

Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

Structural Empowerment Impacts Nurse Educators Work Environment and Professional Quality of Life

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Purpose:

This aim of this study was to investigate nurse educators' perception of structural empowerment (SE) and determine if there is a relationship to their professional quality of life (ProQoL). A nurse educators' sense of SE is important because of its impact on the academic setting, the work environment, nurse educators themselves, nursing students, the educational process and the nursing profession (Arslan & Kocaman, 2019). Kanter's SE theory (1993) guided this research. Kanter (1993) posited that SE has two main structures, the structure of opportunity and the structure of power. The structure of opportunity is ones' ability to gain incentives, challenges, job position/status, value, and competency. The structure of power includes both formal and informal power. Kanter argues that characteristics of a workplace affect one's behaviors and attitudes more than his/her own personality. When there is a strong sense of SE it makes room for shared decision making, improves professional practice and excellence, increases autonomy and positively impacts the work environment, and may in turn, impact one's ProQoL. According to Stamm (2010) ProQoL should be a balance between compassion satisfaction (CS) and compassion fatigue (CF). Stamm notes that CS is the joy derived from doing ones' job to the best of their ability while CF results from the culmination of secondary traumatic stress (STS) and burnout (BO). While much research has been done on staff nurses (Asif, et al., 2019; Van Bogaert, et al., 2016) in looking at both SE and ProQoL, particularly in Magnet designated hospitals (Hamadi, *et al.*, 2020) there is a paucity of research investigating the cohort of nurse educators. Nurse educators are an important cohort to investigate for several reasons. First, because of the impact SE has on the work environment, when striving to create a healthy academic work environment this is research is important to consider. Second, because of the potential impact on the nurse educators themselves ProQoL and then consequently, on the educational process. Third, it is essential to investigate to provide evidence and solutions for the nurse faculty shortage. Furthermore, it is essential to identify how SE, the work environment and the ProQoL may impact the educational process of future nurses.

Methods:

A survey link was emailed to random colleges and universities in the United States asking for anonymous, voluntary participation. The survey included a demographic questionnaire as well as the conditions for work effectiveness questionnaire (CWEQ-II) to measure SE (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001) and the ProQoL-V5 scale (Stamm, 2010) to measure the professional quality of life. Descriptive, chi-square, t-tests, ANOVA and Pearson correlation statistics were used.

Results:

The 211 nurse educators validated that their CS was relatively high and STS and BO were relatively low. When their sense of SE went up, CS also went up and their report of STS and BO went down.

Conclusion:

Findings suggest that SE such as access to opportunity, resources, information, support, formal and informal power does have a relationship to the nurse educator's ProQoL.

Title:

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Keywords:

Nurse educators, professional quality of life and structural empowerment

Abstract Summary:

This investigated nurse educators' perception of structural empowerment (SE) to determine if there is a relationship to their professional quality of life (ProQoL). While greatly studied, in nursing staff, this has been minimally researched for nurse educators and is important to consider in light of the current nurse educator shortage.

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Author Summary: I have been speaking about Healthy Work Environments and a sense of balance at previous Sigma Theta Tau conferences. I have also published in this area. I have been teaching for over 30 years and feel this is an important area of future research.