



Employee silence about healthcare job satisfaction: interpreting the gap between top and middle managers

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Case: St. John Hospital, Budapest



Questionnaire (MSQ + open questions):

Date: year 2022 and 2024

Response rate: 17%, and 9%

Gender: F=75%, M=25%

Physician: 25%, Nurse: 47%,

Other: 15%, No: 13%

Main data of the hospital:

Health care area (population):

4-500.000 patients,

29 professions,

957 bed

Healthcare staff: total 2300ps

Infrastructure:

pavilion-style !

(built in 1898)

Critical area:

2022: infrasturcture/work environment, communication

2024: + workforce shortage and managerial functioning!



Exploration of communication problems – Top management interviews (added middle managers)

Narrative interview: Employee voice and Cultural patterns and their Influence on communication

Gap – “Why doesn’t the voice reach the Top?”

Middle managers’ focus: daily operations, survival mode, solving local issues, “By focusing on what’s wrong, we forget to appreciate what’s going well.”

Lack of upward communication: ideas and feedback rarely reach top managers (filter)

Distrust and fear: “There’s no point in speaking up”, “Nothing changes anyway”

Hierarchical barriers: Senior physicians dominate, middle managers have less autonomy.

Physical and symbolic distance: top manager is in separate buildings, perceived as unapproachable

Top managers:
Medical director
Deputy medical dir.
Nursing director
Strategic manager

Middle managers:
Communication manager,
Head of Physiotherapy



Building the bridge – Opportunities to connect organizational levels

Improving communication

Create formal and informal channels (e.g. feedback loops, internal focus groups)

Ensure follow-up: “What happened to my suggestion?”

Regular, structured meetings between middle and senior managers, e.g. ‘morning kick-off’, joint conferences for doctors and nurses

Cultural shift

Celebrate positive experiences and achievements.

Building trust: employees feel safe to raise problems or share ideas

Importance of informal, personal connections. (“hallway conversations” and spontaneous interactions).

Reducing the physical distance between nursing and medical staff. ?

Empowering middle management

Offer mentoring, coaching.

Give space and support for initiating change: “It’s worth speaking up”

Research and publication direction

Gap between top management and employee/ middle management

Communication between top management and staff is minimal, with middle managers filtering information both ways (to avoid tension?).

Many employees perceive that their voice makes little difference, leading to a sense of disconnection from decision-making.

Top management's behaviour is mirrored in the organizational operation – system

In the Hungarian healthcare system, the hierarchical structure between hospital owners and institutions sets a pattern for the entire organization.

This same top-down model influences how leadership communicates with staff and shapes the overall organizational culture.



THANK YOU



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