

Increasing the Dialogue in Workplaces Enhances the Age-Friendly Organisational Culture and Helps Employees Face Work-Related Dilemmas

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Abstract : The ageing of employees, the availability of workforce, and employees' engagement in work are today's challenges in the field of health care and social services, and particularly in the care of older people. Therefore, it is important to enhance both the attractiveness of the work in the field of older people's care and the retention of employees in the field, and also to pay attention to the length of careers. The length of careers can be affected, for example, by developing an age-friendly organisational culture. Changing the organisational culture in a workplace is, however, a slow process which requires engagement from employees and enhanced dialogue between employees. This article presents an example of age-friendly organisational culture in an older people's care unit and presents the results of the development of this organisational culture to meet the identified development challenges. In this research-based development process, cycles used in action research were applied. Three workshops were arranged for employees in a service home for older people. The workshops worked as interventions, and the employees and their manager were given several consecutive assignments to be completed between them. In addition to workshops, the employees benchmarked two other service homes. In the workshops, data was collected by observing and documenting the conversations. After that, thematic analysis was used to identify the factors connected to an age-friendly organisational culture. By analysing the data and comparing it to previous studies, some dilemmas we recognised that were hindering or enhancing the attractiveness of work and the retention of employees in this nursing home. After each intervention, the process was reflected and evaluated, and the next steps were planned. The areas of development identified in the study were related to, for example, the flexibility of work, holistic ergonomics, the physical environment at the workplace, and the workplace culture. Some of the areas of development were taken over by the work community and carried out in cooperation with e.g. occupational health care. We encouraged the work community, and the employees provided us with information about their progress. In this research project, the focus was on the development of the workplace culture and, in particular, on the development of the culture of interaction. The workshops showed employees' attitudes and strong opinions, which can be a challenge from the point of view of the attractiveness of work and the retention of employees in the field. On the other hand, the data revealed that the work community has an interest in developing the dialogue in the work community. Enhancing the dialogue gave the employees the opportunity and resources to face even challenging dilemmas related to the attractiveness of work and the retention of employees in the field. The psychological safety was also enhanced at the same time. The results of this study are part of a broader study that aims at building a model for extending older employees' careers.

Keywords : age-friendliness, attractiveness of work, dialogue, older people, organisational culture, workplace culture

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