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Influence and management of work boundaries in the work of nursing supervisors

In the 2020s, the social and health care sector has faced major changes and challenges, which has put a strain on nursing supervisors. Their job descriptions have expanded and become unclear. In this study, based on interviews with nursing supervisors conducted in 2022, we examine the extent to which nursing supervisors can manage the boundaries of their work. Utilising content analysis, we inspect the management of work boundaries by drawing on the concept of influence. The nursing supervisors' level of influence appears to be very narrow when discussing their own work in relation to organisational structures and macro-level issues. There is too much work, it is dictated from above, and their own job description appears unclear, which jeopardises the ability to do the work well. However, in relation to colleagues, the work appears as a joint endeavour for which collective responsibility is taken. The boundaries of the work are discussed with colleagues, the work is evened out, and solutions for managing the excessive workload are searched for together. In relation to the self, managing the work's boundaries entails independent decisions, emotions, and sometimes an uncontrollable flow of thoughts, but it is also something that can be learned. Managing the work's boundaries is a skill gained through experience, and it requires the ability to see what is essential and accept that sometimes something important will be left out.

Keywords: supervisors, influence, nursing, work boundaries