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An attractive place to work, inspired by the Magnet model®

Ingela Bäckström

Department of Communication, Quality Management and Information
Systems

e-mail: ingela.backstrom@miun.se

Lilly-Mari Sten

Department of Communication, Quality Management and Information
Systems

e-mail: lilly-mari.sten@miun.se

Pernilla Ingelsson

Department of Communication, Quality Management and Information
Systems

e-mail: pernilla.ingelsson@miun.se

Marie Häggström

Department of Health Sciences

e-mail: marie.haggstrom@miun.se

Ulla Näppä

Department of Health Sciences

e-mail: ulla.nappa@miun.se

Abstract

Purpose: To explore the concept of nursing homes as attractive workplaces perceived by staff and interpreted through the lens of the Magnet Model®.

Methodology: Two workshops with staff from two departments at a nursing home and one workshop with registered nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists were held to explore attractive workplaces. Additionally, interviews were conducted with 12 registered nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in another municipality. For the analysis, the authors combined all of the text from the workshops and the interviews and analysed it versus the five core components from the Magnet Model®: 1) transformational leadership, 2) structural empowerment, 3) exemplary professional practice, 4) new knowledge, innovation, and improvements, and 5) empirical quality results as a deductive frame of analysis.

Findings: The analysis revealed how the staff perceived nursing homes as attractive workplaces through the lens of the Magnet Model®. When sorting the material versus the five core components, all the components contributed attractive workplace examples even though innovation and improvements had the fewest examples and empirical quality results the second least.

Research limitations/implications: This study was limited to staff from one nursing home and all registered nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in another municipality. Further research can be conducted at several nursing homes to explore their view of attractive workplaces.

Originality/Value: The originality of this research is the use of the Magnet model to analyse an attractive workplace in nursing homes within a municipality context.

Keywords: Attractive workplaces, Nursing home, Magnet model

Paper type: Research paper

1. Introduction

The number of elderly people with multiple diseases is increasing (James et al., 2018), and the number of elderly people over 60 years of age is increasing worldwide. By 2030, 1.4 billion persons in the world will be 60 years old or older (WHO, 2025). Therefore, there is a need for more elderly care facilities to be developed, and the number of health care staff who want to stay needs to increase. However, the working-age population is not growing at a proportional rate (European Commission, 2023). These challenges become even more complicated with workplace dissatisfaction in health care, causing health care staff to leave their professions due to low job satisfaction and high stress (Raso et al., 2021; Stone et al., 2007). To recruit and retain the necessary staff, organisations must be attractive to ensure that employees will want to work there and stay there longer (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019). Feeling proud of one's work is important for psychological health and a decisive reason for selecting to stay in the field of elderly care (Eriksson et al., 2023; Foà et al., 2020). Ingelsson (2013) studied Disney and reported that pride was considered the most important reason for both promoting employee satisfaction and supplying quality to the customer. In addition, research shows that successful organizations consciously work to create a good public image to promote pride among staff and managers (Bäckström, 2009). After studying the tourism industry, Özbezek et al. (2023) concluded that organizational pride and its subdimensions have a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Nguyen et al. (2022) reported that companies in the service industry can refer to solutions to assist their employees in achieving work–life balance, thereby increasing employees' job satisfaction, organizational pride, and organizational commitment. A "blame culture" is a major source of errors and poor quality in health care systems (Khatri et al. 2009). They argue that health care systems must change towards a system based on commitment to admit staff to participate in decision-making to achieve a more "just culture" (ibid). Thus, there is a need to initiate settings for a sustainable quality culture, i.e., a culture that generates value for patients and citizens and, at the same time, a working environment including a holistic approach and long-term planning; here, leadership is central and a prerequisite for creating healthy workplaces (Bäckström et al., 2018).

According to Aiken et al. (2008), the Magnet Model[®] creates high-quality care, more nurses, a good working environment, decreased stress, less mortality, and higher patient satisfaction. The Magnet Model[®] was proposed in 1983 after a study of nursing shortages in the US, which demonstrated that some hospitals had higher job satisfaction among nurses (The American Nurses Credentialing Center, ANCC, 2019). A more recent review by Rodríguez-García et al. (2020) revealed that the Magnet Model[®] contributes to better care and improved patient and organizational outcomes. The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of nursing homes as attractive

workplaces perceived by staff and interpreted through the lens of the Magnet Model[®].

2. Methodology

This study is a part of two three-year research projects, namely, “Develop leadership and teamwork at nursing homes for increased nursing quality” and “Striving for magnet standards in nursing homes—a pilot project”. The first is financed by the Kamprad Family Foundation, the second is financed mutually by municipal and university cooperation and the projects are joint studies between two research subjects: Nursing Sciences and Quality Technology and Management. The overall aim of the first project is to use the Magnet Model as a starting point to develop methodologies and working methods to increase leaders' ability to create a sustainable quality culture within nursing homes. The purpose of the second project is to identify, describe, test, and evaluate how nursing homes and community health care can become attractive and learning workplaces that, like certified magnet hospitals, provide good conditions for care quality.

2.1 Workshops and data collection

The study presented in this paper describes parts of the research projects described above. Two workshops with staff from two departments at a nursing home and one workshop with registered nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in the same municipality were held to explore attractive workplaces. The workshops were performed between November 2024 and January 2025. At the workshops, the participants first reflected individually on what an attractive workplace is and wrote their individual thoughts in a workbook. The participants subsequently discussed their reflections together in smaller groups and documented their joint reflections in the workbook. Finally, reflections and documentation in the smaller groups were made on what a first step could be to create conditions for increasing attractiveness at a workplace. The documented reflections from the smaller groups were presented for the whole group, and an overall reflection was made. Additionally, interviews were conducted with 12 registered nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists working at two different nursing homes in another municipality, who were asked “What changes or additions would improve your enjoyment at work?”

2.2 Analysis

For the analysis, the authors put all the text from the group reflections in the workbooks and the answers from the interviews according to the attractive

workplace in the digital post-it notes on the digital board Mural. In two meetings, the post-it notes were analysed jointly versus the five core components from the Magnet Model[®]: 1) transformational leadership; 2) structural empowerment; 3) exemplary professional practice; 4) new knowledge, innovation, and improvements; and 5) empirical quality results as a deductive frame of analysis.

2.3 Ethical considerations

The projects have been evaluated by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Dnr, 2023-03858-01), a public agency under the Ministry of Education that examines and approves or denies applications for ethics reviews of research involving humans and human biological material. All participants provided consent to participate.

3. Results

The analysis revealed how the staff perceived nursing homes as attractive workplaces through the lens of the Magnet Model[®]. When sorting the material versus the five core components, all the components contributed attractive workplace examples even though innovation and improvements had the fewest and empirical quality results second least. The perception of an attractive workplace from the workbooks and the interviews are presented below under the respective core component.

3.1 Transformational Leadership

The staff describe an attractive workplace according to transformational leadership as follows: good leadership with clear and effective guidance from managers and present leadership with managers who are actively involved. The managers listen; providing a sense that management truly hears employees. The management is accessible, and the leaders provide feedback and are easy to reach. There is open dialogue and strong communication between managers and teams. The management is supportive, and the managers understand the team's tasks and help them progress. The staff is appreciated, and leaders value and recognize employees' contributions. There is two-way flexibility with a mutual give-and-take approach that benefits everyone. The employer is responsive and provides a workplace that engages with and values its employees. The employees feel that their work is valued and that their contributions are appreciated. There is a well-defined mission for the organization, and the purpose is clear. In an attractive workplace, there are clear roles and effective teamwork. The planning is good, and there is proper preparation and organization.

3.2 Structural Empowerment

A desirable work environment is characterized by allowing workers the ability to independently plan and structure their workday, with flexibility that allows individuals to adapt their schedules according to personal and family needs. Having the freedom to influence not only how but also when work is performed fosters a sense of ownership and well-being. Predictable schedules, the opportunity to work four days and rest for three, and the possibility of working 80% while receiving full pay contribute to a more sustainable work–life balance. Clearly defined goals are valued, and the flexibility to reach them in one’s own way is highly appreciated. Employees also value having limited work outside of regular hours, emphasizing the importance of recovery time and maintaining clear boundaries between professional and personal life.

Fair and competitive compensation plays a vital role in making the workplace attractive. Employees appreciate salaries that reflect their responsibilities and performance, along with opportunities for salary growth. Equal pay and flexible benefits—such as choosing between time off or financial compensation—are important. Additional perks such as free parking, wellness allowances instead of designated wellness hours, Christmas gifts, access to a staff gym, and free coffee enhance the sense of appreciation. Initiatives such as the rural area subsidy, introduced for a three-year period, are also seen as important for improving the workplace’s appeal and should be continued.

Professional development is another key area, with strong support for opportunities such as training during working hours, paid education, and continued learning. The chance to develop one’s competence, take part in further studies, and grow both personally and professionally is seen as a cornerstone of a stimulating and meaningful work environment.

Finally, employees place great importance on being involved in decision-making and having a voice in how work is organized. Participation in the development of the workplace, having influence over methods and staffing, and being kept informed about changes all contribute to a stronger sense of engagement and purpose. When routines are clear and communication is transparent, it fosters trust and strengthens the overall quality of the workplace climate.

3.3 Exemplary Professional Practice

A professional approach is fundamental to a successful and supportive work environment. Clear routines, well-structured processes, and effective communication ensure that daily tasks are handled efficiently and with confidence. Having a well-defined role and understanding what one’s responsibilities include helps maintain focus and direction. Communication—especially when it is brief, clear, and accessible—is considered vital, both in internal teamwork and in interactions with relatives

of residents, visitors, and the wider community. Being a good ambassador for the municipality or employer contributes to the organization's reputation and sense of pride.

Teamwork is at the heart of this culture. A well-functioning collaboration across colleagues and professionals strengthens the sense of shared purpose. A strong team spirit, built on engagement, participation, and respect for each other's work, creates a more cohesive and motivated environment. Working towards common goals, while acknowledging that people operate in different ways, encourages an atmosphere of inclusion and flexibility. Multiprofessional teamwork allows everyone to contribute their expertise for the benefit of the whole group.

Mutual respect is a recurring theme—respect for one another's opinions, tasks, and individual differences. When trust and empathy are present, it becomes easier to ask for help, support each other, and foster a welcoming atmosphere. The work environment is enriched by colleagues who are kind, humorous, and understanding—who can lift their mood while still maintaining professionalism. Valuing one another not only improves collaboration but also reinforces a shared sense of responsibility for creating a good workplace. The mindset that “we are all different but working towards the same goals” is foundational.

Smaller teams are appreciated for the closer bonds they allow, which often make individuals feel seen, needed, and respected. Open dialogue, receptiveness, and emotional awareness—acknowledging that life can be challenging—further enhance the sense of belonging and safety at work. Being open and welcoming in all interactions helps create a trusting, inclusive culture where everyone feels invited to contribute.

On a practical level, having appropriate and purpose-adapted spaces is essential. Fresh, clean facilities and offices of adequate size contribute to comfort and functionality. Proper planning in relation to patient care and access to the right equipment further improve the quality of service and daily workflow. Taken together, these elements form the basis of a workplace that is both effective and compassionate—where people feel empowered, supported, and united.

3.4 New Knowledge, Innovation, & Improvements

The goal of the staff is to investigate whether there are other models with which to work. They also suggest that small sessions, such as training, meetings, etc., be held for almost a full day instead of being split for many days. Improving the work environment and adapting it to operations is another suggestion for becoming an attractive workplace. Hold a workshop

to capture employees' opinions. Provide the opportunity to combine physical work with digital elements.

3.5 Empirical Quality Results

A sense of coherence is fostered through a positive spirit and a joyful atmosphere at work. It is about having fun, experiencing happiness, and enjoying time together as colleagues. When joy is present in the workplace, it fuels motivation and creates a genuine desire to go to work. A good work environment—one that is safe, supportive, and open to influence—is essential. This environment not only strengthens employee well-being but also encourages engagement and a sense of coherence in everyday work life.

4. Conclusion and discussion:

By exploring the concept of nursing homes as an attractive workplace through the lens of the Magnet Model[®], we gained an understanding of how staff perceive what an attractive workplace is and what is needed to become more attractive. The staff described many examples of what an attractive workplace is and conditions for increasing attractiveness at a workplace as well as what could be done to increase the working environment. When the descriptions were sorted under the respective core component, it was sometimes difficult to decide which core component was most suitable; sometimes, two or more components were interpreted as being suitable, and sometimes it was hard to find one that fit. The final placement, as described above, was the result of consensus discussions with the five researchers in the project group.

Examples sorted under 'Transformational leadership' are typical leadership skills that describe clear and present leadership from managers who are actively involved. Previous research has emphasized that leadership is important and a prerequisite for creating healthy workplaces; see, for instance, Bäckström et al. (2018). Bergman et al. (2022) also emphasize the importance of leadership: "it cannot be overstated how important a clear and committed leadership is for creating a culture for successful and sustainable quality improvements" (p. 72). Even though there seems to be agreement about the importance of good leadership, it seems difficult to accomplish, as many organisations still struggle with bad working environments. Is it due to bad leadership or to something else?

The core component 'Structural Empowerment' is exemplified by the importance of being involved in decision-making and participation in the development of the workplace. This is in line with Chamberlain et al. (2016), who reported that when staff have decision-making autonomy, it can increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover. Participation is a fundamental value in

total quality management (TQM), indicating its importance in reaching higher service quality (Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2018).

Within the core component 'Exemplary Professional Practice', the staff emphasized that being an ambassador for the municipality or employer contributes to being a good ambassador for the municipality, which reflects positively on organization's reputation and sense of pride. This is in line with Özbezek et al. (2023), who claim that pride has a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Eriksson et al. (2023) and Foà et al. (2020) reported that feeling proud of one's work is a vital reason for deciding to stay in one's position. Pride also promotes staff satisfaction and quality for the customer (Ingelsson, 2013). Organizations that have achieved sustainable health among their employees continuously work to create a good public image to promote pride among staff and managers (Bäckström, 2009). Therefore, it is important to work to create pride in the organization; the question is how you do that and how you start.

In the core component 'New Knowledge, Innovation, & Improvements', the staff want to improve the work environment and, for example, conduct a workshop that captures the staff's opinion. In this study a workshop was conducted that did that in one nursing home. The management has received the results and is now working with improvements with the staff. In the research project, we will follow this approach and may conduct a workshop such as this on the other two nursing homes.

An example from the staff sorted under the core component 'Empirical Quality Results' is a working environment that is safe, supportive, and open to influence. This environment strengthens staff well-being and encourages engagement and a sense of coherence. Previous studies, such as Karasek & Theorell (1990) and Warhurst et al. (2022), confirmed that a positive work environment improves performance and quality for the employer and well-being, motivation, engagement, and health for staff.

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