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Career Opportunities and Workforce Equity in Eldercare

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Background: Self-perceived occupational status (SPOS) is linked to health, motivation, and retention, yet its determinants among assistant nurses in Swedish municipal eldercare remain under-investigated. These workersconstitute alow-status occupational group that often faces multiple obstacles, including high physical and psychosocial job demands, limited influence over work organization, and constrained career development opportunities.We therefore examined workplace resources that may enhance SPOS over a 12-month period.
Methods: A two-wave cohort of assistant nurses (*N*= 404) completed self-rated measures (all $\alpha > 0.72$) at T1 and T2, one year apart. A lagged autoregressive regression model predicted SPOS at T2 controlling for SPOS at T1. T1 predictors (perceived career opportunities, job satisfaction, work engagement, autonomy) were entered simultaneously. Paths were estimated using maximum likelihood (ML); missingness was low ($< 1.5\%$ per variable) and handled with FIML.
Results: Model fit was acceptable (RMSEA = 0.070, 90% CI 0.044–0.097; CFI = 0.981). SPOS demonstrated substantial stability (autoregressive $\beta = 0.577$, $p < 0.001$). Perceived career opportunities at T1 independently predicted higher SPOS at T2 ($\beta = 0.181$, $p < 0.001$). Job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.001$), work engagement ($\beta = 0.042$),and autonomy ($\beta = -0.020$) were non-significant in the full model (all $p > 0.20$).
Conclusions: Perceived career opportunities uniquely predicted higher SPOS among assistant nurses, independent of prior status and other job resources. These findings have implications for strengthening career pathways in eldercare and supporting workforce sustainability. Prior research suggests that career opportunities are most meaningful when they are transparent, accessible, and supported by organizational resources.

Key messages:

- Career opportunities uniquely raise assistant nurses' self-perceived status.
- Strong career paths may improve retention and sustainability in eldercare.

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