



Understanding Nurse Job Crafting Through Work Orientations

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Introduction

Same Pressures, Different Responses

- **Nurse retention** is still a **major** issue in Sweden and globally (WHO, 2025)
- Common explanations: workload, leadership, pay (e.g., Nei, Snyder, & Litwiler, 2015)
- ***Survey data identifies dissatisfaction, but not always what underlies it.***
 - Same issue (e.g., workload) → different meanings, different responses.
 - This suggests that what matters is not only the conditions themselves, but how they interpret them and how those interpretations are acted upon.
 - We need to explore how nurses relate to their work, what they value, and how they respond when those values are threatened.

Aim & RQ

- To understand how **work orientations** shape nurses' **job crafting**, thereby informing strategies to **improve** their **well-being** and **retention**.
 - *Theoretical lenses: Work orientations (Bella et al., 1985; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) & Job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).*
- **Research question:** *How do work orientations shape the way nurses experience and engage with their work through job crafting?*

Empirical Approach

Qualitative, multimethod case study over 1,5 years



Qualitative

53 Interviews, Observations, Audio diaries



23 nurses

4 groups from similar wards



Two Public Hospitals
Sweden



Thematic →
narrative analysis.
Developed “mini cases”

Empirical Approach

3 Distinct Work Orientations Emerged from the Data:

1. The Patient-Oriented
2. The Integrated Team-Self
3. The Self-Oriented

RESULTS

Orientation	What They Value	How They Craft
Patient-Oriented	Meaningful patient care	Carve out patient time, derive meaning from patients.
Integrated Team-Self	Team Belonging, Recognition, Growth	Find meaning from colleagues & recognition, add tasks for growth.
Self-Oriented	Autonomy & Control	Optimize schedules, protect boundaries, efficiency.

Quotes

“Seeing when I’ve made a difference is certainly that feeling. It’s absolutely the best. When you see that the patient is happy when I come, when it’s me specifically. [...]” (Patient-oriented nurse)

“It’s definitely the colleagues first and foremost because that’s what I’ve felt when it’s tough at work. It’s what makes you not want to quit.” (Integrated team-self nurse)

Consequences

Same conditions, different frustrations

Orientation	Frustration	How they craft
Patient-oriented	When care quality is compromised—too little time, too many patients, not enough resources.	Prioritize patient contact, take on additional tasks, focus on small positive moments.
Integrated team-self	When teamwork breaks down or recognition is lacking	Compensate for faltering team dynamics, reframe challenges, lean on colleagues for support.
Self-oriented	When autonomy is limited or work no longer supports personal goals	Focus on maintaining control, such as choosing shifts.

Quotes

“Yesterday, I met with a patient for only five minutes the entire day. Then I go home feeling that I haven’t done a good job. [...]” (Patient-oriented nurse)

“Why should one work for 35,000 when you can do the same job and earn 65,000? [...] A lot of changes could be made by raising wages.” (Self-oriented)

Why this matters

Shared pressures (like understaffing) **trigger distinct frustrations** and **crafting strategies** based on a nurse's work orientation:

- a threat to patient care (Patient-Oriented)
- a breakdown of teamwork (Team-Self)
- a loss of control & autonomy (Self-Oriented)

Structural improvements are vital

But their impact may depend on how they align with what different nurses value.

- *"Better leadership" may not fix what a nurse sees as the core problem, like lack of time for patients, broken teamwork, or lost autonomy.*

Key Levers for Retention

- Complement structural improvements with strategies that account for different work orientations.
- Support nurses in crafting roles that reflect what they value and find meaningful.

A cluster of colorful geometric shapes, including triangles and polygons in shades of pink, teal, and blue, positioned above the "THANK YOU" text.

THANK YOU



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Taking action to
improve health for all



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