

# STAFF STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT - OBSERVATIONS OF FIRST-LINE MANAGERS (FLMs)

## INTERVIEWES with managers and staff

"The open door"  
"Getting an overview"

**The aim** was to study how first-line managers act to make structural empowerment accessible for nursing staff. Furthermore to relate these observations to the manager's and their nursing staff's descriptions regarding staff's access to empowering structures.

"Arranging fika"  
"Taking a stand for"

### BACKGROUND

Work-related complaints from the nursing workforce.

Shortage and retention of nurses.

Positive workplace outcomes has been seen in relation to staff's access to structural empowerment.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In Kanter's organizational theory (1993) of structural empowerment the role of management is to provide employees with essential structures that support them to be empowered and strengthened in their ability to carry out their work in a meaningful way.

"It's one thing to say that you should be involved, influence and develop your work and your unit, but if there's never time set aside for it, it won't work. But here we get the time."

150 randomized  
Acute hospital  
units, Sweden

331 randomized nursing  
staff answered an  
instrument measuring  
access to structural  
empowerment (CWEQ-II)

### Focused Ethnographical approach

#### Criterion sampling

Units with the highest perceived access to structural empowerment, >50% response rate

#### Observations

80h following 5 FLMs

#### Interviews

with the 5 FLMs and  
13 of their nursing staff

### METHOD

**Design:** Qualitative descriptive design with a focused ethnographical approach.

**Sample and setting:** Criterion sampling, 5 FLMs and 13 members of staff at medical and surgical units at acute hospitals in Sweden with the highest ratings of staff's access to structural empowerment (CWEQ-II)

**Data collection:** observations and interviews during fall and winter of 2017.

#### Participant Observations

- 80 hours of observations, following the FLMs during their workday
- Participant as observer, taking field notes
- Reflexive discussions after the observations led to questions added in the interview guide

#### Interviews

- Face-to-face interviews with the five FLM's
- Interviews with staff, face-to-face n=11, telephone n = 2
- Semi-structured, questions concerning what had been observed and questions inspired by Kanter's theory of empowerment

#### Data Analysis

- A directed content analysis informed by Kanter's theory. Data from both the observations, in the form of field notes, and the interviews were read through several times. Meaning units relating to the aim were identified and coded. The codes were deductively sorted into categories based on Kanter's theory of structural empowerment.

### FINDINGS

FLMs intentionally worked to enable staff access to empowering structures.

FLM's activities and strategies overlapped each other.

An unanimity (FLMs and staff) regarding the importance of staffs' access to empowering structures.

Empowering structures in line with Kanter's theory.

### IMPLICATIONS

- recognize and demonstrate the importance of giving staff access to empowering structures
- support FLM's presence and availability to their staff.

"You feel that she's here with us. Managers of today are so occupied and can be hard to reach, but she, she's for us!"

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