

### Background / Purpose

Peri-anesthesia staff morale declined during a period of sustained organizational change, increasing demands, and evolving practice requirements. Within the fast-paced unit environment, opportunities for structured recognition and appreciation between peers were limited. Informal assessments, including staff feedback and observations of team dynamics, indicated decreased engagement and a diminished sense of belonging.

A structured literature review was conducted to evaluate the evidence supporting peer recognition as a strategy to improve staff engagement and sense of belonging. Relevant studies were examined to assess the relationship between recognition practices and workforce outcomes within healthcare settings.



The literature suggested that a peer recognition initiative could provide a structured, tangible process through which the nursing team could acknowledge team-affirming behaviors and contributions.

The purpose of the initiative was to enhance staff engagement, strengthen professional relationships, and foster a greater sense of belonging within the peri-anesthesia team.

### Process of Implementation

To strengthen peer recognition and foster team belonging, the unit implemented a monthly, peer-nominated recognition initiative. In collaboration with other team members, the **“Golden Urinal Award” (GUA)** was developed. Team members were invited to nominate colleagues who exemplified unit values, teamwork, and reliability in high-acuity clinical situations. The winning recipient was announced and awarded during the morning team huddle, reinforcing shared values and publicly celebrating contributions in real time.

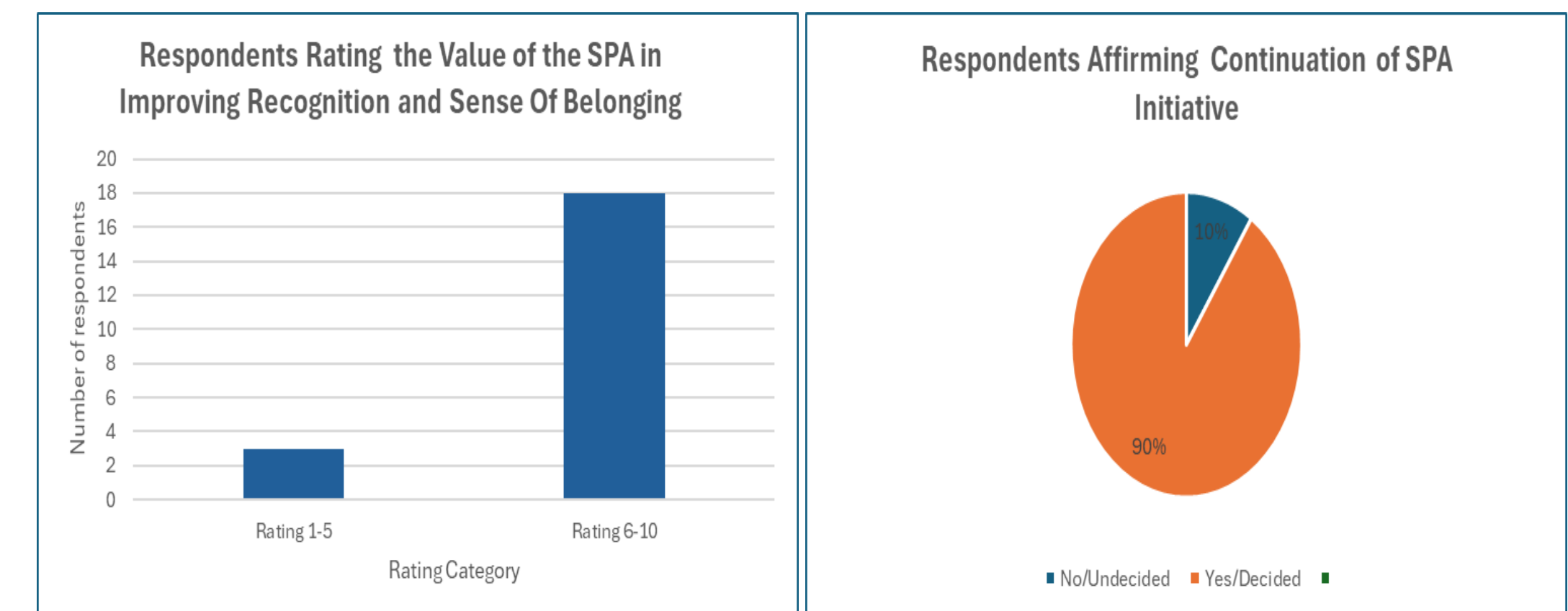


As the initiative evolved, the program was formalized as the **“Star Player Award” (SPA)**. Recipients received 100 e-Recognize points from the unit manager, a certificate of recognition, and unit-based photo recognition. To evaluate impact, staff completed questionnaires assessing changes in engagement and sense of belonging following implementation of the initiative.

### Implications For Practice

- Increased staff involvement in recognizing positive behavior
- Enhanced work life experiences and sense of belonging
- Improved patient care delivery
- Reduced attrition

### Results



Analysis of the collected data indicates that the SPA initiative is positively perceived by most staff, reinforcing the role of structured recognition in enhancing engagement, morale, and belonging, with support for its continuation and ongoing refinement.

### Discussion / Conclusion

Peer recognition showed a positive impact on staff morale, engagement, and sense of belonging within the nursing unit. Structured opportunities for team members to acknowledge one another’s contributions fostered a culture of value, support, and connection. This strengthened teamwork and psychological safety, contributing to a more satisfied, resilient team, and supporting high-quality patient care.

### References

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