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**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND SENSE OF BELONGING
AMONG HEALTHCARE WORKERS**

Master thesis

Programme Entrepreneurial Management, MBA

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

The document length is 14 408 words from the introduction to the end of the conclusion.

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare is a very labour-intensive sector that constantly faces workforce problems which due to the shortage of medical personnel and heavy workload cannot keep up with the constantly growing demand. Healthcare organizations are constantly struggling to retain and motivate existing employees and are looking for ways to attract new top talent. It is known that there is a connection between employee satisfaction and patient health. The constant shortage of healthcare workers has created a situation where health professionals work in several institutions and therefore their workload is often higher than usual. Since there is no clear overview of how big the workload of healthcare workers really is and how stressful their work is, the aim of this thesis is to understand why they work in several institutions, what motivates them and how could they thereby feel more engaged in the organizations.

A qualitative study of 11 healthcare workers revealed that they generally work in two institutions, in extreme cases three. However, working in multiple locations does not always mean work overload, but it is largely the case. The main motivator for working in several institutions is the salary, but they also highly value the experience they get from different organizations. Experience gives them the opportunity to get the knowledge and thereby be a better specialist. Healthcare workers also highlighted the engagement. Unfortunately, the research shows that in those companies, where the employees have lower workload, they do not feel like they are part of the team, rather they just want to get the job done.

The study revealed that although medical professionals are the ones who know how to help others, their own welfare is rather left behind. This results in employee burnout, demotivation and fatigue. Employers use several motivators to increase employee satisfaction but the most basic one is often forgotten. It is very important for the healthcare professionals to be able to talk to someone who will really listens to them.

Keywords: Employee branding, employee engagement, employee satisfaction, employee motivation, employee as advocates

INTRODUCTION

Healthcare is one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy. The workforce crisis in the healthcare sector has been called one of the most pressing worldwide issues of our time (Aluttis, 2014). Healthcare is a very labour-intensive industry, and its most important component is employment (Afolabi, Fernando, & Bottiglieri, 2018). The workload and working hours of the healthcare workers such as doctors, nurses and midwives cannot keep up with the growing demand (Shenje & Wushe, 2019). The resulting stress and excessive workload have been the most essential occupation health challenges for decades, especially since health workers are exposed to significantly more stress than the general population (Kohlfürst, Zöggeler, Karall, & Kerbl, 2022). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is a global shortage of nearly 4.3 million doctors, midwives, nurses and other healthcare workers. The shortage of healthcare workers threatens the quality and sustainability of health system worldwide. (Aluttis, 2014).

According to Health Statistics and Health Research Database, there were 25 165 healthcare workers in Estonia in 2021. In fact, there were only 20 362,5 positions filled (Statistikaamet, 2021). There is no overview of how long the doctor's working days are and how intense the work is (Eesti Arstide Liit, 2014). The workload per week or month may vary, depending on the person and their wishes, profession, workplace and the size of the institution, as well as on the filled positions and the lack-availability of doctors in the institution (Themas, et al., 2015). In addition, in many healthcare facilities, not all working hours are reflected in the official working time schedules, and some work is not included in the working time (work with documentation, handing over of duties). Also, they often work based on authorisation or contract of service agreement (Eesti Arstide Liit, 2014). For example, many doctors work in two or more medical professions – common combinations are a doctor of emergency medicine or a doctor without special specialization and another profession (Tomson, 2018).

As the provision of healthcare services is labour intensive, it must be recognized that human resources are very important for healthcare organizations to achieve their goals (Afolabi, Fernando, & Bottiglieri, 2018). It is well known that attracting top talent is important but motivate

them to stay is even more (Suomi, Saraniemi, Vähätalo, Kallio, & Tevameri, 2021). The management of healthcare organizations has been focused more on patients, thus neglecting the relationships with their own internal employees (Huang & Lai, 2018). All the evidence shows that organizations that prioritize employee welfare and management deliver higher quality of patient care, have higher patient satisfaction and are better able to retain their employees (West & Coia, 2019).

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the importance of attracting employees to the healthcare sector has increased which is why the issue of employer branding is especially timely and crucial in this context (Heilmann, Lampela, & Taipale-Eräväla, 2021). Employer brand is intended to influence the perception of the organization by potential and current employees so that they consider this organization as their first-choice employer (Edwards, 2010). The importance of the employers' brand in the long term can only happen if the external employer brand is supported by a strong internal employer brand (Reis, José Sousa, & Dionísio, 2021).

The problem of this thesis is that Estonian healthcare workers often work in several organizations, which does not enable them to feel a sense of belonging and engagement in each of the organization. The aim for the thesis is to gather knowledge about the healthcare workers motivation which could increase their engagement and sense of belonging.

This thesis is an empirical study seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. Why health service providers work part-time in several institutions at the same time?
2. How could they feel more involved and engaged in each of the organisations?
3. What would motivate them to increase their part-time workload?

In the author's opinion this research provides practical value in understanding the motivation and challenges of healthcare workers, helping Estonian medical institutions to better understand and appreciate the value of their employees.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the theoretical background of external and internal employer brand, employee loyalty and engagement. The second part focuses on the methodology of the study and third part is for the interpretation of the study results and proposals for future improvements to Estonian medical companies.

The master's thesis uses qualitative research method. In order to collect data, an open-ended semi-structured interviews are conducted among medical professionals to gain an in-depth understanding of their working principles and perceptions.

Theoretical background from previous research combined with the conclusion of interviews with Estonian top doctors and specialists will provide a good understanding how strong is the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance in healthcare institutions.

The author would like to express her gratitude to the healthcare professionals who participated in the interviews, who found the time to contribute to this master's thesis despite their busy schedule and stressful work. Special thanks goes to the supervisor Kristjan Jasinski who offered comprehensive help and support throughout the process.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The first chapter of the master's thesis provides an overview of the theoretical background of employer branding. Describing how the concept of employer brand illustrates the combination of marketing and human resources. Employer brand consists of an internal and external brand which must be aligned to guide the perception of the employer brand to current and future employees.

The second part focuses on the employee engagement. It describes how employee engagement is related to employee satisfaction and motivation and how does it affect company's performance.

The chapter also describes what are the drivers to become company's advocates and how can employees thereby influence company's image and reputation.

1.1 Employer brand

Employer branding is not a new concept and nowadays it has become increasingly important in talent management today (Reis, José Sousa, & Dionísio, 2021). The term of employer branding was first introduced by Amber and Barrow in 1996, aligning the marketing techniques with the recruitment and employee retention process (Backhaus K. , 2016). Amber and Barrow defined employer branding as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). The concept described above perfectly illustrates the combination of marketing and HR (Benraïss-Noaillesa & Viotb, 2021).

Employer brand represents a company's effort to promote, both internally and externally, a clear picture of what makes it different and desirable as an employer (Backhaus K. &., 2004). Building a strong employer brand for the company has a direct impact of hiring, retention and engagement of talent and it has become one of the company's top priorities on the strategy list (Itam, Misra, & Anjum, 2020). The employer's brand image and reputations are extremely important in recruitment and directly influence the candidate's decisions to apply. Employees want to feel connected to the company, to be proud of working there and to be sync with the company's mission (McCabe & O'Bryant, 2019).

The positive attributes of an employer brand to a company are shown in the “Employer Brand Model” (which can be seen in Figure 1.), which shows that commitment, retention, performance, satisfaction, attraction, and loyalty can associated with an employer brand.

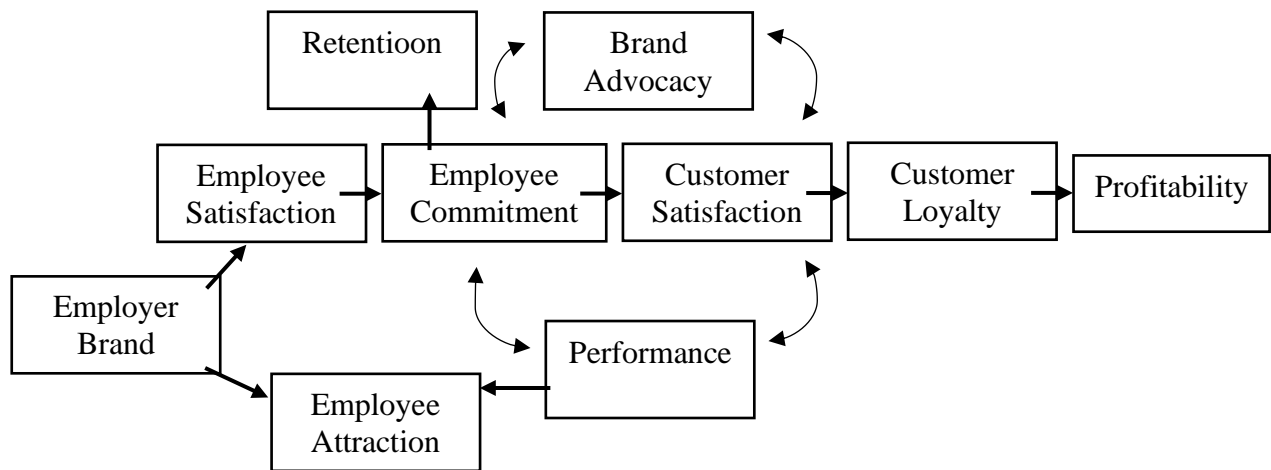


Figure 1. Employer Brand Model (Gilani, 2017), created by the author.

Employer branding and efforts to be an attractive employer to current and potential employees differentiates an organization as an employer. Building a desirable employer brand can help organization increase employee retention, satisfaction and engagement as employees associate the employer brand as the benefits that are related to their employment and employer (Špoljarić & Verčič, 2021). There are three important assets in creating an employer brand: organizational culture, organizational identity, and distinctive value proposition (Reis, José Sousa, & Dionísio, 2021).

Every organization has its own unique culture that differentiates them from their competitors (Tajpour, Salamzadeh, & Hosseini, 2020), through this, the company creates an image for current and potential employees (Tajpour, Salamzadeh, & Hosseini, 2020). The success of a healthcare institution is inextricably linked to its organizational culture (Nelson & Taylor, 2020) and should promote organizational capability based on its core competencies and provide high-quality health care services to patients (Lee D. , 2020). There is a clear connection between a healthy work environment and healthy patients. Achieving a value of trust is necessary for the safe treatment of patients, which is achieved through technical and team competence, based on the ethics and values. It is also important to involve doctors and specialists so they can contribute and develop new

strategic initiatives for the organization and thereby helping to shape the organizational culture (Carney, 2011).

Company's reputation and perceived organizational identity are strongly related, yet we distinguish them. The reputation refers to prestige and status, while identity refers to organizational stereotypes, as perceived by members (Xie, Bagozzi, & Meland, 2015). In other words, identity is what the organization's insiders (employees) consider to be the main characteristics (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

Organizations that develop a strong brand identity are more likely to experience higher employee satisfaction, performance, service quality and customer retention, as well as lower employee turnover. Organizational identity can explain a variety of human activities in organizations, such as why some employees are prone to cooperation while others are not. Organizational identity thus helps to summarize the image from the perspective of both employer branding and employee behavioural outcomes (Robertson & Khatibi, 2012).

Nowadays employees evaluate and compare the benefits of their organization with others. Due to this, organizations face significant challenges to achieve a more unique employee value proposition than competitors (Raj, 2020). Minchington (Minchington, 2006) defines employee value proposition as "a set of associations and offerings provided by an organisation in return of the skills, capabilities and experiences an employee brings to the organisation". Thus, it can be said that employee value proposition is an important strategy in employee management, as its existence directly affects the work results, productivity and competitiveness of employees. Committed employees are valuable to any organization (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019).

1.1.1. External employer brand

The employer brand consists of an internal employer brand and an external employer brand (Špoljarić & Verčič, 2021). Recent research has followed an integrated approach where both external and internal employer branding is important (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). It has been found that the two must be aligned to guide the perception of the employer brand to current and future employees and customers (Špoljarić & Verčič, 2021). As a result, several organizations have combined external promises with their internal employee experiences. Thus, it can be said that the strength of the employer's brand is a combination of internal trust and external brand message (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021).

Several studies suggest that insiders' and external views of the employer brand tend to differ remarkably, meaning that to attract, motivate and retain talents, companies must avoid inconsistency between their external and internal employer brand image. Therefore to capture the employer's brand, it is crucial to view both the insider's and the outsider's perspective (De Stobbeleir, et al., 2018).

External employer brand is directed to the organization's environment: professionals, students and other interest groups but the most important target group is the company's potential employees. The role of external employer brand is to communicate the company's values and through it attract the desired candidates (Macalik & Sulich, 2019). It has been found that the image of the organization is one of the main organizational factors influencing the employer brand, and a company with a positive brand image was considered an attractive employer (Younis & Hammad, 2020).

Before establishing an employment relationship, potential employees look for information about the company and the benefits offered. Unfortunately, job seekers rarely have advance information about the values offered, so they look for the signals displayed by employers to the labour market, based on which they form the first impression about the company (Alshathry, Clarke, & Goodman, 2017). A disgruntled employee can create a negative image for a brand by spreading the message through word of mouth or posts that publicly inform other potential candidates that the company is not the organization to work for. This damages the brand and thus the reputation of the organization (Graham & Cascio, 2018). Several studies have shown that due to the company's bad reputation, the company has to pay at least 10% more when recruiting employees. Therefore, it is extremely important to develop a value proposition that would define the main advantages and differences of the company as an employer, which would also be visible externally (Sharma & Prasad, 2018).

To optimize external employer branding, employees should be treated as strategic assets (Barbaros, 2020). Human Resource Management occurs in the belief that employees are dedicated ambassadors who promote the image of the organization's purpose and believe deeply in the image they give to internal and external stakeholders (Wæraas & Dahle, 2020). Thus, the positioning of the company's strategy, differentiation from competitors and increasing the attractiveness of the organization should include consideration of employees as resources of strategic assets (Barbaros, 2020).

The result of successful employer branding gives the organization increased reputation and visibility, employee engagement and directs many potential employees to apply, as the organization is described as a great place to work. An employer brand can be defined as an image of an organization that is a great place to work in the minds of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market (Dr. Basha, Mrs. Rajitha, & Ms. Afreen, 2020).

1.1.2. Internal employer brand

Organizations are increasingly focusing on internal branding to align corporate culture and strategy. This leads to employee brand identification, loyalty and commitment (Maurya & Agarwal, 2018). The purpose of employer branding is process management and controlling the employer reputation, it helps to develop the employee's value proposition and market it within the organization (Staniec & Kalińska-Kula, 2021). Internal employer branding creates an atmosphere in which current employees support the employer brand and achieve brand/organizational goals. The concept is about creating an image and keeping promise to existing employees (Maurya & Agarwal, 2018).

People are the main asset of any company that gives the company a strategic advantage. There is a constant struggle for competent talent to attract, retain them and increase their determination. Therefore, employee satisfaction and retention are important elements in organizational success (Staniec & Kalińska-Kula, 2021). This is extremely important on a situation where the supply of talented people in labour market is remarkably lower than the demand, which encourages companies' competition in the labour market (Dzhulai, 2022). Internal marketing is like selling a company to its employees. It is the process by which satisfied employees provide quality services, which result in higher performance in the organization, which in turn improves the consumer's perception of the company (Paul & Sahadev, 2018). From the researchers' point of view, internal marketing includes several processes: empowerment, training programs, rewarding and motivations, administrative support and internal communication (Mohammad, Alshura, Al-Hawary, Al-Syasneh, & Alhajri, 2020), as can be seen in Table 1.

Employees' empowerment means giving empowering and responsibilities to employees, encouraging independent decision-making, and providing confidence and freedom without involving management. It builds relationships between management and employees, helps to motivate them and encourages their participation in decision making (Abualoush, Obeidat, Tarhini,

& Al-Badi, 2018). In other words, the company makes efforts to empower employees by positively influencing their desire to deliver the best result at work and increasing their emotional satisfaction with daily tasks (Mohammad, Alshura, Al-Hawary, Al-Syasneh, & Alhajri, 2020). Companies focus on training new and existing employees, with the aim of increasing and strengthening the knowledge and skills of employees. Thus, in turn leads to high result, leading employees to perform better (Mohammad, Alshura, Al-Hawary, Al-Syasneh, & Alhajri, 2020). It can be said that the competitive advantage of the company depends on the knowledge and skills of the employees (Karim, Choudhury, & Latif, 2019).

Rewarding and motivation is important for any company, as it can be used to direct employees to achieve the organization's goals (Asaari, Desa, & Subramaniam, 2019). Human nature is motivating when their achievements and efforts are seen and recognized, which in turn motivates employees to improve the quality of their work and increase productivity (Mohammad, Alshura, Al-Hawary, Al-Syasneh, & Alhajri, 2020).

The company's internal communication is extremely important for the implementation of the company's goals and marketing strategies (Mohammad, Alshura, Al-Hawary, Al-Syasneh, & Alhajri, 2020). It consists of formal and informal communication between employees and management (Suomi, Saraniemi, Vähätalo, Kallio, & Tevameri, 2021), through which the company's values and mission are communicated and thereby involving employees in the fulfilment of the company's greater purpose (Men & Yue, 2019). Information exchange can take place through newsletters, information sessions or meeting (Suomi, Saraniemi, Vähätalo, Kallio, & Tevameri, 2021).

The company's management, as an organizational department, makes strategic decisions on which regulatory actions are based. It is like a bridge that connects the activities of different departments to achieve the company's goals. Administrative support has come from the employees' understanding that management assesses the needs and concern of different level and proposes solutions (Mohammad, Alshura, Al-Hawary, Al-Syasneh, & Alhajri, 2020).

Table 1. Overview of internal marketing processes and how they impact employees and employer.

Internal Marketing Process	Benefit to Employee	Benefit to Employer
Empowerment	More responsibility Confidence Freedom Better relationships Motivation Emotional Satisfaction	Better work results Less management involvement
Training	More knowledges Skills Better performance	Better performance Competitive advantage
Rewarding	Recognition Motivation Productivity	Achieving organizational goals Better work quality Increased productivity
Administrative support	Communication Involvement	Implementation of the company's goals and strategies
Internal communication	Connections Understanding Solutions Support	Achieve company's goals

Source: Author's summary based on the literature review (Mohammad, Alshura, Al-Hawary, Al-Syasneh, & Alhajri, 2020), (Abualoush, Obeidat, Tarhini, & Al-Badi, 2018), (Suomi, Saraniemi, Vähätalo, Kallio, & Tevameri, 2021), (Karim, Choudhury, & Latif, 2019), (Men & Yue, 2019).

Various literatures suggest that the use of internal marketing tools can lead to improved satisfaction and organizational commitment among healthcare workers. For the successful functioning of the organization, it is important to focus on the welfare of the employees because to have satisfied customers, the company must first have satisfied employees (Tipa, Sfetcu, Tudose, & Pucarea, 2018).

Teamwork is a very important resource in medical facilities. Healthcare professionals coordinate their activities to provide patients with healthcare services that should be safe, effective, patient-centred, well-organized, and equitable. Teamwork is an essential part of protecting employees emotionally, from depersonalization and disengagement (Mijakoski, et al., 2018). Well-functioning teamwork creates positive attitudes among employees, enabling employees to coordinate each other's work, make joint decisions, support each other, and achieve higher performance. Thanks to effective teamwork, patient satisfaction is also higher, which is increasingly valued in health care performance (Ogbonnaya, Tillman, & Gonzalez, 2018).

1.2. Employee engagement

For researchers and practitioners, the employee engagement in management has become one of the most important issues (Saks, 2022). This is important because when employees are engaged everyone benefits. Employees use their skills, develop relationships, and increase their effectiveness through these relationships. They consistently perform at a high level, driving innovation and moving their organization forward (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). The concept of employee engagement originated in burnout research, which looked at employee welfare rather than just their „un-welfare.“ Engagement can be interpreted as a two-way relationship between employer and employee (Suomi, Saraniemi, Vähätalo, Kallio, & Tevameri, 2021) which is strongly related to employee attitudes, behaviour, performance and welfare as well as organizational results (Saks, 2022).

A high engagement levels are a strategic goal for many organizations, including healthcare (Lowe, 2012). An engaged employee is aware of their responsibilities in achieving the company's goals and motivates other employees (Anitha, 2014). They are more committed to the organization and its goals (Pandita & Ray, 2018) and they share a common belief that the way they work creates value and performance for the organization (Lowe, 2012). Several studies have shown that employee engagement results in lower employee turnover and the lack of employee engagement can be one factor that makes an employee consider leaving (Sandhya & Sulphey, 2020).

Better work results are provided by shared organizational values, which provide the employee with the meaning and purpose of work. It has been found that when there is an alignment between the company's cultural and individual values, employees are more committed and engaged. How an organizational views leadership, teamwork and interpersonal relationships is determined by the company's work climate and cultural values (Kang, et al., 2020).

Work engagement is built on cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements which are reflected in the individual performance of the employee (Huber & Schubert, 2019). Involvement makes employees committed, satisfied, and ready to make extra efforts to achieve the company's goals (Lowe, 2012). Thus, it can be concluded that employee engagement leads to company performance (Kang, et al., 2020).

Based on the evidence, employee engagement has positive effects on both employees and the organization (Saks, 2022) and as research has shown, there is a clear correlation in healthcare between employees and patient satisfaction. Leaders can contribute to a better patient experience by improving employee retention and satisfaction (Lowe, 2012). Thus, it can be said that the behaviour of employees play an important role in the information of customers' perception of the company, so employees who are satisfied believe that they can deliver excellent service. It is also assumed that satisfied employees express more positive emotions and are ready to share these feelings with customers (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alnaser, 2020).

Employee satisfaction is important in defining the success of an organization because it is a key aspect of achieving better business performance, increasing long-term employee productivity, and retaining profitable customers. As shown in Figure 2, several variables influence employee satisfaction: communication, rewards, employee loyalty, retention, and commitment (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alnaser, 2020).

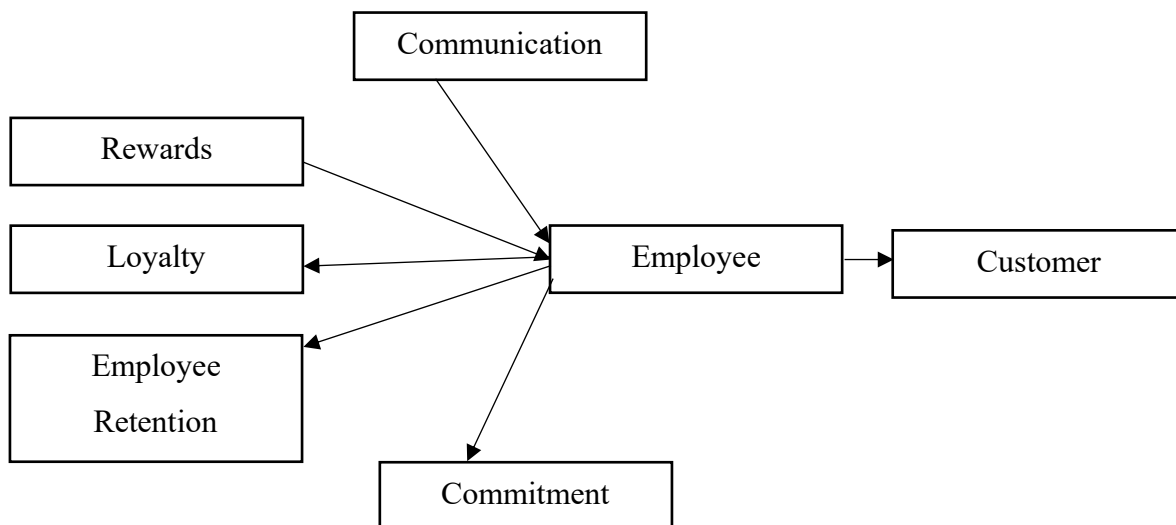


Figure 2. Influences of Employee Satisfaction, composed by the author based on (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alnaser, 2020).

Internal communication has a positive effect on employee satisfaction, which significantly affects internal integration, which in turn affects external integration. Managers should not only focus on employee satisfaction, but rather work on employee engagement as it contributes to improved satisfaction and integration both internally and externally (Jacobs, Yu, & Chavez, 2016). It has been found that employee satisfaction is also related to perceptions of top management's

communication style and related management activities (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alnaser, 2020). Good communication and feedback from management can significantly reduce the occurrence of various problems that can contribute to employee dissatisfaction (Ibrahim, Suharto, Zainurossalamia, & Samarinda, 2020). Involving employees in their work and actively involve them in making work-related decisions (Kang, et al., 2020), as well as the development of an appropriate reward system is the basis for successful teamwork (Phina, Arinze, Chidi, & Chukwuma, 2018).

The reward is the result of hard work driven by motivation to achieve a goal (Siswanto, Maulidiyah, & Masyhuri, 2021). Compensation or reward is indispensable for employee engagement, motivating the employee to achieve more and thus focus more on work and personal development (Anitha, 2014). Thus, can be said that work motivation is directly related to this reward (Siswanto, Maulidiyah, & Masyhuri, 2021). Motivating compensation includes a combination of salary, bonuses, other monetary and non-monetary benefits (Anitha, 2014). The reward can be monetary, which increases the direct satisfaction of employees, and non-monetary, which helps in recognizing employees (Waqas & Saleem, 2014).

Research has shown that recognition and rewards are important for employee engagement, making employees feel obligated to respond with higher levels of engagement (Anitha, 2014). Based on research, healthcare workers are strongly motivated by recognition, appreciation, and rewards, making them feel valued. Financial incentives are very important factor in increasing the motivation of healthcare workers. The salary and benefits offered by the organization are considered an important tool in meeting the basic needs of healthcare workers. They may feel demotivated if they perceive that they are not getting enough recognition or reward for their work (Afolabi, Fernando, & Bottiglieri, 2018). In addition, unfair or disproportionate pay may affect the relationship between employees and employer (Asaari, Desa, & Subramaniam, 2019).

Salary is certainly one factor that increases the motivation of demotivated employees and makes them happier to come to work. It is a very important aspect to show how important is the employee to the organization (Asaari, Desa, & Subramaniam, 2019). However, a salary increase alone is not enough to solve the already reduced motivation problem. Thus, organizations should also emphasize non-monetary motivational factors to motivate healthcare workers and increase career commitment (Afolabi, Fernando, & Bottiglieri, 2018).

Employees' perception of rewards play an important role in shaping employee loyalty. The literature review shows that the perception of reward fairness has a simultaneous effect on employee loyalty and reward satisfaction (Hareendrakumar, Subramoniam, & Hussain, 2020). Employee loyalty is important for every company, which ensures the employee's desire to continue working based on the company's vision and values. The loyalty of employees cannot be measured only by the time worked, but their commitment must also be evaluated (Darmawan, et al., 2020). Research has shown that interpersonal trust affects employee satisfaction, which in turn increases loyalty. Employee satisfaction in turn affects customers' understanding of the value of the service which in turn leads to customer loyalty and customer loyalty in turn affects the company's financial results (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alnaser, 2020). Based on various studies, it can be concluded that employee loyalty is the attitude of employees who are ready to support the achievement of the company goals through positive efforts and put the company's interest first. High employee loyalty guarantees trust, efficient work, and low employee turnover intentions (Darmawan, et al., 2020).

It can be said that one of the primary human resource goals for any organization is to retain competent employees, as turnover is costly (Lowe, 2012). Reducing employee turnover have a positive impact on organizational performance by minimizing operating costs and increasing profit (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alnaser, 2020). It is generally believed that the more engaged, committed or emotionally attached employees are (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019), the more likely they are to stay and the more they will contribute (Lowe, 2012). Therefore, it can be concluded that remaining both employees and customers is considered important for companies to achieve competitive advantage (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Alnaser, 2020).

Organizational commitment can be described as a belief on the goals and values of the organization (Ibrahim, Suharto, Zainurossalamia, & Samarinda, 2020), employee who feels individual and emotional bond with the company. Organizational committed employee associates himself with the goals of the organization (Mahmood Aziz, et al., 2021) and have a desire to make efforts for the benefit of the organization and maintain membership in the organization (Ibrahim, Suharto, Zainurossalamia, & Samarinda, 2020).

Motivated healthcare workers are the key to meeting the constant and changing demand for healthcare services. However, if healthcare professionals are demotivated, their performance deteriorates which in turn affects the quality of healthcare provided (Afolabi, Fernando, &

Bottiglieri, 2018). Dissatisfaction with the work of employees also affects the productivity and performance of the company. A high level of employee turnover as a negative impact on the company, leading to several expenses, such as recruiting new employees, training, paying overtime, etc. Quitting intentions are generally related to the employees' own wishes, which are influenced by organizational factors such as working conditions; personal factors such as motivation, satisfaction, or work pressure (Ibrahim, Suharto, Zainurossalamia, & Samarinda, 2020).

Healthcare facilities are inherently stressful places where employees are often exposed to stressful situations that can negatively impact their personal welfare and patient outcomes. Digitalization has led to high expectations for employees, making work more intense with an emphasis on speed, productivity, and planning (Huhtala, Geurts, Mauno, & Feldt, 2021).

There is a widespread opinion that the burnout of healthcare workers and the turnover of the workforce is related to the low engagement of employees (Willard-Grace, et al., 2019). Studies have shown that work stress and burnout not only have harmful consequences for the health of the employees themselves, but also have a negative impact on the quality of care provided to patients (Huhtala, Geurts, Mauno, & Feldt, 2021). Thus, can say that burnout is a huge problem among healthcare professionals and can negatively impact patient care, destabilize the workforce and increase turnover (Willard-Grace, et al., 2019).

Stressful situations can also represent positive challenges, allowing them to learn new skills that can lead to professional development and increase work motivation (Huhtala, Geurts, Mauno, & Feldt, 2021). Several studies also suggest that work-related stress can have a positive effect on organizational results, such as performance, job satisfaction, commitment, or the degree of innovation (Albort-Morant, Ariza-Montes, Leal-Rodríguez, & Giorgi, 2020).

The positive results, job satisfaction and commitment of the organization are also contributed by the employees who can be called as the reputation advocates. The “inner public” has never been so much outward sounding (Ferreira, 2019). Employee advocacy has been defined as “the promotion of and organization by its employees” or “employees' willingness to act as 'part-time marketers' of the organization to both potential customers and potential employees” (Thelen, 2020). Employees are transformed to be communicators with high reach, and they are considered one of the most reliable advocates, the main representatives and spokespeople of the brand's culture when talking about the company. Since communication with and between employees are

one of the main foundations of business, the need to build trust from inside out is more evident than before (Ferreira, 2019).

A corporate brand is defined as the visual, verbal, and behavioural appearance of an organization's business model. Brand advocate must be a person who verbally advocate, explain, lend credibility, or otherwise convey a brand message that can persuade the recipient of the information to have a positive view of the brand (Pekkala & Luoma-aho, 2017). A brand advocate is a dedicated employee who believes in the employer and its brand, and outwardly displays a true image of the organization's culture and values (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

The role of employees in shaping the company's image is extremely important, and therefore more and more attention is paid to internal management, through which external performance is promoted (Kim-Gianluca & Lovari, 2019). Employees are like spokespeople for the organization because they are the ones who work as service providers and communicate about their employer by recommending the organization to potential employees and customers (Gross, Ingerfurth, & Willems, 2021). What employees say about their organization can have a positive or negative impact on the company's image (Kim-Gianluca & Lovari, 2019). Especially in service-based companies, where in the eyes of the customer the employee is the brand of the company, who communicates with customers and is responsible for providing a positive and real brand experience (Smith, Jacobson, & Rudkowski, 2021).

With the growth of digital environment, organizations have increasingly started to use various media platforms as a new strategic tool for communicating with the public and straightening the company's image. The influence of employees as advocates of organization, who have in-depth knowledge and experience about the company, has been raised to an important position. Media platforms provide an opportunity for employees to act as brand ambassadors, interacting with thousands of people outside the organization and thereby influencing the company's image (Lee Y. &., 2020). While employee endorsements can be expressed on social media as well as face-to-face conversations, the emergence of communication tools and public forums has dramatically increased the pervasive influence of message shared by individuals (Thelen, 2020). However, the increase in the digital environment can also bring several threats to the company's reputation. Several studies show that the company's reputation is one of the most dominant factors in decision-making, which is why internet-based media plays an important role. Internet allows potential patients to evaluate and gather information about services based on other people's feedback and

reviews (Wang, Wu, Lei, Shen, & Feng, 2020). Today, an increasing number of patients decide to rely on the available assessments of doctors or clinics when choosing a treatment service, especially when it comes to something as important as health. In this situation, the company's reputation is threatened by those patients who are never satisfied or who do not accept real treatment options and decide to post online a negative opinion that a potential patient can read. However, it is difficult to evaluate medical services, as patients often have different expectations. Thus, healthcare professionals must accept the need to communicate with patients both face-to-face and online, as the reputation of healthcare organization may depend on it (Radu, Radu, Condurache, & Purcărea, 2018).

A company's reputation is their intangible asset that provides a long-term competitive advantage (Kircova & Esen, 2018). It is critical asset for organizations, especially when the actual quality of service is difficult to assess, e.g., in the context of hospitals (Gross, Ingerfurth, & Willems, 2021). The formation of a reputation and its creation takes a long time as it is the sum of past and present activities which in result attract investment and high qualified employees and more loyal customers (Kircova & Esen, 2018).

Employees and their referral intentions to other employees and patients are important in the reputation building process (Gross, Ingerfurth, & Willems, 2021). A brand's reputation is also created because of certain activities, for example in the case of offering the best quality products or services. The literature also talks about the connection between brand reputation and the integrity of the organization, in other words, the reputation of the company is the reaction of the stakeholders to the strong or weak activities of the organization. There the ideal reputation of the brand must follow the overall vision of the company to convey trust, quality, responsibility, and ethics. (Mahmood & Bashir, 2020). For medical institution a strong reputation is very important as it gives the company a professional image, thereby increasing the number of patients served and facilitating the recruitment of talents (Huang & Lai, 2021).

In conclusion, the more employees identify with the organization, the more they are intrinsically motivated (Du Preez, Bendixen, & Abratt, 2017) and more likely they are to speak positively about the company when they feel pride, commitment and engagement in the organization they work for (Lee Y. &., 2020).

The theoretical part covers an overview of the importance of building employer's brand and how it is combined with internal trust and external brand message. It has a direct impact on the hiring, retention and engagement of talent, as well as impact on candidates' application pipelines. A strong brand is likely to result in higher employee satisfaction, performance, and service quality. In addition, it provides an overview of the importance of employee engagement. People are the main asset of any company, playing an important role in shaping the company's image. Employees want to feel connected to the company, be proud to work there and be in sync with the company's values and thereby creating a healthy work environment. These findings serve as input for qualitative research. The following chapters focus on the research methodology and the outcome of the study.

2. METHODOLOGY

The second chapter of thesis is divided in two sub chapters, introducing the research design, sampling procedure and sample size, data collection and analysis methods and the results of the study.

2.1. Research design and sampling procedure

The structure of the research design can be considered as the plan of the research work, the structure of which holds together all the elements of the research project. Social scientists have defined research design as “A research design is the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure”. Research design provides a logical basis for data collection, processing and analysis (Akhtar, 2016).

The purpose of this work is to gain a deeper understanding of the reason why Estonian doctors and other healthcare workers work in several organizations and thereby being less engaged in a specific company. In order to get a better insight of their perceptions, the author decided to use a qualitative research method. A qualitative research method is based on research methods that examine a social or human problem. The researcher creates a complete picture, analyses words, provides details of the informants and conducts the study in a natural environment. Qualitative research is based on observation and interpretation of how people perceive different events, and it creates a snapshot of people’s perception in the natural environment (Khan, 2014).

The purpose of qualitative research sampling is to collect specific cases, events of activities that can clarify or deepen the researchers’ understanding of the circumstance under the study. Purposive sampling is a sampling procedure for qualitative research, using expert judgement to select cases. The aim is to gain in-depth understanding of specific case types rather than to generalize the result (Ishak & Abu Bakar, 2014).

As the aim of this thesis was to gather knowledge about healthcare workers motivation that increase their engagement and sense of belonging, the sample has been selected using the criteria below:

- Works in healthcare institution
- Works part-time and/or in several institution

In order to get a broader overview, Estonian healthcare workers from different national and/or private medical institutions were selected. The sample size was 11 healthcare professionals working for two or more employers. They were selected from different specialities and different levels.

The author's interest was to find out whether there are similarities in the perceptions and statements of employees working in the same field. To clarify what are the main motivators for working in several institutions and whether they are engaged within the companies.

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, which can be conducted non-randomly among people on a specific field, in this case medical professionals (Ishak & Abu Bakar, 2014). The list of participants can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2. Method and data analysis

In this research the author used semi-structured interviews to collect necessary data, which helps to understand the research topic more deeply. Semi-structured interviews are useful because they allow for the exploration of subjective perspectives and the gathering of in-depth accounts of people experiences. The interview schedule allows the researcher to address the agreed topic while allowing the respondent to answer on their own wording and discuss related issues and topics (Evans & Lewis, 2018). This data collection method has been chosen because the aim of the research is to gather knowledge about the motivation of healthcare workers, which would increase their engagement and sense of belonging. Valuable insights were collected from actual conversations with practitioners who were asked the same questions. Based on the interviewees' answers lie in their personal perceptions, a semi-structured interview gives the interviewer the opportunity to improvise follow-up questions and leaves the participants room for individual verbal expression (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

The interview consisted of 20 questions (Appendix 2), which were divided into three main categories: work in several institutions, engagement, and future orientation. Since the goal was to gather knowledge about the motivation and engagement of medical workers, the author followed the interview guide and used guiding open questions, which gave the opportunity to ask additional clarifying questions during the interview. 11 medical professionals from different fields agreed to participate in the study: nurses, midwives, a doctor, and family doctor.

Interviews were conducted in November 2022 via conference call in Microsoft Teams and mainly in face-to-face meetings. The interviews lasted about 48 minutes on average. The reason of the research was explained to the interview participants and permission was asked to record the interviews. To protect the interests of the interviewees, the abbreviation INT is used in the analysis part. For the transcription, the author used automatic speech recognition technology which is developed by the Laboratory of Phonetics and Speech Technology of the Institute of Cybernetics at TUT (Olev & Alumäe, 2022). Link to the interview transcriptions can be found in Appendix 3.

The method of data analysis of the thesis is content analysis. Content analysis is used to analyse written, verbal, or visual communication message. As a research method, it is a systematic and objective means of describing phenomena that allows testing theoretical questions to better understand the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Qualitative content analysis is appropriate method to analyse interviews with different personas and groups (Gläser-Zikuda, Hagenauer, & Stephan, 2020).

Qualitative content analysis makes it possible to focus on the main and important meaning of the text. The analysis allows considering what is hidden between the lines which means to encode the hints, intentions, and goals of the author of the text, as well as the various interpretation possibilities of several connections. Qualitative content analysis tries to get an overview of the studied text as whole, to see the complete pattern of structure of the text and/or the author's expressions of thought (Kalmus, Masso, & Linno, 2015).

Based on the goal of the master's thesis, it can be said that the qualitative research method is justified. Author focuses on the perceptions of the healthcare workers participating in the study and their motivation to be engaged. Conducting a qualitative study gives the participants the opportunity to make sense of their personal understandings and experiences.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following chapter of the thesis presents the result of the research, which is based on semi-structured interviews conducted by the author. 11 healthcare workers participated in the study, with whom the author met face-to-face or via online conference calls in Microsoft Teams.

Since the aim of this thesis is to understand the motivation of medical workers to work in multiple institutions and as a result, the employees' sense of engagement, the questions were asked according to the interview guide. The results of the interviews are presented in coded formation: INT1, INT2, INT3 etc. When analysing the interviews, the focus is on finding out the employees' motivation and consequently aspects of engagement and prospects.

The following section is divided into four subchapters: 3.1 identifies the main reason why healthcare workers work in several institutions at the same time and do they thereby feel part of both companies, 3.2 focuses on understanding how healthcare workers feel about the engagement and what are the different aspects that could increase employees motivation, 3.3 covers the future orientation, are they willing to work in just one institution and what would be the main decision drivers, 3.4 points out critical aspects that need more attention.

3.1 Work in several healthcare institutions

In order to obtain important knowledge about the work organization and motivation of healthcare workers in Estonia, the study identified the current work situation. The author realizes that a sample of 11 interviews may limit generalization, but since qualitative research accepts interpretation from an epistemological perspective, the author's aim is not to provide any claim, but to understand the motivation of medical professionals to work in multiple locations at the same time and whether and how they feel in these organizations.

All the participants in the survey work simultaneously in two or more medical institutions.

According to the Estonian Doctors' Association, there is no overview of how long a doctor's working days are. Especially since in many healthcare institutions not all working hours are reflected in official work schedules and in addition, specialists often work based on authorisation or contract of service agreement (Tomson, 2018).

As presented in Table 2, the workload of the interviewees varied depending on the profession, personal wishes, excessive sense of duty and financial aspect. The least workload was for the nurse in aesthetic medicine, who works an average of 80 working hours per month in two jobs. (INT7): "I came up with this idea myself, I got a dog so that I could not completely shut down my days. Now I think how people work five days a week. It is not normal (...) If we are in such profession, we must set an example."

Table 2. Profession and working hours of interviewees

Interviewee	Profession	Working hours (monthly average)
INT1	Midwife	180
INT2	Nurse	200
INT3	Family doctor	160
INT4	Nurse	180
INT5	Nurse	160
INT6	Nurse /Midwife	224
INT7	Nurse	80
INT8	Nurse /Midwife	320
INT9	Doctor	180
INT10	Nurse	180
INT11	Nurse	180

Source: Author's creation based on the analysis.

Unfortunately, it cannot be said that other specialists have such a good distribution of work time. One of the interviewees pointed out her usual work week which included three 24-hour shifts and a couple of 12-hour workdays. (INT2): "For me, the ambulance job has become a place where you can just work yourself to death. There is never an end of work. People get sick or they just don't show up for work. Everyone has two or three jobs."

The most extreme example is a young nurse who works full-time in a medical institution and part-time in ambulance. But since she is the responsible nurse in medical facility, she often must cover gaps in the schedule or deficiencies caused by an employee's illness. (INT8): "Because of my

position, I cannot express my wishes in the schedule, so I work when others cannot. In other words, I fill these holes and if someone gets sick and no one else comes to replace them, I come myself.”

The study revealed that the medical institutions where specialists work may not be located in the same city or even in the same country. In other words, in addition to working in several institutions, they often have to travel long distances to get to work. The interviewees do not see this as a problem and rather use it to take time off, listen to podcasts and enjoy nature. One of the interviewees chose to work between different cities because she enjoys the change, both in the environment and the people. In addition, she mentioned that although both clinics specialize in one area, they still have different directions and services. One has been working in England for over 8 years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic gave an impetus to return to home. (INT4): „What I like about England is that first of all, the salary is good, and I can travel because I make my own work schedule and that gives me the freedom, but then it was taken away. Thanks to that I came back.“ For today, the nurse has been traveling between the two countries for work for over 6 months.

Based on research, healthcare workers are most motivated by recognition and a decent salary for their work. Financial reward is a very important motivator that satisfies their basic needs (Afolabi, Fernando, & Bottiglieri, 2018). It is very important for healthcare workers, that the remuneration for the work is fair, proportionate and related to the result (Asaari, Desa, & Subramaniam, 2019). Based on the information obtained from the interviews, it can be said that the biggest motivator is indeed money. This is one of the main reasons why healthcare professionals work in two or three medical facilities. (INT2): “Mainly because there would be money left over from the salary for food. In addition to pay the bills, we all have home loans”. The interviewee said that if one employer would offer the same salary as working in several institutions, she would definitely choose only one job. While most of the interviewees mentioned money as the first motivator and that the income would be worthy for the job, the importance of the collective was also mentioned as the next motivator.

A very common combination is to do ambulance service in addition to the main job, as it is a quick side job. Healthcare workers are motivated to do extra work in ambulance by the remuneration offered. The interviews showed that there is always a shortage of workers and therefore healthcare workers can always earn extra money there. (INT2): “For me, this has become a workplace where you can just work yourself to death, if you want to. You never run out of work there.”

Unfortunately, the work there has already become relatively monotonous and no longer offers enough adrenaline and excitement. However, the interviewees admitted that what they experience and see at the work is something that an ordinary person cannot imagine. (INT10): “I had always lived with rose-coloured glasses, such a princess. I worked from eight to three and knew nothing about the life. I thought an ambulance would come and then everyone would survive. And suddenly I see this other side of life, where everything is not so nice and so good and there are very different people out there.”

Since many medical professionals work overtime, it can be concluded that the usual remuneration received is not competitive. (INT8): “A medic don’t get paid as usual. But yes, I don’t go there for the salary. I am going precisely for this experience and this team, because I have a very nice brigade to go there for.” From this it can be concluded that in addition to the salary, the communication and understanding between employees pays an important role.

Based on the literature review, it can be said that teamwork plays an important role in protecting employees emotionally (Mijakoski, et al., 2018). Well-functioning teamwork creates positive attitudes in employees, which gives the opportunity to coordinate each other’s work, make joint decisions and support each other (Ogbonnaya, Tillman, & Gonzalez, 2018). The interviews revealed that the longer one works in an organization, the more important the team spirit is. In addition, it turned out that more connection and the support of colleagues are felt in a smaller team. (INT4): “What keeps me here, is that there is a nice team, and it is very important to have one.”

Medical professionals also highly value the experience they get while working in several medical institutions. The experience gives them a larger set of skills and significantly increases their self-confidence. The interviewees stated that they do not want to lose their competence and that the experiences gained from different medical institutions are highly valued. (INT5): “These are very different jobs. One skill is useful in one job, other skill in another job. Here I have also been a nurse in different fields. All these experiences are enriching (...) Working in several places is good. You can see how things are done in one place and you take the knowledge that was given to you, and you can use it in the next place.” (INT6): “My baggage of experience is quite large, so just doing simple reception is not enough for me. I have much more experience and I am capable of much more than blood sampling and ear-flushing.” (INT1): “I can do so many different things (...) one institution is calm and the other offers a bit of excitement.” (INT5): “All these experiences are enriching (...) The work is quite unpredictable, and you have to know and do a lot.” (INT8): “I

like these challenges (...) I am motivated by the fact that I can keep knowledge, experience and my competence.” (INT9): “I like that I get experience and knowledge. That reassures my own nervous system that I know what I’m doing.” Medical professionals appreciate the experience working in different departments or areas, but also from the perspective of patients as clients differ between medical facilities. Based on the interviews, it seems that if one job is more relaxed then the other job is more stressful. Perhaps medical professionals are looking for the adrenaline, which comes with this profession. In addition, it can be said that the more the employees are motivated to gain knowledges and the more experience they have, the more competent the employees are to treat the patient and in addition it is also beneficial for the company.

The study revealed that healthcare workers feel more connected to the institutions where they work the most. Then they can feel the team spirit, which helps to create an even stronger bond between doctors and nurses. The size of the team also helps to create a sense of belonging. The smaller the team, the greater bond between the employees. In the healthcare sector, the small size of the team helps employees to communicate better with each other, to be more aware of what is going on and to solve problems before they arise. In addition, smaller teams stick together, support each other, and make work more efficient. (INT2): “We’re such a small department. We are all there for each other and support each other”. One interviewee pointed out that in the case of a large company, it feels like they just get the job done and that’s the story. A larger team can also make them feel forgotten or the fear of missing out.

The so-called extra work is treated rather getting the job done. This may be because part-time workers are not being on the site as much time and therefore not being able to feel a sense of belonging. The second job is taken as a “check mark” because they are more separated from the system and information about what others are doing and what is happening in the project does not reach them. Therefor there are no sense of team spirit. In addition, part-time healthcare workers do not feel that the employer invests in them. (INT10): “We’re working there for an idea. Actually, I work there for the idea, everyone else work there for the money. And because the money is small and there are not so many employees, they work a lot. Due to the overwork all kind of psychoses and stress are developed. Thus, the employee’s welfare is not invested much.” This is largely due to working under different contracts, such as authorization agreement. Vacation days and other benefits are calculated in proportion to the workload. According to the interviewees, this is a failed approach. In addition, interviewees agreed that they had made a conscious choice to work part-time without having all the benefits.

However, some companies have realized that keeping good employees and consistently motivating them is a very important part of personnel management. This has also been understood by healthcare institutions, which offer different benefits to their employees. Through that they try to keep their employees and attract new ones. Fortunately, it can be stated that although the participants in the study work part-time in the institutions, the benefits also apply to them, often with some concessions. (INT1): “There are some differences. If you’re full-time, you get seven extra days off, if you work less than you get less.” (INT6): “We get all the holidays, all the extra bonuses but there is still a difference. A thousand euros for full-time and five hundred for part-time. But it is fair.”

The study shows that working in multiple locations does not always mean work overload, but it is still largely the case. The main reason for working in several institutions are the salary, diversity, experience, and people or the collective. Although part-time workers do not feel equally engaged in all the medical institutions they work for, they still get some of the benefits offered by the company.

3.2 Work engagement

Work engagement has been interpreted as a positive and satisfying state of mind characterized by commitment. Commitment refers to being engaged to work (Saks, 2022). The employees’ positive attitude towards their work ensures the strategic success and competitiveness of medical institutions. To achieve this, it is important for managers to know their employees’ attitudes towards work engagement and what people think and feel about their work (Huber & Schubert, 2019).

The interviewees agreed that the way the company looks on the outside is rather important. The image of the organization is an important part of recruiting employees, to appear attractive and to attract specialists to work and also in retaining existing employees. The reputation of a healthcare facility largely depends on how and what messages the employees pass on and how satisfied the patients are with the services they receive. I believe that the reputation of the healthcare professionals plays an important role in the development of the reputation of the medical institution and the increase of patient loyalty. The interviewees recognized that the reputation of the company

is very important. They understand that they, together with other colleagues, create the image of the company and if they screw up something bad, they must look in the mirror. They recognized that how they as employees are treated and how they are taken care of is also of decisive importance. In addition, one interviewee pointed out that engagement and mutual trust are important to her. She may come up with new suggestions and ideas to try that would benefit patients as well. The interviewees constantly keep themselves informed of what is being said publicly about their employer and it was acknowledged that in the meantime media coverage can cause embarrassment and then they would rather not mention where they work for. (INT6): “Most of the time I still speak with pride about where I work, because it is still prestigious institution”. The interviewee said that she would not completely terminate the employment relationship if the reputation dropped a little, but if things really get bad, she would probably terminate.

Today more and more patients decide on available assessments when choosing a treatment service. The reputation of the company and doctors are therefore threatened by those patients who are never satisfied and decide to publish it online (Radu, Radu, Condurache, & Purcărea, 2018). The interviews revealed that medical professionals are aware that negative feedback can come from anywhere and unpredictably. However, they understand that what is reported in the media may not be as it is claimed. (INT8): “It was quite a shame when the last Pealtnägija was on TV (...) People are burnt out in ambulance and they only go there to get their salary of a sense of duty.” Since reputation is important for healthcare workers, in the light of negative coverage, they rather not say publicly where they work. Yet, they are proud when they receive natural or positive coverage. The interviewees admitted that in case of positive coverage they feel proud of their work. They are grateful for the people who surround them and for a workplace where they feel good.

One interviewee pointed out that the culture of the company and how the employee feel there is extremely important. From the medical professionals’ point of view, a safe and pleasant working environment is important as the greater the workload the more stressful it is. (INT10): “We actually need some kind of footholds that we can lean on. Because without that we can’t make it. There must be some kind of anchor. Some kind of place that we come to and feel safe. Since we are there from eight to twelve, twenty-four hours, it must be the place where you feel safe and where you feel good to be.”

If we draw parallels from the inputs obtained from the interviews, we can again state that compared to Finland Estonia still has a long way to go before achieving real employee engagement and

satisfaction. It comes out precisely when there is an opportunity to compare one person who works in two companies but in different countries. One interviewee who works also in Finland pointed out that there is prestigious to work in medicine. They are automatically considered as good people and treated like saints. There can healthcare workers feel part of the team and no one is left out. (INT10): „ They never say „you“, they always says „we“. „We“, „we do“, „we are told to.“ In comparison with Estonia, employees are treated as individuals, where everyone must report and take responsibility for themselves. (INT10): “If you say that you are an ambulance nurse in Estonia, you are immediately asked that how do you manage with this salary (...) At the moment, I don’t say that I work in the ambulance because the institution has such a bad reputation.“

Recognition and rewards are important for employee engagement, making employees feel obligated to respond with higher levels of engagement (Anitha, 2014). Based on the research, it can be said that although recognition is important for medical professionals, it is rather rarely received. One interviewee pointed out that in Finland recognition and appreciation of employees are quite different. They understand that all employees, regardless of their origin, are valuable to them. Young medical professionals are retained and recognized because it is understood that they will benefit the organization as they will work for at least several more decades. (INT10): “This is what happens with our doctors, that here we produce them, we train them, but they are kept in Finland.” In contrast to Finland, the feedback in Estonia is more about what is bad or needs improvement than about what is good. Individual recognition is rarely given, it is rather given to each other within team or in a small group. The interviewees agreed that the greatest recognition is when colleagues praise and acknowledge with kind words. One interviewee admitted that although her direct manager sometimes shares kind words, she does not feel recognized in either company. They just wish to hear more of these kind words.

Recognition from patients is also important, creating a good and warm feeling in healthcare professionals. Especially when they are recommended. (INT9): “I was told that I am their Facebook doctor in Finland. That so many people have visited me, and they all recommend me.” The interviewed doctor acknowledged that it is flattering when one of the patients is satisfied with the reception and recommends her to a friend.

Another way of recognition is a financial bonus. Based on the literature review, the financial incentive is important component in increasing the motivation of healthcare workers (Afolabi, Fernando, & Bottiglieri, 2018). The interviews revealed that when a financial bonus is distributed,

all employees generally receive it. A monetary bonus can stimulate and motivate employee once, but it is certainly not a long-term and sustainable for both the employee and the employer.

(INT8): “When there was Covid-19, a bonus was paid which motivated a bit, it was a bit nicer.”

However, healthcare workers consider the best recognition to be continuous salary increase, which unfortunately only a few employers offer.

The company’s competitive advantage depends on the skills and knowledges of the employees. The organization must ensure the continues development of employee’s knowledge and skills, as employees are the assets of the organization, through which the success of the company depends. Training and development opportunities ensure better performance and effectiveness of employees (Karim, Choudhury, & Latif, 2019). The interviews revealed that healthcare institutions also contribute to the success of their employees through training.

Medical workers are required to complete sixty hours of professional training per year. However, all other additional trainings must be sought by the employee himself and the company don’t always pay for it. (INT9): “Actually, the institutions are passive. If you want to develop, the initiative should come from you. Institution provides training days but often the company doesn’t pay for it. It is usually paid by the company you agreed with. Or if you pay it yourself, then the institution can compensate you € 400 a year.” (INT3): “I am allowed to take quite a lot of different trainings. I can always suggest in which field and where I want to develop myself.” (INT4): “In England invest more in you (...) they are ready to pay for your master’s studies and you can take more training than required.” However, outside from Estonia the story is completely different. (INT10): “There is a training site in Finland with all kinds of courses. You can listen the courses in your free time, at the end take a test and get a diploma. And the more diplomas you have, the higher the salary is.”

The company’s contribution to the success of the employees is not only through training. An excellent example is from Finland, where the employer ensures the welfare of the employees, through which the employees feel more successful. (INT10): “You rest and come to work fresher. You are already a better nurse. When I leave work in Helsinki, I close the door and that’s it. I am not at work anymore.” The work of healthcare professionals is intense, stressful and requires a lot of commitment, so it is very important for them to have their time to recover and rest. This has an important effect on the satisfaction for employees and patients as a rested employee performs more enthusiastically and better.

For healthcare workers it is important to discuss matters related to the treatment of patients, to ask advice from other specialists and to find the best possible solution together. (INT9): „Every morning we have a discussion of all the patient’s illnesses, where it is possible to solve these problems. You can discuss the problems with everyone without feeling bad that you didn’t know it yourself. The process of sharing and supporting in safe environment is that you dare to throw a stupid question on the table.“ (INT5): „We have an hour-long meeting once a week with lunch. At the same time the institution is closed and everyone is at the table to discuss and have lunch together.“ (INT11): „Before the start of the working day, we gathered in the in charge nurse room to have a small meeting or so-called stand-up for five to ten minutes. We just talked about our day and discussed concerns. Just before the working day because maybe the working day is so busy that you didn’t see your colleagues.“ The discussion of patient’s health issues is favourable desire of healthcare professionals to do their job better and ensure better treatment for the patient. By discussing with other colleagues, there is a greater chance of finding a solution through the experience. Through a joint discussion, all employees have the opportunity to speak, and this increases engagement and a sense of team.

While medical professionals are caring for those who need medical help, their own welfare should not be forgotten. As can be seen from the literature review, the management of healthcare organizations has focused more on patients, neglecting the relationships with their own internal employees (Huang & Lai, 2018). The employer should be very concerned if the employee admits that she is no longer motivated by anything, does not want to be there, and is fed up with work. (INT2): “It feels like I am available to the crowd to wipe their ass. You are just so available, and people use you, spit on you, throw things at you, attack you, hit you, push you... whatever. That you are like just some kind of foot mat for everyone. And the ambulance is used just to drive a free taxi across the city. And that makes me mean (...) Before I had a sense of mission, really. I really liked it, but this workload is so tiring. Years ago, we made twenty plus invitations a day, it seemed like we were heroes, but today it is normal. That’s how it disappears, and the workload is so brutal. This salary is ungratefully crap with this workload.” (INT5): “Currently everyone has this kind of burnout syndrome, a very strong one. Little things like a raise, a bonus, days off, get-togethers, all those things keep you engaged.”

Although there are companies that seem to care about the employee’s welfare one interview revealed deficiencies that would definitely need improvement because this directly affects the

employee's mental welfare and ability to work. (INT8): „The ambulance provides psychological help to the workers, even though it's like part of the job. Actually, it is good that this possibility exists, but it is rather difficult to get there. In order to see a psychologist, you have to justify it to your direct manager. But who wants to tell their manager why they need to see a psychologist? And these sessions are only half an hour long. Those who have visited a psychologist have given feedback that they wouldn't go again.“ That shows that although the employer wants to contribute to the employee's welfare, this solution has not been thought through and does not help the employee in this form.

It can be concluded that the company's reputation is important to healthcare professionals. If the external image is positive, then they are also positively tuned into the company. However, it may change if the external image should become negative. Health professionals also feel the need to be engaged. This is reflected by asking employees opinion, considering suggestions and from the joint events and get-togethers. Teamwork and cooperation are also important which gives the healthcare professional confidence and a better understanding of the treatment for their patients.

3.3 Motivators

There are various tools used to motivate employees, which increase their satisfaction either in short or long term. We might think that employers know what their employees want, but the interviews show that even the most basic motivators have been forgotten. The interviewees recognized that the company must value its employees. If they want to keep the quality, if they want to be a respectable player in the market, they must keep their employees. They want their work to carry value without someone telling them what the company's mission and vision are. In addition, the interviewees pointed out that they wish to have been heard or that they have been listen to. And not just heard but understood. They can understand if the other person listens with a blank look, without actually hearing. Or really listens and seems to understand. They would like someone to be interested in how they are doing. (INT5): „I would like the management to be more in touch with employees, to listen more their concerns or discuss things. We are all working towards a common goal, so I think it is crucial.“ One interviewee said that the ideal workplace would be the one where everyone has one goal, one target, from top to bottom. To do so, the company needs to have a strong leader who says what they need. (INT5): “A signal should come from above that why are you needed, why they need my profession. “

Another interviewee mentioned the possibility of visiting a psychologist, which indicates to its importance. (INT1): „I would like the possibility of seeing a psychologist. In those medical facilities where there are more difficult cases, someone to support the spiritual side. And also, that the manager would ask how you are, how you really are. That I can say in the morning that everything is fine, but how is it really going? Just to take the moment to ask. “

Again, when drawing a parallel with Finland, then there is clear understanding that the employee must believe in the company's activities and vision. (INT10): „In Finland, they are really moving in the direction that if there is some kind of deviation, they are brought back or if a person has some kind of problem that for some reason they think totally differently, the conversation is held. Everyone in the company should be on the same mind, otherwise they move to different directions or stand still. Thus it is implied that it might be time to change job.“ I think that first of all it should be understood what is the reason for the disagreement and whether it has arisen out of emotion. If a person values and beliefs match the company's, it is much easier to motivate them back.

The survey revealed that due to the heavy workload, healthcare workers currently do not plan to increase their working hours, but they do not deny doing so in the future. (INT10): „There is no need to increase the workload. Well, I can do an extra shift in Finland but not in Estonia. It wouldn't pay off here.“ (INT11): „Not at the moment. At the moment I feel that I have a very good balance and I like it. Maybe sometime in the future when I want more stable life, when I have kids and so on. But at the moment, I really like the way my life is.“ (INT8): „I try to find as much free time as possible, wherever possible. And I try to fight against work, but work still finds me all the time, so I try to push it away (...) At the same time, knowing myself, I think that working in only one company probably won't last long, because I get bored, and I want different challenges. I like to do several things at once in a way that does not create a routine. Working in multiple places is already in the blood. Different companies, different people, different opportunities, things to do.“

However, different factors were brought out that would make them decide to work in one company and thereby increase their workload in one place. One participant in the study had already made the decision and will continue to work in only one institution in the near future. (INT1): „I wanted to help and be there for support. I've worked with these people for a long time and I understand that actually the whole department there is very tired and if there is more over hours... but now I understand that the problem always stays, so I feel that I can't stay there longer (...) This decision did not come very easily, because then you have worked in one place for seven years, it is difficult

to make the decision. The sense of security and comfort, but I started to feel too comfortable and the job didn't offer me any tension anymore. “

The driver for making the decision was mostly cited as a higher salary, which would make the decision much easier. The interviews revealed that if the salary were better when working in one institution, the employees would also be more motivated and thus could spend more time at home with their loved ones and not have to worry about how the bills would be paid. Another interviewee stated that her decision would be easy, because if the ambulance project were to end or if they had to reduce her salary, she would stay in her main job which is the family practice. In addition, it was pointed out that if one institution would offer the opportunity to work more hours, the salary would be much better and thus one would agree to work in only one institution. (INT6): „Really, if they would offer such salary that the amount would be so big that I wouldn't get bored.“ (INT9): „The salary number would certainly help to decide“. The interviewee pointed that if she continues to work like this, the fatigue will come and that all this is too much. Thus, it can be said that the salary of healthcare workers is the main reason why they work in several institutions. If one facility offered a higher fee, the decision would be much easier to make. Healthcare professionals who work part-time abroad did not feel financial pressure, because there the workload corresponds to the salary, and they come to Estonia to keep their finger on the pulse. (INT10): „I come here to see my parents and at the same time I can keep my finger on the pulse in ambulance.“

One interviewee stated that it wouldn't matter how many medical institutions she worked at, she emphasized that work and some kind of freedom is important to her. (INT7): „It would be one company if I could have all my professional needs met in one place (...) I would rather work in one clinic, which does not restrict me, than I would work in two where I am somehow restricted (...) And actually a functioning collective as well.“

Thus, it can be said that healthcare professions are currently working according to their abilities and have no plans for increase their workload. However, they are willing to consider it in one institution, but sufficient motivators are needed to make such decisions, which in mainly the salary. In their daily work, healthcare workers feel that they are not being heard. It is often forgotten that the simplest and most basic satisfaction booster is listening and being heard by employees.

3.4 Aspects that need more attention

To conclude, the work of a medical professional is very hard, both physically and emotionally. Since the workload is high and work is done in several locations, the employees tend not to feel that they are part of the team. Therefore, attention needs to be paid in listening to employees, engaging, and creating a sense of belonging.

It was highlighted that the cause of concern may be that the structure of the organization is outdated and here is no need to make changes if everything is working. (INT9): “The structure is so old, there is already a path, everything is working, everything functions.” However, management should start with listening and understanding their employees. Listening to the other party, exchanging opinions, and understanding each other is important in managing relationships. Only through listening is possible to create mutually beneficial relationships. Listening makes employees feel taken seriously and cared for (Qin & Men, 2021). If the work-related relationships are good, a better sense of team is created and if the employees feel that their opinion counts and is taken care of, it will increase the employee’s motivation.

In addition, an important aspect is to review whether and how the healthcare worker’s welfare is contributed to. As mentioned before, the work of medical profession is stressful and emotionally difficult. The interviewees agreed that overwork can lead to errors in patient care and vacation is needed from time to time to eliminate these errors. Overwork and tensions create emotions that can be transferred to patients. (INT10): “In Finland, if someone yells at a patient, they are sent to vacation and to see a psychologist. It shows that you are tired, and you are shouting for someone to help you.” This shows that the employer cares about their employees, valuing their welfare, through which they can provide better care to patients. Medical professionals who experience a greater sense of welfare in the workplace are more likely to be more persistent, persevere longer and exhibit positive behaviours (Adams, Chamberlain, & Giles, 2019). Based on the literature review, the evidence shows that organizations that prioritize employee welfare and management deliver higher quality of patient care, have higher patient satisfaction and are better able to retain their employees (West & Coia, 2019).

To conclude the welfare and engagement of healthcare workers is the prior. When employees’ values are same as companies, they are rested and they are listened to, their motivation to work

and ensure better quality is higher. The more positively the medical profession is attuned to work, the better the patient's feedback and satisfaction, which in turn benefits the company.

CONCLUSION

Healthcare is a labour-intensive sector where the main component is labour. The shortage of healthcare workers has caused excessive workload for existing workers, thereby endangering the quality of the healthcare system. Estonian doctors and nurses often work in several medical institutions which is why they don't feel a sense of engagement and belonging on both organizations.

The purpose of this work was to gain a deeper understanding of the reason why Estonian doctors and other healthcare workers work in several organizations and thereby being less engaged in a specific company.

Based on the research objective and to get a better overview, the author set the following research questions:

1. Why health service providers work part-time in several institutions at the same time?
2. How could they feel more involved and engaged in each of the organizations?
3. What would motivate them to increase their part-time workload?

To start, the author explored the concept of employer branding and employee engagement, including employee satisfaction and motivation based on the latest empirical studies and research. Based on the theory and findings, the main factors of engagement and motivation were defined. These findings were the input for the preparation of the qualitative research. The author used semi-structured interviews to collect necessary data, which helped to get in-depth information about the topic. 11 medical professionals agreed to participate in the research: nurses, midwives, doctors, and family doctor. Interviews were conducted mainly in face-to-face meetings and one via video call in Microsoft Teams, during the period of 3rd of November to 16th November 2022. Interviews lasted on average around 48 minutes. The author analysed the answers received using a qualitative content analysis method.

What we have learned from the survey is that working in multiple healthcare facilities doesn't always mean a lot of overtime, although most of the time it is. The main reason why healthcare professionals work in two locations in parallel is related to the desire to receive a higher salary. In addition to improve the quality of life, the desire to gain experience in different departments and change, so that routine or boredom does not arise, was highlighted. The study also revealed that when working in several organizations, the working hours are longer than usual, which is why healthcare workers have less time to rest. This in turn can cause errors in the treatment of patients. Making mistakes on patient treatment is unacceptable.

Consequently, the author's proposal is to review the remuneration of medical personnel. The salary of medical professionals should be tied to the average salary, which would guarantee them a consistent salary increase. Today, only the privileged people have such an opportunity, but we must remember the importance of healthcare workers in all our lives. In addition, the author recommends reviewing the employment contract form for healthcare workers. Working for several employers, an employment contract is often concluded which does not set a limit on working hours and as a result, the employer cannot pay a higher wage for overtime.

A combination of working in a public hospital and a private practice or one of the and an ambulance is very common among healthcare workers. The ambulance is mainly used to make money, as there is always a shortage of staff and extra help is needed. Working in an emergency room should not only be for the purpose of earning extra money. Thus, the number of working hours should be regulated. The working hours of the primary organization could be taken as a basis and based on this, the opportunity to work a certain number of additional hours should be offered. Such an approach will certainly cause a shortage of employees in ambulance, but perhaps it should be reviewed what is happening in the organization and what is the reason why healthcare workers don't want to work there full time.

The study revealed that company's reputation is important to all survey participants, as they create it themselves together with their co-workers. However, they admitted that if the image of the company is negative, they prefer not to mention where they work, and in case of a very bad reputation, they are even ready to change job. It was pointed out that the workplace should be a place where you want to go, where you feel good and safe.

Based on the study, it can be said that healthcare workers do not feel that they are involved in companies. They are not aware of what is happening in the company and the information reaches them rather later. One interviewee admitted that in the meantime she has the feeling that she is completely forgotten, and another admitted that she does not have a contact with other employees as she does her part of the job and leaves. Unfortunately, this is the downside of part-time work, that they are not in the middle of important information.

Author's proposal is to increase the commitment of the medical professionals through the information movement in organization. The information must reach those who work part-time and are not always present. The messages should be specific and based on the company's strategy, not just a letter that creates too much noise in the mailbox and thus loses interest in reading. Also, there should be access to internal channels, where up-to-date information is constantly added. Author's suggestion would be to increase engagement through joint events, which was also mentioned by the interviewees. Joint events help people get to know each other, which in turn helps create a stronger sense of team.

We learned that although receiving recognition is very important for medical professionals, it is rarely given. Though they would rather expect financial bonuses, the verbal recognition would be nice to hear, as well as from patients. Communication with other professionals is important part of the job to ensure better treatment and welfare of patients. Unfortunately, their own welfare is often left behind. Due to their stressful work the rest time is very important to avoid mistakes in patient treatment and burnout at work.

Author's proposal is to review the ratio of work and rest time. Medical professions should take rest breaks during working hours and there should be enough time between two working days to rest properly. This should also be considered when working for several employers. Fatigue due to the workload and the difficult nature of the work affects the mental health of employees. Author thinks it is extremely important to ensure that all medical professionals could visit a psychologist or other support person who would help the workers mentally and listen to them. This person should rather be outside the organization, so that employees dare to open more without fear of being judged.

Based on what is stated above, the author considers that the research questions are answered, and the aim of the thesis fulfilled. Based on this work, we have a greater understanding of the

motivation of medical workers to work in parallel in several medical institutions, how they feel in these institutions and which aspects would increase their motivation. In addition, critical points that require more attention has been highlighted. For further research it would be interesting to examine the perspective of employers, how they feel when their employees are working in multiple locations, whether and what are they willing to do or change to increase employee engagement and motivation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Table of interviewed medical professionals

Interviewee	Profession	Number of companies	Location	Working hours (monthly average)	Method	Date	Duration (min)
INT1	Midwife	2	Tallinn	180	F2F	03.11.2022	49
INT2	Nurse	2	Tallinn	200	F2F	04.11.2022	53
INT3	Family doctor	2	Tallinn	160	F2F	05.11.2022	38
INT4	Nurse	2	Tallinn / UK	180	F2F	07.11.2022	27
INT5	Nurse	3	Tallinn	160	F2F	08.11.2022	49
INT6	Nurse /Midwife	2	Tallinn / Viljandi	224	F2F	10.11.2022	41
INT7	Nurse	2	Tallinn / Tartu	80	F2F	10.11.2022	61
INT8	Nurse /Midwife	2	Tallinn	320	F2F	11.11.2022	46
INT9	Doctor	3	Tallinn / Pärnu	180	F2F	14.11.2022	62
INT10	Nurse	3	Tallinn / Helsinki	180	F2F	16.11.2022	58
INT11	Nurse	2	Tallinn / Tartu	180	Teams	16.11.2022	40

Appendix 2. Table of interview structure and questions

No	Themes
INTRODUCTION	
	Purpose of the interview and reminder of duration time (up to 45 min)
	Permission to record the interview
	Permission to use the name of interviewee
I	WORK IN SEVERAL INSTITUTIONS
1.	How does your work week look like?
2.	Why do you work part-time and/or in several medical institutions?
3.	Do you feel that the company's has invested on your success?
4.	Do you feel that you're recognized for the work that you do? How?
5.	Do you feel that your're and your work is valued?
II	ENGAGEMENT
6.	Do you feel engaged to the companies you work for?
7.	How do you feel about your work in this company (do you feel proud working here)?
8.	How do you feel about the company's reputatuon? Would you reccoment it to your freinds as an employer?
9.	What motivates you to work?
10.	What do you think, does the company's organizational culture foster enjoyable and supportive place to work?
11.	How do you feel about your current benefits in here?
12.	Do you feel inspired about the company's vision and values?
II	FUTURE ORIENTATION
13.	How do you feel about working here in a year or two?
14.	What do you think, does your work challenge you and support your development?
15.	Do you feel that you have all the tools needed to maximize your potential here?
16.	Have you had recently thought about increasing your workload?
17.	How could the company help you to improve your engagement at work?
18.	Would you consider working in just one (this) organization?
19.	What would be the decision making driver?
20.	If you could change just one thing about your job/workplace, what would it be?

Appendix 3. Coding frame based on semi-structured interviews

Link to the Coding frame file:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13TH_2U0J1wtCkgLFZOEIVxjU3tkMT52?usp=share_link

Link to interview recordings:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kb49OLgpzoHhYwgrMheiAPVlaWtPFEOF?usp=sharing>

Link to the transcribed interviews:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11Ows02emmyFQfuPA1lpYOU1Dh1EPjWUn?usp=sharing>

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