

# Human Resource Management Challenges and Future Prospects in Japanese Welfare Facilities: A Literature Review of the 2010–2020 Period

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**Abstract:** This paper systematically examines the recruitment, training, and retention challenges faced by welfare facilities in Japan through a literature review on the challenges of human resource management in Japanese welfare facilities over the period 2010–2020. While the demand for long-term care services is rising with the rapid decline of the working-age population and the dramatic increase in the elderly population in Japan, the shortage of human resources in welfare facilities is a growing problem. Using a rooted theory approach, the study distilled three main problems from 28 related papers: recruitment difficulties and high turnover rates, inadequate training systems and unclear career paths, and difficult working conditions and low social recognition. These problems are interrelated and together constitute a fundamental obstacle to human resource management in welfare organisations. The way forward includes the adoption of ICT to improve operational efficiency, the implementation of marketing strategies to achieve service differentiation, and the enhancement of practical training programmes to improve staff quality and retention. The findings provide a theoretical and practical framework for achieving sustainable management of welfare facilities and improving the quality of care.

**Keywords:** Welfare facilities; Human resource management; Staff recruitment; Staff training; Staff retention Abstract.

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## 1. Introduction

Japan is experiencing a rapid decline in its working-age population concurrent with a dramatic increase in the number of elderly requiring long-term care due to accelerated population aging and the aging of the baby boom generation. Since the introduction of the Long-Term Care Insurance System in April 2000, various welfare facilities—including special nursing homes for the elderly, geriatric health service facilities, and care houses—have been established to meet the diverse needs of the aged. However, a chronic shortage of care and welfare human resources remains a critical issue in these facilities. For instance, Mase (2021) reports that although the welfare professional training programs in the Aoyama Rikai Association have been continuously implemented over an extended period, persistent challenges remain in recruitment and staff retention at the operational level [1]. Similarly, Tanaka, Miyaue, and Nishio (2018) reveal from their investigation into the relationship between mid-care workers and supervisory staff at long-term care facilities that deficiencies in career development and psychosocial support have created an urgent need to improve post-hiring training systems [2]. In addition, Ishikawa (2020) discusses how policy measures aimed at securing home care personnel prioritize quantity over quality, resulting in inadequate training systems for enhancing the expertise required by care workers [3]. Furthermore, Miyazaki (2015) provides a recent business report on welfare and care, highlighting operational changes and future prospects for welfare facilities, and emphasizes that practical improvements—such as the adoption of ICT tools and marketing strategies—are under active discussion [4]. Finally, Sato (2018) corroborates that harsh recruitment environments, high turnover, and deteriorating working conditions, particularly in small- to medium-sized facilities, significantly affect manpower security [5]. Together, these studies demonstrate that

persistent structural challenges in recruitment, training, and work environment continue to undermine effective human resource management in Japanese welfare facilities.

Against this backdrop, achieving sustainable management and maintaining high-quality care services in welfare facilities require not only quantitative manpower recruitment but also the creation of an environment that enables care and welfare personnel to fully utilize their professional skills and remain employed over the long term. To this end, the establishment of specialized training programs, the construction of effective career paths, and a restructuring of organizational management aimed at improving labor conditions are indispensable. Such measures are expected to build the foundation for qualitative improvements and enhanced staff retention in welfare facilities.

## 2. Problem Statement and Issues

The primary issues identified in this study can be summarized into three main points:

First, regarding recruitment difficulties and high turnover rates, Sato (2018) indicates that welfare facilities face severe challenges in attracting new applicants, with turnover rates significantly exceeding the national average. The harsh working conditions on the ground, combined with the perception that care work is “a job anyone can do,” contribute to a decline in both recruitment and staff retention.

Second, concerning the inadequacy of training systems and the absence of well-defined career paths, the studies by Takimoto (2016) and Iwata (2019) highlight that post-hire in-service training and systematic continuing education programs for care staff are insufficient [6–7]. Moreover, there is a noticeable disjunction between the curricula provided in care worker training institutions and the actual demands of fieldwork. This disparity hinders career advancement and impedes the long-term retention of core human resources in welfare facilities.

Third, the study further identifies that the severity of the labor environment—characterized by long working hours, low wages, and difficulties in obtaining sufficient leave—results in reduced job satisfaction among care staff, which in turn accelerates turnover. Additionally, reports by Choi (2018) underscore that deficient internal communication exacerbates poor working conditions, further inhibiting staff retention [8]. In sum, these studies collectively provide evidence that unresolved issues in recruitment, staff training, and working conditions continue to pose fundamental challenges to human resource management in welfare facilities.

### 3. Research Objectives

The purpose of the current study is to systematically organize and evaluate the trends and challenges in human resource management in Japanese welfare facilities since 2010 by reviewing literature published between 2010 and 2020. Specifically, the study aims to:

(1) Comprehensively assess the current state of recruitment, training, and retention processes in welfare facilities, as documented in the literature, with particular emphasis on the challenges of harsh recruitment environments, inadequate post-hire training systems, and deteriorating labor conditions.

(2) Compare and analyze case studies and empirical findings concerning organizational management practices from the perspective of facility administrators and frontline staff, thereby identifying common factors in both successful and problematic cases.

(3) Propose actionable improvements and future strategies—including the adoption of ICT, the implementation of differentiated marketing strategies, and the enhancement of practical educational and training programs—to achieve sustainable recruitment and to elevate the professional expertise of care workers.

By doing so, the study is expected to provide both a theoretical and practical framework that supports the sustainable management of welfare facilities and enhances the quality of care provided by care workers in an increasingly aging society.

### 4. Literature Extraction Method

This study was conducted through a literature review of original Japanese journal articles published between 2010 and 2025 that pertain to human resource management and staff retention in welfare facilities. The extraction criteria were as follows:

- Time Frame: 2010–2025
- Document Type: Peer-reviewed original articles published in Japanese
- Keywords Used: “Japan,” “human resource management,” “welfare facilities,” “staff retention”

Literature searches were performed using the following platforms: Google Scholar (which yielded 1,870 articles), J-STAGE (yielding 8 articles), and CiNii (yielding 4 articles) [9]. After excluding duplicates and articles that did not meet the content relevance requirements based on titles and abstracts, a final sample of 28 articles was selected for analysis [10].

### 5. Research Results

Using a grounded theory approach (GTA), key phrases and important keywords related to recruitment, training, and labor conditions were extracted from the selected literature [11].

The initial codes were then grouped into three main categories.

The first category, “Recruitment Difficulties and High Turnover,” included codes such as “difficulty in recruitment,” “decline in job applicants,” “high turnover,” “poor labor conditions,” “low wages,” and the perception that care work is “a job anyone can do.” These codes indicate that welfare facilities face significant challenges in recruiting new personnel and that harsh working conditions substantially elevate turnover rates [12–13].

The second category, “Inadequate Training Systems and Lack of Career Pathways,” comprised codes such as “insufficient in-service training,” “lack of systematic education programs,” “absence of career advancement support,” and “mismatch between training curricula and actual field requirements.” The findings reveal that care worker training and post-hire education systems are underdeveloped, hindering the development of core personnel and obstructing long-term retention [14].

The third category, “Harsh Working Conditions and Low Social Recognition,” was built from codes including “long working hours,” “difficulty obtaining leave,” “deteriorating work environments,” “lack of communication,” and “low social evaluation.” These issues collectively impede job satisfaction and exacerbate turnover, thereby hindering the ability of care workers to fully exercise their professional expertise [15–17].

The integrated analysis of these categories demonstrates that the persistent challenges in recruitment, training, and labor conditions are mutually reinforcing and represent fundamental obstacles to effective human resource management. Several studies indicate that improvements—such as integrating ICT to enhance operational efficiency, utilizing marketing strategies for service differentiation, and reinforcing practical training programs—could mitigate these issues and improve both the quality and retention of personnel in welfare facilities (Miyata, 2024; Tsutsui, 2015) [18–19].

### 6. Limitations and Future Prospects

This study is limited by its exclusive focus on Japanese peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2025, which may restrict its perspective to the domestic context. Consequently, international case studies and diverse cultural perspectives are not reflected. Moreover, relying solely on published literature may exclude grey literature and emerging field data that could offer valuable insights into recent policy modifications and technological advancements. Furthermore, the application of a grounded theory approach to code and categorize textual data introduces an element of subjective interpretation, which could affect the generalizability of the findings.

In the future, it is imperative to expand the scope of research to include international comparative studies that can situate Japan’s challenges within a broader global context. Incorporating quantitative data and field surveys alongside literature reviews would enable a more robust validation of the proposed improvement strategies. Additionally, evaluating the impact of ICT applications, marketing strategy integration, and enhanced training programs on staff retention through a mixed-methods approach could lead to the development of a more comprehensive and actionable model for sustainable human resource management in welfare facilities. Such work would contribute significantly to the formulation of both theoretical and practical frameworks necessary for addressing the evolving challenges of an aging

society.

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