

# Exploration of Swedish Nurses’ Perceptions of Nursing in Sweden

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## Introduction

A plethora of studies have noted that nurses in Sweden are suffering from burnout and are leaving the profession due to a heavy workload, absence of professional advancement, poor social support, and low wages (Fochsen, Sjögren, Josephson, & Lagerström, 2005; Rudman, Gustavsson, & Hultell, 2014). A number of studies indicate many nurses leave the profession during the first few years of working. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of Swedish nurses who have been in the field for at least 6 years.

## Design

Following IRB approval, a sample of 8 Swedish nurses from an urban town on the western side of Sweden were invited to participate in this study. Inclusion criteria included having been in the field at least 6 years and the ability to articulate in English their perceptions of nursing in Sweden. Nurses were individually interviewed at a time that was mutually convenient for them. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for narrative data. The interview consisted of questions that uncovered the lived experience of nurses in Sweden. Interview questions included:

- “What is it like to be a nurse in Sweden?”
- “What are the benefits to being a nurse?”
- “What are challenges nurses face?”
- “How do you see interprofessional communication and collaboration in Sweden?”

All data were transcribed and van Manen’s (1990) approach to analysis was followed.



## Findings

Themes	Narrative Data
<u>Seeing Eye-to-Eye</u>  Many nurses feel there is less of a hierarchy with the doctors and view themselves as having equal status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✧ “We work well together... I feel equal to them (doctors) now. They listen to us. We have a good climate here, but I don’t think it’s like that everywhere. They are also used to us making a lot of decisions on our own.”</li><li>✧ “The doctors know I am the one seeing the patients and know the patients when they (doctors) only see them for 5 minutes. They listen to me.”</li><li>✧ “The nurses are the ones that see the patients so we see if they are getting sicker and tell the doctor.”</li><li>✧ (Communication) “is the hard thing because being a nurse is like becoming the spider in the net or the spider in the glue; being caught by all the people around you...”</li><li>✧ “More and more now the emphasis is on patient centered care. When you have that, then all the professions really have to come together around the patient rather than being consultants. If we can get that idea more set in the health care system I think that would be a good thing.”</li></ul>
<u>Relationship with Patients</u>  The nurses found joy in their work by having positive relationships with patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✧ “I still love it and think it’s the best job in the world. When you see a dying patient and then see them a few weeks later and see them up and walking, it is worth every effort.”</li><li>✧ “A benefit to nursing...the fact that I can help people and it’s not about the money. (The rewards are) “the patients are happy and you do something good for the patients. Also, my colleagues.”</li><li>✧ “We have one guy who took his exam in high school 3 weeks ago and he hit his head on a bridge and he was in such bad shape but now today he is breathing himself and he can squeeze your hands if you talk to him and he understands what you say. He can’t talk yet, but he understands. That’s why it’s the best job.”</li></ul>
<u>Support System</u>  Positive support from coworkers was reported by the nurses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✧ “I like the people who work here. We have 100 people and I like and know them. That is why I am here. It feels like a community.”</li><li>✧ “When I started, there were a lot of nurses I could ask and I never felt alone.”</li><li>✧ “If something happens, I know that there is always help. We have each other.”</li><li>✧ “When I started to work, the Dr. was very high up, but not here and not anymore. It’s teamwork. They need us and we need them because the patient is in the middle. We are all depending on each other in the intensive care.”</li></ul>
<u>Responsibility</u>  The nurses reported having more responsibility than nurses in other places.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✧ “To some extent, compared to other high income countries, nurses in Sweden have a lot more responsibility.”</li><li>✧ “I like having the extra responsibility ...When there are new doctors from other places they are surprised by what we do.”</li><li>✧ “In this department we have a lot of responsibility compared to other nurses in Sweden when it comes to medications and decisions that we make.”</li><li>✧ “We have huge responsibilities as a nurse and I think we should be paid more for those responsibilities.”</li><li>✧ “I’ve always been working night shifts. I’m quite an independent person and you are left by yourself at night. You have a lot of responsibility and I love it.”</li></ul>

## Discussion

Findings shed light on the lived experience of nurses who have been working in the field for at least 6 years in Sweden. It is noteworthy that the majority of their positive experiences as nurses is a result of feeling respected by the doctors, having a sense of teamwork and support from fellow nurses, and doing meaningful work for the patients who need them most. More research is needed to learn how these positive environments can be created to guide practice and increase respectful interprofessional collaboration.

## Limitations

Data was gathered from a fairly small sample size from one area in Sweden. More research is needed with a more diverse group and a Swedish interpreter to hear from both English and Swedish speaking nurses to cover a larger sample of nurses in other parts of the country.

## References

Fochsen, G., Sjögren, K., Josephson, M., & Lagerström, M. (2005). Factors contributing to the decision to leave nursing care: a study among Swedish nursing personnel. *Journal Of Nursing Management*, 13(4), 338-344. doi:10.1111/j1365-2934.2005.00546.x

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