

MOTIVATION OF CROATIAN HEALTH WORKERS TO GO ABROAD

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Prior to Croatia's accession to the European Union, nurses could be employed in Germany under an agreement between the German Federal Agency and the Croatian Employment Service. Following Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2015, the labor market has become more accessible and open.

Objective: Explore the motivation of Croatian health workers to go abroad.

Subjects and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted. The study was conducted using a survey consisting of 29 questions and involving a total of 102 respondents, and three interviews were conducted for research purposes.

Results: The participants attend retraining to ensure a better future for their children abroad (38.1 %), to find a good, steady and better paid job (23.5 %) and to obtain a dignified pension (63.7 %). As the main reason for emigration, respondents cite corruption and injustice (65.7 %), non-arrangement of the state (59.8 %), while seeing the biggest problem in leaving the family (20.6 %). At the end of 2019 Croatia was abandoned by 1,438 nurses, mainly due to poor working conditions and dissatisfaction with the material conditions of work in Croatia. This trend included other health professionals.

Conclusion: The main factor for the emigration of health professionals is the political organization of the state, which is manifested by corruption and injustice, clientelism, political affiliation, and replaces man's knowledge, ability, skill, value and dignity.

Keywords: motivation, departure, health professionals, abroad

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INTRODUCTION

The first wave of emigration from Croatia began in the 1960s and 1970s. The second wave of emigration was marked by war events in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1). The positive effects of migration in the recipient country are filling seasonal and physically less attractive jobs, increasing fiscal revenues (taxes, etc.), settling young, able-bodied populations, rejuvenating the population by establishing young families. (2). The reasons for emigration state: dissatisfaction with status and working conditions, social–historical events (war), inability to develop, achievement of results, progress and creativity (3). This begins „tradition“ emigration of Croatian intellectuals. Furthermore, the causes of „brain drain“ are unemployment, labor insecurity, low wages, insufficient interest of governing political structures to improve the position, work and influence of scientists. Scientists abroad are attracted to more complex research jobs, better working conditions and a greater opportunity for self - realization. Emigration can be viewed as a subjective need due to the dissatisfaction of life in the home country and the need to realize its needs and values (4). Croatian intellectuals emigrate primarily because they can get better financial and material working conditions in the recipient country

for the same job, but also because they have lost confidence in the political leadership and, consequently, the economic and financial stability of the homeland (5). After Croatia's accession to the European Union, the departure of young educated people turned into mass emigration. It is considered that every third Croat with a degree makes his knowledge and experience available to neighboring countries such as Germany, Austria, Slovenia, but also to more distant countries such as England and Ireland (6).

In 2015, Germany opened the door to the free entry of Croatian health workers into the German labor market, which accelerated and simplified the process of their departure from their homeland (7). The dissatisfaction of the nurses is manifested in overcrowding due to their insufficient number, resulting in fatigue and exhaustion, then in the impossibility of progress according to the level of education and work experience and numerous unpaid overtime hours (8). As for numerical indicators, according to the data of the Croatian Chamber of Physiotherapists, until November 18, 2019 96 certificates were issued, in 2016 54 were issued, in 2017 85, and in 2018 95 certificates (9) for work abroad. In the period between 2015 to 2019, 28 midwives reported to the Croatian Chamber of Midwives to go abroad. 33 of them

requested the necessary requirements for the purpose of recognizing a foreign professional qualification abroad (10). The European certificate from 2013 to the end of 2019 was requested by 11 masters of pharmacy, while for the same time period 105 other applications were issued for the purpose of working abroad (11).

According to the director of the Master's College, the number of participants since the beginning of the economic crisis (2008) and the wave of emigration (2013) has increased by 50.0%. The largest share consists of students of the health and social sectors (caregivers, geronto housewives, nannies) whose main goal is to go abroad (12).

The main objective of this study is to explore the motivation of Croatian health workers to go abroad before and today.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

A cross - sectional study was conducted. The collection of results lasted from early December 2019 to March 2020. A total of 105 respondents participated in the study, of which 102 respondents completed the above questionnaire, and an interview was conducted with three participants. The largest share of data was obtained through quantitative research, while qualitative research (interview) brings a slightly deeper insight into respondents 'thoughts.

Collected data are processed by statistical methods and aggregated as a whole. Then, with the help of tables and diagrams, the sociodemographic significance of the questionnaire is shown. The interview was conducted with the help of questions from the questionnaire, with a note of personal opinions, observations and statements related to the given topic. Both parts of the research complement each other and confirm the results obtained. The survey was conducted using a survey and interview. The survey was prepared by the author for data collection purposes. The same contains 29 issues related to personal, social, educated and other characteristics of participants and their attitudes related to migration, which are significant for research. The survey was conducted in five Zagreb colleges that organize and implement programs for the education of people over the age of 18.

Statistical analysis

Data analysis was performed using Statistical Package for Social Science statistical software version 26.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY). The collected data were processed by the descriptive statistics method. For count data, frequencies and percentages were used. Differences in categorical variables were tested by the Hi-square test and the Fisher exact test. The

probability level in all tests of $p < 0.05$ is taken as statistically significant.

RESULTS

The study involved 84.3 % of women and 15.7 % of men. Respondents aged between

26-51 believe ($p < 0.05$) that the political organization is the main culprit for the bad economic situation in Croatia (Figure 1).

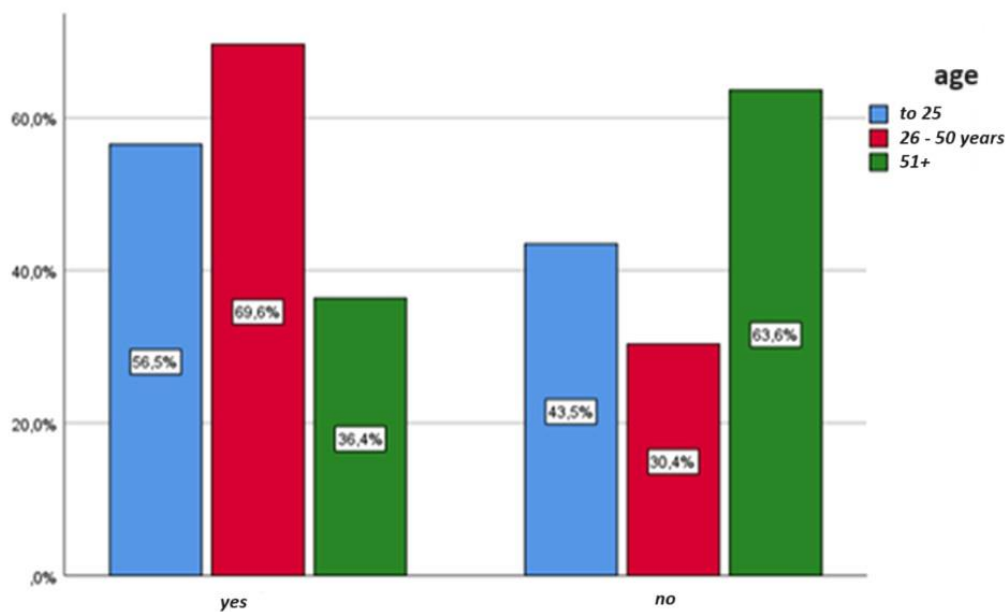


Figure 1. - Distribution of answers to the question: What do you consider to be the main culprit for the poor socio-economic situation in Croatia (unemployment, poverty, emigration): political organization?

The level of signification in the question: „How much your salary has been in Croatia so far“, the value of Fisher's exact test was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which means that

a statistically significant difference was observed with respect to the working status of the respondents (Figure 2).

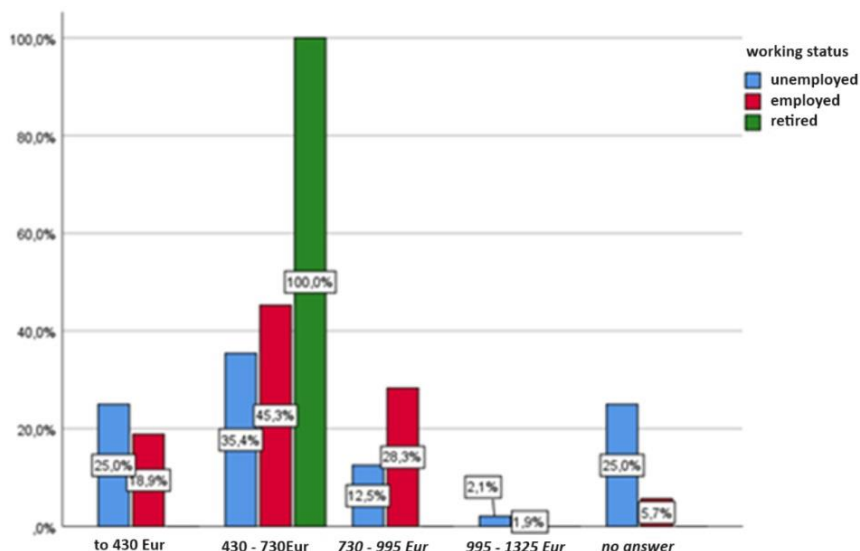


Figure 2. - Distribution of answers to the question: *How much has your salary in Croatia been so far?*

The level of signification in the question: „If you think that you could live more with dignity than a Croatian pension?“, from a foreign pension (health worker), the value of Fisher's exact test was 0.040 ($p < 0.05$),

which means that a statistically significant difference was observed with respect to the employment status of the respondents (Figure 3).

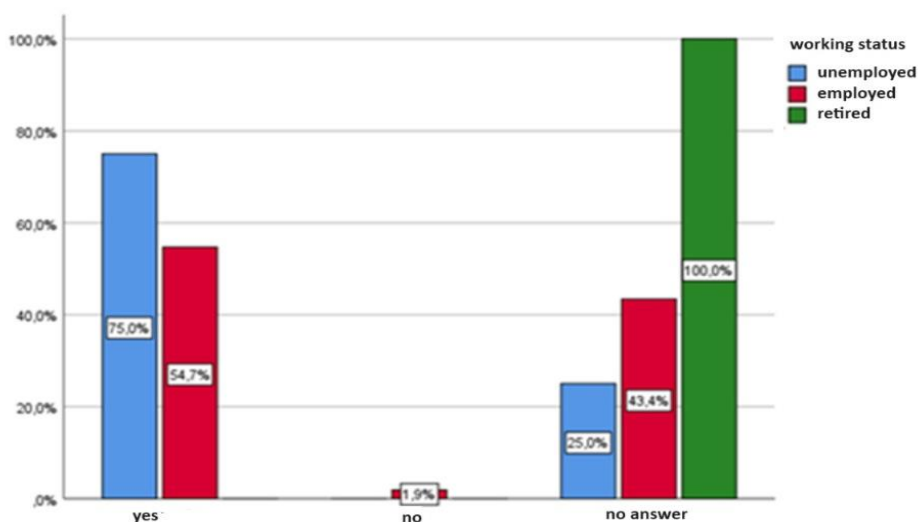


Figure 3. - Distribution of answers to the question: *Do you think that you could live with a more dignified life than a Croatian pension from a foreign pension (health worker)?*

The level of signification in the question: “How much do you think you will stay abroad,” was 0.007 ($p < 0.05$), which means

that a statistically significant difference was observed with respect to the gender of the respondents. In doing so, 37.5% of

male respondents state that they do not want to return at all, while 26.7% of

female respondents state that they want to return to Croatia after 5 years (Figure 4).

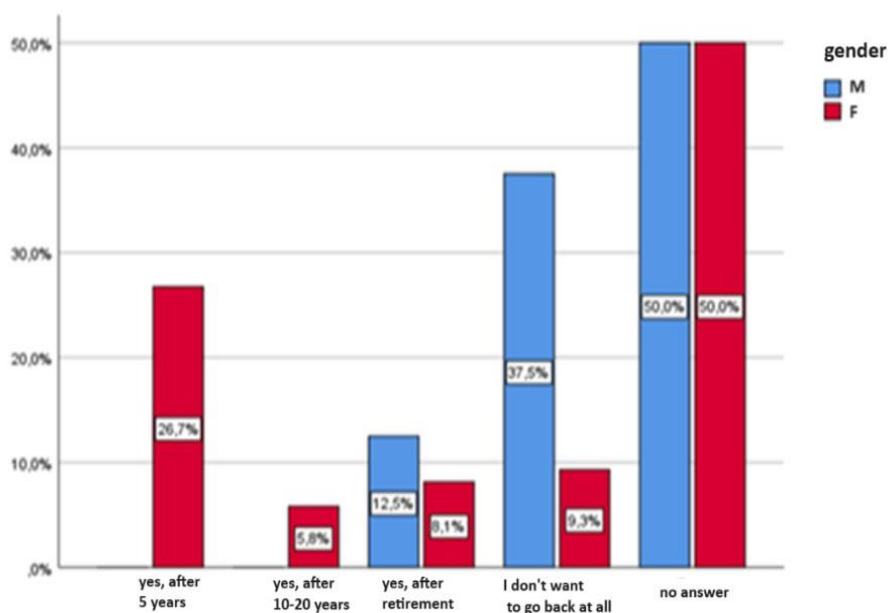


Figure 4. - Distribution of answers to the question: How much do you plan to stay abroad?

The level of signification in the question: "What type of program you attend at the College?", the value of Fisher's exact test was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which means that a statistically significant difference was observed with respect to age of

respondents. In doing so, 65.2% of respondents up to 25 years of age are unanswered, while respondents aged 26 to 50 and 51 and over list training to a significantly greater extent (Figure 5).

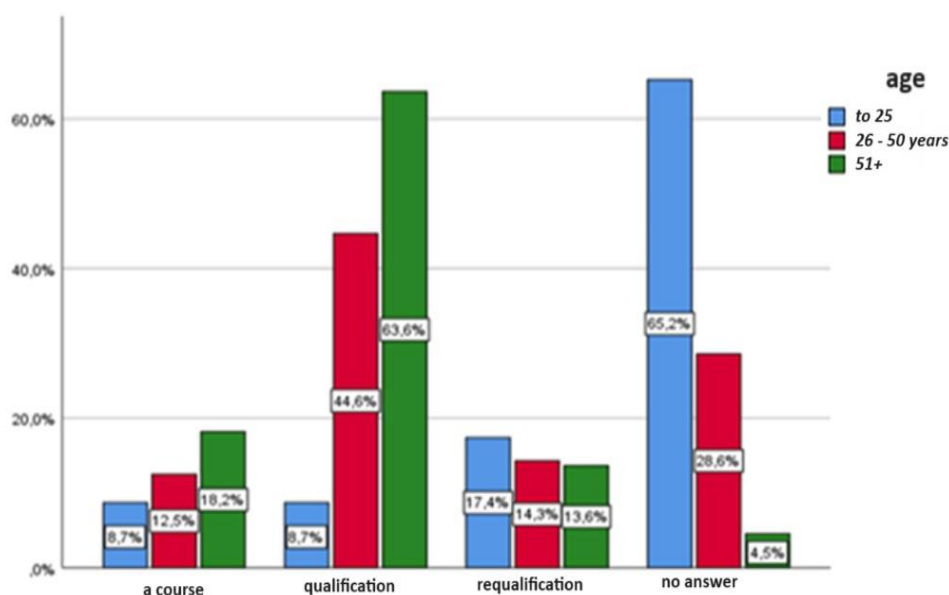


Figure 5. - *Distribution of answers to the question: What kind of program do you attend at the College?*

DISCUSSION

A number of surveys of the main factors of emigration of health professionals abroad have been conducted in Croatia so far. The results of these studies confirm the quantitative results of this research. Unlike the previous analyzes of the main emigration factors conducted on health workers, this sample survey has participants of vocational occupations who become health professionals after completing their education (training, retraining), and with the aim of emigration, thus increasing the number of young people from Croatia to European countries. As there is no research conducted on the same topic, there is no relevant data to compare the data obtained. Therefore, the

author will list the main features of quantitative and qualitative research in the discussion. The results of the research showed that the main hypothesis, which as the main reasons why participants enroll in retraining / training states their intention to move abroad and find a job there, is partially confirmed. The secondary hypothesis that gender does not affect attitudes about going abroad has not been confirmed. Another secondary hypothesis, that gender affects attitudes about return from abroad, has been confirmed. Most respondents, as noted, implement a retraining program to find a better job and not necessarily abroad. But it should be mentioned here that some of the respondents who rounded up in the questionnaire so as not to move abroad, in

addition to the rounded answer, were masterfully corresponded to move out if given the opportunity for a good job. So, even some attendees who would prefer to stay in Croatia would not refuse a good business offer from abroad. Taking into account the above facts and the data obtained from the interview, we are certainly getting unfavorable indicators for our homeland. Ljubić conducted a study of the analysis of the factors influencing the emigration of nurses and proved that nurses are 74.7% more prone to emigration than medical technicians. This role is played by old age - those aged 25 to 35 they are more prone to emigration 28.6% and the level of education - those with completed secondary education are more likely to emigrate 64%, which is in line with this research. Also, the first selection of the recipient country is Germany for 63.3% of respondents. As many as 86.7 % of respondents do not think about returning to their homeland at all, and the same was confirmed by this study. The difference exists in the main cause of emigration - in Ljubić it is dissatisfaction with working conditions 67.1 %, while the results of this research indicate that the main reason for emigration is social injustice and corruption 65.7% (13). The Troškot and Prskalo also cite clientelism and corruption, political and kinship ties as the main reasons for the departure of highly

educated young people. In addition to these factors, young people are demotivated by the realization that their advancement and training depends on subjective and biased criteria. Therefore, the state should necessarily invest in the most endangered areas from which there is the largest brain drain: health, technical and scientific, in order to reduce the emigration of experts (14). In a conducted study, Potočnik and Adamovac confirmed once again that young people from Croatia are emigrating due to the dominant influence of political roles and disorder of the country, with the biggest challenge being separation from their families.

Other reasons for leaving the homeland are: dissatisfaction with life, unemployment, the influence of friends and the pessimism of young people. Respondents described emigration as a positive experience that brought them a sense of happiness, highlighted the increase in social responsibility and the need for their own action, a better quality of life, and at least higher earnings (15). Škalec conducted a study considering the thoughts of female nursing students of the Croatian Catholic University on migration after graduation and obtained the results of how students aged 36 thought about migration, 32.3 %, those who have work experience 29.5 %, and mostly are single 30.6 % with knowledge of a certain level

of German 19.0 % (16). According to Vlačić, the motivation for moving abroad is found by participants in a greater opportunity to improve and advance 48 %, while the positive attitude about professional careers is held by thirty-year-olds, those with high and higher education and 15 years of work experience (17).

The advantage of the research is the correlation of quantitative and qualitative research results that confirm the validity of the data obtained, while the lack is a large proportion, as many as 24.5 % of participants, who did not give any answer to the question of the main reasons for enrollment. In addition, it should be noted that only 15.7 % of male people participated in the survey and that the survey was conducted only in the area of the city of Zagreb, so the results cannot be generalized.

A comparison of the results of the research conducted over the last three years shows that there are non-negligible similarities in the results and that the state has not taken concrete investment measures to prevent the emigration of young highly educated and able-bodied populations. Immigrants give preference to members of the European Union who thus fill their jobs with highly educated, often experienced people who often become cheap labor, while the negative consequences of emigrant countries are seen in the first

place in an increasing share of the elderly population.

CONCLUSION

Croatia's accession to the European Union has enabled more free movement of Croatian citizens in the European Union labor market. A large proportion of expatriates are also nurses and other health professionals, as confirmed by data available to official associations, societies and chambers of health professionals. The motivation for the emigration of respondents is: good pay for work, desire for further education in the profession, the need to ensure a better future for your family and higher pensions, and the main reason for emigration is the organization of the state, in which corruption and injustice predominate.


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MOTIVACIJA HRVATSKIH ZDRASTVENIH DJELATNIKA ZA ODLAZAK U INOZEMSTVO

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SAŽETAK

Uvod: Prije ulaska Republike Hrvatske u Europsku uniju, medicinske sestre mogle su se u Njemačkoj zaposliti na temelju sporazuma između Njemačke savezne agencije i Hrvatskog zavoda za zapošljavanje. Nakon pristupa Republike Hrvatske Europskoj uniji 2015. godine, tržište rada postalo je pristupačnije i otvorenije.

Cilj: Istražiti motivaciju hrvatskih zdravstvenih djelatnika za odlazak u inozemstvo.

Ispitanici i metode: Studija je provedena pomoću ankete koja se sastoji od 29 pitanja i u kojoj je sudjelovalo ukupno 102 ispitanika, a u svrhu istraživanja provedena su i tri intervjua.

Rezultati: Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su da polaznici pohađaju prekvalifikaciju kako bi u inozemstvu osigurali bolju budućnost svojoj djeci (38,1 %), kako bi pronašli dobar, stalan i bolje plaćen posao (23,5 %) i priskrbili dostojanstvenu mirovinu (63,7 %). Kao glavni razlog iseljavanja, ispitanici navode korupciju i nepravdu (65,7 %), neuređenost države (59,8 %), dok najveći problem vide u napuštanju obitelji (20,6 %). Krajem 2019. godine Republiku Hrvatsku je napustilo 1438 medicinskih sestara, uglavnom zbog loših radnih uvjeta i nezadovoljstva materijalnim uvjetima rada u Republici Hrvatskoj. Taj trend obuhvatio je i druge zdravstvene djelatnike.

Zaključak: Glavni čimbenik iseljavanja zdravstvenih djelatnika jest političko ustrojstvo države koje se očituje korupcijom i nepravdom, klijentelizmom, političkom pripadnosti te se zamjenjuje čovjekovo znanje, sposobnost, vještina, vrijednost i dostojanstvo.

Ključne riječi: motivacija, odlazak, zdravstveni djelatnici, inozemstvo

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