

# Nursing Empowerment: A Concept of Professional Development in Nursing

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## Abstract

*“Nurses dispense comfort, compassion and caring without even a prescription” -Val Saintsbury*

The importance of empowerment in nursing profession is that the nurses will feel that they have the power to authorize their job, satisfaction in their job and feel appreciated. Besides, they will feel less worn-out in their work. It will also enhance the care of patient outcomes. Powerless nurses are less satisfied with their jobs and are more susceptible to burnout and depersonalization. Lack of nursing power may also contribute to poorer patient outcomes<sup>1</sup>.

*“The longer I’m in the profession, the more experiences shape my life, the more amazing colleagues influence me, the more I see the micro and macro power of nursing”.- Joni Watson*

**Keywords** - Nursing Empowerment, Concept, Professional Development, Nursing

## Introduction

Empowerment is an inner strength and inner power transcending expected behaviors due to the importance and meaning that individuals derive from their work. It is a desirable and positive concept that incorporates energy and impetus to do good for oneself and others within a nursing context<sup>2</sup>. Empowerment means it is a positive concept of a power or authority given on doing something. This is also a dynamic concept that can be shared, taken or given to others. “An individual is vested with power or authority legally or formally to perform certain tasks”. It is also associated with growth and development of a person or an organization.

In Health care institutions, nurses encounter a lot of problems and challenges that make them stressed most of the time. So, it is necessary to have support and empowerment from Nursing Directors, Supervisors, Co-worker, and The General Manager of the hospital. A supportive workplace is highly valued by workers and makes a significant contribution to their productivity and effectiveness. Empowerment is one of the most important concepts in nursing and is most relevant to study of nursing professionals’ job-related outcome.

**Bish et al. (2014)** Study conducted in rural and regional Victoria, Australia found that acknowledgement of structural empowerment by nurse leaders may assist in the process of formulating strategies to facilitate an open, honest and responsive culture of patient safety, removing silos, departmental turf issues and professional territoriality in healthcare services<sup>2</sup>.

**Wang et al. (2013)** Findings suggest that empowered health profession may experience less emotional exhaustion. In contrast, disempowered employees experience greater levels of emotional exhaustion. Statistically significant positive correlation was also indicated between work empowerment and personal accomplishment<sup>3</sup>.

**Smith et al. (2012)** Recent study conducted in California reported that nurses lacked the empowerment to influence their working conditions and perceived a lack of organizational support. A research conducted to examine the relationship between structural empowerment and anticipated turnover among behavioral health nurses stated that the factors that enhance nurses’ perceptions of empowerment, particularly related to issues of retention and anticipated turnover among behavioral health nurses. The majority of participants

in this study perceived themselves as moderately empowered, there was a significant negative correlation between empowerment and anticipated turnover<sup>4</sup>.

**Cai et.al. (2011)** revealed that empowerment is seen to enhance individual competence and self-esteem which, in turn, increase perceptions of personal control which has a direct effect on improving health outcomes<sup>5</sup>.

**Perm (2011)** In Jordan, limited representative evidence studied the level of empowerment and factors contributing empowerment among nurses and most of the studies conducted to assess nurses' support which is part of empowerment. Study findings revealed that disempowered nurses were ineffective, less satisfied with their jobs, and more vulnerable to burnout and leave their job or profession. Also, it has a negative impact on quality improvement process, decision making ability and job performance development<sup>6</sup>.

**Ahmad & Oranye (2010)** Comparative study entitled "Empowerment, job satisfaction and organizational commitment among nurses working in Malaysia and England" revealed that Malaysian nurses felt more empowered and committed to their organization as compared to English nurse and does not generate the same results in all countries, and there is difference in the outcomes of empowerment between nurses in different countries<sup>7</sup>.

**Armellino et al. (2010)** Study conducted to examine the relationship between structural empowerment and patient safety culture among registered nurses (RNs) within adult critical care units revealed that structural empowerment and patient safety culture were significantly correlated. So, in order to foster patient safety culture, nurse leaders should consider providing structurally empowering work environments for RNs<sup>8</sup>.

**Richardson & Storr (2010)** conducted a study implies that nurses' background variables significantly correlated with nurses' empowerment. Nurses who are Skillful, motivated, independent and experiencing

less stressors during performance of nursing care associated with higher behavioral, verbal and outcome empowerment. Efforts to build safer health care systems have seen the global creation of organizations with the sole purpose of improving patient safety<sup>9</sup>.

**Wagner et al., (2010)** Study revealed that empowered workplace can contribute to a healthy, productive and innovative registered nurses (RNs) workforce with increased job satisfaction and retention<sup>10</sup>.

**Irene et al., (2009)** Study conducted in USA to evaluate the relation between psychological empowerment, service quality and Job satisfaction among certified nursing assistants with random sample of 60 certified nursing assistants and 56 employees from other management and non-management employee working in 12 different physical and mental health nursing home showed that certified nursing assistants awareness of empowerment and facility level service quality were strongly related to job satisfaction<sup>11</sup>.

**Lautizi et al., (2009)** Study conducted in Italy adopted Kanter theory to investigate the relationship between staff nurses structural empowerment, work stress and job satisfaction in two health care settings revealed that there is a strong relationship between high levels of structural empowerment and job satisfaction, this study implied that organizational administration must make every effort to create organizational structures and systems that empower nurses to practice according to professional standards and optimize the use of their knowledge and expertise<sup>12</sup>.

**Laverack (2006)** Nurses empowerment effect on patient health care outcome. Nurses who perceived themselves as empowered, use more effective work practices that will encourage others to be active participants and lead to positive patient outcomes. In addition, empowered nurses will be more satisfied and will empower their patients and will do all assignments in an efficient way; so that the quality of care will be improved<sup>13</sup>.

**Discussion**

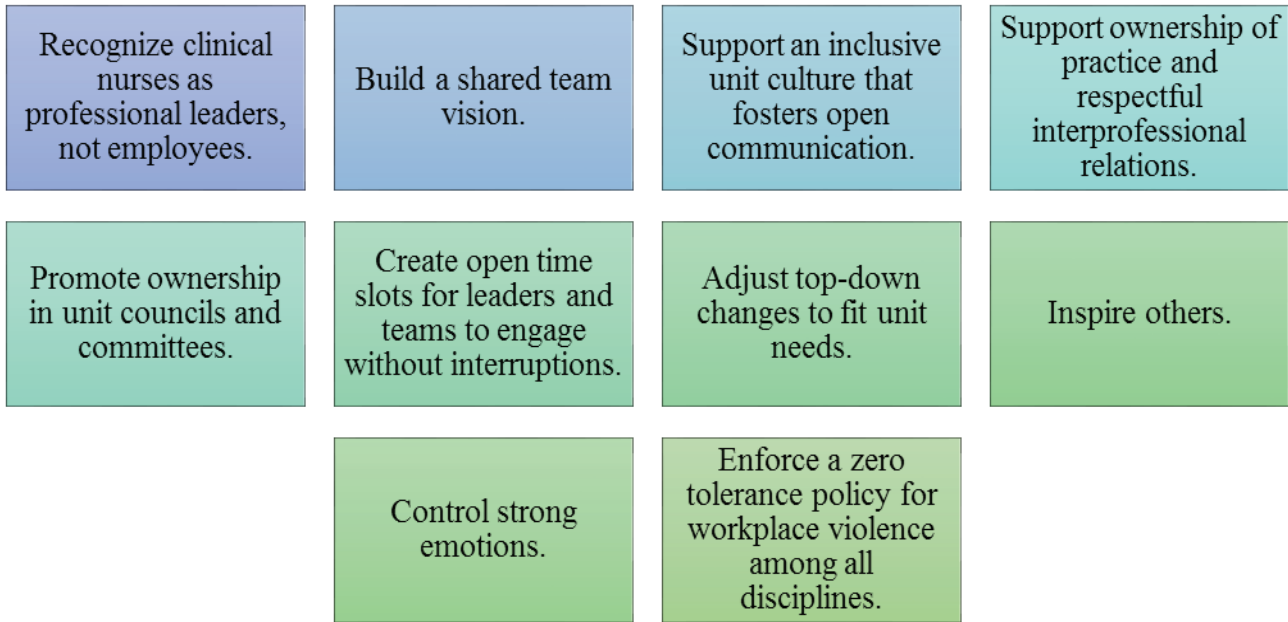
Many nurses leave their positions because of negative experiences with heavy or unrealistic workloads and due to feeling unheard and undervalued, if not worse. Clinical nurses’ sense of disempowerment can be related to deficient leadership interventions. For instance, these nurses feel managers are insensitive to their staffing needs, don’t support employee well-being, and don’t invest enough in staff education or clinical advancement. Even seemingly positive changes, when introduced to a unit without staff input, might result in lack of buy-in because nurses perceive this as being told

“how to do our job.” In contrast, empowered teams are supported by inclusive, nonauthoritarian, visionary, and emotionally intelligent leadership.

“Nothing about me without me” is the key phrase for more empowerment of clinical nurses. Staff RNs must see themselves as professional stewards of their unit, rather than as employees who clock in and out for a paycheck. Empowerment isn’t something to be bestowed by hospital managers and executives. Nurses are leaders by virtue of their responsibilities; for them, empowerment isn’t a privilege, but a professional necessity.

**Conclusion**

**Ways to Empower A Nursing Team**



The literature has clearly identified a relationship between nursing empowerment and important nursing outcomes as work stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion, individual competence, self-esteem, retention, nurse’s accomplishment, job commitment, job satisfaction and job performance. All these variables are important in the field of nursing profession and lead to positive outcomes in health care.

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**Conflict of Interest** – Nil

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