

## **(32) Which social work treatment techniques are empowering?**

*Khawla Zoabi & Iddo Gal*

*School of Social Work and Department of Human Services  
University of Haifa, Israel*

Empowerment is advocated as a preferred framework for social interventions, yet little is known about how social workers perceive the potential of different intervention techniques to contribute to client empowerment. This study examined the perceptions of social workers regarding the empowering potential of social work techniques in five areas: *Case management* (e.g., referral), *Support* (e.g., mirroring), *Insight* (e.g., identify past mistakes), *Therapy* (e.g., develop coping skills), *Strengths* (e.g., recognize one's potential).

A sample of 148 social workers involved in diverse types of individualized interventions rated 30 items from the above five areas in terms of their empowering potential on a 5-point scale and provided other background information.

It was found that respondents view *all* intervention techniques as empowering to at least a moderate extent, including case management techniques that according to the literature are not expected to be able to contribute to client empowerment. Techniques from the areas of strengths, support, and therapy were perceived on average as having high empowering potential. Yet, there was sizeable variation in social workers' ratings of the empowering potential of some techniques.

The findings suggest that social workers' perceptions of the empowering potential of different techniques do not always agree with the theoretical literature, or with perceptions of other workers. The findings have implications for needed academic preparation and field supervision and monitoring, and may shed light on reasons for failure of empowerment programs.

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