Nurse Role Adaptation: A Concept Analysis

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Abstract

Nurse role adaptation is an important concept that explains the process of becoming a nurse and developing a professional identity for an individual who joins the nursing profession. This concept analysis aimed to explain nurse role adaptation for further use in nursing education and practice. Walker and Avant's concept analysis approach was used to analyze the concept.

Keywords Nurse, Role, Adaptation, Concept, Analysis

1. Introduction

Nursing is a challenging and demanding profession; therefore, nurses need to adapt themselves to the nurse role to remain satisfied and progress in their career (1). Successful role adaptation is also a predictor of having a more satisfied and skilled nursing force in the nursing profession (2). Additionally, it has been discussed that newly graduated nurses encounter different challenging situations at the start of their careers, which alter their level of comfort and threaten their future goal of becoming expert nurses (3). Moreover, abundant literature has identified the experiences of new nurses, but little is known about their role adaptation (2, 4, 5). Adding to the discourse, it has been reported that becoming a nurse adds new roles and responsibilities to life which require healthy adaptation to environmental changes. It is considered vital for novice nurses to understand their professional role and thrive for healthy adaptation. (4, 5, 6, 7). Therefore, nurse role adaptation needs to be explained to understand the whole phenomenon of becoming a nurse and to facilitate the professional transition among nurses (3). The purpose of this concept analysis is to answer the question of how nurses adopt their role as nurses and to provide new knowledge, understanding, and clarity about the concept of nurse role adaptation by using Walker and Avant's method of concept analysis.

2. Material and Methods

According to McEwen & Wills (2018), "concept analysis is conducted when concepts require clarification or further development to define them for a nurse scholar's purpose, whether that is research, theory development, or practice" (p. 79). This concept analysis utilizes Walker and Avant's concept analysis approach, which comprises eight steps: select the concept, determine the aim and purpose, identify possible uses and defining attributes of the concept, identify model, borderline, related, and contrary cases, explain antecedents and consequences, and define empirical referents (p. 79–80) (8).

3. Results

3.1. Definitions and Uses of The Concept

This section provides a detailed description of the concept, its definition from different sources, and the use of the role adaptation concept by different authors in various situations.

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References	Use of Concept
(Webster dictionary, 2022).	Webster's online dictionary defines the role as "*A socially expected behavior pattern usually determined by an individual's status in a particular society*" and adaptation as: "*adjustment to environmental conditions*"
(9)	Littlejohn (2018) defines "Adaptation" in English Oxford Dictionary as: "*the action or process of adapting one thing to fit with another, or suit specified conditions, esp. a new or changed environment*" (p.10).
(10)	Sister Callista Roy has used the adaptation concept in her model. Roy's Adaptation Theory views the person as an adaptive system that is in constant interaction with his environmental stimuli, which have the potential to alter the person's unique wholeness. A person's major task is to maintain his integrity while facing environmental stimuli. This integrity is the degree of wholeness that is achieved by adapting to the needed change. Environmental stimuli act together and influence the adaptation level of the person which is the "*ability to respond positively to the situation*" (p.264).
(11)	Zarakovsky (2014) defines "*human adaptation as a process ensuring the attainment of a particular objective.*" (p.589)
(12)	Ramona T. Mercer (2014) used the role attainment concept in her theory of maternal role attainment. Her theory describes four stages of role acquisition: the first is the anticipatory stage, or psychosocial preparation for the role. Second is the formal stage: the identification of the role's uniqueness by copying the expert's behaviors and following their advice. The third is the informal stage: the progression from rigidly following others' directions to the use of personal judgement to perform the role. The final stage is role identity, characterized by a sense of harmony, confidence, satisfaction in the role, attachment to the infant, and congruence of self and motherhood as others accept her performance.
(13)	Schlossberg (1981) developed a model for human adaptation to transition. This model explains that human adaptation to transition is a dynamic process that moves through various stages of transition. Adaptation to transition is influenced by three sets of characteristics: the characteristics of transition, the characteristics of pre- and post-transition supports and physical settings, and the characteristics of the individual.
(14)	Edwards (2016) identified the nurse's challenges as environmental stimuli during role adaptation as; nurses while performing their tasks and fulfilling professional responsibilities, encounter different devastating situations and challenges that drain their physical and mental energy and make them stressed.
(15)	Hudgins (2016) explained the need for successful nurse role adaptation by stating that long working hours are a big challenge for nurses; nurses have to work back-to-back or extended shifts, which causes fatigue. Continuous encounters with such challenging situations develop professional dissatisfaction and lead to stress and burnout among nurses. Nurses need to adapt their roles successfully to overcome these challenges.
(16)	Cheng & Catling (2015), while explaining successful nurse adaptation, stated that nurses' adaptation is their ability to face adversity and bounce back from a difficult situation and the way they grow with adverse experiences.
(17)	Hwang & Shin (2018) reported that becoming resilient is a process of adaptation to adversity. Individuals with resilience are found to be equipped with some characteristics that help them cope with the stresses and uncertainties of life.
(3)	Maclellan (2015) says that the transition to the nurse role is challenging; new nurses experience role confusion while defining a distinct place for themselves within the healthcare team. With successful nurse role adaptation, a novice nurse no longer remains

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	a newcomer but rather becomes an insider of the profession, which enhances job performance, job satisfaction, professional commitment, and the intention to remain in nursing.
(1)	Dinmohammadi et al. (2013) explain nurse role adaptation as a transition from novice nurse to expert nurse, which depends on congruency among the values, norms, educational expectations, and reality of professional work.
(18)	Aldasheva (2014) describes role adaptation as the individual having an active role in the process of adaptation, he uses different styles as adaptation strategies, and his manifested behavior is adaptive.
(19)	Bandura (1998) talks about human adaptation by relating it to perceived self-efficacy and self-regulation mechanisms used by the individual to modify himself and adapt or adjust to society.

3.2. Defining Attributes

Defining attributes are the characteristics repeated in the literature that are associated with the concept. These are the elements that make up the concept and differentiate it from other related concepts (3). In this concept analysis, the defining attributes of nurse role adaptation demonstrate how nurses adapt to their nurse role in the nursing profession.

This concept analysis identifies the following defining attributes of the nurse role: effective coping, socialization, professional identity formation, and patient care competence.

3.2.1.   Effective Coping

Roy's adaptation model explains that, as an open living system, the person (the nurse) receives stimuli from his environment and self. Adaptation occurs when an individual (a nurse) responds positively to environmental changes (10). According to the theory of human adaptation, adaptation is a process oriented towards the rearrangements of regulatory mechanisms to maintain the vital activity of the body (20). Therefore, it can be deduced that when a nurse starts practising, she receives different stimuli that have the potential to change her comfort level. On this journey, effective coping mechanisms help to respond to and manage these stimuli and effectively adapt to the role by using coping strategies including self-control and self-efficacy, emotional/situational intelligence, and interpersonal relationships.

3.2.2.   Professional Socialization

Adaptation is the process of socialising and becoming familiar with the norms, values, and attitudes of society.

A nurse's role adaptation is a dynamic and interactive process in which a nurse internalizes professional values, beliefs, knowledge, and skills and develops a professional identity as an outcome. Nurses learn and display the professional knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to fulfil the nurse role and become part of the community of practice (21).

3.2.3.   Professional Identity Formation

It is a component of an individual's overall identity, formed by professional, educational, and social values, that distinguishes a profession from others and makes an individual a professional. Nurses develop professional identity throughout their careers by internalizing a sense of professionalism and professional belongingness (21, 22). It is a crucial element of becoming a nurse and nurse role adaptation.

3.2.4.   Patient Care Competence

After successful adaptation to the nurse role, a nurse can fulfil the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and moral needs of her patient. She demonstrates a therapeutic relationship with her patient and performs her duties with more dedication and commitment.

Based on the literature searched related to role attainment and adaptation, this concept of nurse role adaptation is defined as:

"Nurse role adaptation is a developmental, interactive and multi-dimensional process characterized by effective coping to the environmental changes, developing professional socialization and identity formation, gaining professional competence and demonstrating therapeutic nurse-patient relationship and attainment of role satisfaction as a nurse".

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3.3. Model Case

Walker and Avant explain that a model case is an example that truly presents all of the critical / defining attributes of the concept under study, these cases can be from real life, constructed, or taken from the literature (8). The following constructed case presents a true model case of the concept with all of its attributes:

Ghzala is a registered nurse working in the critical care unit. In her current job description, she interacts with the team of healthcare providers on a daily basis. She handles workplace conflicts and problems more intelligently and confidently. Ghazala can rely on her abilities of self-control and self-efficacy in challenging situations and remains positive to solve problems. She has good working relations with her colleagues, and she often used to discuss clinical concerns with them to take collective decisions. She also used to discuss debatable issues with her shift in charge, who is a role model for her, and she valued learning from her professional experiences. She provides care for her patients with dedication and in a professional manner. Her good patient care practice is a reflection of her sound nursing knowledge and skill competence. She is very satisfied with her job and her professional title as a nurse'.

3.4. Borderline Case

The borderline case explains most of the defining attributes of the concept. The following constructed case is a borderline case of the nurse role adaptation concept. Sara is a registered nurse in the medical ward. She has a very good relationship with her colleagues and demonstrates a good teamwork approach. She feels confident about her nursing skills and provides care to her patients with professional commitment and dedication. Her shift in charge is very happy with her performance and her patient care practices. Sara feels that she often gets frustrated with job conflicts and finds it difficult to solve her problems. She has good working relations but the nature of the nursing job leaves Sara feeling stressed and anxious for a time, and she often tries to find meaning in being a nurse.

3.5. Contrary Case

The following constructed contrary case is an example where the defining attributes of nurse role adaptation are not present.

Riaz is a registered nurse in the surgical ward, which is often poorly staffed in comparison to its bed occupancy rate. Riaz has to interact with the healthcare team, but he lacks the confidence to communicate his concerns and present patient complaints. He is even less confident about his nursing care practices. Most of the time, he remains unable to manage workplace conflicts and solve problems. His shift in charge is not satisfied with his performance. Riaz does not discuss his problem with his colleagues or even with his family. He often tries to find the meaning of being a nurse but is unable to place himself in the nursing profession. He is very dissatisfied with his job and often thinks that he is not fit for nursing and should leave this profession.

3.6. Antecedents

Antecedents are the events or indicators that must occur before the concept takes place. Literature has reported different antecedents for successful nurse role adaptation: Professional education and training: Nurses with more professional knowledge and training adapt to the nurse role easily. Nurses with high professional knowledge and training understand professional expectations and develop coping skills to adjust to job demands. It is positively related to role clarity and nurse role adaptation (23).

Experiential learning: For successful nurse role adaptation, it is necessary to provide experiential learning opportunities to nursing graduates under the supervision of professional experts. Novice nurses learn the knowledge, skills, and behavior required to fulfil the nurse role through experiential learning at the workplace. Learning through reflection and reflexivity is a basic part of experiential learning and nurse role adaptation (24).

Role modelling helps nurses learn and display the professional knowledge, skills, and behaviours required to fulfil their professional roles. Role models are the experts who provide guidance and motivate nurses to achieve professional goals, and help them develop professional identities (21).

3.7. Consequences

Consequences are events that can happen as a result of the concept. In this concept analysis, the consequences of successful nurse role adaptation can be classified into nurse-related and patient-related outcomes. Nurse-related outcomes are improvement in job performance and satisfaction (2), competence (22), professional commitment (21), and the mental well-being of the nurse (25). Patient or healthcare-related outcomes of nurse role adaptation are therapeutic nurse-patient relationships, better nursing care, and healthy teamwork (26, 27).

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3.8. Empirical Referents

According to Walker and Avant's method of concept analysis, an empirical referent is the existence of classes of categories of real phenomena that explain the concept itself (28). As nurse role adaptation is reflected in clinical competence, level of mastery, professional socialization, and attainment of professional identity, it can best be determined by exploring the professional journey of the transition from novice to expert nurse. There is no tool available to assess nurse role adaptation, however, it can be measured by assessing outcomes of nurse role adaptation, including the level of job satisfaction, professional competence, and mental well-being among nurses.

4. Conclusion

It was hard to pin down one definition applicable to the phenomenon of nurse role adaptation. However, the concept was explained with the help of a literature analysis and a review of the previous uses of the concept in different contexts. What is important for nursing educators and leaders to take from this concept analysis is the process of nurse role adaptation. Graduate nurses who are considered novices need successful adaptation to the nurse role, which can be facilitated by preparing them to adapt to the nurse role. Clinical supervision, role modelling, mentorship, and experiential learning can help them in their professional transformation and adjustment to the new role. Nursing educators, clinical supervisors, and mentors should provide newly graduated nurses with a plate form to develop their professional identity and understand their professional roles and responsibilities. Nurse role adaptation should be facilitated by effective socialization and supervised clerkship programs. It should be kept in focus by the educators and trainers that a nurse needs to adapt to the nurse role to stay and succeed in the profession.

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