

Unveiling Employee Preferences: A Focus Group Exploration of Employer of Choice Attributes

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Abstract

The employer of choice is a highly sought-after position within any organization. It signifies that the company is seen as an attractive employer, preferred by talented individuals. The current study aims to identify the attribute of an organization that contributes to its status as the employer of choice. The research is conducted among information technology (IT) companies, with respondents of various genders and with varying levels of experience. The data collected through semi-directed interviews with employees and analyzed using thematic analysis, which is considered one of the best and accepted methods for analyzing qualitative data. The findings obtained from the respondents reveals that an organization can become an employer of choice due to its competitive compensation and benefits, prioritization of employee satisfaction and well-being, provision of growth and development opportunities, fostering of diversity and inclusion, and promotion of a positive and collaborative company culture. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of retaining and attracting talented employees, which can be achieved with the help of organizational branding. These findings emphasize the significance of considering these factors when designing and implementing strategies to achieve the status of the employer of choice. Additionally, this study highlights the limitations and suggests avenues for further research.

Keywords: *Employer of choice, Fairness at work, Quality of work life, Growth opportunities, qualitative analysis, Organizational Culture.*

Introduction

In the rapidly changing landscape of work and highly competitive job market (Ahmad & De Clercq, 2024), the concept of being an "employer of choice (EOC)" has garnered significant attention as organizations seek to attract and retain top talent in today's competitive labor market (Ada, Korolchuk, & Yunyk, 2023). Organizations are increasingly seeking to understand the factors that contribute to being an employer of choice and the potential benefits it offers (Bharadwaj, Khan, & Yameen, 2022). By offering attractive benefits, competitive salaries, and a positive work culture, employers can attract and retain top talent (Beus, Taylor, & Smith, 2023). Additionally, employers who prioritize employee development and provide opportunities for growth can further enhance their reputation as an employer of choice. One key aspect of becoming an employer of choice is creating a strong employer brand (Bharadwaj, Khan, & Yameen, 2022). However, (Allam, Employee Disengagement: A Fatal Consequence to Organization and its Ameliorative Measures, 2017) emphasize that to be an employer of

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choice, an organization must align its values and practices with the needs, expectations, and interests of its employees.

A positive employer brand can be achieved by showcasing company values, employee success stories, and a supportive work environment on various platforms such as social media, company website, and industry events. Moreover, investing in employee well-being programs and initiatives can significantly contribute to becoming an employer of choice. This can include offering flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and mental health support to create a positive and healthy work environment (Silva & Dias, 2023). Furthermore, fostering open communication and feedback channels can improve employee satisfaction and retention, ultimately boosting the employer's reputation. Encouraging a diverse and inclusive workplace culture can also attract a wider range of top talent and enhance the employer brand. By implementing these strategies, employers can position themselves as the employer of choice, setting themselves apart in the job market and attracting the best candidates for their organization (Al Kahtani, Khan, & Allam, 2016).

Review of Literature Review

This literature review aims to synthesize the existing research findings on factors influencing employer attractiveness and provide insights into potential future research directions. However, a comprehensive review of the literature reveals that several studies do not provide a direct answer to the research question of what it takes to become an employer of choice. While there is a lack of literature directly examining the concept of "Employer of Choice" (EOC) on a global scale, numerous studies have delved into its indirect aspects. Various attributes, such as competitive pay and benefits, the provision of a reasonable degree of security (Wood, Daniels, & Ogbonnaya, 2020), engagement (Sedyoningsih, Suhud, Dianta, & Elliyana, 2024), fair treatment (Al Kahtani, Khan, & Allam, 2016) & (Ada, Korolchuk, & Yunyk, 2023), quality of work life (Allam & Shaik, 2020), enhanced future employability (Silva & Dias, 2023), commitment (Allam, 2013), enhance or provide job satisfaction (Bharadwaj, Khan, & Yameen, 2022) & (Allam, George, Yahia, & Malik, 2023), employer image or brand (Ada, Korolchuk, & Yunyk, 2023) & (Silva & Dias, 2023), supportive leadership (Allam, 2017) & (Wood, Daniels, & Ogbonnaya, 2020), participation of employees (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019), psychological benefits (Sedyoningsih, Suhud, Dianta, & Elliyana, 2024), opportunities for growth & learning, recognition (King, et al., 2021), attracting the employees (Ada, Korolchuk, & Yunyk, 2023), and providing an incredible work atmosphere (Bharadwaj, Khan, & Yameen, 2022), culture (Beus, Taylor, & Smith, 2023), and workplace environment (Samoliuk, Bilan, Mishchuk, & Mishchuk, 2022), contribute to making an organization an EOC. By considering these aspects, organizations can create a workplace that attracts and retains the most competent workforce.

Researchers (Heikkurinen, 2010) discuss the concept of image differentiation through corporate environmental responsibility. The study underscores the potential of environmental initiatives to shape the image of an organization as an employer of choice. This insight suggests the relevance of environmental responsibility in employer branding efforts and points to the need for more research in this area. However, (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010) present the concept of customizing job content through idiosyncratic deals as a means of work redesign. While not directly focused on employer attractiveness, this research sheds light on the potential of personalized work arrangements in enhancing the appeal of organizations as employers. This suggests a potential avenue for future research on the customization of job content to attract and retain talent. Another researcher, (Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen, & Schoonderbeek, 2013) explore the relevance of employer branding in job advertisements for becoming an employer of choice. Their study emphasizes the role of employer

branding in shaping perceptions of organizations among potential candidates. This finding highlights the need for further research on the impact of employer branding initiatives on employer attractiveness.

(Dogl & Holtbrugge, 2014) highlight the importance of corporate environmental responsibility in enhancing employer reputation and employee commitment. Their empirical study emphasizes the positive impact of a green strategy and culture on employee perceptions of an organization as an attractive employer. This finding underscores the significance of environmental initiatives in shaping employer branding and attracting top talent.

(Chhabra & Sharma, 2014) emphasize the role of organizational culture, brand name, and compensation in employer branding strategies. Their research underscores the need for organizations to focus on these factors to improve their attractiveness as employers. This suggests that a strong organizational culture, a reputable brand name, and competitive compensation packages contribute to becoming an employer of choice.

(Kissel & Buttgen, 2015) Kissel and Buttgen (2015) delve into the power of social media for crafting a strong employer brand identity and its subsequent impact on a company's image and attractiveness to potential hires. Their research underscores the growing influence of social media in shaping how people perceive employers, ultimately affecting an organization's ability to attract top talent and become an employer of choice. They emphasize the crucial role of organizations in strategically utilizing social media platforms to enhance their employer brand and stand out in the competitive talent market.

(Biswas & Suar, 2016) provide insights into the antecedents and consequences of employer branding. Their study contributes to the understanding of the factors that drive employer branding initiatives and the subsequent outcomes for organizations. This research highlights the need for further exploration of the mechanisms through which employer branding influences employer attractiveness.

(Al Kahtani, Khan , & Allam, 2016) emphasize the importance of human resource practices, including fair compensation, performance rewards, training, and development, in creating an environment where employees feel respected and valued can be considered factors contributing to employer of choice. (Fishman, 2016) discusses the importance of employer branding in becoming an employer of choice. The author emphasizes the need for organizations to develop a strong employer brand to attract and retain top talent. This finding underscores the significance of employer branding in creating a positive workplace image. Furthermore, (Fishman, 2016) also highlights the role of employee engagement in becoming an employer of choice. The author suggests that organizations with high levels of employee engagement are more likely to be viewed as employers of choice. This finding underscores the importance of fostering a culture of engagement and involvement within the organization.

(Lyngsie & Foss, 2017) investigate the influence of women in top-management teams on entrepreneurship in established firms. While not directly related to employer attractiveness, this research provides insights into diversity and leadership factors that may contribute to organizational appeal as an employer of choice. This suggests a potential area for future research on the influence of diverse initiatives on employer attractiveness. (Harini, Luddin, & Hamidah, 2019) identified continuous learning, work engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and diversity and inclusion initiatives as key factors contributing to an employer of choice status. (Allam & Shaik, 2020) also emphasized the importance of these factors.

(Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019) investigate the relationship between employer branding, perceived organizational support, employee retention, and the mediating role of organizational commitment. Their study highlights the importance of organizational support and commitment in shaping employee retention, which is a critical aspect of

being an employer of choice. This finding emphasizes the need for organizations to focus on creating a supportive work environment and fostering employee commitment to enhance retention and become an employer of choice.

Research conducted by (Andeyo & Otuya, 2020) highlighted the importance of work-life balance in the context of being an Employer of Choice. The authors emphasized that organizations that prioritize work-life balance tend to attract and retain top talent, thereby enhancing their status as an Employer of Choice. This finding underscores the significance of implementing policies and practices that support employees in achieving a healthy balance between work and personal life. Similar findings have been shown by (Allam & Shaik, 2020). Furthermore, (Ahmad, Khan, & Haque, 2020) emphasized that social value is a significant employer value proposition, followed by interest value and work-life values. These findings suggest that organizations seeking to become employers of choice should focus on creating a supportive and inclusive work environment that addresses employees' social and personal needs.

However, (Sharma & Kumra, 2020) investigated the relationship between workplace spirituality, organizational justice, and mental health, with a focus on the mediating role of employee engagement. The findings indicated that fostering workplace spirituality and organizational justice positively influences employee engagement and mental health, which in turn contributes to an organization's attractiveness as an employer of choice.

Research by (Saridakis, Lai, Torres, & Gourlay, 2020) found that increased job satisfaction positively influences organizational commitment. This relationship is essential for organizations aspiring to be employers of choice, as it indicates a strong bond between employees and the organization, leading to higher retention rates and enhanced performance. Similar trends were observed by (Allam, 2013).

(Vercic & Spoljaric, Managing internal communication: How the choice of channels affects internal communication satisfaction, 2020) investigated how the choice of communication channels affects internal communication satisfaction. The findings imply that effective internal communication can enhance an organization's reputation as an employer of choice. Therefore, organizations should prioritize creating a transparent and engaging communication environment to strengthen their attractiveness to potential employees.

Researchers, (Stofkova & Sukalova, 2020) focus on the sustainable development of human resources in the globalization period. The challenges and opportunities presented by globalization have implications for employer branding and the practices that contribute to being an employer of choice. Moreover, (Al-Dalahmeh, Heder-Rima, & Dajnoki, 2020) examined the effect of talent management practices on employee turnover intention in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) sector. The study revealed that effective talent management practices play a crucial role in reducing employee turnover intentions, highlighting the importance of talent management in becoming an employer of choice.

Researcher, (Vercic, 2021) studied the impact of employee engagement, organizational support, and employer branding on internal communication satisfaction. The findings suggest that employee engagement and organizational support play crucial roles in shaping an organization's reputation as an employer of choice. This indicates that an organization's investment in fostering positive employee engagement and providing robust organizational support can contribute to its attractiveness as an employer.

(Trigaux, Allacker, & Debacker, 2021) emphasized the role of sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in becoming an Employer of Choice. The study suggested that organizations that demonstrate a commitment to environmental sustainability are more likely to appeal to potential employees who are increasingly conscious of corporate social responsibility. This finding underscores the importance of

integrating environmental benchmarks and sustainable practices in organizational strategies to enhance the attractiveness of the employer brand.

According to (Astuti, Safitri, Setrojoyo, & Wibowo, 2023), organizations that are regarded as employers of choice are more likely to have improved levels of employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The study findings are consistent with those of (Allam, George, Yahia, & Malik, 2023).

Additionally, (Gifford, 2022) highlighted the unprecedented increase in remote working and identified it as a critical area for developing a research agenda. The shift towards remote and hybrid working models has implications for employee wellbeing and work-life balance, which are vital components of becoming an employer of choice. Furthermore, (Shahriari, Riahi, Azizan, & Rasti-Barzoki, 2023) explored the effect of green organizational culture on organizational commitment and highlighted the mediating role of job satisfaction. This finding underscores the significance of fostering a supportive work environment to enhance job satisfaction and organizational trust, contributing to the employer of choice status.

However, (Halova & Muller, 2023) examined how employers build their brand using social media as a tool for personnel marketing, with a specific focus on recruiting Generation Z in becoming an employer of choice. The study combines a literature review with empirical research to provide a comprehensive understanding of this dynamic field. (Spoljaric & Dosen, 2023) reviewed various articles offers valuable insights into employer branding and its significance for organizations. The findings highlight the need for further research in the field of employer branding, with a specific focus on international employer branding. By understanding the challenges of global talent acquisition and the need to align employer brand strategies with local contexts, organizations can optimize their recruitment efforts and become employers of choice on a global scale.

Researcher, (Chen, 2023) focused on the impact of benevolent and hostile sexism, recognition, peer parity, impostor syndrome, glass ceiling bias effects, and the maternal wall on the workplace. Understanding and addressing these biases are crucial for creating an equitable and inclusive work environment, which is essential for becoming an employer of choice.

(Sedyoningsih, Suhud, Dianta, & Elliyana, 2024) conducted an extensive study to highlight the significance of job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment on employee loyalty in the maritime tourism industry of Indonesia. Their research revealed significant findings that shed light on the indirect and direct effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on employee loyalty, which were mediated by work engagement. These findings have significant implications for organizations in the maritime tourism industry, as it suggests that job satisfaction, employee loyalty, and commitment can significantly influence the attractiveness of an organization as an employer of choice.

For your organization to become an employer of choice, you have to communicate your company culture, values, and mission in an authentic manner across all platforms in order to attract genuine interest from both employees and employers (Ahmad & De Clercq, 2024).

Objective of the study

1. To understand what factors, make the company an employer of choice.
2. To gain insights into how a company prioritizes employee satisfaction and well-being.

3. To identify the opportunities for growth and development offered by the company.
4. To discover how the company fosters a diverse and inclusive workplace.
5. To explore how the company promotes a positive and collaborative company culture.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design serves as the foundation of a study, influencing its framework and methodology, with the ultimate aim of elucidating answers to the research questions. This qualitative study seeks to shed light on the factors that contribute to an employer of choice reputation from an employee perspective in terms of their opinion, thoughts and feelings. By understanding these key drivers, organizations can develop effective strategies to attract and retain top talent, foster a positive work environment, and ultimately improve their overall performance and competitiveness. After conducting a thorough literature review, five pertinent research questions were selected to frame the analysis. This allowed the study to gain valuable insights and uncover new information.

Research Questions

In this study, the research questions are as follows:

1. What makes your company an employer of choice?
2. Could you please explain how your company places priority on ensuring employee satisfaction and well-being?
3. What are the opportunities for growth and development offered by your company?
4. What are the ways your company fosters diversity and inclusion in the workplace?
5. How does your company promote a positive and collaborative company culture?

Participants' demographic profile

A semi-directed interview process was conducted with a diverse group of ten employees from various departments and positions within the company. The sample included six married individuals and four unmarried individuals, with a gender balance of seven males and three females. This diversity enriched the study's findings by capturing a wider range of perspectives and experiences. It is noteworthy that most of the interviewed employees are in the early stages of their careers, with an average experience of less than three years in the information technology sector.

Data Analysis:

This research employed thematic analysis, a flexible method well-suited for qualitative data analysis, as its foundational approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis, as defined by (Braun & Clarke, 2006), is "Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method used for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Themes are defined as shared meanings across the data and can be identified either inductively or deductively." Whereas, according to (Willig, 2013) "Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves identifying and analyzing patterns of meaning (themes) within data." However, (Braun & Clarke, 2006) outline a six-step process for thematic analysis: familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and summarization. This study followed these steps by identifying patterns, topics, and categories related to the understanding of employer of choice within

interview transcripts. Subsequently, the refined codes were grouped into coherent themes to enhance data comprehension. Although a widely used approach for analyzing diverse textual materials like interviews and documents, thematic analysis does not adhere to a single, universally prescribed method.

Result and Discussion

The interviews conducted for this research utilized Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp calls. The interviews were recorded with permission from the respondents, and the transcribed data was subsequently carefully reviewed and re-read to ensure accuracy and maintain the realm of the scientific investigation.

Question#1 What makes your company an employer of choice?

Ten employees working in the IT sector were asked about the characteristics of an employer of choice. Two respondents out of ten replied that “competitive compensation and benefits” offers attractive salaries and bonuses that align with industry standards, ensuring that its employees are fairly rewarded for their contributions. Furthermore, they opined that the company provides a comprehensive benefits package that includes health insurance, retirement plans, and work-life balance initiatives”. However, three employees were having opinion that “professional development opportunities that company offers training programs, workshops, and mentorship programs to enhance skills and promote career advancement. Indeed, they said that the company encourages employees to pursue further education and provides financial support for relevant certifications or degrees”. As we know, collaborative work environment culture is essential to retain the top talented employees. Out of ten six were having opinion related collaborative work environment and responded that “company fosters a collaborative work environment that encourages teamwork and innovation. The company values open communication and mutual respect among its employees, creating a positive and productive atmosphere”. Out of ten, three responded that work life balance is essential. They said that “company recognizes the importance of work-life balance and is committed to supporting its employees' well-being. The company offers flexible work hours, remote work options, and paid time off, allowing employees to manage their personal and professional commitments effectively.” Pertaining to motivation, all responded that “our company recognizes and rewards its employees' achievements and contributions. The company provides regular opportunities for employee recognition, such as performance bonuses, spot awards, and team building activities.”

Based on the employee opinion, the company has emerged as an employer of choice due to its competitive compensation and benefits, professional development opportunities, collaborative work environment, commitment to work-life balance, and employee recognition and rewards. These valuable benefits not only attract top talent but also foster a culture of innovation, success, and satisfaction within the company. Other researchers, such as (Vercic & Spoljaric, *Managing internal communication: How the choice of channels affects internal communication satisfaction*, 2020), (Vercic, 2021), (Bharadwaj, Khan, & Yameen, 2022), (Samoliuk, Bilan, Mishchuk, & Mishchuk, 2022), (Allam, George, Yahia, & Malik, 2023) and (Sedyoningsih, Suhud, Dianta, & Elliyana, 2024), have also identified these factors as key contributors to the company's reputation as an employer of choice.

Question#2 Could you please explain how your company places priority on ensuring employee satisfaction and well-being?

For employees to be able to promote their organization and reach their desired goal, job satisfaction and employee well-being is essential. Three employees believed “employee satisfaction and well-being are top priorities. Company is committed to fostering a positive and supportive work environment where employees feel valued, engaged, and

empowered to reach their full potential”. Some of them said that “employee satisfaction and well-being is by fostering a culture of appreciation. The company recognizes and appreciates the hard work, dedication, and achievements of our employees through various channels. This includes regular feedback sessions, performance reviews, and award programs that acknowledge exceptional performance”. Few were having opinion that “company is able to maintain a good work-life balance which encourages increased productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being”. Some were said that “company offer various training and development opportunities to enhance their skills, broaden their knowledge, and promote career advancement”. Also, some that “company prioritize the well-being of their employees by implementing strict health and safety protocols, promoting ergonomic practices, and offering wellness initiatives”.

Based on the employee interview responses, the company has established itself as an employer of choice due to its emphasis on fostering a culture of gratitude, promoting work-life balance, offering employee assistance programs, fostering employee development, and providing a safe and healthy work environment. Through these initiatives, we ensure that our employees feel valued, engaged, and supported. In addition to our own research, other researchers have also highlighted these factors as key contributors to the company's reputation as an employer of choice. For instance, studies by (Andeyo & Otuya, 2020), (Francis & Fonceca, 2023), (Stokic & Gardasevic-Zivanov, 2023), and (Beus, Taylor, & Smith, 2023) have shown that fostering a culture of appreciation, work life balance psychological well-being at workplace, has a significant impact on employee satisfaction and productivity.

Questions#3 What are the opportunities for growth and development offered by your company?

Opportunities for growth and development refer to various chances and possibilities that individuals have to enhance their skills, knowledge, and abilities throughout their lives. These opportunities arise in various settings, from personal and professional endeavors to educational pursuits. Out of ten, seven of the employees responded that “our company offers a wide range of opportunities for growth and development. Employees are encouraged to take on new responsibilities, expand their skills, and pursue career advancement. The company has a culture of continuous learning, providing employees with access to training programs, mentorship opportunities, and reimbursement for educational courses”. Out of ten, six were having opinion that “our company fosters a positive and collaborative company culture. Teamwork and open communication are emphasized, and employees are encouraged to share ideas and support each other's success. The company also organizes regular team-building activities and social events to foster camaraderie and a sense of belonging”.

Employees perceive that there are ample opportunities for growth and development within the organization based on the results of the question. Whether through professional advancements, educational pursuits, or personal initiatives, staff members can actively seize these opportunities to enhance their skills, knowledge, and abilities. These findings mirror what previous research has discovered, including studies carried out by (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019), (Stofkova & Sukalova, 2020), (Ahmad, Khan, & Haque, 2020), and (Vercic, 2021). These researchers observed that organizations that prioritize employee growth and development often become employers of choice. By providing employees with the tools and resources they need to grow, these organizations attract and retain top talent, leading to increased productivity and success (Al Kahtani, Khan, & Allam, 2016).

Question#4 What are the ways your company fosters diversity and inclusion in the workplace?

In today's globalized business landscape, organizations understand the importance of fostering diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Eight out of ten responses replied that “our company emphasizes fair and inclusive recruitment processes. Our company seeks

out candidates from different backgrounds and skill sets, ensuring diverse representation at all levels of the organization. Our recruitment team conducts thorough screening procedures to eliminate bias and promote fairness”. However, some said that “our company supports and encourages the formation of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to cater to a diverse workforce”. According to all participants, “our company provides regular training and education programs on diversity and inclusion. These training sessions cover topics such as unconscious bias, diversity awareness, and cultural sensitivity”. All the respondents pointed out that “our company offers flexible working arrangements and policies. Our company understands that employees come from diverse backgrounds and have unique personal lives. By supporting flexible working hours, remote work options, and family-friendly policies, we enable employees to balance their professional responsibilities and personal commitments”. Also, seven out of ten stated that “our company recognizes and rewards employees and teams for their efforts in promoting diversity and inclusion. We celebrate achievements, encourage open communication, and provide a platform for employees to share their ideas and best practices”.

The company has built a strong reputation as an employer of choice due to its fair recruitment processes, employee resource groups, training and education, work-life balance, and recognition and rewards. Moreover, the company actively fosters diversity and inclusion within the workplace. The company's commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive environment is evident through its dedication to valuing and respecting all employees. In addition to our own research, independent studies by (Sharma & Kumra, 2020), (Al-Dalahmeh, Heder-Rima, & Dajnoki, 2020), (Trigaux, Allacker, & Debacker, 2021), (Gifford, 2022), (Shahriari, Riahi, Azizan, & Rasti-Barzoki, 2023), (Chen, 2023) and (Spoljaric & Dosen, 2023) have also recognized these factors as crucial contributors to the company's reputation as an employer of choice.

Question#5 How does your company promote a positive and collaborative company culture?

Companies must implement a variety of strategies to foster a supportive and inclusive work environment to become employers of choice by creating a positive and collaborative company culture. Most of the respondents have said that “our company promotes a positive and collaborative culture by establishing clear communication channels. The company ensures that employees have open lines of communication with their supervisors, colleagues, and other departments”. This question elicited similar types of responses compared to other questions, as well that “our company acknowledges and rewards outstanding performance through employee recognition programs, such as employee of the month awards, bonuses, and company events, company offers various training and development opportunities to its employees”. Mostly respondents were having thought that “our company implements to foster a positive and collaborative company culture is an open-door policy. Our company always encourages employees to approach their supervisors, managers, and executives with any concerns, ideas, or suggestions”. Also, most of the respondents said that “our company organizes regular team-building activities, such as company retreats, team-building workshops, and social events. These activities help employees build strong relationships, improve their teamwork skills, and develop a sense of camaraderie, in addition this they told us that our company offers flexible work arrangements to its employees”.

The company has established a strong reputation as an employer of choice due to its positive and collaborative company culture. This has been achieved through various practices such as clear communication channels, employee recognition and rewards, training and development programs, an open-door policy, team-building activities, and flexible work arrangements. By implementing these practices, the company creates a work environment that encourages teamwork, innovation, and employee satisfaction. Furthermore, independent studies by (Ahmad, Khan, & Haque, 2020), (Allam, Asad, Ali,

& Ali, 2021), (King, et al., 2021), (Samoliuk, Bilan, Mishchuk, & Mishchuk, 2022), (Shahriari, Riahi, Azizan, & Rasti-Barzoki, 2023), (Card, Schmutte, & Vilhuber, 2023) and (Lui, Andres, & Johnston, 2024) have also recognized these factors as crucial contributors to the company's reputation as an employer of choice.

Conclusion

The current investigation delves into the concept of being an "employer of choice (EOC)" and the factors contributing to this status. It emphasizes that organizations seeking to become employers of choice must align their values and practices with the needs, expectations, and interests of their employees. The current study underscores the significance of creating a positive employer brand through showcasing company values, employee success stories, supportive work environments, and investing in employee well-being programs. It also highlights the role of environmental responsibility, organizational culture, brand name, compensation, and social media presence in employer branding strategies. Additionally, the importance of fair compensation, performance rewards, training, and development, as well as employee engagement and workplace spirituality, in creating an environment where employees feel respected and valued, is discussed.

The methodology section outlines the research design, research questions, participant demographic profile, and data analysis method used in the study. The research questions focus on understanding the company's status as an employer of choice, its approach to ensuring employee satisfaction and well-being, the opportunities for growth and development offered, the fostering of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and the promotion of a positive and collaborative company culture. The present investigation presents the responses obtained from semi-directed interviews with employees, revealing that the company is perceived as an employer of choice due to its competitive compensation and benefits, prioritization of employee satisfaction and well-being, provision of growth and development opportunities, fostering of diversity and inclusion, and promotion of a positive and collaborative company culture.

The study utilized thematic analysis to interpret the interview responses, revealing that the company emphasizes fair recruitment processes, employee resource groups, training and education, work-life balance, and recognition and rewards to foster diversity and inclusion within the workplace. It also promotes a positive and collaborative culture through open communication channels, employee recognition programs, training and development opportunities, an open-door policy, team-building activities, and flexible work arrangements. These findings are consistent with previous research on the factors contributing to an organization's reputation as an employer of choice to attract and retain top talent. Based on the participants' responses, selected attributes related to their employer of choice are shown in figure 1.



Figure 1 Selected Attributes of EOC

Limitations and recommendation of the investigation

In the field of management and social sciences, no research is ever considered absolutely flawless. All studies, regardless of their subject matter and methodology, have certain limitations. This study faced limitations due to its inability to arrange face-to-face meetings with the participants. However, alternative measures were employed, such as virtual meetings, to overcome this challenge. While virtual meetings presented their own limitations, they provided a means of accessing the participants and ensuring their participation. It is important to note that these limitations do not undermine the overall findings of the study. Instead, they serve as reminders of the complexity of conducting research and the importance of considering alternative approaches when faced with obstacles.

Future researchers are encouraged to select different industry sectors, explore diverse questions, and conduct surveys in order to investigate the attributes of an employer of choice. Although this investigation involved participants from India, other countries' employees should be considered to obtain more genuine outcomes. It is essential to choose an alternative analysis method, such as quantitative methods, since this investigation is based on qualitative analysis. Furthermore, organizations and companies should cultivate a culture focused on retaining talented employees in order to transform into an employer of choice. This can be achieved by implementing fair Human Resource Management (HRM) practices (Al Kahtani, Khan , & Allam, 2016) & (Astuti, Safitri, Setrojoyo, & Wibowo, 2023) and implementing various strategies to enhance the productivity of the workplace.

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