



JUSTYNA JABŁOŃSKA<sup>1</sup>, ELŻBIETA GRZYWACZ<sup>2</sup>, MARIA GRZYMKOWSKA<sup>3</sup>,  
JOLANTA CHMIELOWIEC<sup>4</sup>, JUSTYNA CHWAŁCZYŃSKA<sup>1</sup>, KATARZYNA BŁASZCZAK<sup>1</sup>,  
JOLANTA MASIĄK<sup>5</sup>, KRZYSZTOF CHMIELOWIEC<sup>4</sup>

## Socio-professional adaptation of a nurse in a new workplace

### Abstract

**Introduction.** The period of socio-professional adaptation is a time when the new employee often feels insecure and is accompanied by emotional tension. Already in the initial period of work, an employee develops a specific attitude towards the environment, which, at a later stage, influences professional development or motivation.

**Aim.** The aim of the study is to assess the course of the process of social and professional adaptation among nurses who, after graduation, started their first job in hospital departments in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, as well as to characterize the adaptation process and factors influencing its effective course.

**Material and methods.** The material for the research was collected by means of a proprietary questionnaire. The number of 118 people participated in the study.

**Results.** There was a statistical dependence between the socio-professional adaptation process and the existence of procedures related to it. Then a relationship was noted between the procedures for the adaptation process and the presentation of the adaptation plan to the new employee. Statistically significant differences were demonstrated by analyzing the feeling of being ready to work independently depending on the duration of the adaptation period in a new workplace.

**Conclusion.** The adaptation process is often ineffective and important elements, such as access to adaptation procedures, adaptation plan, employee final evaluation, are often overlooked. These elements have a statistically significant impact on the overall assessment of the adaptation process. The adaptation period is often too short, which translates into the lack of readiness to work for new employees.

**Keywords:** socio-professional adaptation, nurses, adaptation in hospitals.

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### INTRODUCTION

Adaptation to a new workplace is one of the most important aspects of human resource management [1]. An ineffective adaptation process leads to increased stress, a lack of job satisfaction, and as a result, staff turnover may result in staff shortages, and thus excess of duties for nurses employed in a given unit [2]. It is obvious that the excess of duties results in performing them in a hurry, without proper commitment, which reduces the quality of services provided. Socio-professional adaptation is a process aimed at introducing an employee to work in a specific position, acquainting him with the norms and rules that apply in a given environment. It is also supposed to help the employee accept his new function and position. In the adaptation process, a new employee gets acquainted with the requirements set for him, learns the scope of activities that apply to him, how to perform them, learns to use machines and medical equipment, learns about the principles of occupational health and safety, and learns the prevailing standards in rela-

tions with colleagues, superiors and patients, thanks to which he becomes professionally independent [3]. Unfortunately, adaptation in practice is sometimes overlooked, although it is often mentioned in the literature, combining issues from various fields of social sciences, such as: pedagogy, psychology, sociology, organization and management. Literature describes several types of adaptation, however, according to researchers, socio-professional adaptation has the greatest impact on the professional career [4].

Nursing is a field of medicine that is developing very dynamically, and the scope of duties and the role of nurses in the hospital is systematically growing. Today, nurses often play the role of a specialist who is independent and takes over some of the duties previously assigned to doctors. For nurses, it is obviously associated with an increasingly greater physical and mental burden [5]. The development of nursing is also connected with placing more and more demands on nurses in terms of the quality of care. In order to meet these requirements, continuous education is required, both in theory and in practice.

<sup>1</sup> Student Scientific Association "SALUS", Collegium Medicum, University of Zielona Góra, Poland

<sup>2</sup> Student Scientific Club of Department of Oral Surgery, Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin, Poland

<sup>3</sup> Student Scientific Club of Independent Laboratory of Health Promotion, Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin, Poland

<sup>4</sup> Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Collegium Medicum, University of Zielona Góra, Poland

<sup>5</sup> II Department of Psychiatry and Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Medical University of Lublin, Poland

Nurses starting their careers face many challenges in a constantly changing hospital environment, which is associated with a lot of stress. Despite the practical dimension of nursing education, after starting work, nurses often encounter a gap between high expectations and the actual state of affairs. Many aspects such as: still not improved practical skills, as well as the lack of them, in the case of performing procedures characteristic for a given workplace, unstructured knowledge, building relationships with both colleagues and patients, increased responsibility, makes the beginning of work in a new place for a young person with a heavy burden [6].

Nurses starting work, like any other new employee, need an adaptation period during which they will be able to acquire the required skills, competences, and also feel more confident in making professional decisions.

The work of a nurse may be a source of tension and anxiety for a newly employed person, which may result in more frequent mistakes, and this may result in loss of self-confidence, criticism from colleagues, conflicts and problems with adjusting to work [7]. Therefore, it is necessary to support nurses starting work in developing their skills and provide them with appropriate conditions to adjust to the new workplace.

Effective adaptation influences professional identification, which determines the attitude of the employee and it manifests itself in: adopting common principles and goals in action, identifying with the assumed function, performing work with emotional commitment, identifying the interests of the workplace with one's own, sense of responsibility for development and functioning workplaces.

All of the above elements make the new employee good at performing his or her job, want to self-improve and feel satisfied with the function [1].

A nurse, from the very beginning of her work, has to meet the expectations of her colleagues, patients and their families. It is required that in this position, from the very beginning, you take responsibility for your behavior in the work environment and actions. The nurse's working environment is created mainly by patients who have different expectations and represent different norms. The need to adapt to each patient individually is a considerable challenge for nurses, not only those newly employed. You cannot learn a routine that works for every patient. At the beginning of work, it increases stress and uncertainty, which is why the way of introducing a new person to work in the therapeutic team is very important. The manner in which a nurse will be prepared to work in a given position also shows how subjective is the organization's approach to an employee who creates the basic potential of the hospital [8].

## AIM

The aim of the study is to assess the course of the process of social and professional adaptation among nurses who, after graduation, started their first job in hospital departments in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, as well as to characterize the adaptation process and factors influencing its effective course. The study focused on what the actual adaptation in hospitals looks like and what nurses entering the profession have to face.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The material for the research was collected by means of a proprietary questionnaire created with the use of Google

Forms and it was carried out on the Internet. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions. Participation in the study was anonymous, free and voluntary. The survey was conducted from October to November 2020. The number of 118 people participated in the study. All 118 completed questionnaires were qualified for the study. The inclusion criterion for participation in the study was the occupation of a nurse, and the beginning of a professional career in hospitals in the Lubuskie Voivodeship.

The calculations were made in the IBM SPSS and STATISTICA programs. In order to assess the relationship between the variables, contingency tables were prepared and the chi-square test was used.  $P < 0.05$  was adopted as the limit of statistical significance.

## RESULTS

The study involved 115 women, which is 97.5% of all the respondents and 3 men (2.5%). The largest number of respondents was in the age range of 25-35 and under 25, which makes up 33.1% and 28.0% respectively. The least numerous age group were people over 55 – 1.7%. Most often, the place of residence of the respondents was a large city with 100 to 150 thousand inhabitants (28.8%) and rural areas (28%), the smallest number of people lived in the city from 50 to 100 thousand inhabitants (7.6%). Moreover, the respondents were asked to describe their length of service as a nurse in full years, where the largest number of respondents has been working as a nurse for a year, as indicated by the dominant. The average length of service of the respondents was 10.66 years.

Among more than 70% of the respondents, a guided process of social and professional adaptation in the new workplace was carried out, however, the procedures for the adaptation process existed only in 50% of cases. Very often, as much as in 64.4% of cases, the employees were not presented with the adaptation plan.

There was a statistical dependence between the socio-professional adaptation process and the existence of procedures related to it. The analysis is presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. The relationship between the process of social and professional adaptation and the existence of procedures concerning it.**

Were there any procedures regarding the adaptation period in the workplace where you started your work?	When you started your professional career, did you experience a process of social and professional adaptation?		
	No	Yes	Σ
No	26	33	59
% of the total	22.03%	27.97%	50%
Yes	9	50	59
% of the total	7.63%	42.37%	50%
sum	35	83	118
% of the total	29.66%	70.34%	100%

Statistically significant difference in the frequency of responses: Pearson's  $\chi^2$ : 11.73907,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.00061$

The existence of procedures regarding the process of social and professional adaptation does not guarantee that it will be carried out, but it significantly increases the chances of its implementation.

Statistically significant differences were observed in the set of questions about the procedures for the adaptation process

and in presenting the adaptation plan to the new employee, as shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 3. Readiness to work after the end of the adaptation period depending on the duration of the adaptation period.**

How long was the adaptation period in your first job?	After completing the adaptation / trial period, did you feel ready to work independently?			Σ
	No	Yes	I'm in the adaptation period	
There was no adaptation period	13	6	0	19
% of the total	11.02%	5.08%	0.0%	16.10%
1 month or less	45	11	0	56
% of the total	38.14%	9.32%	0.0%	47.46%
2 months	1	3	0	4
% of the total	0.85%	2.54%	0.0%	3.39%
3 months	20	12	1	33
% of the total	16.95%	10.17%	0.85%	27.97%
Over 3 months	3	2	0	5
% of the total	2.54%	1.69%	0.0%	4.24%
I'm in the adaptation period	0	0	1	1
% of the total	0.0%	0.0%	0.85%	0.85%
sum	82	34	2	118
% of the total	69.49%	28.81%	1.69%	100%

Statistically significant difference in the frequency of responses: Pearson's  $\chi^2$ : 67.82097,  $df=10$ ,  $p=0.0000$

Statistically significant differences were demonstrated by analyzing the feeling of being ready to work independently depending on the duration of the adaptation period in a new workplace. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

**TABLE 2. The relationship between the existence of procedures for the adaptation process and the presentation of its plan to a new employee.**

Were there any procedures regarding the adaptation period in the workplace where you started your work?	Were you presented with an adaptation plan when starting work?		
	No	Yes	Σ
No	53	6	59
% of the total	44.92%	5.08%	50%
Yes	23	36	59
% of the total	19.49%	30.51%	50%
sum	76	42	118
% of the total	64.41%	35.59%	100%

Statistically significant difference in the frequency of responses: Pearson's  $\chi^2$ : 33.27068,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.0000$

The research shows that people with a period of social and professional adaptation lasting a month or less experienced a lack of readiness to work independently much more often than people with a longer period of social and professional adaptation. It is also worth noting that after the adaptation period, 69.49% of the respondents did not feel ready to work independently.

There was no statistical correlation between the workplace and whether the adaptation process took place at all ( $p=0.06172$ ). The process of social and professional adaptation did not always take place in conservative and surgical departments, as well as in highly specialized operating rooms or dialysis stations.

The research explored the role of the caregiver in the process of social and professional adaptation. The participants were asked who played this role and about the satisfaction of working with their tutor. The answers show that most often the role of a caregiver is played by a designated nurse (37.29%), then a ward nurse (13.56%), in a few cases (7.63%) the role of a caregiver is performed by a nurse who was not assigned to this task, and she volunteered for it unofficially. Moreover, as many as 49% of people did not have a guardian during the adaptation process.

Statistically significant differences were observed in the frequency of responses when analyzing the question about satisfaction with work with the guardian and the assessment of the entire adaptation process. People who rated the adaptation process very well and positively were satisfied with the work with their tutor (72.7% and 78.8%, respectively), while those who were dissatisfied with the work with a tutor or did not have one, most often assessed the adaptation process badly and very badly (respectively: 86.4% and 8.48% of 91%). The analysis is presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4. Satisfaction with working with the tutor and the assessment of the adaptation process.**

Were you satisfied with the work with your tutor?	How would you rate your adaptation/trial period in your first job?					Σ
	Very bad	Bad	Neither good nor bad	Good	Very good	
No	5	8	9	0	0	22
% of the total	4.24%	6.78%	7.63%	0.0%	0.0%	18.64%
Yes	1	3	15	26	8	53
% of the total	0.85%	2.54%	12.71%	22.03%	6.78%	44.92%
There was no such person	5	11	17	7	3	43
% of the total	4.24%	9.32%	14.41%	5.93%	2.54%	36.44%
sum	11	22	41	33	11	118
% of the total	9.32%	18.64%	34.75%	27.97%	9.32%	100%

Statistically significant difference in the frequency of responses: Pearson's  $\chi^2$ : 39.27556,  $df=8$ ,  $p=0.0000$

## DISCUSSION

The period of socio-professional adaptation is a time when the new employee often feels insecure and is accompanied by emotional tension. Already in the initial period of work, an employee develops a specific attitude towards the environment, which at a later stage influences professional development or motivation. An effective adaptation process helps to build a good attitude and trust in the workplace, and also proves a positive attitude of the employer towards the employee [9].

As indicated in the literature on the subject, more and more attention is paid to the process of social and professional adaptation of a new employee. Spontaneous adaptation is abandoned in favor of directed adaptation, which makes it easier for the employee to find a new professional role. In companies, procedures are created to facilitate the control of the adaptation process, and this has an impact on the effectiveness and speed of this process [10]. This is confirmed by the results of our own research, which indicate that 63.6% of the respondents who assessed the adaptation process as good and 72.7% of the respondents who assessed the adaptation process very

good, started working in a place where procedures for social and professional adaptation were available.

The conducted research also showed a significant role of the caregiver in the process of social and professional adaptation. The entire adaptation period was rated as good by 78.8% and very good by people who were satisfied with the work with their tutor in 72.7%, while those who were dissatisfied with the work with a tutor or did not have a tutor assessed the adaptation process very badly (90.9%) and badly (86.4%). Moreover, people who negatively assessed the work with their tutor or did not have one, often felt lonely (73%), they felt the desire to change their place of work (75%) and reluctance to ask questions (80%). Among these people, fear of the next working day and severe stress appeared more often than in the case of people positively assessing the work with the tutor. Ściegłińska also indicated an important role of the caregiver in the effectiveness of the process of social and professional adaptation. The author emphasized that improper methods used by the caregiver may be associated with the lack of effects of the adaptation process, and result in more frequent mistakes by the employee or a sense of loneliness, and these experiences may contribute to discouragement or even quitting work [3].

Perycz and Leńczuk-Gruba wrote about the important role of a caregiver and the atmosphere at work. Their research showed a correlation between areas such as the atmosphere in the workplace, the tutor's ability to transfer knowledge, help from other employees, and the overall assessment of the adaptation process. Employees assessing the given areas better also assessed socio-professional adaptation better [11], which is confirmed by the results of the authors' own research.

The influence of the caregiver on the process of social and professional adaptation is also emphasized by Lewicka, who notices that the support and kindness on the part of the caregiver contributes to the effectiveness of the adaptation process, and thus accelerates the achievement of independence by new employees [12].

The literature on the subject also draws attention to the negative impact of the lack of an appointed guardian and too high demands on new employees on the course of the adaptation process [13], which is confirmed by the results of own research. The importance of the working environment is often discussed in the literature. It affects not only the effectiveness of the adaptation process, as shown by our own research, but also the perception of job satisfaction, strengthening motivation to work, and patient satisfaction with the care provided [14].

Despite the fact that the adaptation process is considered to be of key importance for the satisfaction of a new employee, and thus is important for the management staff who want to hire and retain the best employees in the organization, it is often ineffective, or even completely ignored [15]. The conducted research showed that the guided adaptation process was carried out in 70.3% of respondents, but only 50% of respondents had access to the procedures related to this process, while the adaptation plan was presented to only 35.6% of the respondents. In most cases, as much as 67.8% of new employees did not feel ready to work independently after the completion of the adaptation process, which means that it was ineffective. According to the authors' own research, it is the presentation of the adaptation plan to the new employee that has an impact on the readiness to work, and thus following it. As many as 75.3% of people who adapted to a new workplace without a plan were

then not ready to work independently. Willingness to work independently was declared by 55.9% of people who had been presented with the adaptation plan. Moreover, the readiness to work was influenced by the duration of the adaptation process. For most of the respondents, this process took a month or less, and of these, only 29.3% felt ready to work.

According to Ciekawski, the longer the time spent on the adaptation process of a new employee, the greater the chances of gaining a loyal and committed member of the organization [15]. Considerations about the optimal adaptation time do not bring clear conclusions. Most often, a period of 3 months is considered sufficient, but there are also opinions about the need to extend this period to 6 months, and even 12, 18 or 24. In occupations where routine activities predominate, it is assumed that the adaptation period of 3 months is sufficient, while in professions that involve performing complex activities that require intellectual commitment, as well as high responsibility, this period should be extended [10].

## CONCLUSIONS

The adaptation process is often ineffective and important elements, such as access to adaptation procedures, adaptation plan, employee final evaluation, are often overlooked. These elements have a statistically significant impact on the overall assessment of the adaptation process. The adaptation period is often too short, which translates into the lack of readiness to work for new employees. The tutor plays a very important role in the effectiveness of the adaptation process. A good relationship with the carer affects the fear of the next working day or severe stress at work. A caregiver who performs his role improperly contributes to a new employee's feeling of loneliness, the willingness to change the workplace, and causes reluctance to ask questions, which may lead to mistakes made by new employees. Therefore, it is important that the guardian is prepared to fulfill this role. Presenting the new employee with an adaptation plan increases his/her readiness for work after the adaptation process is completed.

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**Corresponding author**

Dr Krzysztof Chmielowiec  
Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Collegium Medicum,  
University of Zielona Góra  
2 Energetyków St., 65-729, Zielona Góra  
e-mail: chmiele@vp.pl