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Determinants of employee loyalty of company A: A delphi study

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and prioritize the key factors influencing employee loyalty at Company A, a major contributor to Malaysia's economy, to provide actionable strategies for enhancing workforce commitment and reducing turnover. Adopting a qualitative approach, this research employs the Delphi method to gather expert insights through a two-round process involving 20 senior employees with over five years of experience at Company A. Thematic analysis was used in Round 1 to extract key themes from open-ended responses, and consensus was achieved in Round 2 through structured feedback and rating. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) was applied to assess agreement levels. Findings indicate that competitive compensation, recognition and reward systems, a supportive and inclusive work environment, career development opportunities, and effective leadership are the top-ranked drivers of employee loyalty. The study also outlines challenges such as resource limitations, managerial resistance, and cultural inertia that may hinder implementation. The study offers prioritized, evidence-based recommendations for HR practitioners and organizational leaders to enhance employee loyalty through targeted interventions, ultimately boosting job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. By shifting the focus from traditional motivation models to loyalty-centered frameworks, this study contributes to the development of employee retention theory and expands qualitative research in human resource management. This research demonstrates the effectiveness of the Delphi method for consensus-building in organizational contexts and offers a replicable framework for identifying loyalty drivers in other firms or industries. The study stands out by addressing employee loyalty using expert-based consensus in a single-organization context, offering novel insights specific to the Malaysian corporate environment. It bridges the gap between theory and practice through structured, participatory decision-making.

Keywords: Delphi method, Employee loyalty, Employee turnover, Job organizational outcomes, Kendall's W, Thematic analysis.

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1. Introduction

The value that loyal employees contribute to the company and the negative implications of high turnover, such as lower morale and productivity, make employee loyalty essential for organizational growth [1]. To prevent this, organizations have established measures that reward loyalty. Employee engagement, dedication to the organization's objectives, adherence to leadership, and appreciation for its culture are all indicators of loyalty. Devoted employees are inspired to strive towards common goals and sustain a long-term relationship with the organization.

The largest categories are those with 1–5 years (25.68%) and 6–10 years (24.32%) of service, according to the HR data regarding the years of service of employees at Company A. Employees who have been employed for 11–15 years (14.86%), 16–20 years (10.81%), and 21–25 years (8.11%) have smaller percentages, and those who have remained for 26–55 years each have less than 5%. According to this distribution, most of the workforce is made up of relatively new recruits, with 25.68% of employees being new hires as more senior employees retire.

In early 2021, 30% of participants changed employment, the lowest percentage since Q3 2019, when 35% did so, according to the Radstad [2]. Despite the decline in switching jobs, 78% of those surveyed said they were satisfied with their current positions. There were regional differences in satisfaction: 51 percent in Hong Kong, 74 percent in Mainland China, 68 percent in Singapore, and 78 percent in Malaysia. Employee satisfaction remains high overall, despite ongoing regional variations.

According to Maulana et al. [3], previous studies show that employee loyalty is strongly influenced by job satisfaction, which is defined as an employee's positive attitude towards their employer. The scope of work that managers assign influences job satisfaction. Unsuitable assignments or heavy workloads have a detrimental effect on loyalty. It was also found that there was a strong correlation between job satisfaction and loyalty among employees. In this connection, variables like workload and leadership style are critical. To keep employees loyal, the organization must be impartial and supportive, especially from the leadership. Two of the most important factors impacting employee loyalty are job happiness and effective leadership, which include motivating employees to meet organizational objectives.

1.1. Problem Statement

Three important areas are highlighted in Company A's problem statement: the significance of preserving loyalty, the development of loyalty, and the expectations of a new generation of workers. Retaining employee loyalty is crucial as it goes beyond simple organizational commitment and is defined by a deep emotional bond and dedication to an organization [4]. Employee loyalty is a reciprocal relationship in which the organization demonstrates loyalty to its employees. Loyal employees lower operating expenses and provide a positive work environment by aligning their objectives with those of the organization. Leadership style, organizational culture, and job satisfaction are important determinants of loyalty. Since they improve performance, reduce turnover, and increase organizational success, loyal employees are important resources.

The evolution of employee loyalty is highlighted by recent shifts in leadership styles, especially in Malaysia, which place a strong emphasis on the value of compassionate leadership [5]. The necessity for compassionate leaders who place employee welfare first and create an enjoyable work environment was brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leadership that prioritizes identifying and meeting the needs of its workforce improves morale, loyalty, and productivity. Furthermore, because of global movements like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, corporate leadership has shifted from short-term profit-driven objectives to long-term investments in employees and communities [6]. This shows how employee loyalty expectations have evolved throughout time.

Malaysia's Generation Z workforce places a higher value on meaningful employment, personal development, and work-life balance than on high income [7]. Financial rewards by themselves are insufficient to maintain the involvement and loyalty of this generation. Establishing an enjoyable work environment and providing opportunities for professional growth are priorities for organizations. As younger employees want flexibility, mental health support, and job satisfaction, these values reflect the generational shift in workplace expectations [6]. Gen Z talent is more likely to be attracted to and retained by organizations that adapt to these shifting requirements, ensuring success and loyalty over the long term.

1.2. Research Objectives and Research Questions

The objectives of this research are to determine the factors that affect employee loyalty in Company A, reach a consensus among experts regarding the most important elements, and offer suggestions for improving loyalty. Accordingly,

the study questions seek to determine which factors affect employee loyalty, how experts rank these elements in order of significance, and what strategies Company A may use to increase employee loyalty.

1.3. Significance of Study

The significance of this research is assessed from methodological, theoretical, and practical perspectives. The results will be used practically to assist management in creating strategies to improve employee loyalty, enhance human resource management (HRM), and establish a safe and healthy workplace [8]. Employee dedication and performance are greatly influenced by leadership [9]. The study theoretically explores the complex nature of employee loyalty by utilizing Social Exchange Theory (SET), highlighting the significance of factors other than compensation and salary, such as pride in the company [10]. This theoretical framework assists in assessing and understanding loyalty by guiding the research methodology. The Delphi survey will also help increase the accuracy of the factors that influence employee loyalty.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Exchange Theory (SET)

According to Vuong [11], loyal, competent employees who remain with the company during difficult times are crucial to the development of successful organizations. Employees who exhibit emotional loyalty prioritize the organization's success over their own interests. Employee and organizational loyalty reduce expenses, stabilize operations, and increase profitability. Human input is the starting point for loyalty, as demonstrated by the Employee Loyalty Research Model [12].

The development of theories of employee loyalty emphasizes the importance of Social Exchange Theory (SET) in understanding organizational loyalty [10]. SET claims that strong bonds between employees, their superiors, and the company, cultivated by mutually beneficial behaviors, trust, and a moral workplace culture, are the foundation of employee loyalty [13].

Employees contribute well to the company as they feel compelled to return the favour. Islam and Amin [14] demonstrate how human capital disclosures enhance recognition and organizational culture, elements central to reciprocal social exchanges. Battistella et al. [15] show that circular economy practices and eco-innovation increase employee engagement, reinforcing the notion that when organizations invest in socially responsible practices, employees respond with stronger affective and normative commitment. According to Arsawan et al. [13], fostering employee loyalty is greatly supported by ethical leadership, which involves leaders exhibiting trust and loyalty. Similarly, Li et al. [16] explore how digital and environmental sustainability strategies influence job satisfaction and leadership perception, which align with SET's emphasis on mutual benefit and trust-building within the employment relationship. With the support of the reciprocity rule, which promotes performing good deeds and returning favors, SET highlights that employees develop a variety of social exchange relationships with superiors, coworkers, and other stakeholders [17].

2.2. Factors That Impact Employee Loyalty

2.2.1. Job Satisfaction

According to Chen et al. [18] job satisfaction is an important factor that affects employee loyalty both directly and indirectly. Employee satisfaction, corporate image, and loyalty are strongly positively correlated in organizations, and job quality has an indirect effect on loyalty through satisfaction. Maintaining job satisfaction is essential for preserving loyalty and enhancing work quality and safety, especially in high-risk industries. Meeting their expectations results in improved job performance and greater employee loyalty, giving organizations a competitive edge. Employees that are satisfied are also frequently more devoted to their employers [19, 20].

2.2.2. Leadership

Leadership has a significant impact on employee loyalty. Singh et al. [21] state that although motivation and job satisfaction have an impact on loyalty, leadership is a crucial component. Positive interactions between leaders and employees increase commitment, but autocratic leadership has a detrimental impact on employee loyalty. According to Zanzabazar et al. [22], transformational leadership considerably increases employee engagement and loyalty more than transactional leadership. Furthermore, research by Kim and Jo [23] shows that genuine leadership lowers employee turnover and increases loyalty by fostering interpersonal fairness and a healthy work environment. Genuine leadership fosters an atmosphere where workers are more inclined to stay and succeed.

2.2.3. Salary, Rewards and Compensation

Compensation, benefits, and salary all have a significant impact on employee loyalty. Nearly half of the employees questioned by Kreacic et al. [24] left their employment as they were not paid enough, highlighting the significance of competitive compensation in retaining employees. Employees' quality of life is impacted by their compensation, which reflects their ability. Bonuses and incentive programs are frequently utilized to keep employees in developing nations [25]. Providing competitive and equitable pay that considers location, economic conditions, and job needs is essential for retaining loyalty because unethical pay practices can cause discontent and lower employee commitment.

2.2.4. Employee Engagement

According to Eurofound and International Labour Organization [26], employee engagement is a positive state associated with work that is defined by energy, loyalty, and absorption. Engagement lowers absenteeism and increases productivity, creativity, and overall well-being. It is strongly related to performance, loyalty, and job satisfaction. Engaged workers are more likely to be dedicated to the objectives of their company [27]. Enhanced engagement lowers resignations,

increases loyalty, and aligns employees with the goals of the organization. To foster loyalty, companies must empower and engage their employees through training and participation in decision-making, as the pandemic increased their desire for purpose and belonging [28].

2.2.5. Professional Growth and Future Development

Employee retention depends on professional development and future advancement since many depart if they are unable to envision a long-term career with the organization [29]. Career development opportunities might be unclear in flat organizational structures; consequently, employers need to give specific career advancement guidance. According to Mercer's survey, workers who consider their jobs to be fulfilling are three times more likely to have a leader who is invested in their professional growth. In the current labor market, people tend to change jobs frequently and leave when they believe their company is not providing prospects for advancement or investing in their abilities [30]. To reduce employee turnover, organizations must prioritize treating employees as long-term assets.

2.2.6. Relationship with Colleagues or Superiors

Employee loyalty is greatly influenced by the interaction that exists between employees and their supervisors or coworkers. Loyalty is positively impacted by strong ties with managers that are fostered by encouragement, care, and trust [31]. The employer-employee relationship, according to social exchange theory, is built on reciprocal efforts, whereby employees support the organization in return for ethical behavior and support from their superiors. Employees who have strong leader-member exchanges (LMXs) are more likely to be loyal and satisfied with their jobs, especially in the face of challenging work conditions [32].

3. Method

According to Sekaran and Bougie [33] a sound research design comprises six key components: the purpose of the study, type of investigation, extent of researcher interference, study setting, unit of analysis, and time horizon. This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory design to investigate the critical factors influencing employee loyalty in Company A, a major player in Malaysia's economic landscape. The investigation is non-causal, focused on expert insights. Researcher interference is minimal, allowing natural expert consensus to emerge. The study is conducted in a non-contrived setting within Company A. The unit of analysis is the organization, with employee loyalty as the central phenomenon. Lastly, the study uses a cross-sectional time horizon, with data collected between July and September 2024. Malaysia was chosen as the context of this study because Company A plays a pivotal role in the national labor market and industrial development. Understanding employee loyalty in this organizational and cultural context provides insights not only for Company A but also for other Malaysian firms and similar economies undergoing workforce transformation.

3.1. Delphi Method

The RAND Corporation created the Delphi method in the 1950s for military use, but it has subsequently been modified for use in several scientific fields. In allowing expert opinions to be refined over several rounds without the need for in-person meetings, it is especially useful for analyzing complex issues [34]. The method's iterative procedure, which improves data quality and reliability, represents its main strength. According to Mohd Noor et al. [35] an expert consensus is gauged by Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W), where a low p-value (less than 0.05) confirms statistical significance, and a high W value indicates agreement. This method has been utilized extensively worldwide to investigate employee loyalty by combining findings from expert research [36]. Figure 1 illustrates the flowchart of the Delphi Method that we utilize.

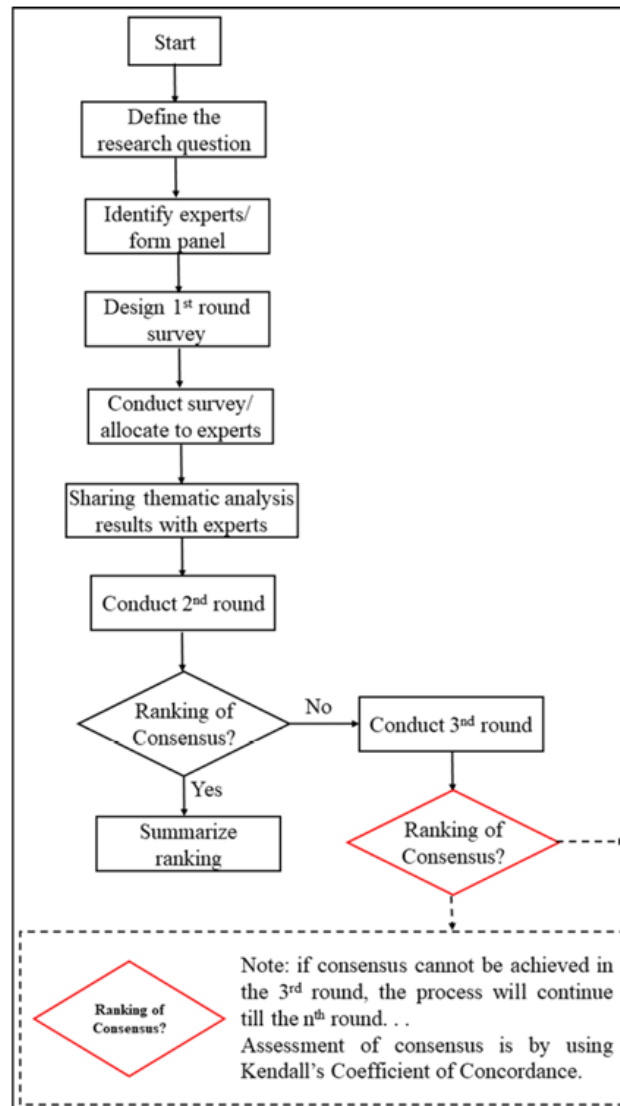


Figure 1.
Flowchart of the Delphi method Mohd Noor et al. [35].

3.2. Delphi Instrument

Two rounds of questionnaires will be used in the study to obtain expert consensus, and if they fail to reach agreement after the second round, a third round will be conducted [37]. According to Subramaniam et al. [34] the Delphi Method will be used for data analysis, and Kendall's W test will be employed to gauge the level of agreement among experts on key issues. Fundamental themes will be organized into broader categories through a thematic analysis of expert feedback. The investigation is scheduled to take place from July to September 2024.

3.3. Kendall's W

Kendall's coefficient of concordance, or Kendall's W, gauges how well experts agree when classifying variables, especially in ordinal data. In these rankings, it evaluates dependability or consistency. The following are essential components of applying Kendall's W in research: (1) Panel Selection, which involves selecting a diverse group of experts; (2) First Round of Open-Ended Questions, which collects a wide range of suggestions; (3) Thematic Analysis, which classifies and interprets qualitative data; and (4) Second Round of Questions, which refines the responses to reach consensus among the experts.

3.3.1. Panel Selection

The Delphi method's panel selection process focuses on assembling a diverse set of experts to offer comprehensive views [38]. Panels usually comprise 7 to 30 experts with relevant experience. Experts in this study will be employees who have worked for the company for at least five years [39]. The goal and expectations of the study will be described in a formal invitation letter. Twenty individuals will make up the expert panel, which is ideal for a homogeneous Delphi [40]. Two important components of the Delphi approach are confidentiality and anonymity [41]. It improves group conversations and guarantees a diversity of perspectives by enabling participants to openly express their opinions without worrying about prejudice or peer pressure.

3.3.2. Initial Open-ended Questionnaire

Two questionnaire rounds will be used in the study. To obtain preliminary information, 20 experts will be given an open-ended questionnaire in the first round [34]. A question like "What are the factors that influence employee loyalty in the organization?" could be an example. This stage will assist in identifying important themes and variables that will be further refined in the next round.

3.3.3. Thematic Analysis

Through the identification of both explicit and implicit meanings in verbal or visual information, thematic analysis (TA) is a method used to study qualitative data [42]. While performing inductive studies, Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach includes: (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) creating preliminary codes, (3) identifying themes, (4) evaluating themes, (5) labeling themes, and (6) reporting findings. This methodical approach facilitates the systematic interpretation of data, revealing underlying meanings and patterns. It is frequently employed in the analysis of open-ended survey responses [43].

3.3.4. Round Two Questionnaire

The topics covered by the second round's questionnaire should be more focused and incorporate the reduced answers from the previous round [44]. Participants may be given the opportunity to submit comments and expert opinions anonymously on issues within a comment area (qualitative construction). Subsequently, the researcher compiles the responses and presents them to the participants in a follow-up round, requesting them to modify or maintain their initial responses considering the new information. The experts will initially view the reduced answers of the other contestants during the second round.

4. Data Analysis and Finding

4.1. Pilot Test

The questionnaire's clarity, comprehension, and completion time were assessed in pilot research, which involved five experts [39]. Participants' understanding of the topics and the questionnaire's structure were the study's main goals [45]. Feedback was given within two weeks by the experts, which included three operators, a manager, and an executive. Following their insights, the item phrasing was slightly clarified, and suggestions were made to include the experts' demographic and background information [46]. To ensure alignment with the objectives of the research and improve the procedure, the survey tools have been refined with the assistance of this feedback.

Table 1.
Experts who participated in the pilot test.

No.	Age	Experience (years)	Position
E1	39	16	Manager
E2	38	6	Executive
E3	78	53	Supervisor
E4	61	17	Operator
E5	41	10	Operator

After the first Delphi round, a 100% response rate was obtained; the results were combined and displayed in Table 2. Employee loyalty was found to be significantly impacted by a list of six (6) different variables. In later phases of the study, these aspects will serve as the basis for further investigation and understanding.

Table 2.
The dimensions and themes of the Round One Pilot Test Delphi findings.

Dimensions	Themes
Leadership styles	Effective leadership
Recognition and rewards	Appreciation for good work
Work environment	1. Company culture
	2. Flexibility
	3. Work/life balance
Compensation and Benefits	1. Bonus
	2. Salary
	3. Employee benefits
	4. Fair Compensation
Career development opportunities	Career advancement
Job Satisfaction	Job Satisfaction

Based on the results from the first round of the Delphi study, we identified six (6) dimensions: (1) Leadership styles, (2) Recognition and reward, (3) Work environment, (4) Compensation and benefits, (5) Career development opportunities, and (6) Job satisfaction.

Table 3.

Mean and Group Rank for the Pilot test.

Experts	Dimensions					
No.	Leadership Style	Recognition & Reward	Work Environment	Compensation and Benefits	Career Development Opportunities	Job Satisfaction
E1	3	5	6	1	2	4
E2	3	4	2	1	5	6
E3	3	4	6	1	2	5
E4	3	4	2	1	6	5
E5	3	6	2	1	4	5
Mean	3.00	4.60	3.60	1.00	3.80	5.00
Group rank	2	4	3	1	6	4

Table 4.

Kendall's W test statistics for the pilot test.

Test Statistics	
N	5
Kendall's W ^a	0.575
Chi-Square	14.371
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	0.013

Note: a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance.

Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (Kendall's W) was used in the pilot test to gauge the degree to which five experts agreed on the factors influencing employee loyalty [47]. With Kendall's W value of 0.575, the data demonstrated moderate concordance. A p-value of 0.013 and a Chi-Square value of 14.371 verified that there was statistically significant agreement among the participants. The process is validated by these results, which ensure that subsequent Delphi survey rounds are organized to produce significant insights into factors influencing employee loyalty.

4.1.1. Descriptive Analysis of The Delphi Experts

The findings are more credible and relevant since the descriptive analysis of the experts involved in the Delphi study emphasizes their variety and range of experience. Experts representing a wide range of hierarchies, including managers, executives, supervisors, and operators, made up the panel and provided a variety of perspectives on employee loyalty [48]. Their different experiences, which ranged from 6 to 52 years, ensured a spectrum of perspectives [38]. During two survey rounds, the Company A expert panel exhibited excellent levels of engagement and response rates (over 90%), which greatly enhanced the study's content validity [49].

4.2. Round One Data Analysis

To determine the demographics of the expert panels, information on the experts' ages, years of work experience, and responsibilities or positions was gathered. This is displayed in Table 5. While maintaining participant anonymity to encourage more open feedback, gathering this data enhances the comprehensiveness and accuracy of insights gained through the Delphi research method.

Table 5.

Experts who participated in the First Round Delphi Study.

No.	Age	Experience (years)	Position
E6	36	6	Executive
E7	34	17	Operator
E8	34	10	Operator
E9	33	8	Supervisor
E10	56	34	Operator
E11	69	50	Supervisor
E12	68	47	Supervisor
E13	37	8	Executive
E14	44	24	Operator
E15	44	23	Executive
E16	40	22	Operator
E17	69	48	Operator
E18	45	16	Operator
E19	38	5	Operator
E20	78	52	Manager
E21	46	15	Executive
E22	42	6	Executive
E23	30	7	Operator
E24	44	16	Operator
E25	46	7	Operator

We used a single question in Round One to gather qualitative data: *"What are the factors that significantly affect employee loyalty? Please list at least six factors."* In response, the panelist provided a list of unranked free-text responses.

4.2.1. Thematic Analysis Findings

A methodical and adaptable method for organizing qualitative data is thematic analysis [6]. Applying classifications to the data and breaking them down into themes, then analyzing and presenting these themes, is a process known as thematic analysis that helps describe and analyze qualitative data in an organized way. The following segment highlights the results of the thematic analysis conducted on the factors impacting employee loyalty at Company A. These findings were obtained from the information provided by our expert panel during the two rounds of the Delphi survey.

4.2.2. Identification and Categorization of Themes

To identify preliminary themes and important factors, the researchers first become familiar with the data before beginning the thematic analysis procedure. Through an in-depth analysis of the text, researchers identify significant quotations that highlight a range of perspectives and trends associated with the research objectives. Providing a detailed explanation of certain or related themes in the data is the purpose of thematic analysis [50, 51]. Except for five from the pilot test, 20 experts took part in this study to determine the factors influencing employee loyalty at Company A. According to Espedal et al. [49], thematic analysis involved coding textual segments into meaningful units that were then grouped into broader themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee loyalty. The organization of these codes into themes is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6.

The dimensions and themes from the first-round data.

Dimensions	Themes
Leadership style	1. Understanding Superiors
	2. Effective Leadership
Recognition and rewards	1. Recognition and reward
	2. Employee appreciation
Work environment	1. Work/life balance
	2. Company stability
	3. Relationship with other employees
	4. Workplace locality
	5. Flexibility
	6. Company culture
	7. Acceptance of employees with a lower educational level
Job satisfaction	Job satisfaction
Benefits and Compensation	1. Benefits
	2. Allowance
	3. Bonuses
	4. Overtime (OT) pay
	5. Salary
Career development opportunities	Career progression and promotions

4.2.3. Key Themes and Patterns

Thematic analysis identified several key factors influencing employee loyalty, including Leadership Style, Recognition and Rewards, Work Environment, Job Satisfaction, Benefits and Compensation, and Career Development Opportunities. These topics surfaced consistently across both the pilot test and the first Delphi round, particularly emphasizing the Work Environment and Benefits and Compensation. Specific themes, including benefits, income, flexibility, and organizational stability, were common. The investigation emphasized that organizational factors, such as employee appreciation, organizational culture, and management's understanding, play a vital role in developing employee loyalty, highlighting that loyalty is influenced by a combination of multiple organizational dynamics.

4.2.4. Experts' Insights and Quotes

Experts offered insightful opinions on several factors impacting employee loyalty during thematic analysis, such as:

E6: "Career development opportunities, Work-life Balance, Flexibility (Dresscode/Working Hours), Benefits, Bonus, Overtime (OT) Pay,"

E13: "Workplace locality (Distance from house to workplace), Salary, Bonus, Career development opportunities, Work-life Balance, Company Stability"

E14: "Understanding Superiors (Superiors willing to tolerate), Workplace locality (Living near workplace), Overtime (OT) Pay, Salary, Flexibility (Dresscode/Working hours), Acceptance of employees with a lower educational level".

4.3. Round Two Data Analysis

Experts ranked the six factors affecting employee loyalty in the second Delphi round. An overall, aggregated ranking was produced by averaging or combining the rankings of each expert. This method reduces individual biases and provides a comprehensive assessment of the factors that most significantly affect employee loyalty. The research offers a more balanced and reliable assessment of the major factors influencing employee loyalty by compiling and averaging the expert feedback.

4.3.1. Non-Parametric Analysis Findings

The results of the non-parametric analysis, which was conducted to investigate and confirm the patterns identified in the Delphi study regarding the variables influencing employee loyalty among Company A employees, are presented in this section. Given the qualitative nature of the data and the objective of examining relationships and differences without assuming a specific distribution, non-parametric tests were selected.

Table 7.
Mean and Group Rank from Second round of the Delphi Study.

No.	Leadership Style	Recognition and Rewards	Work Environment	Job Satisfaction	Benefits and Compensation	Career Development Opportunities
E6	4	5	2	6	1	3
E7	6	3	2	5	1	4
E8	4	3	2	6	1	5
E9	5	4	2	6	1	3
E10	3	4	2	5	1	6
E11	3	4	2	5	1	6
E12	5	3	2	6	1	4
E13	4	5	1	6	2	3
E14	3	4	2	5	1	6
E15	5	4	2	6	1	3
E16	3	4	2	6	1	5
E17	3	4	2	5	1	6
E18	3	4	2	6	1	5
E19	3	4	2	5	1	6
E20	5	4	6	3	1	2
E21	4	3	2	6	1	5
E22	5	4	3	6	1	2
E23	6	3	2	4	1	5
E24	5	4	1	3	2	6
E25	6	3	2	5	1	4
Mean Group	4.25	3.80	2.15	5.25	1.10	4.45
Rank	4	3	2	6	1	5

Table 7 shows the six-dimension ranking ranges from 1.10 to 5.25. The sequence of the importance of the dimensions is as follows: (1) Benefits and Compensation (1.10), (2) Work Environment (2.15), (3) Recognition and Rewards (3.80), (4) Leadership Style (4.25), (5) Career Development Opportunities (4.46), and (6) Job Satisfaction (5.25).

4.3.2. Rationale for Non-Parametric Analysis

Nonparametric methods are statistical approaches that are appropriate for data that do not follow a normal distribution, such as ordinal variables or data containing outliers, because they do not rely on assumptions about the population [52]. These approaches are simple to comprehend and interpret, robust, adaptable, and suitable for use with small sample sizes. Nevertheless, in comparison to parametric approaches, they could have smaller confidence intervals, less precision, and lower statistical power, especially if the data have a known distribution.

4.3.3. Non-Parametric Test Results

According to the findings of the non-parametric test using Kendall's W, there is a high degree of agreement among the 20 experts who ranked the factors affecting employee loyalty. With a strong concordance of 0.697, Kendall's W value indicates that experts were largely in agreement with the rankings [47]. Statistical significance of this agreement is confirmed by the Chi-Square value of 69.714 with 5 degrees of freedom and a p-value of about 0 (1.17514E-13). Benefits and salary, work environment, recognition and rewards, leadership style, career development opportunities, and job satisfaction are among the key themes that the analysis reveals strong correlations between.

Table 8.
Kendall's W test result for the second round data.

Test Statistics	
N	20
Kendall's W ^a	0.697
Chi-Square	69.714
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	1.17514E-13

Note: a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance.

In the first Delphi round, open-ended responses were analyzed thematically. Expert feedback converged around five core themes: benefits and compensation, work-life balance, leadership quality, career development opportunities, and organizational culture. These themes were distilled through coding and clustering of recurrent keywords and concepts across the responses.

While Kendall's W indicated an increasing consensus (W = 0.68 in Round 2; W = 0.79 in Round 3), qualitative feedback provided additional nuance. For instance, several experts emphasized that loyalty in younger employees is deeply

tied to perceived value alignment with organizational mission. Others noted that while compensation ranks highest, it is often a "baseline" factor, with relational and developmental aspects playing a reinforcing role.

5. Discussion of The Findings

This study employed a Delphi approach to systematically gather and refine expert opinions on the factors that influence employee loyalty at Company A. The findings revealed a mix of internal and external influences that shape loyalty and provided a prioritized list of key factors according to an expert consensus. This discussion integrates those insights with existing literature to answer the two research questions.

5.1. RQ1: What are the Key Factors Influencing Employee Loyalty in Company A?

The key factors influencing employee loyalty at Company A were identified through a structured Delphi study involving expert evaluations across multiple rounds. The findings revealed a comprehensive array of internal and external factors that significantly impact employee loyalty. These factors were thematically categorized to form a framework that reflects how loyalty is cultivated within the organization.

First, external factors such as leadership style, compensation and benefits, work environment, and career development opportunities emerged as central themes. These elements represent organizational policies and environments that are largely shaped by management decisions. Leadership that is supportive, transparent, and responsive to employee needs plays a crucial role in motivating employees and fostering commitment. Compensation, including competitive salaries, bonuses, and fringe benefits (e.g., social security, paid leave), serves not only as a financial incentive but also as a sign of the organization's valuation of its workforce [53, 54]. A positive and flexible work environment, marked by remote work options, ergonomic workspaces, and healthy coworker relationships, enhances employees' work-life balance, which in turn nurtures loyalty [55, 56].

In addition to this, internal factors such as job satisfaction, rewards, and recognition also significantly influence employee loyalty. Recognition and rewards, whether in the form of verbal appreciation or formal awards, have a profound impact on employee morale and sense of belonging [57]. The study found that recognition efforts are even more crucial in the era of remote work, where feelings of detachment and undervaluation can lead to disengagement [58]. Job satisfaction, which stems from perceived fairness, alignment with job roles, and emotional fulfillment, leads to lower absenteeism and turnover rates while enhancing productivity [59].

Another essential factor is career development opportunities, which serve as a strategic mechanism for retaining talent, especially younger employees. These opportunities include training, mentorship, workshops, and avenues for upward mobility. According to APA [60] a lack of professional growth is a primary driver of turnover. Employees who perceive their company as invested in their development are more likely to exhibit long-term loyalty.

Finally, the Delphi study highlighted that employee loyalty at Company A is the result of dynamic and reciprocal relationships, aligning with the Social Exchange Theory. When employees receive fair treatment, recognition, and growth opportunities, they are more inclined to reciprocate with loyalty, enhanced performance, and commitment [61, 62].

5.2. RQ2: How Do Experts Rank These Factors and What Strategies Can Enhance Employee Loyalty?

To reach expert consensus on prioritization, the Delphi technique employed ranking and Kendall's W coefficient to measure agreement. The results showed the following order of importance:

5.2.1. Rank 1: Benefits and Compensation

Employees prioritize compensation such as salary, bonuses, and allowances, which are proven to enhance loyalty and organizational commitment [53]. Offering competitive monetary and non-monetary incentives helps organizations attract and retain top talent [63]. Fringe benefits like social security and pension plans further increase engagement by reducing stress and fostering a sense of security [54]. Culturally, in many collectivist societies, financial stability is a major determinant of employee satisfaction, reflecting the high ranking of benefits. However, some literature warns that overemphasis on monetary rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation and creativity [64], indicating a need for balanced compensation strategies.

5.2.2. Rank 2: Work Environment

The work environment includes several themes, including workplace locality, coworker relationships, flexibility, work-life balance, and company stability. According to Vuong [65], loyalty at Company A is greatly impacted by positive interactions between coworkers and employees. According to Ena et al. [66], the work environment includes both tangible components, such as workspace and equipment, and intangible features, including relationships with coworkers and superiors. A friendly work environment with adequate facilities and supportive relationships enhances employee loyalty and performance. Flexible work schedules, such as remote work and job sharing, increase productivity, job satisfaction, and morale, which contribute to long-term employee loyalty [54]. According to Samat and Hamid [67], a positive work environment increases productivity, while a negative one could result in issues such as absenteeism. However, negative workplace culture can severely reduce employee retention. The cultural relevance is evident in high-context cultures where harmonious relationships and group cohesion are critical for employee loyalty. As a result, organizations often implement flexible work schedules to increase employee retention.

5.2.3. Rank 3: Recognition and Rewards

Employee loyalty and morale are greatly increased when their efforts and accomplishments are recognized [53]. Regular recognition, whether in the form of awards or simple gratitude, makes employees feel valued and encourages positive behavior. Considering the increase in remote work, this is particularly crucial since workers may become disengaged [58]. According to studies, a considerable number of individuals have quit their employment as they felt undervalued, and 65% of them would be willing to put in more effort if they felt valued. A motivated workforce is a result of successful recognition programs, which also increase performance, lower absenteeism, and reduce turnover. Employee performance, morale, satisfaction, and loyalty could all be boosted by rewards and recognition, which are essential components of HR strategy [57]. Systems for rewards that are customized to the needs of employees and the culture of the organization are more effective than those that are generic. Research shows that rewards, employee behavior, and loyalty are positively correlated, highlighting the significance of well-designed incentive programs for enhancing retention and job satisfaction [68]. Customized reward systems aligned with organizational culture are more effective than generic ones. Some studies argue that recognition fulfills psychological needs and can be more motivating than financial rewards, emphasizing its cultural and individual importance.

5.2.4. Rank 4: Leadership Style

According to Riatmaja and Shaddiq [69], a leader's style has a significant influence on how lower management motivates employees and accomplishes objectives. Effective leaders inspire prompt decision-making, transparent communication, and accountability. Their leadership style influences employee motivation, productivity, and loyalty. Leadership and organizational success have a strong correlation, according to research, which emphasizes how crucial it is to identify the appropriate style to improve employee performance. Leadership style is also reflected in the behavior of leaders during hiring, training, and decision-making processes [70]. Culturally sensitive leadership that adapts to societal norms and individual differences enhances loyalty, especially in cultures valuing respect and hierarchy [71]. As they develop organizational behavior within the cultural framework, effective leaders align team goals with company objectives. By fostering positive relationships and providing support, leadership boosts employee loyalty and morale [72]. According to Calder and Follett [73], post-pandemic leadership appears more concerned with understanding the individual requirements of employees and motivating and mentoring them to meet evolving demands. Company A values leaders who are understanding and supportive, as such leaders have a positive impact on employee attitudes and performance [71].

5.2.5. Rank 5: Career Development Opportunities

Career development supports both professional and personal progress by managing and enhancing professional growth through lifelong engagement. It involves building essential skills, including time management, leadership, and communication [74]. Cultural factors play a role, as some employees may prioritize long-term job security over rapid advancement, suggesting the need to tailor career development to employee values. By providing opportunities for advancement, development, and job stability, career development plays a crucial role in fostering employee loyalty. Employers who place a high priority on career development programs generally retain top talent and sustain employee loyalty. According to a 2022 American Psychological Association survey, professional development opportunities are the leading cause of employee turnover, with 23% of American workers expressing dissatisfaction regarding this issue [75]. To attract and retain talent, organizations need to enhance their career programs, as the pandemic highlighted [76]. Employers can retain younger employees by providing opportunities for career advancement, such as training and development initiatives. Seminars and workshops are examples of educational activities that enhance organizational efficiency and employee skills, which in turn increase loyalty [54].

5.2.6. Rank 6: Job Satisfaction

Employee loyalty, motivation, and productivity are all significantly impacted by job satisfaction. Employees are satisfied when they can express their feelings about their job during performance reviews [77]. Work-life quality and absenteeism are impacted by job satisfaction, which is influenced by factors such as salary, benefits, professional development, workplace culture, and recognition. According to Hadj [59], organizations that place a high priority on job satisfaction have a higher probability of retaining employees and boosting loyalty. In accordance with the research, factors such as colleague relationships and job demand have significant effects on employee satisfaction, which in turn influences loyalty [78]. Employee satisfaction improves long-term financial results, productivity, and organizational performance by reducing turnover. However, job satisfaction is complex and culturally mediated; thus, strategies to improve it must consider local values and employee expectations to be effective.

6. Implications of Research

6.1. Practical Implication

The Delphi study provides a useful framework for determining and prioritizing the key factors influencing Company A's employee loyalty and assists in effectively customizing loyalty initiatives. By gathering experts, Company A could establish targeted programs that focus on the most significant factors, such as benefits, compensation, work environment, flexible schedules, and recognition programs. Long-term HR strategies can also be guided by the findings, providing adaptability in response to changing employee demands. Programs that increase employee retention, satisfaction, and loyalty can be implemented practically with this approach.

6.2. Theoretical Implication

According to the Delphi survey, benefits and compensation, work environment, and recognition and rewards were the most significant factors influencing employee loyalty at Company A. Leadership style, career development opportunities, and job satisfaction were ranked lower. According to Nickerson [79] the study's application of Social Exchange Theory (SET) highlights how the balance of rewards and costs in relationships influences employee loyalty. While imbalances result in dissatisfaction, fairness and positive interactions foster loyalty [75]. Additional evidence that strong supervisor-employee relationships enhance loyalty is provided by the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Lapointe et al. [80]. Zhu et al. [81] claim that reciprocity also plays a part, with positive reciprocity increasing loyalty and negative reciprocity decreasing it. Fairness perceptions, organizational support, and values contribute to significant effects on employee satisfaction and retention [82]. These findings could assist Company A in adapting its employee loyalty programs to consider the most significant factors.



Figure 2.
Ranking of factors affecting employee loyalty in Company A.

6.3. Methodological Implications

Thorough methodological considerations are necessary to guarantee the reliability of a Delphi study on factors influencing employee loyalty. A broad panel is ensured to obtain in-depth insights by carefully selecting experts with appropriate expertise at the outset of the process. The entire procedure is conducted anonymously to promote open communication, which calls for a safe and private way to gather data. The questionnaire is administered in rounds, beginning with open-ended questions and moving on to more structured ones, as part of the study's iterative process. Utilizing statistical metrics like means to assess agreement, researchers often provide feedback between rounds to help panel members reach consensus. To achieve a balance between diversity and manageability, the sample size needs to be carefully considered. To provide a comprehensive and beneficial understanding of employee loyalty, the Delphi study should ultimately not only discover factors impacting employee loyalty but also produce practical implications and recommendations for organizational applications.

7. Conclusions, Recommendations and Challenges

7.1. Conclusions

Company A's Delphi study on employee loyalty found that 18 elements across six dimensions, leadership style, career development opportunities, benefits and compensation, job satisfaction, work environment, and recognition and rewards have a significant influence on loyalty. In the workplace, flexibility and work location have been identified as important, as were benefits and compensation, such as salary, overtime pay, and bonuses [83]. A significant role was also played by leadership style, which emphasized the importance of effective and considerate leadership. According to the report, to improve employee loyalty, Company A should integrate these values into its practices and culture.

7.2. Recommendations

Employee loyalty and positive attitudes can be promoted by a well-maintained workspace with enhanced security. Employees who receive recognition, rewards, and fair compensation feel more appreciated and motivated, which further boosts loyalty. To remain competitive and satisfy employee demands, Company A should evaluate its salary structure regularly, which will increase employee loyalty [63]. Prioritizing critical factors such as salary, recognition, and work environment for focused improvements is recommended by the Delphi study. Customized strategies, including long-term

compensation plans, inclusive work environments, rewards programs, and leadership development, could effectively increase employee loyalty.

7.2.1. Implementing Long-Term Effective Benefit and Compensation Strategies

Long-term success for Company A depends on implementing effective compensation plans since competitive and fair salaries boost employee loyalty, job satisfaction, and retention [84]. Recruiting and maintaining top talent requires regularly reviewing and adapting benefits to meet changing employee needs [85]. Ensuring that employees feel appreciated through open communication regarding compensation and benefits increases loyalty and productivity [53]. Employee loyalty can be increased, and turnover can be further decreased by addressing the disconnect between benefits offered and employee needs, especially in the period following the pandemic [74].

7.2.2. Promoting A Positive and Inclusive Work Environment

Job satisfaction and loyalty at Company A are greatly increased by a flexible and accommodating work environment that emphasizes work-life balance and remote work options [53]. Enhanced comfort, safety, and morale at work lead to increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and increased employee loyalty, Sukawati and Suwandana [55]. Zhenjing et al. [86] have found that such forms of environments encourage cooperation and dedication, which result in higher commitment and dedication. Prioritizing well-being through stress reduction, work-life balance, and wellness programs fosters a healthy workplace culture that raises employee loyalty and job satisfaction [87]. To attract and retain talent, Company A has implemented flexible policies, such as shift changes [57]. Workplace interactions and employee relationships can be further enhanced through establishing policies that promote mutual support and cooperation among coworkers [56].

7.2.3. Effective Employee Rewards and Recognition Programs

According to research by Yang et al. [88], formal or informal recognition has a minimal cost and a positive impact on task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), job satisfaction, and employee trust. Company A's in-role and extra-role behaviors are improved by recognition because it increases emotional reactions such as authentic pride, which in turn promotes confidence as well as achievement. Long-term engagement can be promoted through standardized recognition programs that are based on organizational culture and provide fair and consistent treatment of employees [57]. Performance-based rewards increase engagement and productivity by enabling organizations to leverage employee contributions as competitive advantages [89]. Sincere and specific recognition increases employees' perception of value, so both monetary and non-monetary rewards, such as bonuses or public acclaim, can boost morale and loyalty [60]. Teamwork and alignment with corporate objectives are further improved by fostering peer appreciation.

7.2.4. Empowering Leaders, Cultivating Growth, Career Development, and Job Satisfaction

Company A could reduce employee turnover, increase job satisfaction, and broaden skill sets by investing in professional development [76]. This will additionally assist employees in making lateral transfers. Additionally, promoting transparency encourages diversity and inclusivity [78]. In a competitive industry, prioritizing development opportunities assists in attracting new talent and makes employees feel appreciated. Furthermore, employees' job satisfaction is influenced by positive relationships with coworkers and job roles that fit their routines, which increases their sense of fulfillment and loyalty at Company A [78].

7.3. Challenges

Implementing these recommendations may face several challenges. Budget constraints could limit the extent of compensation and benefit improvements, requiring careful resource management. Resistance to change from employees or management may occur, especially when introducing flexible work policies or new leadership approaches, making change management critical. Inconsistent or perceived unfair recognition programs might reduce employee trust and motivation, emphasizing the need for transparency and fairness. Furthermore, providing meaningful career development and leadership training demands sustained commitment and alignment with organizational goals, which may require significant time and effort from both employees and management. Addressing these potential obstacles early through strategic planning and stakeholder engagement will be essential for successful implementation.

8. Further Research Directions

The Delphi study on determinants of employee loyalty of Company A provides valuable insights and highlights avenues for further research. To get a wide range of viewpoints for future research on the factors influencing employee loyalty in Company A using the Delphi method, it is recommended to assemble a diverse panel of experts with an emphasis on newly developing loyalty drivers such as remote work and mental health support. The research should also consider cross-comparative analysis between various demographic groups, incorporate longitudinal tracking to comprehend changes over time, and investigate how organizational culture and leadership styles affect loyalty. To ensure the research's relevance and application, it is also critical to integrate quantitative data with qualitative insights, look at technology's impact, and evaluate how well the findings scale across various organizations.

9. Limitations

This study focuses solely on Company A, which inherently limits the generalizability of its findings. Because Company A operates within a specific industry, organizational size, and cultural context, the results may not be fully applicable to organizations that differ in these aspects, such as those in other sectors, larger or smaller companies, or

organizations with distinct cultural environments. Additionally, the study does not differentiate between various job functions or hierarchical levels, which could influence perceptions of employee loyalty differently across roles and positions. This lack of granularity may obscure important nuances that affect the applicability of findings across diverse employee groups.

Moreover, the study's cross-sectional design captures data at a single point in time, limiting the ability to account for fluctuations in employee attitudes and organizational dynamics that occur due to evolving internal and external factors, such as economic changes, industry disruptions, or organizational restructuring. This temporal limitation reduces the capacity to understand how employee loyalty may develop or decline over time.

These constraints collectively restrict the extent to which the findings can be generalized beyond the specific context of Company A. To enhance generalizability and address these limitations, future research should consider longitudinal or repeated measures designs to track changes over time. Expanding the scope to include multiple organizations across various industries and sizes, while differentiating between employee roles and hierarchy, would provide richer insights and improve the applicability of results to broader organizational settings.

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