Comparison of decision authority among dentists from Denmark and Sweden

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Alm
Karasek and Theorell define job control as the worker’s control over work tasks and performance during the working day. This study aims to analyze differences in job control as decision authority over aspects of the work among general dental practitioners from Denmark and Sweden.

Methods
In 2008, a questionnaire was sent to 1835 general dental practitioners, randomly selected from the dental associations in Sweden and Denmark (17% of the eligible population). The response rate was 68% after two reminders.

Eight items about influence were measured on an ordinal scale. Principal Component Analysis was applied and based on the resulting two factors, additive indices were established to measure decision authority: “general influence” (6 items) and “influence on scheduling appointments” (2 items). ANOVA with Tukey’s HSD test was used for comparison between groups based on nationality and sector for dentists with/without managerial responsibility. For analyses without equal variances, Kruskal-Wallis test was applied.

Conclusion and perspective
Differences in decision authority were found between general dental practitioners working in the public and the private sector in Sweden as well as in Denmark. The results may reflect different management cultures as well as different structural organizations of the work. Securing decision authority in dentistry is important for the working environment of dentists, especially when meeting the changing needs of the population.

Results

Factor analysis
Principal Component Analysis of the variables describing influence on the work resulted in a two factor solution explaining 69% of the variance.

Influence on scheduling appointments

- In both Denmark and Sweden, dentists working in the public sector reported significantly lower influence on scheduling appointments than private practitioners (p<0.01).
- Comparing dentists from the same sector across countries showed no significant differences, nor were there any differences after controlling for leader responsibility.

General influence

- For dentists without leadership tasks, similar results were seen as for influence on scheduling appointments.
- In contrast, Swedish managers reported significantly higher scores on general influence than their Danish colleagues (p<0.05).

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