

HOSPITALS' GREEN PRACTICES AS DRIVERS OF TALENT RETENTION

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Abstract *The environmentally conscious economy makes sustainable business practices imperative. Green environmental practices in the healthcare sector is a subject which is acquiring more consideration by healthcare professionals, hospital, and government authorities world over. The purpose of this study was to seek answers to the research question, whether and to what extent does hospital's green practices promote and support doctors' retention. Self report questionnaires were used to study hospital's green practices impact on retention, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction of doctors. Findings suggest that doctors perceived huge potential for green practices in hospitals and also expressed strong willingness to work for such hospitals. The paper has implication that by committing to green practices and embedding it into an overall growth strategy and culture; hospitals could design a targeted retention strategy to navigate through difficult times and face the challenge.*

Keywords: *Doctors, Green Practices, Job Satisfaction, Nashik, Organisational Commitment, Talent Retention.*

INTRODUCTION

Today, with increased human pressure and interactions of human with natural environment, the natural equilibrium has been disrupted. 'Save the Environment' drive has hopefully come at the right time to rescue our earth. The environmentally conscious economy makes sustainable business practices imperative. Apart from increased competitive, regulatory and community pressures, organisations are furthermore facing pressure for environmental sustainability which requires strategies to be put in place to reduce the environmental impacts (Smith and Perks, 2010). The concept of sustainable development was brought up by United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987. Their report defines sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To achieve this environmental sustainability, businesses need to go green, transform into green businesses and implement environment friendly practices. Green businesses are those that adopt the eco conscious attitude into their most aspects of work culture, so as to have positive impact on environment and community. Cooney (2009) describes green business as one that incorporates principles of sustainability into each of its business decisions, supplies environmentally friendly products or services that replaces demand for non-green products or services, commits to environmental principles in its business operations and finally; one that is greener than traditional competition. With the green wave sweeping even India, the notion of green initiative is experiencing a

tremendous surge of popularity nationwide. Green business in India will directly impact our world and environment due to India's incredible economic growth rate.

Retention efforts involve taking measures to encourage employees to remain in the organisation for the maximum period of time. These efforts aim at lessening the employee turnover and various other costs or loss associated with it like productivity loss, loss of company knowledge, hiring and training expenses and so. High employee turnover not only affects business performance and but leaves a negative impact on remaining employees of the company. As stated by Roger Herman (1997) in the book 'Keeping Good People' employee retention involves being sensitive to people's needs and developing various environmental, relationship, support, growth or compensation strategies. Talent retention technically differs from employee retention with talent retention essentially focusing on key desirable employees only, rather than simple efforts put in by organisations to improve employee retention rate or decrease attrition rate. Talent retention is retention of key talent that is, those employees who are the strongest performers have high potential and are critical to jobs and organisation's success. Talented employees often have the potential to become organisation leaders and can largely contribute to organisation's current and future performance. Since key employees' impact and contribution are greater than that of average employees, cost of talent turnover often ranges from 50% to 200% of the employee's annual salary based on the type and level of job (Allen 2008, Cascio 2010, O'Connell and Kung 2007). Talented employees' career aspirations and

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expectations go beyond basic job satisfaction, instead they seek self actualization. A comprehensive talent retention strategy therefore, needs to encompass contemporary retention drivers that can satisfy these aspirations and expectations.

From retention perspective, environmental commitments of organisations can establish an emotional tie between employee and the business, create a sense of teamwork among employees and improve quality of life of its employees. Engaging employees in sustainability initiatives can prove to be an effective talent retention technique if designed meticulously. Green business initiatives are about making organisation attractive so that the best talent in the market wants to work there. Rather the relationship can be two way, it can be said that employee support and retention is a key driver of sustainability within the business, they are the crucial players in greening processes and in transforming corporate culture (UNEP FI, 2010).

Healthcare is one of the fastest growing sectors in India and no doubt hospitals are an inseparable part of the healthcare delivery system. Green Environmental Practices in the healthcare sector is a subject which is acquiring more consideration by healthcare professionals, hospital and government authorities world over. Hospitals often neglect or ignore its massive impact on the environment. Sustainability in healthcare management is an emerging business segment that encompasses current aspects ranging from energy efficiency to climate change initiatives (Rich and Wadhwa, 2010). Lost critical talent within hospitals becomes increasingly difficult to replace as shortage of doctors is on rise, even in emerging markets. A study has found that healthcare workers begin to think about leaving 180 days into their job, and half of them leave after the first year (Martin, 2004). Thus hospitals' green practices can be an approach of making hospitals more attractive, so that the best talent in the market wants to work there.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to seek an answer to the research question whether and to what extent do hospitals' green practices promote and support doctors' retention?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Shaik (n.d.) suggests four relevant questions that would define talented employee considering nature of business. These are a) identifying where the business strategy requires talent, b) what strategic advantage is achieved by talented employees? c) to maintain competitive advantage what talent gaps need to be closed? and finally d) what business areas would have greatest impact due to change in the availability or quality of talent? When considered within

hospital industry, these guidelines identify doctors as talented employees of hospitals. Doctors are the critical talent and source of value creation for hospitals. Haas et al., (2000) emphasize prevalence of dissatisfaction among doctors has been given considerable importance in research as it affects patient satisfaction leading to a reduction in the quality of care (Kaur et al., 1997, p. 139). Hospitals need to deliberate on and become sensitive to their doctors' needs, and thereby design work culture to improve talent management. The Indian healthcare industry has witnessed tremendous growth in the last decade. But this growth has offered a potent mix of opportunities and challenges to Indian hospitals which face increasing patient demands coupled with dire shortage of doctors. Hence with an endeavour to identify contemporary drivers of talent retention in healthcare settings of Nashik, this study was undertaken to comprehend role of hospitals' green practices in doctors' retention.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Talent retention has been a daunting challenge for organisations and managers in almost all the industrial sector, thus leading to a growing interest of managers and researchers alike, in the concept and its driving factors. Organisational interest in respect is specifically due to the benefits arising from retention efforts. A study on talent management and its effects in hospitality industry showed outcomes like improved employee recruitment and retention rates and enhanced employee engagement leading to improved operational and financial performance (Hughes and Rog, 2008). There are several healthcare industry related challenges and constraints that have increased the importance attached to talent retention in this sector. Studies within healthcare sector suggest that, in a very challenging situation of shortage of healthcare professionals, additional efforts are needed to retain the talent workforce.

Earlier studies of green business practices have focused particularly on financial implications of these practices on the bottom line of the organisation. Limited studies have explored the impact of business green practices on employees and their attitude. Environmental and CSR initiatives are having a direct impact on firms' attractiveness to potential new recruits and are a determining factor in employee retention and engagement rates (Murray, 2007). A review of various surveys has identified green practices as one of the upcoming drivers of employee attracting and retention strategies. In an annual survey 'The Greening of American Workplace, 2009', by Buck consultants, 84% of the green survey respondents listed employee engagement as extremely important objective for their green programs. Employees looked to work for companies with a strong brand reputation and a focus on sustainability. Highly educated and talented prospective employees, especially Generation Y, were seeking the opportunity to work in a

company focused on sustainability. The survey indicated that going green can save costs, engage employees, boost their morale and could be a key point of differentiation in creating a positive brand image (Buck Consultants, 2009). An Employee Engagement Survey (2010), based on a diverse set of respondents in terms of job role, employer size, and industry sector, concluded that effectiveness of employee engagement depends on many factors including the frequency with which sustainable actions are promoted. Employee retention and public marketing were identified as primary motivations behind sustainability programs (Brighter Planet, 2010).

A growing number of analysts believe that adopting more environmental strategies should be one of the key strategies for managing in a downturn. Environmental initiatives are often deeply rooted in employee interests in supporting a socially responsible corporation (Rich and Wadhwa, 2010). Employees respond positively with creative ideas in the environmental area, if they perceive a strong commitment to the environment from the organisation (Ramus and Steger 2000). Data from CCL's World Leadership Study also support the finding that employees' perceptions of their organisations' concern for environment are linked to their level of organisational commitment and in turn to increased job involvement and job satisfaction. Higher the employees rate their organisation's corporate citizenship, the more committed they are to the organisation (Stawiski, Deal and Gentry, 2010). A study to investigate the direct relationship between environmental standards and labour productivity revealed that organisations that had adopted environmental standards enjoyed higher labour productivity compared to other firms (Delmas and Pekovic, 2012). Thus there are indications that business green practices are not only beneficial for the environment but also for organisations and its employees. Employees in such green organisations are found to be more motivated, concerned about their company and share better interpersonal relationships due to the feeling of working for a common cause.

Many Indian organisations have also responded to these global changes and various surveys have shown the presence of eco consciousness among Indian employees. The Kenexa Research Institute's (2010) survey in Canada, Spain, France, Germany, India, United States, and United Kingdom, on how workers feel about their organisation's green and sustainable business practices, reported that 80% Indians took pride in working for organisations with green business initiative significantly surpassing all other countries under the survey. The report puts forth that staff participation in CSR initiatives leads to higher employee engagement levels and more favourable views of senior management. Hence with the supporting background of previous studies, this paper aimed at understanding impact of hospitals' green practices on doctors within Indian context.

OBJECTIVES

The study on green practices of hospitals was undertaken with following focused objectives:

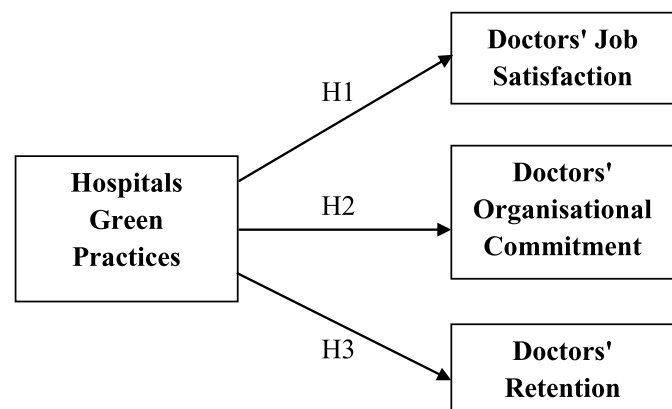
- To identify factors influencing retention of hospital doctors,
- To study hospital doctors' turnover intentions, job satisfaction and commitment levels,
- To elicit information on doctors' views about need and scope of green practices in hospitals,
- To assess potential impact of hospitals' green practices on generating job satisfaction, organisational commitment and retention of doctors and
- To obtain doctors suggestions on areas where the hospitals could become greener.

HYPOTHESES

The relationship of different interrelated variables, hospitals green practices, doctor's commitment level, doctor's job satisfaction, and doctor's retention was presented in a form of a simple conceptual model (Figure 1). In order to analyze the association between hospitals' green practices and retention of doctors, green practices was considered as the independent variable and job satisfaction, organisational commitment and retention were the dependent variables. All the constructs of this study were measured from doctors' perspective. Based on literature review and objectives of the study, following hypotheses were framed to be tested:

- H1: Hospital's green practices will have positive association with doctors' job satisfaction level.
- H2: Hospital's green practices will have positive association with doctors' commitment towards the hospital.
- H3: Green practices of hospitals will have positive association with doctors' retention.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of Impact of Hospitals' Green Practices



Any activities or programs that would reduce hospitals' impact on environment, including waste management, energy conservation, electricity and water conservation, purchasing green products, constructing green buildings were considered as green practices (GP) of hospitals, for the purpose of this study.

METHOD

The study was a descriptive quantitative research that aimed at describing doctors' perspective about hospitals' green practices and its impact as a driving force of retention.

Participants

Participants of the study were doctors working in private hospitals of Nashik city. Hospital doctors, who influence safety and quality of services provided, undoubtedly are the key critical talent within the healthcare settings. They often have huge potential to contribute to hospital's performance and propagate its image. Further doctors are more likely to play active role in implementation of hospital's green practices. Hence, they were expected to be in a better position to provide more realistic data about the impact of hospitals' green practices on retention.

Measures

A self report questionnaire was designed based on previous studies on talent retention and green business initiatives. An initial pilot study was undertaken with an objective to test the reliability of self developed scales. The scales were considered as good measures for the study after computing Cronbach's coefficient. The final survey instruments consisted of following sub-scales:

- First section: Turnover intention ($\alpha=0.78$) of respondent doctors was assessed on items like 'I have no intentions of leaving this hospital at least for next three years', 'I am already looking for a better job opportunity and intend to leave immediately', 'I have no intentions to leave this job in the hospital'. Further doctor's job satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.81$) level with their current practice in the hospital was measured on three items 'I share good relations with my colleagues and seniors', 'This job in the hospital provides good opportunity for career development and promotions', 'Overall I feel secure and satisfied with my practice in this hospital'. Doctor's commitment level ($\alpha = 0.80$) towards the hospital was measured with following three items 'I am loyal to my hospital and promote its best interest', 'I do not feel any attachment or obligation towards the hospital or my department', and 'I feel a strong sense of commitment and belongingness towards the hospital'.

With the objective to identify retention factors, respondents were also requested to rank order the following factors in terms of their importance as retention factors 'Career Growth Opportunities', 'Competitive Salary', 'Good Work Environment', 'Strong Eco-Friendly Culture', 'Hospital's Reputation', and 'Support from management'

- Second section: Doctors' attitude towards a hospital's GP ($\alpha = 0.80$) was assessed through items like 'GP earns a good reputation', 'GP generates higher revenues and customer loyalty', 'GP generates higher confidence in hospital's future' and 'Green hospitals have more retention capacity'.
- Third section: Data on GP's impact ($\alpha = 0.76$) on generating retention, organisational commitment and job satisfaction were sought through items like 'I prefer working and staying with hospitals that undertake green practices', 'I am willing to sacrifice a good paying job to work for a hospital that is strongly eco conscious', 'GPs makes me feel proud about my hospital', 'GPs generate high levels of enthusiasm and participation', 'Participation in green practices would make me feel better about my job' and so.

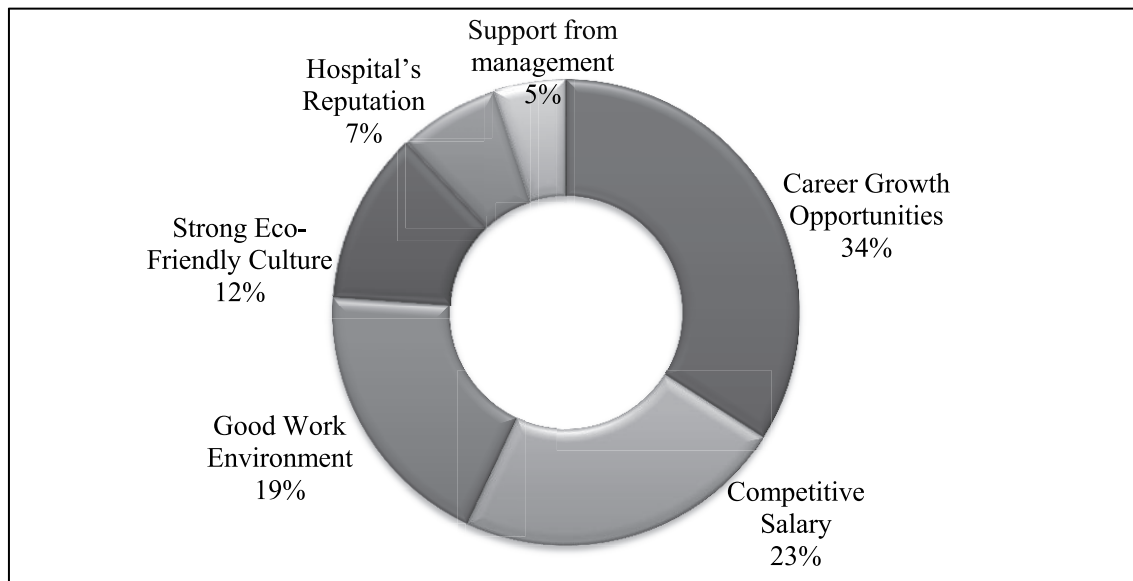
Respondents were asked to mark their responses on all items on five point Likert's scale ranging from 'Highly Agree' as '5' to 'Highly Disagree' as '1'.

RESULTS

Of the 250 distributed questionnaires, 91 completely filled in questionnaires (36% response rate) were received which were further used for analysis purpose and drawing the results. The demographic profile of respondents is shown in Table 1. Respondents represented 6% males and 36% female. Maximum respondents belonged to the age group of 36 to 45 years (53%) and were married (69%). Nearly half of the doctors were having tenure from 6 to 10 years (38%) and three-fourth (76%) worked in general shift.

Job Satisfaction and Commitment Levels of Doctors

Analysis of turnover intentions of respondents showed that 31% agreed having no intentions of leaving their hospital, 64% had no plan to change their hospitals at least for next three years, while the remaining five percent respondents were in search for an attractive job offer and intended to leave immediately. Only 43% scored high on job satisfaction, in particular, female respondents felt secured and satisfied with their current jobs in hospitals. However analysis of commitment levels of doctors revealed that 63% respondents

Figure 2: Factors Prioritized in Continuing with the Job

Source: From data analysis of the present study.

exhibited significant commitment level, while 48% cared for their hospital, 31% felt a strong sense of commitment and belongingness. The concepts of normative and continuance commitment may be a probable explanation for existence of high commitment levels in absence of job satisfaction. Respondents may have chosen to remain committed because of feelings of moral obligation or due lack of appropriate opportunities elsewhere. Thus there is an indication that with low job satisfaction levels, the exhibited commitment may not be affective in nature. Findings related to retention factors revealed 'career growth opportunities' as the most prioritized requisite to continue working with the hospital (34%), 23% demanded 'competitive salary' while 12% would continue with a hospital incorporating strong eco-friendly culture (Figure 2).

Respondents held a positive vision for green practices in hospitals, with 92% asserting that GP is an obligation of an environment friendly world (Table 2). Although 23% respondents held a slightly negative view, feeling that green practices were just another marketing and promotion tool. Respondents perceived that hospitals which would implement green practices and abide by environmental laws could earn a good reputation with employees, customers, investors and community members (88%), generate higher revenues through customer loyalty (72%), generate higher confidence in hospital's future (85%) and could become employer of choice (86%). Further most respondents (79%) agreed that their hospitals were engaged in barely few green practices such as electricity and water conservation and use of solar energy ample scope laid beyond. They visualized a complete green hospital and foresaw huge potential for implementing best green practices like green buildings,

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	44
	Female	36
Age	26-35 yrs	30
	36-45 yrs	53
	46-55 yrs	11
	more than 55 yrs	6
Marital Status	Unmarried	27
	Married	69
	Divorced	3
	Widowed	1
Tenure	1 – 5 years	24
	6 – 10 years	38
	11 – 15 years	25
	above 15 years	13
Type of shift	General shift	76
	Alternate shift	23

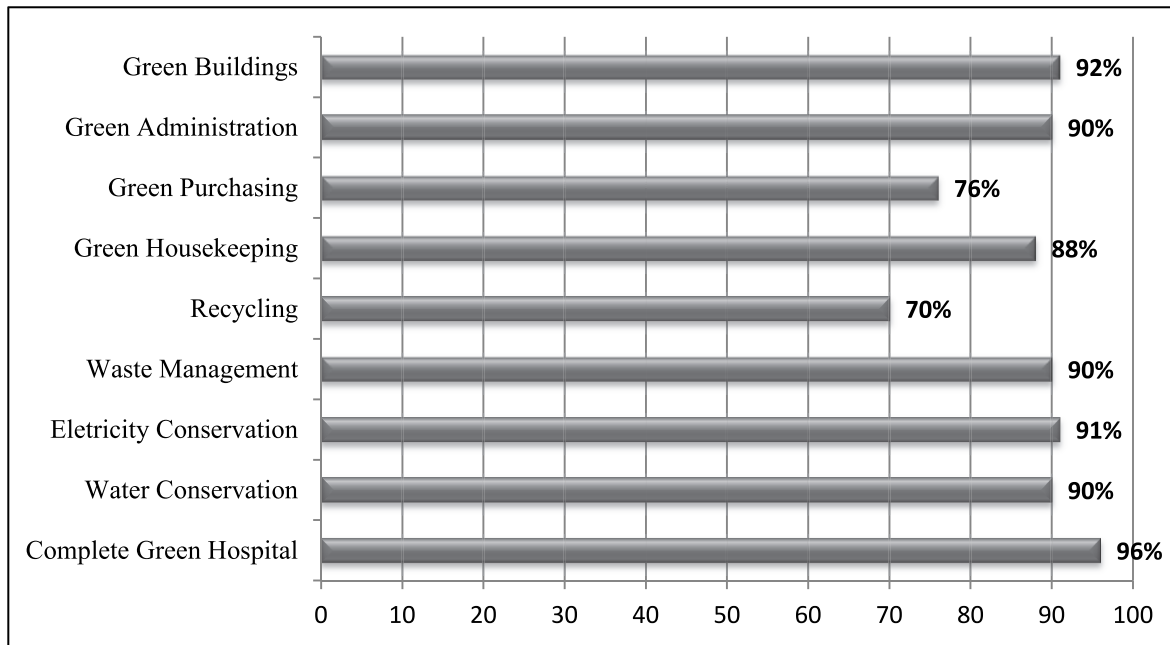
Source: From data analysis of the present study.

green administration, waste management, and energy conservation (Figure 3).

Impact of Hospitals' Green Practices

A striking 94% of respondents opined that they would always feel proud to be associated with environmental

Figure 3: Respondents Perception Regarding Opportunities for Green Actions in Hospitals



Source: From data analysis of the present study.

Table 2: Doctors' Attitude towards Hospitals' Green Practices (GP)

Doctors' Perception about GP	Response Rate (in %)
GP as an obligation of environment friendly world	92
GP as a practice integrated in hospital's culture (driving the mission)	74
GP as an talent attracting and retention tool	69
GP as just another CSR activity	31
GP as a marketing and promotional tool	23

Source: From data analysis of the present study.

friendly hospital. Respondents felt that hospitals' GP could establish emotional tie with the hospitals (79%) and generate higher employee engagement (77%). On the contrary impact of GP was not very strong on job satisfaction factors like good relations with colleagues or positive feeling about the job (Table 3). 83% respondents preferred continuing with hospitals that undertook green practices. However, only 52 % were willing to sacrifice a good paying job to work for an eco conscious hospital of which 44 % were senior doctors with over ten years of experience. A reasonable explanation for this could be that young doctors who had just started their career, though eco friendly in other aspects of their life would pursue for attractive opportunities and high paying hospitals, rather than just eco-conscious hospital.

Table 3: Impact of Hospital's Green Practices (GP) on Job Satisfaction and Commitment Levels of Doctors

Impact of GP	Response Rate (in %)
makes feel proud about the hospital	94
generates higher employee engagement levels	79
establishes an emotional tie with the hospital	77
generates high levels of enthusiasm and participation	76
creates sense of teamwork among hospital employees	69
makes feel better about the job	52
leads to better understanding among employees	47
provides an opportunity to make use of one's abilities	40

Source: From data analysis of the present study.

Hypotheses Testing

Associations between variables under study were assessed using Chi Square (χ^2) test with degree of freedom (df) one and five percent level of significance. The first hypothesis stated that there would be positive association between hospital's green practices and doctors' organisational commitment, which has been proved using the statistical test. It means that green initiatives render doctors to appreciate their hospitals for being environment friendly. The second hypothesis assumed positive association between hospital's

green practices and doctors' job satisfaction, which was not been proved. Probably, job satisfaction being a multi facet concept, revolving more around job related aspects; green practices may, make one feel good about their organisation but not about their job. The third hypothesis was relating to association between hospital's green practices and doctors' retention, which was supported by Chi Square (χ^2) test; although it did not show very strong association.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to understand the potential role of hospitals' green practices in generating doctors' job satisfaction and commitment towards hospitals; further leading to their retention. An increased awareness and desire to participate in green practices could be sensed among today's hospital doctors. To conclude, it can be said that green initiatives can be used to frame positive attitude among doctors towards their hospital as findings indicate positive association of green initiatives with organisational commitment. Integrating environmental concerns into workplace settings projects a positive image of the hospital. Engaging employees in these initiatives would influence their mindset and further assist in retaining them. However this would particularly imply to those talent professionals whose basic needs from the job are satisfied as findings did not suggest any association between green initiatives and job satisfaction levels. There is a plausible indication that green practices could lead to talent retention due to increased impact on employee's commitment levels and not on job satisfaction.

Moreover, respondents anticipated a huge potential for green practices in hospitals and also expressed strong willingness to work for such hospitals. Doctors expressed that they did not want themselves neither their hospitals to be engaged in green practices just to be more charitable. Rather for hospitals green business practices needs to be more than just corporate social responsibility. Apart from providing healthcare services, hospitals can seriously promote good green practices for the benefit of the society and environment. Hospitals might as well build on these positive responses from doctors and incorporate green practices through voluntary initiatives; instead as statutory norms in coming times. The paper has the implication that by committing to green practices and embedding it into an overall growth strategy and culture; hospitals can design a targeted retention strategy to navigate through difficult times and face the challenge. Although it may be slightly early to speak about green practices in hospitals of Nashik, but with cases of new upcoming hospitals boasting about its green certification in Mumbai and Pune, the same is not completely unforeseen in Nashik in the near future.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A limitation of this study is that doctors' perceptions about green practices were measured through self report, hence the responses may be the result of a temporary mood or what may be considered socially and situational appropriate by the doctors. Moreover the sample size being small and limited to one city, it would be inappropriate to generalize the findings. Further research on green business practices and its impact on Indian organisations' bottom line and employees will be of great importance in an eco-conscious era. Keeping in mind that green business is really in its infancy, the scope for future developments and innovations holds good promises.

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