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The impact of job security factors on sustainable competitive advantage: The mediating role of employee retention – an empirical study of private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study surveys the degree to which employee well-being, digital transformation, and leadership styles affect employee retention at private hospitals in Riyadh, acting as a significant factor in sustaining long-term competitive advantage. Data were collected through self-administered surveys distributed among nurses according to a causal-descriptive research methodology, while validated items were further analyzed through multiple regression and Pearson correlation analyses in SPSS V29. The findings indicate that digital transformation ($p < 0.001$) has the highest effect on retention, followed by employee well-being ($p < 0.001$) and leadership style. The remaining part of the 68.5% variance of competitive advantage is explained by retention ($\beta = 0.572$, $p = 0.001$). In conclusion, the study suggests that management should consider both digital transformation and the improvement of leadership styles, combined with policies for workers. Practical implications show that administrators should focus on technology advancement, development in leadership, and staff well-being programs as the major contributors to a healthy work environment. Such measures will eventually enhance retention further while strengthening hospitals' ability to gain continued competitiveness. Future research should explore similar aspects in public hospitals to broaden the generalization of the findings here.

Keywords: Employee retention, Job security factors, Private hospitals, Saudi Arabia, Sustainable competitive advantage.

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1. Introduction

An increasingly dynamic competitive environment places an increasing emphasis on the role of sustainable competitive advantage [1]. Maintaining quality service also calls for relationship support and competitiveness in healthcare. Long-term success, especially in private hospitals, is, therefore, somewhat dependent on the quality and consistency of their workforce [2]. Employees feel more job security and show more commitment if leaders are using digital tools to improve employee well-being as well as to change the organization. A major positive aspect to be factored in when dealing with employee motivation, well-being, and commitment is workplace stability [3]. Work remains a safe place in which a commitment to leadership can improve individual performance and allow individuals to remain working within an organization [4]. The stability of the workforce is also linked to the digital revolution; however, technology may bring insecurity among workers who believe it will make them redundant through automation, even though it can bring efficiency to their work. In turn, leaders should improve their strategies to make the workers interested and eager to participate actively in their work [5]. Employee retention—in industries even more stressful than healthcare—is indeed heavily reliant on employee well-being [6]. Generally low turnover, in connection with how well they retain employees through supportive workplaces, respecting mental health, and achieving a balance between work and personal life, results in fewer people leaving and provides a competitive edge [7]. Retention of the quality of services and innovation through retaining a skilled labor force will, in the long run, enhance the competitive advantage of the hospital over time [8]. This study attempts to explain sustainable competitive advantage, mediated by employee retention, with digital transformation, leadership style, and employee well-being as the variables of the study. This study will therefore provide empirical insights into enhancing organizational sustainability and workforce stability in a rapidly evolving healthcare market by focusing on private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

2. Problem Statement

Private Saudi Arabian hospitals still struggle generally to retain their staff nurses. Contributing to this include nurses' regular leave, occupational stress, and continuous technological change in use. Al-Kahtani, et al. [9] maintained nurses guarantee the quality of service, lower recruiting costs, and increase patient comfort—all of which support ensure that Further study on leadership, the acceptance of high technology, and worker happiness in private healthcare in Saudi Arabia would help to better grasp how nursing might be retained. Studies abound on the relationship between staff retention and leadership styles Hai and Van [10]. Alsadaan, et al. [7] conducted a recent integrative study that found that cultural issues like strong society norms and negative attitudes of the nursing profession still cause problems in recruiting and keeping staff among Saudi nurses. Actually, they were among the few works examining this apparent combination of digital transformation and leadership styles for hospital staff retention [11]. Furthermore lacking research on how this mix creates a long-lasting competitive advantage in Saudi Arabia's healthcare industry [12]. This work aims to look into segment retention, distributive justice, and leadership style in Saudi Arabian institutions. The results will provide useful insights for hospital leaders and policymakers who are working to improve nurse retention and keep their competitive edge in a changing healthcare environment.

3. The Significance of the Study

This research is of great importance both conceptually and practically regarding the healthcare industry of Saudi Arabia. In theory, this study would be filling a gap in today's knowledge because it combines the issues of employee well-being, digital transformation, and leadership style as key factors in protecting workers in the healthcare industry. Though such components have been analyzed individually in earlier studies by Hai and Van [10] and Gao and Gao [12] their collective influence on sustaining a competitive advantage in private hospitals has not been explored. Therefore, this very paper bridges the gap by providing evidence on how these factors interact and, consequently, moves forward the academic discussion of employee retention and a competitive edge in the healthcare sector [11]. Practically, this study will be beneficial to top management in the private healthcare industry in Saudi Arabia, policymakers, and human resource managers by providing them with intelligent recommendations. With nurse retention becoming more and more problematic, this study thus presents evidence in terms of which channels can be used to improve the leadership practice, bring digital transformations, and launch well-being initiatives. Quality and accessible healthcare services, reduced recruitment and training costs, and ensuring patient satisfaction all hinge on maintaining employee retention Among other factors, this study also reveals the relationship between employee retention and the creation of a lasting competitive advantage. Such information directs hospital administration to develop strategies aimed at improving long-term outcomes and resilience within the dynamic healthcare environment.

4. Background of the Health Sector in Saudi Arabia

The healthcare industry in Saudi Arabia has a total of 290 Ministry of Health-managed hospitals and the hospitals under other governmental bodies amount to 59. This number is completed by 150 private hospitals Statista [13] from 2016 to 2023; the nursing workforce has grown by just over 23% and currently stands at a tremendous 235,461 nurses across all sectors. The number of nurses in the private sector amounts to slightly over 67,000 [14]. Yet, the overall increase notwithstanding, a fundamental void of native Saudi nurses exists extensively and more predominantly in the private section since the expatriates represent nearly 90% of health professionals [15].

5. Research Objectives

This research investigates the relationship between leadership styles, digital transformation, and employee well-being in terms of employee retention and how these variables work together to enhance the sustainable competitive advantage of private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze the influence of the leadership style on nurse retention in private hospitals.
2. To analyze the role of digital transformation in employee retention in the healthcare sector.
3. To establish the impact of employee well-being on retention in private hospitals.
4. The objective of this study is to explore the mediating role of employee retention in the relationship between leadership style, digital transformation, employee well-being, and sustainable competitive advantage.
5. To offer evidence-based recommendations to improve the mechanisms for retaining employees and building a sustainable competitive advantage in private hospitals.

6. Research Questions

The following section addresses the questions arising from the study's objectives.

1. How does a leader's communication style affect a nurse's willingness to stay in a private hospital in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
2. How is digital transformation helping in the retention of employees in the healthcare sector?
3. How does employee well-being interface with employee retention in a private hospital?
4. Does employee retention moderate the relationship between leadership style, digital transformation, and employee well-being with sustainable competitive advantage?
5. What specific strategies can private hospitals implement to enhance employee retention and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage?

7. Literature Review and Hypothesis

7.1. Leadership Style and Employee Retention

In the healthcare industry, personnel retention depends mostly on leadership style. Transformational leadership, according to Hai and Van [10] creates trust, inspiration, and job satisfaction—very important traits to keep qualified employees. Likewise, Nikolova, et al. [6] support the participative leadership approach that lowers nurse turnover together with improved working conditions and prospects for professional growth. Moreover, Gao and Gao [12] argue that leaders that practice digital and flexible leadership will be better able to satisfy evolving employee needs, hence increasing retention. Good leadership ensures that employees see themselves as valued and engaged, so reducing their need to quit Hai and Van [10]. Al-Kahtani, et al. [9] argue that encouraging leadership in technologically advanced healthcare facilities increases job satisfaction and motivates dedication for nurses.

H₁: Leadership Style has a significant positive impact on Employee Retention.

7.2. Digital Transformation and Employee Retention

Particularly in the case of healthcare, digital transformation is today a growingly crucial benchmark for employee retention. As Chong and Duan [16] note digital advancements increase employee job happiness, flexibility, and work efficiency such that they better match their environment. The great usage of digital tools and technologies results in decreased turnover rates since the employees become more engaged and procedures more efficient. Furthermore, based on Wan [4] digital leadership most likely relates to the rise of adaptive workers, burnout resistance, and the blending of greater long-term commitment. This kind of technology promotes job satisfaction since it releases health professionals from time-consuming and labor-intensive administrative chores that can be used to simplify workflow efficiency. As a result, nurses employed in digitally changed companies typically have a lot better retention rate inside their companies since they experience a somewhat more favorable overall work and career development possibility experience [17].

H₂: Digital transformation has a significant positive impact on employee retention.

7.3. Employee Well-being and Employee Retention

Employee welfare and retention of employees highly depend on employee well-being, which has gained increased recognition. In return, companies that prioritize employee well-being have lower turnover rates as well as more job satisfaction [18]. Several factors of well-being, including physical, mental, and emotional conditions, significantly determine whether an employee remains in an organization. This paper shows how programs for employee well-being at the workplace—such as flexible work schedules, psychological counseling, and health promotions—enhance business commitment [18]. The better and safer environment of the organization offers long-term longevity among workers [19]. As Bakker, et al. [20] indicate in the JD-R theory, workers with enough job resources, such as autonomy and supervisory support, show a lower inclination to leave and greater engagement levels. This evidence underscores the way strategic well-being programs could help enhance employee retention support for companies. Knowing what the previous literature reviews already hold, we can surmise the following theory:

H₃: Employee well-being significantly improves employee retention.

7.4. Employee Retention and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Attaining sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) and the long-term viability of a firm depend critically on employee retention. Companies who successfully keep their employees gain from lower turnover costs, more organizational knowledge, and a better corporate culture strengthening their competitive advantage [21]. Retaining competent personnel helps businesses to increase operational efficiency, improve service delivery, and foster innovation—all of which are absolutely vital for sustainable competitive advantage [22]. To some degree, SCA links staff retention to the preservation of organizational tacit knowledge, experience, and abilities. Employees who have a more acute awareness of internal processes, external industry competitive dynamics, and changing customer preferences as they gain tenure help to strengthen organizational inertia and competitive resilience [23]. Furthermore, companies who make major investments in skill development create a workplace where staff members show more dedication and involvement, therefore enhancing organizational performance and sustainability [24]. A good retention plan promotes loyalty and raises motivation, therefore strengthening the culture and driving higher production. Highly respected and secure workers can offer fresh ideas and show higher degrees of corporate citizenship behavior, therefore improving the long-term survival of companies [12]. Overall, staff retention is a basic component that promotes a sustained competitive advantage in the market; it goes beyond simple attrition reduction. Companies may build a dedicated workforce that supports ongoing organizational performance and market leadership by giving employee happiness top priority, helping career growth, and keeping a clean workplace [25].

H₄: Employee Retention has a significant positive impact on Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

8. Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA)

Thanks to the development of enduring distinctiveness and sustainability in healthcare operations, Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) is attracting a lot of interest in the modern healthcare industry, especially in strategic management. Using valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources, Barney and Clark [26] argued that the Resource-Based View holds organizations above rivals. In private hospitals, personnel retention, digital transformation, and leadership drive SCA. Attaining a competitive advantage for a company requires leadership in which case it promotes creativity, develops strategic vision, and inspires the workforce [4]. By means of organizational transformations and workforce involvement, transformational leadership significantly affects sustained competitive advantage (SCA). Essential for maintaining a competitive advantage in dynamic healthcare environments, effective leaders create a culture of ongoing improvement inside companies [26]. Thanks to digital transformation, technological developments have become second nature to South Carolina. Artificial intelligence and data analytics, among other benefits of digital technology, have emphasized by stakeholders higher productivity and improved medical care Nawaz, et al. [27] Digital transformation improves agility, which helps companies to change with the times and offers a clear competitive edge. Using digital tools in private hospitals enhances the provision of treatment and distinguishes institutions in a technologically driven world [1]. Sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) depends critically on employee retention, on the other hand. High retention points to more seasoned and steady personnel, which improves service quality and provides consistent organizational expertise [28]. Studies show that companies with lower turnover rates usually show better performance because of more employee loyalty and less hiring expenditures [24]. Improved patient outcomes and operational efficiency strongly correlate with the retention of trained nurses in the healthcare industry, therefore influencing the market situation of the institution [29]. Maintaining qualified and dedicated workers improves Sustainable Competitive Advantage, according to Human Capital Theory since they are seen as a strategic asset [30]. Essential for maintaining competitive advantage, the motivating components for employees with extensive institutional knowledge will improve innovation, customer satisfaction, and service quality [31]. Private hospitals that provide staff well-being and professional progression as top priority are probably going to keep a competitive edge for a long time [32]. Finally, at private hospitals, SCA results from good leadership, digital change, and staff retention. These specify long-term success, competitive position, and operational effectiveness. Future studies should look at these traits holistically in several healthcare environments in order to fully understand their impact on competitive positioning.

8.1. Leadership Style and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

The leadership style significantly influences the attainment and preservation of a sustainable competitive advantage. Strategic leadership is crucial for establishing direction, managing complexity, and fostering an adaptive organizational culture, particularly for entities aiming to maintain a competitive advantage [33]. An effective strategic leader positions the organization to thrive in a dynamic environment by adapting to market fluctuations and enhancing long-term performance. Furthermore, digital leadership significantly influences sustainable competitive advantage, especially within industries where technological integration improves efficiency and innovation. Digital leadership, facilitated by the implementation of green absorptive capacity and eco-innovation, improves organizational standing, allowing for the alignment of sustainability with corporate success [34]. The leadership strategy effectively leverages technology and sustainable practices to enhance the competitive image of organizations. Leadership style, whether digital or strategic, significantly contributes to sustainable competitive advantage by fostering innovation, adaptation, and overall performance.

H₁: Leadership style has a significant positive impact on Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

8.2. Digital Transformation and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Digital transformation is among the leading factors supporting sustainable competitive advantage over the long term within firms, affecting productivity, innovation, and customer experience. The integration of AI, big data analytics, and cloud computing within digital process technologies enables firms to innovate and establish unique value propositions as they also

improve competitive advantages. Changing digital maturity also improves organizational agility and adaptability because the organization will detect permeating market conditions and react to create a sustaining advantage. Researchers have also proven digital transformation to lead to a positive influence on sustaining competitive advantage through its influence on continuous innovation and quality of decision-making, particularly in businesses that are increasingly digital in their lead [2]. In turn, such business systems will help them stand out in the market, improve customer interaction through the best modeling, and invent business systems to improve their competitive advantage [35].

H₂: Digital transformation has a significant positive impact on Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

8.3. Employee Well-Being and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Employee well-being creates sustainable competitive advantage by increasing productivity, minimizing turnover, and stimulating innovation [36]. If organizations promote well-being through supportive work environments, mental health programs, and initiatives for maintaining balance between work and personal lives, they will create a more engaged and motivated workforce to produce better results and sustain long-term competitive advantages [37]. On top of this, employee well-being, through reducing burnout and improving job satisfaction, can create organizational resilience. By prioritizing well-being, organizations become attractive, will be able to attract and retain the very best talents, and will build a sustainable high-performance workforce that is an asset in their competitive positioning in the market [19].

9. Theoretical Framework

Understanding and going into more detail about the relationships between the important factors in this study—leadership style, digital transformation, employee well-being, employee retention, and sustainable competitive advantage (SCA)—is based on the theoretical framework. Several well-established theories ground this study in explaining the interaction of the different variables within the context of private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

1. Resource-Based View Theory: Some ideas, like the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory Barney and Clark [26] say that a company's competitive edge comes from its valuable, rare, unique, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources. In this study, the leadership style, digital transformation, and employee well-being are valuable strategic resources that ultimately lead to employee retention and serve SCA [38].
 - Leadership Style and RBV: An effective leader engenders a conducive organizational culture and increases employee engagement; thus, leadership is considered an intangible asset that accrues value to the organization [4].
 - Digital Transformation and RBV: Digital capabilities such as AI, big data, and automation enhance a sustainable edge by bringing forth efficiency and service delivery.
 - Employee Well-Being and RBV: An organization committing resources toward the well-being of employees generates motivation and performance, enhancing retention and performance over the long term [33]. This study illustrates how the adoption of RBV mediates between digital transformation and sustainable competitive advantage through employee retention.

2. Human Capital Theory argues that employee retention makes a major contribution to gaining a competitive advantage by creating well-informed, experienced, and motivated employees [30, 32]. Employee retention enables private hospitals to deliver quality service and improve patient satisfaction and efficiency in their operations; they ensure sustainable competitive advantage.

3. Transformational Leadership: Theory Transformational leadership theory Khan, et al. [39] stresses the aspect of visionary leaders, who inspire and motivate employees. We propose the following conceptual model based on the aforementioned theories and the literature review:

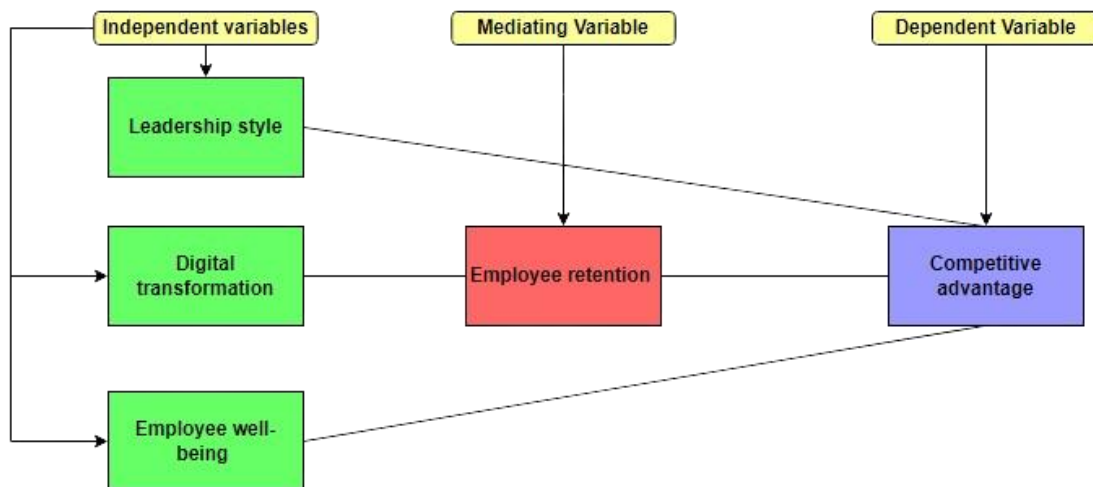


Figure 1. Research conceptual model.

Figure 1 shows that the way leaders act, the shift to digital and how happy employees feel all help to keep staff, boosting competitive advantage in private hospitals.

10. Research Methodology

10.1. Research design

The research design provides a framework needed to study the relationship between leadership style, digital transformation, employee well-being, employee retention, and SCA within private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This study utilized a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional survey design for the collection and analysis of data.

10.2. Research Design: Cross-Sectional Survey

This design was appropriate for a single data collection point. The design will be appropriate for:

- Estimation of correlations and multiple regression between variables.
- Locate a pattern in employee retention and SCA.
- Efficiently gather data from a larger sample.

The survey uses closed-ended Likert-scale questions to evaluate participant perceptions of leadership style, digital transformation, employee well-being, retention, and competitive advantages [40].

10.3. Population and Sample

This study focused on nursing professionals employed in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The MOH-2023 report presents a listing of 51 private hospitals in Riyadh. We selected 10 private hospitals for this study based on bed capacity, nursing staff levels, and geographic representation to guarantee complete population coverage. The poll pertains to nurses, including registered nurses, nurse supervisors, and clinical nurses. We employed a purposive sampling method to collect responses from the nursing personnel engaged in patient care and hospital operations. The hospitals disseminated a total of 400 surveys. A total of 320 completed surveys were returned. Ultimately, 295 individuals met the criteria for analysis. This outcome elevates the response rate to 74%, which is sufficient to produce a high-quality data set suitable for statistical analysis. We employed the Likert scale to assess replies regarding perceptions of leadership style, digital transformation, employee well-being, staff retention, and sustainable competitive advantage, thereby providing a systematic method for evaluating measured responses.

10.4. Data Collection Methods

This study offers a quantitative approach, employing structured questionnaires as the instrument for data collection. To ensure their reliability and validity, the questionnaires are developed from validated scales from previous studies [41].

10.5. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was divided into five sections with each measuring a dimension.

- Section 1: Demographic Details (age, gender, education level, and years of experience).
- Section 2: Leadership style Section 2: Leadership Style (Measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), based on Van Witteloostuijn, et al. [42]).
- Section 3: Digital Transformation (adapted from Rogers [43]).
- Section 4: Employee wellbeing (measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale based on Marmara, et al. [44]).
- Section 5: Employee Retention and Sustainable Competitive Advantage [14].

A five-point of the Likert scale were applied to elicit respondents' true opinions on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

10.6. Data Collection Process

Outreach and ethical consideration: The administrators of the hospitals and relevant ethics committees provided approvals for ethical compliance in research before the commencement of data collection [45].

Data distribution: A paper and web-administered questionnaire was used to enhance participation. Online responses were collected through Google Forms.

Select Participants: The participants must be nurses working in 10 private hospitals in Riyadh only.

Data Collection Period: The data collection was staggered over six weeks so that responses and follow-ups could be initiated afterward.

11. Cronbach's Alpha of the Pilot Study

We conducted a pilot study before full-scale data collection to ensure the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire. Thus, 30 nurses from two private hospitals in Riyadh participated in the pilot study. The reliability for each construct in the questionnaire was analyzed using Cronbach's alpha (α). According to Hair, et al. [46], a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or above is acceptable for reliability purposes. The table below lists the Cronbach's alpha values for each variable and the number of items included in the questionnaire:

Table 1.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test Results (Pilot Study).

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Interpretation
Leadership Style	8	0.85	High Reliability
Digital Transformation	7	0.82	High Reliability
Employee Well-being	6	0.78	Acceptable Reliability
Employee Retention	5	0.80	High Reliability
Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA)	6	0.83	High Reliability

11.1. Analysis and Interpretation the Results Pilot Study

The Cronbach's alpha values for all variables are between 0.78 and 0.85, which shows very high internal consistency. Leadership Style ($\alpha = 0.85$) was found to have the highest reliability score among the other measures and indicates a good degree of consistency in measuring leader behaviors. Despite achieving the lowest acceptable value of 0.78, employee well-being still falls within the guidelines for research acceptance. As all variables scored above the cut-off of 0.70, the survey is reliable and valid for the main study.

11.2. Measurement Details and Sources

- Leadership Style: Measured with the help of Van Witteloostuijn, et al. [42] Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).
- Digital Transformation: Used by Chong and Duan [16] with a focus on digital innovation's effect on organizations.
- Employee well-being: Measured in accordance with Charles-Leija, et al. [45] framework, which evaluates psychological and workplace well-being.
- Employee Retention: Based on the Organizational Commitment Scale developed by the Ministry of Health [14] measuring the intention of an employee to stay on.
- Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA): Measured using Barney and Clark [26] Resource-Based View (RBV), focusing on firm-specific resources upon which to build a competitive advantage.

12. Data Analysis Techniques

12.1. Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA)

Multiple Regression Analysis was used in this study to assess how strong the relationships were between independent variables and the dependent variable. Multiple regression is a statistical method widely employed in analyzing the effects of several predictor variables on an outcome variable [47].

12.1.1. The Model Used in This Analysis is Formulated as Follows

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where:

- Y = Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) (Dependent Variable)
- X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4 = Leadership Style (Independent Variable)
- X_2, X_3 = Digital Transformation (Independent Variable)
- X_3, X_4 = Employee Well-being (Independent Variable)
- X_4 = Employee Retention (Mediating Variable)
- β_0 = Intercept
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Regression Coefficients
- ϵ = Error Term

12.1.2. Multiple Regression Analysis and Results.

Table 2.

Model Summary.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.782	0.611	0.605	0.352

Table 2 shows that the R-value (0.782) indicates a strong correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R² value (0.611) shows that 61.1% of the variance in Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) is explained by the independent variables. The Adjusted R² (0.605) accounts for the number of predictors in the model, confirming the model's explanatory power.

Table 3.

ANOVA Results.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	62.350	4	15.588	42.765	0.000**
Residual	39.650	250	0.158	-	-
Total	102.000	254	-	-	-

Table 3 shows that the F-statistic (42.765, $p < 0.001$) confirms that the model is statistically significant. This indicates that the predictor variables jointly influence Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

Table 4.
Regression Coefficients.

Independent Variable	B (Unstandardized Coefficient.)	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized Coeff.)	T	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	1.105	0.152	-	7.270	0.000**
Leadership Style	0.275	0.062	0.289	4.435	0.000**
Digital Transformation	0.310	0.058	0.312	5.345	0.000**
Employee Well-being	0.198	0.065	0.210	3.046	0.003**
Employee Retention	0.347	0.060	0.330	5.783	0.000**

Table 4 shows that all the independent variables significantly impact Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) ($p < 0.05$). Employee Retention ($B = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$) has the strongest positive effect on SCA. Digital Transformation ($B = 0.310$, $p < 0.001$) is the second most influential factor, followed by Leadership Style ($B = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$) and Employee Well-being ($B = 0.198$, $p = 0.003$).

12.2. Discussion and Results

The Multiple Regression Analysis established that all independent variables predict with significance the Sustainable Competitive Advantage. Employee retention acts as a strategic mediator in fortifying this relationship while addressing the predominance of employee retention strategies in private hospitals in Riyadh.

13. Pearson Correlation Matrix Analysis and Results

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to assess the strength and direction of the relationships among the study variables of Leadership Style, Digital Transformation, Employee Well-Being, Employee Retention, and SCA. The value of the Pearson correlation coefficients (r) generally ranges from -1 to +1, such that:

- +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation.
- -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation.
- 0 indicates no correlation.

Table 5.
Pearson Correlation Matrix.

Variables	Leadership Style	Digital Transformation	Employee Well-being	Employee Retention	Competitive Advantage
Leadership Style	1.000	0.615**	0.523**	0.498**	0.554**
Digital Transformation	0.615**	1.000	0.567**	0.531**	0.602**
Employee Well-being	0.523**	0.567**	1.000	0.612**	0.577**
Employee Retention	0.498**	0.531**	0.612**	1.000	0.635**
Competitive Advantage	0.554**	0.602**	0.577**	0.635**	1.000

13.1. Interpretation of Correlation Results

- Leadership Style and Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA):
 - A positive correlation ($r = 0.554$, $p < 0.01$) suggests that an effective leadership style enhances SCA.
 - This implies that transformational and participative leadership can contribute to a stronger competitive edge in private hospitals in Riyadh.
- Digital Transformation and SCA:
 - A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.602$, $p < 0.01$) indicates that higher levels of digital adoption contribute to sustainable competitive advantage.
 - This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the role of digital transformation in organizational success [47].
- Employee Well-being and SCA:
 - A moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.577$, $p < 0.01$) suggests that improving employee well-being significantly influences an organization's ability to sustain its competitive edge.
 - Organizations that focus on mental health, job satisfaction, and work-life balance tend to retain employees and maintain performance excellence.
- Employee Retention and SCA:
 - Employee retention shows the strongest correlation with SCA ($r = 0.635$, $p < 0.01$).
 - This confirms that retaining skilled employees through career development programs and incentives directly enhances long-term competitiveness.
- Inter-correlations Among Independent Variables:

- Leadership Style and Digital Transformation are significantly correlated ($r = 0.615, p < 0.01$), indicating that strong leadership fosters a culture of digital innovation.
- Employee Well-being and Employee Retention are positively correlated ($r = 0.612, p < 0.01$), suggesting that improved well-being enhances retention rates.

14. Results and Discussion

Most of these variables show a strong positive correlation with SCA. Employee retention has the highest positive association with SCA, which indicates its importance in sustaining competitiveness in private hospitals. Furthermore, the results indicate that leadership style, digital transformation, and employee well-being contribute to increasing a firm's performance at the same time.

This part sums up the main results of the statistical tests (Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and hypothesis testing) that were used to examine the connections between the study variables. The discussion connects these findings to prior research and theoretical implications.

Table 6.
Multiple Regression Results for Employee Retention.

Independent Variables	B (Beta Coefficient)	T-value	P-value	R ²
Leadership Style	0.311	4.58	0.000	-
Digital Transformation	0.412	5.23	0.000	-
Employee Well-being	0.367	4.89	0.000	0.678

Note: $p < 0.01$ (Highly significant).

Table 6 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the direct relationships between Leadership Style, Digital Transformation, and Employee Well-being with Employee Retention. Subsequently, a second regression model was employed to assess the influence of Employee Retention on Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA).

The model explains 67.8% ($R^2 = 0.678$) of the variance in Employee Retention, meaning that leadership style, digital transformation, and well-being significantly predict retention rates.

Digital Transformation ($\beta = 0.412, p < 0.01$) has the highest impact on retention, followed by Employee Well-being ($\beta = 0.367, p < 0.01$) and Leadership Style ($\beta = 0.311, p < 0.01$).

Table 7.
Multiple Regression Results for Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA).

Independent variable	B (Beta Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	R ²
Employee Retention	0.572	6.45	0.000	0.685

Table 7 explains that 68.5% ($R^2 = 0.685$) of the variance in SCA, confirming that retaining skilled employees directly strengthens competitive advantage and it shows that employee retention significantly predicts SCA ($\beta = 0.572, p < 0.01$).

The effect of Employee Retention is found to be the most potent predictor of SCA ($\beta = 0.572, p < 0.01$). This concurs with Barney and Clark [26] resource-Based View (RBV) in that retention of skilled employees affords the firm a sustainable competitive edge. In private hospitals, low turnover rates, professional development, and reward systems contribute directly to service quality and reputation.

15. Hypothesis Testing

This part takes into consideration the outcomes of hypothesis testing, multiple regression analysis, and the Pearson correlation. After conducting thorough examinations, we can provide statistical validation for the suggested relationships and their contribution to organizational strategies.

H₁: Leadership Style has a significant positive effect on Employee Retention in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The behavior of leaders in private hospitals in Riyadh positively contributes to retaining employees. Good leadership channels into the factors of job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment on the part of employees; hence, it has a direct impact on retention. The statistics in Table 5 support this argument, indicating that there is also a statistically significant positive relationship between the leadership of hospitals and staff retention ($r = 0.498, p < 0.01$). In this respect, Table 4 also indicates that leadership behavior has a statistically significant effect on the retention of employees ($B = 0.275, p < 0.01$), emphasizing the crucial role of leadership in keeping employees at the hospital. This finding was supported by the study of Hair, et al. [47], which proved that promotion has a great impact on employee behavior and retention through the facilitation of a supportive and dynamic work atmosphere. Employees are nurtured by leaders who establish affirmative relationships, offer growth opportunities in professionalism, and recognize team members. This suggests that leadership is indeed important in retaining employees and is more impactful than other broader organizational policies, such as compensation and training, which also have a significant impact on employee retention. However, the results of this study prove that, although these opinions may differ, leadership style indeed comes in as a major and viable factor in sustaining private hospitals in Riyadh.

H₂: Digital Transformation has a significant positive effect on Employee Retention in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Jobs for private hospital employees in Riyadh might be one avenue for explaining why digital transformation projects sustain them for longer. Top-notch technology will simplify work while improving the quality of services in hospitals, hence

reducing the workload of the workers at the same time. The ultimate boost is to ensure happiness among the workers, and this information will support this. The data support the argument. The results of Table 5 indicate a strong positive relationship between digital transformation and employee retention ($r = 0.531$, $p = 0.01$). This means that hospitals which are in the process of introducing new digital technologies are most likely to have more employees staying with them. Also, strongly supported by the results as shown in Table 4 is a significant positive impact of digital transformation on employee retention ($B = 0.310$, $p = 0.01$). Thus, it is stressed that there is a need to apply digital technology so that employees stay. This result is also found in the study by Rogers [43], who maintains that improved efficiency and resource management brought about by digital transformation positively influence employee satisfaction and the likelihood to stay. Better systems and processes reduce administrative work, which in turn releases workers to attend to patients, consequently elevating their work contentment. Eikebrokk and Olsen [48] mention that while it is an enabler, digital transformation can result in challenges such as feeling technologically swamped and having an attitude of resistance. These challenges may be apparent, although the study results revealed that successful transformation leads to enhanced employee retention within private hospitals located in Riyadh.

H₃: Employee Well-being has a significant positive effect on Employee Retention in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The hypothesis emphasizes that maintaining physical, mental, and emotional health is crucial for sustaining the workforce in Riyadh's private hospitals. Employees are more likely to stay with organizations that show a genuine commitment to their well-being, as this often leads to higher job satisfaction and stronger ties to the organization. The data in Table 5 supports this, showing a significant positive correlation between Employee Well-being and Employee Retention, with values of $r = 0.612$ and $p < 0.01$. This indicates that improved employee well-being is linked to higher retention rates among staff. Additionally, the regression analysis in Table 6 reveals that employee well-being has a positive impact on retention rates, with statistical significance ($B = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that a greater emphasis on well-being leads to better retention outcomes. This agrees with what Gomathy [49] said, that employee happiness is directly connected to how committed they are to the organization and how satisfied they are with their jobs. These factors are key to keeping employees. Initiatives for employee well-being like health benefits, stress management programs, and maintaining work-life balance help lower burnout and turnover. However, Edú-Valsania, et al. [50] warn that while these initiatives are important, they need to be part of a bigger plan that includes supportive leaders, clear communication, and chances for career growth. Despite these considerations, this study's results show that employee well-being has a big impact on keeping employees, especially in healthcare, where stress and burnout happen often.

H₄: Employee Retention positively influences Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

This idea suggests that keeping more staff can lead to a stronger and long-lasting competitive edge for private hospitals in Riyadh. When hospitals hold on to skilled and experienced workers, they keep a team that knows a lot, works well, and is dedicated to the goals of the place, which helps the hospital succeed and stay ahead in the market in the long run. The data backs up this idea, as seen in Table 7, where Employee Retention has a clear positive impact on Sustainable Competitive Advantage ($B = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$). This shows that places with better employee retention are more likely to keep a competitive edge over time. This finding follows what Barney and Clark [26] said that human skills are an important resource in keeping a sustainable advantage in competitive markets, especially in service areas like healthcare. A stable and skilled team boosts organizational performance by offering better service quality, pushing for innovation, and making operations more efficient, all adding to a competitive lead. On the other hand, Shipra Singh [51] believes that while keeping employees is important, it needs to be paired with strategic skills and innovation to truly keep a sustainable competitive edge. Even with different views, this study's results show that keeping employees is key to boosting SCA, especially in the healthcare field where constant service and expertise are the main factors for success.

H₅: Leadership Style significantly contributes to Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) through its effect on Employee Retention in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

This suggests that how leaders act affects employee retention, which then changes sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) in private hospitals. Good leadership creates a pleasant work environment, makes employees happy, and keeps them from leaving, which leads to a more stable team that helps the hospital stay ahead in the long run. The data supports this, as shown in Table 4, where it is clear that leadership style has a positive and strong effect on employee retention ($B = 0.275$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, Table 7 shows that retaining employees significantly contributes to SCA ($B = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that leadership not only directly aids in retaining workers but also indirectly supports a competitive edge by maintaining skilled staff. The results align with Northouse [52], who stated that transformational leadership helps motivate employees, enhancing their dedication and keeping them engaged. Furthermore, Barney and Clark [26] pointed out that having a dedicated and skilled team is crucial for sustaining a lasting competitive edge. Thus, leadership style indirectly impacts competitive advantage through its effect on employee retention.

H₆: Digital Transformation significantly contributes to Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) through its effect on Employee Retention in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Thus, the idea of digital transformation retains manpower, making private hospitals more robust in the long term. It is convenient and labor-saving, and it enhances work satisfaction and thereby attracts more employees. As substantiated by the data, there is strong positive support in Table 6 concerning retaining employees ($B = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, Table 7 shows that keeping employees is a big part of maintaining a competitive edge ($B = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$). This is because digital transformations indirectly improve the competitive edge by keeping stable staff. This conclusion is in line with Chong and Duan [16] who posited that digital transformation would enhance the working experience and employee retention and

therefore provide long-term benefits for the organization. In another study, De Souza and Forte [53] found that the use of digital tools led to sustained competitive positioning.

H₇: Employee Well-being significantly contributes to Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) through its effect on Employee Retention in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

This suggests that a positive work environment tends to retain employees, thereby ensuring the hospital's long-term success. A supportive workplace, mental health programs, and job satisfaction will lead to lower attrition and a more committed workforce. This is evidenced by the data in Table 6, which indicates a robust association between employee well-being and employee retention ($B = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, Table 7 indicates that employee retention is highly conducive to sustaining long-term competitive advantage ($B = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$). Arguments for employee well-being preserve competition indirectly by maintaining staffing stability. As has been rightly pointed out, the well-being of employees helps retain people and improve the place where they work. Similarly, Chali and Lakatos [54] observed that the well-being of employees in an organization preserves a strong and active team, which continuously gives the company an edge over its competition.

H₈: Leadership Style, Digital Transformation, and Employee Well-being collectively contribute to Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) in private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, through their effects on Employee Retention.

The implied relationship between leadership style, digital change, and worker well-being is thus strong, in turn impacting worker retention and SCA. The output in Table 6 reveals that Leadership Style ($B = 0.311$, $p < 0.01$), Digital Change ($B = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$), and Worker Well-being ($B = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$) contribute positively to Worker Retention. Furthermore, the results in Table 7 indicate that, in turn, worker retention contributes substantially to SCA. Good leaders, using new tech and caring for employee health, keep staff and contribute to long-term business advantage. All these results confirm the statement of Barney and Clark [26] that long-term general business success derives from critical and dynamic internal capabilities, notably leadership and employee strategy. A related group of authors, Takeuchi, et al. [58], mentioned that companies that blend leadership and digital use and care for the health of their workers build a strong staff that boosts their staying competitive over time.

16. Findings

Leadership Style, Digital Transformation, and Employee Well-being drive Employee Retention (Table 6: Leadership Style, $B = 0.311$, $p < 0.01$; Digital Transformation, $B = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$; Employee Well-being, $B = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$). SCA is strongly associated with employee retention (Table 7: $B = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.685$), thereby explicitly substantiating the fact that an edge has to be maintained. The mediation analysis results indicate that employee retention emerges as an important mediator in relating the impacts of leadership style, digital transformation, and employee well-being relative to SCA and signals the imperative need to invest in these areas for firms' long-term success. The results back up the resource-based view and the human capital theory, which says that good leadership, digital innovation, and employee well-being keep a business ahead of the competition by keeping a loyal and stable workforce. Alsadaan, et al. [7] found that cultural and social perceptions significantly hinder nursing recruitment in Saudi Arabia, aligning with Elmorshedy, et al. [55] who also emphasized societal stigma as a key barrier. However, unlike Albalawi, et al. [56] who highlighted financial incentives as a major concern, Alsadaan, et al. [7] focused more on cultural constraints. This suggests that while social factors remain a primary challenge, economic and institutional aspects may also influence nursing shortages.

17. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is emphasized by this research that leadership style, digital change, and employee well-being are key in retaining workers and consequently enhancing the long-term competitiveness of private hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The results prove that by focusing on these aspects, an organization can attract a highly committed and stable workforce whose long-term interests are furthered through competition.

17.1. Recommendations

- Improve Leadership Skills: Spend more on training to make managers better and staff happier.
- Speed up Tech Use: Put in new tech to make work quicker, easier, and more enjoyable.
- Care for Staff: Make rules that help with mental health and balance between work and life to keep staff happy.
- Keep Staff Longer: Make plans to help workers grow and feel secure in their jobs to stay ahead in the market.
- One of the major recommendations for hospital decision-makers is that they should intervene in social and cultural norms that sometimes dissuade candidates from considering nursing as a career in Saudi Arabia.

18. Implications for Practice

This study provides useful tips for hospital administrators, HR professionals, and policymakers in private healthcare facilities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

- Leadership Development: Hospitals need to establish leadership training programs to enhance managerial skills, create a positive work environment, and retain employees for a longer duration.
- Digital Transformation Integration: Putting money into digital health tech, like electronic health records and AI-driven help, can make operations smoother and increase job happiness, which can keep more workers.
- Employee Well-being Programs: Places should focus on programs for well-being, including mental health support, flexible working options, and wellness plans, to make a supportive and effective work environment.

- Retention Strategies: HR teams should create specific policies to keep workers, like chances for career growth, good pay, and programs that recognize good work, to cut down on quitting and stay ahead of competitors.
- Sustainable Competitive Advantage: By maintaining a stable team through effective leadership, digital updates, and a focus on well-being, hospitals can provide better service, enhance patient satisfaction, and achieve long-term success.

19. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study is limited in that it only includes privately run hospitals in Riyadh. Therefore, we cannot generalize the findings to other settings or public hospitals. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design means that this study is unable to comment on temporal changes as they occur over time, and the information is self-reported and susceptible to bias regarding leadership, digital change, and worker well-being. Additionally, variables beyond the organizational structure were not considered, including issues such as organizational culture, economic conditions, and government policies, which are related to rates of employee turnover and the competitive standing of hospitals. Further research should be longitudinal in design to track changes over time and involve a comparison of different hospitals or regions. Qualitative methods such as interviews and case studies can be very helpful to delve deeper into the experiences of employees. One will also be able to identify better ways to remain competitive in the healthcare industry by examining factors such as the culture of an organization and external market forces.

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