am. - I am very much welcomed and I can feel that I belong to the family. - Sense of family during my stay at the university. - the university being like a family that helps young Lasallian students reshape their lives.	Family-Like Atmosphere	
-The trust that was given to me. - I am grateful for the trust that the school has given to me. - The trust I have received from my immediate heads and their willingness to allow me to do the job I was hired to do.	Trust and Autonomy	Provides Trust and Recognition
- I like how the admins take good care of their employees and attend to different concerns. - Administrative support and recognition. - The opportunity to serve my alma mater. - the university has a supportive administration. - The school's commitment to excellence and recognition of its employees' achievements.	Administrative Support and Recognition	

Partners who have been a part of the private university community have conveyed their feelings with a deep sense of development, fulfillment, and belonging. Numerous chances for both personal and professional growth are frequently mentioned by partners as a noteworthy aspect of their time at the university. There is a clear emphasis on training, seminars, and workshops, which has greatly benefited their skill sets and levels of confidence. Another positive attribute of private university is the value of a supportive workplace environment. This is highlighted by the recurrent topic of the sense of community and camaraderie among coworkers. The university's leadership and administration are commended for

International Journal of Social Science, Educational, Economics, Agriculture Research, and Technology (IJSET)
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1354

Navigating Retention Rapids: Insights into Employee Satisfaction and Attrition at Private University

Daryl F. Quinco

their dedication to fostering staff development and wellbeing, and the university is seen as a place that encourages both personal and professional improvement. Moreover, another feature that people value is the chance to instruct and guide kids, which reflects the inherent benefits of molding young brains. Additionally, the mission and values of the university are in line with the goals and objectives of its personnel, which fosters a sense of commitment and purpose.

Additionally, many find that the emphasis on spiritual growth and Lasallian principles connects with them, bringing a special depth to their professional experiences. the university has a reputation as a supportive and transformative workplace thanks to its close-knit community, teamwork, and commitment to a common objective. Thus, private university is seen as more than just a place of employment; it is also a place of belonging, a platform for growth, and a community that cherishes the welfare and professional advancement of its members. The supportive environment, the variety of learning opportunities, and the chance to positively influence students' lives have all contributed to the optimistic outlooks of individuals who have participated in the university's journey.

2.0 What employees like least about private university?

The dialogue among the private university partners reveal a variety of experiences and worries within the organization. Many workers reported feeling worn out and overburdened by their duties, which is a problem that frequently arises in academic contexts.

Table 2.0 Themes on what is like least about private university

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
- Tired with workload. - Sometimes paperwork can be too much. - The pressures and numerous workloads. - Too much work preparation. - New module formats lead to confusion.	Too much workload	Work Life Imbalance
- Irregular long hours and work schedule. - Work interferes with personal life. - Work brought home.	No more time for personal life	
- Dealing with the program head. - Negative interaction with colleagues and superiors. - Misalignment with career plan. - Inconsistent rules and regulations.	Hostile work environment	Unhealthy Workplace Atmosphere
- Unfavorable physical working conditions. - Ventilation issues. - Institution over-pampering students.	Unfavorable Working Conditions	
- No proper dissemination of information. - Sudden movement of officers. - Sudden changes of announcements/guidelines. - The sudden changes in the posted announcements and late transmission of information. - Poor communication during the pandemic.	No proper communication of information	

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
- Compensation doesn't match workload. - Need for higher compensation. - Lack of overtime pay. - Miscomputation in salary. - 13th-month pay issues. - Salary doesn't compensate for effort. - No assistance for working students/employees.	Not receiving compensatory remuneration	Professional Stagnation
- Limited external seminar opportunities. - Inconsistent career growth. - Lack of opportunities for teacher support in external seminars.	Lack of support for external training and development	
- Limited academic resources, especially in Biochemistry. - Lack of laboratory technician support. - Need for updated infrastructure.	Limited learning resources and support	

The three themes, "Work Life Imbalance," "Unhealthy Workplace Atmosphere," and "Professional Stagnation," are common problems in the workforce that have an impact on employees' well-being and job satisfaction. A prevalent worry is the existence of a work-life imbalance, which is defined by an excessive workload and insufficient free time (Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, & Heelan, 2010). As workers try to balance their work and personal commitments, it leads to burnout, stress, and declining mental health. An "Unhealthy Workplace Atmosphere" frequently makes this imbalance's negative effects worse (Kivimäki et al., 2019). Conflicts, strained relationships, and general dissatisfaction among coworkers can result from hostile work settings, bad working conditions, and poor communication (Cortini, Pivetti, & Wirth, 2018).

According to Costanza et al. (2019), "Professional Stagnation" is also a major issue because it is linked to not obtaining compensatory compensation, not receiving help for outside training and development, and having few learning tools. Employees may become frustrated and feel unappreciated if they are unable to grow professionally. The fact that all of these themes have been demonstrated to lower employee morale and overall job satisfaction highlights the necessity for the university to deal with these problems before they worsen in order to foster a safer and more favorable work environment (Chung, & Lee, 2021). In order to increase employee happiness and retention, the findings highlight the significance of managing workload difficulties, enhancing communication, and ensuring fair treatment and chances for professional progress.

3.0 What changes would you make to improve private university?

The following table gives a summary of private university's areas for improvement as identified by its participants. These observations are based on the experiences of the university staff members, who provide insightful commentary on the many areas of the university that might be improved to foster a more satisfying and productive working and learning environment. The feedback from the participants at the university shows critical areas where the institution can further excel and support the growth and well-being of its community, from growth and development and communication to workload management and resource improvement. In order to help the university's administrators and decision-makers make informed and focused reforms to better align the university with the expectations and goals of its valued workforce, this table seeks to serve as a useful resource.

International Journal of Social Science, Educational, Economics, Agriculture Research, and Technology (IJSET)
E-ISSN: 2827-766X | WWW.IJSET.ORG

1356

Navigating Retention Rapids: Insights into Employee Satisfaction and Attrition at Private University

Daryl F. Quinco

Table 3. Suggested Areas for Improvement

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
- Decision making and dissemination of relevant information. -Clear instructions and time schedules should be relayed to the teachers. -Consistently have department learning sessions, monthly check-ins with lunch outings.	Decision-Making and Information Flow	Improvement of Communication Flow
-Strengthening the communication between the teachers and heads to minimize inconsistency. -The flow of instructions/guidelines needs collaboration/cooperation among department heads to provide clear goals. -Asking for opinions, ideas, and sentiments regarding giving loading/subjects to the faculty. -Open communication but what has been transcribed should be kept confidential.	Consultation and privacy	
-Subjects that will be handled by the teachers should be given ahead of time. -Changes of information during the 11th hour and dissemination of information.	Timeliness of Information	
-Faculty development to include team building, bonding moments and open forums -Provide local and national seminars to my colleagues, use and/or apply the appropriate instruction and curriculum for SENDS, and organize the classroom that meets the needs of the deaf. -Promotion of sufficient training and enough time to mentor/get familiar with some academic tracks. -Add more training or seminars for non-teaching majors and support staff	Diversified Employee Development Program	Holistic approach to growth and development
-Looking out for the welfare not just of students but also of the teachers. -Reinforce protection of teachers' well-being, consistent guidelines and decisions, and calendar plotting or time scheduling.	Improve the Well-being of Employees	
-More team-building activities for teachers to promote morale, improve interactions, and establish a collaborative culture. -More events to get us close together. -Working with teams, ideas from my co-teachers, and	Improve the sense of community in the workplace	

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
involving them in decisions that affect them so that in the end no one will be blamed. -Providing a collaborative atmosphere for experienced educators and newly hired teachers.		
-Offline teachers must handle four grade levels only. -Decreasing the workload and providing dedicated free time for teachers to recharge. -Assigning subjects to teachers/instructors with enough knowledge on the subjects.	Manageable workload preparations	Improvement of Work Life Balance
-Scheduling of the tasks ahead -Work/tasks should be divided equally and maximizing duty hours for meetings.	Equal division of tasks	
-Focus on the facilities and equipment of the school. -Improvement of the ICT department in terms of equipment. -A proper testing room. -A better room for empowering individual workers within the center. -Improve on the school's buildings, especially the rooms and offices.	Improving the physical structure	Improvement of the Resources of the University
-Seeking extended funding and grants to provide more research opportunities for faculty and students. -	Improving the fund sourcing	

Any company, especially academic institutions like private university, must improve the flow of communication. Successful organizations depend on effective communication because it promotes employee belonging, unity, and transparency. Having open lines of communication makes it easier to share information, solve problems, and make sure that everyone is on the same page. DeVito (2019) asserts that excellent communication within a workplace is crucial for developing trust, maintaining a positive work environment, and attaining shared objectives. In a university setting, a holistic approach to growth and development refers to taking into account an individual's total development, which includes not only their professional advancement but also their psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The Lasallian legacy of educating minds, touching the hearts, and transforming lives is in line with this strategy. Universities, like the university, can promote holistic development by giving teachers and staff a variety of chances for personal as well as professional growth.

As shown by Choudha (2021), holistic development in higher education can result in more resilient, engaged, and sympathetic workers as well as higher levels of job satisfaction. Improving Work-Life Balance is yet another important factor in a university context. It guarantees that teachers and staff can carry out their duties in a way that doesn't compromise their personal life or wellbeing. The maintenance of a healthy, motivated staff and the prevention of burnout depend on striking this equilibrium. According to Davenport, Bergman, and Bergman (2019), employees who have a healthy work-life balance are more productive, creative, and satisfied with their jobs in general. Improving the university resources is essential to creating a climate that supports both teaching and research. This

International Journal of Social Science, Educational, Economics, Agriculture Research, and Technology (IJSET)
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1358

Navigating Retention Rapids: Insights into Employee Satisfaction and Attrition at Private University

Daryl F. Quinco

includes both people resources and support systems in addition to tangible resources like offices, schools, and technology. Universities can improve the standard of instruction, research, and the campus environment by investing in better resources. Altbach and Knight (2007) emphasized that the success and worldwide competitiveness of higher education institutions depend significantly on the availability and sufficiency of resources.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

The study of employee perspectives regarding attrition and retention at the private university has provided valuable insights into the factors contributing to both employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The participants' feedback indicates that while there are aspects of the university that employees appreciate, such as the sense of community, the desire for professional growth, and the commitment to quality education, there are also significant areas of concern. These areas include the high workload, insufficient communication, challenges in work-life balance, and resource limitations. In light of these findings, it is essential for the university to address these issues to enhance employee retention, job satisfaction, and overall institutional success. The university should concentrate on reducing the factors that cause attrition if it wants to improve staff retention. This entails changing how the task is distributed, building more effective communication channels, and fostering an office culture that places a high value on work-life balance. Further enhancing employee happiness and loyalty can be holistic support systems and ongoing professional development. The dedication and motivation of the university's staff will help it keep them, which will eventually be advantageous to both the school and its students.

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1360

Navigating Retention Rapids: Insights into Employee Satisfaction and Attrition at Private University

Daryl F. Quinco

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