



UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES OF NEWLY GRADUATED NURSES IN TRANSITION TO PRACTICE

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Abstract:

The transitional issues that newly graduated nurses (NGNs) face when they begin their nursing careers are summarized in this overview. Achieving a healthy work-life balance is a challenge, and there are many obstacles to overcome during the transition from student to practicing nurse, such as a mismatch between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, communication problems, time management issues, and ethical challenges. The dynamic and unpredictable character of clinical practice—which might differ greatly from the controlled settings of nursing education programs—is the root cause of these challenges. Overcoming these obstacles requires a multifaceted strategy that includes mentoring, education, and organizational assistance. The goal of nursing education programs should be to close the knowledge gap between theory and practice by providing NGNs with lots of opportunity to practice and gain practical experience in clinical settings. Initiatives for mentorship are essential in helping NGNs feel competent and confident in their work by offering them advice and assistance. Healthcare organizations should also put policies in place to support work-life balance, offer continuing education and training, and foster a courteous and cooperative work environment. Stakeholders may help NGNs transition into the nursing profession more smoothly by acknowledging and addressing the particular difficulties they confront. This will ultimately help to build a workforce of qualified and resilient nurses.

Keywords: Newly Graduated Nurses, Challenges, Experiences, Healthcare.

Introduction:

The majority of workers in hospital settings are nurses, and they play crucial roles in healthcare teams. However, a shortage of nurses has become a major issue for international healthcare systems. The causes of this scarcity are numerous and include inadequate funding for training, inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, and inefficient administrative supervision. Numerous academic studies have suggested interventions targeted at improving



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nurse retention. In addition, there has been a noticeable trend of nurses migrating abroad to alleviate this shortfall, especially from underdeveloped to developed countries. But there are other significant challenges that migrant nurses face, like language and cultural differences. Academics support coordinated efforts to address the nursing crisis and guarantee a sufficient and skilled future nursing workforce, with a focus on the well-being of recently graduated nurses (NGNs)

For newly graduated nurses (NGNs), the first few years of practice are a critical time for building confidence and forming a professional identity. Their continued dedication to the nursing profession depends on this development. This devotion is significantly shown by organizational dedication and job satisfaction. In their quantitative, cross-sectional study, Bontrager, Hart, and Mareno (2016) found that strong group cohesion and successful preceptors were additional important characteristics that helped NLRNs stay in their positions. The study involved 84 newly licensed registered nurses (NLRNs). Consequently, a thorough understanding of the difficulties that NGNs face in the workplace can guide the development of improved approaches in nursing education that are intended to support NGNs' long-term careers.

Between 2009 and 2030, there will likely be a shortage of registered nurses in both the US and Canada due to the aging Baby Boomer population and growing healthcare needs. North American nursing schools are struggling to expand their staffing levels in order to meet the growing demand for healthcare services, especially in light of recent healthcare reforms in the US. According to the Employment Projections for 2014–2024 published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there will be 16% more registered nurses in the workforce in 2024 (from 2.7 million in 2014 to 3.2 million). In May 2017, the Taiwan Union of Nurses Association (TUNA) revealed that the employment rate for registered nurses in Taiwan was just 58.5%. Additionally, the average turnover rate for newly graduated nurses (NGNs) was 18.82%. Healthcare organizations must incur substantial expenses in order to guarantee the proficiency and long-term employment of NGNs.

When newly graduated nurses (NGNs) set out to become competent and proficient in nursing practice, they frequently face difficult situations. Jewell (2013) examined twenty-three English-language peer-reviewed publications published between 1999 and 2013 and found that recently graduated and inexperienced nurses face transitional challenges related to emotional reactions, professional integration, developing a professional identity, and self-perception. It is found that the first three months of work are the hardest for nurses; in North America, between 35 and 60 percent of NGNs choose to move jobs at this time (Delaney, 2003). Clinical nursing practice is sometimes seen in Taiwan as being difficult, risky, under a lot of pressure, and requiring long hours. Work shift schedules and interprofessional communication dynamics add to the pressure that arises from professional responsibilities like caring for individual patients (Ke and Hung, 2017). NGNs have little professional experience and haven't completed many clinical internships. The difficult situations that new graduates face in their first jobs after

graduation can have a big effect on how NGNs spend their whole careers and how they decide whether to stay in nursing or not.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by Newly Graduated Nurses (NGNs) as they transition into the nursing profession. These challenges range from emotional responses to professional integration, from establishing professional identity to managing high-pressure clinical environments. The literature underscores the critical nature of the initial months of employment, during which a significant proportion of NGNs contemplate changing their places of work. Moreover, regional disparities, such as those observed between North America and Taiwan, underscore the importance of contextual factors in shaping NGNs' experiences. The implications of these challenges are profound, as they not only impact NGNs' immediate job satisfaction and retention but also have long-term implications for their entire careers. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from nursing institutions, healthcare organizations, and policymakers. Strategies such as effective preceptorship programs, supportive work environments, and enhanced interprofessional communication can contribute to easing the transition for NGNs and fostering their professional growth. Ultimately, recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by NGNs is essential for ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the nursing workforce. By investing in the support and development of NGNs, healthcare systems can cultivate a skilled and motivated nursing workforce capable of meeting the evolving healthcare needs of society.

Work Challenges:

For newly graduated nurses (NGNs), the shift from student to employee is a critical time characterized by conflict in the clinical setting even though they have already gained knowledge and skills from education and clinical experience. People who experience this shift often feel scared and uncertain, comparing it to "walking on thin ice." During their time as students, they were used to handling fewer patients with less oversight from preceptors and with less accountability. They now have to care for a larger patient load as staff nurses, usually between six and eight in regular ward settings. Their duties have become much more involved, especially when it comes to caring for patients who are in critical condition or handling unpredictable situations. Two sub-themes, which represent the complex difficulties faced by NGNs at this crucial juncture, further define this shift.

During their initial three months as staff nurses, Newly Graduated Nurses (NGNs) confronted a notable disparity between their experiences as students and their roles as clinical professionals, encompassing deficiencies in essential knowledge, care practices, and proficiency with technological tools within the care unit. Consequently, they harbored apprehensions about committing errors and lacked confidence in delivering patient care. Many NGNs observed disparities between clinical practices and the theoretical framework imparted in educational settings. Moreover, they encountered numerous challenges that had not been addressed in

textbooks or lectures, necessitating adaptation and on-the-job learning to navigate their newfound professional responsibilities effectively.

In the study, Newly Graduated Nurses (NGNs) frequently encountered the clinical setting as unpredictable and challenging, particularly in navigating patients' individual conditions. As the dynamic nature of situations evolved, some NGNs realized their inadequacy in managing emergent issues due to deficient knowledge and skills, leading to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. The demands and fluctuating circumstances within the care unit often resulted in exhaustion for NGNs, stemming from the pressures of patient care, colleagues' expectations, and adapting to an unfamiliar work environment. Meeting deadlines proved to be a considerable challenge for NGNs, with factors such as high patient influx, emergent situations, and staffing shortages often necessitating overtime work and exacerbating fatigue. The expectation of delivering exemplary performance weighed heavily on NGNs, who were acutely aware of being under scrutiny by their colleagues. This burden intensified their sense of pressure and contributed to their challenges in assimilating into inter-professional collaboration teams within the clinical setting. Moreover, NGNs encountered certain unspoken norms within their units, adherence to which was crucial for acceptance among peers.

Despite facing distress and work-related dilemmas, most NGNs expressed a commitment to persevering in their nursing profession, viewing hardship and stress as integral aspects of their professional growth. While some contemplated leaving their current unit or even quitting the profession altogether during their initial months, the majority sought ways to enhance their competencies and sought guidance from experienced role models, particularly senior schoolmates. This underscores the importance of mentorship and peer support in facilitating NGNs' adjustment to the demands of clinical practice and nurturing their professional development. The study's conclusions are in good agreement with the research questions it set out to answer, providing insightful information that will help Newly Graduated Nurses (NGNs) in their nursing education and laying the groundwork for further research. Participants' responses revealed four main themes that offer a detailed picture of the difficulties Taiwanese NGNs encounter in their line of work.

Under the subject "feeling nervous like you're walking on thin ice," NGNs eloquently portrayed their first shift into staff nurse duties in clinical settings. Emotions of fear and doubt resulted from a sense of incompetence and insecurity in carrying out care procedures, especially when tending to critically sick patients. This is consistent with research by Numminen et al. (2015), which found a substantial correlation between NGNs' empowerment and competence using a correlational design and a sample of 318 NGNs. The study found that the practice environment, which included the ethical climate and the level of occupational commitment exhibited by senior personnel, had a substantial impact on the competence of NGNs. Additionally, NGNs' views on the practice environment and climate, as well as their levels of empowerment and occupational commitment, were found to be positively correlated with higher levels of competence.

These results highlight how crucial it is to provide NGNs with a practice environment that is both supportive and empowering, as this can have a big impact on their competence, confidence, and ability to stay in the nursing field. They also stress the importance of focused interventions in nursing education to provide NGNs with the knowledge and self-assurance they need to successfully negotiate the challenges of clinical practice. Furthermore, the study opens up new avenues for investigation into the interactions among NGNs' experiences, competencies, and the larger practice setting, supporting continued initiatives to improve nursing workforce development and retention. Under the theme "suffering physical exhaustion and mental stress," participants related stories of being overworked and having to work shifts, which left them physically exhausted. This result is consistent with the study conducted by Hussein et al. (2017), which showed that newly graduated nurses (NGNs) frequently deal with a workload that is too much for them to handle, which raises their stress levels. This topic emphasizes how important it is that senior staff members who assign workloads to NGNs consider the NGNs' learning curve and the acquisition of the performance abilities they need.

Upon joining the clinical setting, NGNs faced extra obstacles due to their unfamiliarity with the work culture, which included taboos peculiar to their location. For example, the custom of calling coworkers "senior sister" in Taiwanese society reflects deeply rooted Confucian ideals that place an emphasis on deference to elders and hierarchical relationships. Although this cultural norm could encourage respect, it can also make NGNs feel intimidated or bullied, especially if senior nurses use dominating communication techniques. The study emphasized the significance of older nurses as mentors in transferring professionalism, competencies, and unit-specific experiences to new graduate nurses (NGNs) in their first few months of employment. Nonetheless, during this critical time, individuals reported not receiving enough mental support. This emphasizes how crucial it is to acknowledge that NGNs require emotional support and psychological counseling in addition to technical assistance. In order to provide NGNs with this kind of support and to provide a loving and supportive environment that is beneficial to their professional development and well-being, nursing colleagues and clinical instructors are essential. For NGNs to be successfully integrated and retained in the nursing profession, certain factors must be taken into consideration.

Participants debated whether to continue in their nursing jobs as a result of the aforementioned topics intersecting. Under the subject of "entering and adjusting to the profession," new graduate nurses (NGNs) had to negotiate a period of time during which they had to acclimate to the many challenges of clinical practice while also navigating doubts about their appropriateness for the position. Through self-evaluation and contemplation, participants worked to improve their skills and sense of empowerment, which is consistent with earlier research (Duchscher, 2008) that showed NGNs' inclination toward self-reflection as a way to improve clinical practice and support lifelong learning. On the other hand, under the theme of "gaining more confidence," participants progressively developed assurance via efficient approaches to problem-solving, especially when it came to controlling their emotions and

handling ambiguity. This study emphasizes how important it is to help NGNs as they adjust to the clinical situation by continually improving their knowledge, abilities, and administrative acumen. In order to help NGNs become more comfortable with the clinical setting and better equipped to navigate clinical care practices, orientation training that is specifically designed to meet their needs within their various workplace units can be extremely important. The results highlight how crucial it is to offer thorough training and support programs designed to increase NGNs' self-assurance and proficiency in clinical settings. The integration of NGNs into the nursing profession can be facilitated and their retention in the workforce increased by nursing education and healthcare institutions addressing the specific issues that NGNs encounter and providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Other contributing Factors:

Lack of Practical Experience: In order to successfully integrate their academic knowledge into clinical practice, recently graduated nurses sometimes find that they lack the practical experience that is required. According to Levett-Jones et al. (2010), clinical placements throughout nursing school programs may not adequately prepare NGNs for the realities of patient care, leaving them feeling uncertain and inadequate. NGNs may find it difficult to apply their knowledge in dynamic and unpredictable contexts, therefore the shift from simulated patient scenarios to actual clinical settings might be disorienting (Levett-Jones et al., 2015). **High Patient Acuity:** Newly graduated nurses (NGNs) often treat patients with acute, complex diseases that are more complex than what they were trained to treat. NGNs may still be acquiring advanced clinical judgment and critical thinking abilities necessary for managing critically sick patients, giving drugs, and handling emergencies (Al-Dossary et al., 2016). Furthermore, NGNs may experience increased stress and anxiety due to the pressure to deliver the best care possible while maintaining patient safety (Maben et al., 2012).

Communication Challenges: Although good communication is essential to nursing practice, NGNs may have trouble interacting with patients, families, and coworkers. Establishing a rapport with patients can be hampered by aggressiveness, cultural differences, and language barriers (O'Mahony et al., 2014). Communication difficulties may also be exacerbated by NGNs' inability to express their worries clearly or ask more seasoned medical personnel for clarification (Maben et al., 2012). **Time management:** In clinical settings, NGNs frequently have to prioritize activities and meet deadlines, thus they need to be adept at managing their time well in order to ensure timely service delivery. For NGNs, managing patient care, administrative tasks, and paperwork needs can be too much to handle, especially in hectic settings like emergency rooms or intensive care units (Fagerström & Kinnunen, 2016). According to Hayes et al. (2012), poor time management can result in stress, burnout, and jeopardized patient safety. **Ethical Dilemmas:** In their therapeutic work, NGNs may come across morally troubling situations that call into question their moral and professional integrity. These moral conundrums can occur in a variety of situations, including decisions about end-of-life care, conflicts between beneficence and patient autonomy, or violations of confidentiality (Johnstone & Kanitsaki, 2008). NGNs must

negotiate contradictory values, moral precepts, and institutional norms in order to manage these ethical complexities—often without clear direction or assistance (Numminen et al., 2017). Work-Life Balance: NGNs' personal life and wellbeing may be negatively impacted by the rigorous and erratic work hours associated with the nursing profession. Long hours, erratic shifts, and varying schedules can disrupt social interactions, leisure activities, and sleep cycles, which can lead to stress, exhaustion, and burnout in NGNs (Dall'Ora et al., 2019). Maintaining general wellbeing and reducing job discontent and turnover among NGNs require striking a balance between work and personal obligations (Duchscher & Cowin, 2004).

At the end, the interplay of various challenges faced by newly graduated nurses (NGNs) underscores the pivotal role of personal attitude in overcoming these obstacles. Among these challenges, heavy workload emerges as particularly daunting, echoing findings by O'Shea and Kelly and Parker et al. The discrepancy between international standards and the nurse-to-patient ratio in Hong Kong public hospitals exacerbates this issue, affecting NGNs across different clinical settings. Contrary to some studies, which suggest a higher workload in specific wards, the burden appears pervasive across acute and subacute environments, posing significant stressors to NGNs.

Insufficient preparation from academic training compounds the challenge, with NGNs reporting a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Despite simulation training, limitations in clinical practice hinder skill development, contributing to a lack of confidence, especially in emergency scenarios. While orientation and mentorship programs offer potential solutions, support varies among hospitals, highlighting the need for standardized training protocols. Communication presents another hurdle, with NGNs grappling with interactions with doctors, senior nurses, patients, and relatives. Hierarchical dynamics and a blame culture further impede effective communication, aligning with prior research findings. High expectations, both internal and external, exacerbate anxiety among NGNs, exacerbated by a complaint culture and labor shortages in public organizations. Despite these challenges, NGNs exhibit resilience and optimism, demonstrating a willingness to confront difficulties rather than resigning. Their proactive approach to self-directed learning and efforts to improve communication skills reflect a positive personal attitude, contributing to their perseverance. This underscores the importance of fostering a supportive environment and implementing comprehensive training initiatives to empower NGNs in navigating the transition into the nursing profession.

Conclusion:

In summary, the move from student to practicing nurse is a critical stage in the career path of newly graduated nurses (NGNs), fraught with difficulties and complications. NGNs face several challenges during this process, from the practical requirements of clinical practice to the moral and emotional conundrums that arise when providing nursing care. The results of several research demonstrate the complex nature of these issues and emphasize the necessity of all-encompassing support systems and specialized interventions in order to enable NGNs to

successfully integrate into the nursing workforce. A major obstacle that NGNs encounter is the disparity between their theoretical understanding and real-world experience. NGNs may experience emotions of inadequacy and uncertainty as a result of clinical rotations throughout nursing school programs failing to adequately prepare them for the dynamic and unpredictable nature of patient care. Additionally, NGNs frequently struggle with time management, communication, and ethical difficulties in clinical practice, which makes their transfer into the nursing profession even more difficult. It need a multidimensional strategy that includes mentoring, education, and organizational support to address these issues. Nursing education programs ought to prioritize closing the knowledge gap between theory and practice by giving NGNs access to clinical settings for practical learning and skill development. Furthermore, mentorship programs can assist NGNs become more competent and confident in their professions by providing them with vital advice and support as they negotiate the challenges of nursing practice. Another important factor in creating a caring and supportive work environment for NGNs is organizational support. Initiatives to support work-life balance, continuous education and training, and the development of a respectful and cooperative culture among healthcare teams should be put into place by healthcare facilities. Healthcare companies may raise retention rates, improve patient outcomes, and develop a capable and adaptable nursing staff by attending to the special demands and difficulties faced by NGNs. In summary, although the move from student to practicing nurse can offer difficulties, it also marks a time of great personal and professional development for NGNs. Stakeholders may facilitate a seamless transition for new graduate nurses (NGNs) and provide the groundwork for a prosperous and satisfying nursing profession by anticipating and proactively addressing these problems.

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