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Embracing Change in the Context of Paternal Postpartum Depression: A Concept Analysis Using the Walker and Avant Method

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Abstract

The transition to fatherhood requires significant emotional and behavioral adaptation, yet many fathers experience depression when unable to adjust to their new roles. Understanding "embracing change" as a concept is essential for developing effective nursing interventions to support paternal mental health and family well-being. Purpose, this concept analysis aims to clarify the meaning, defining characteristics, antecedents, and consequences of "embracing change" in the context of paternal postpartum depression and maternity nursing care. Method, The Walker and Avant systematic concept analysis method was employed to examine the concept through comprehensive literature review and case construction. Key Findings, "Embracing change" in the paternal context is characterized by three essential attributes: (1) strong self-awareness of emotions and changing identity, (2) a supportive environment providing empathy and validation, and (3) effective communication with partners and healthcare providers. Antecedents include resilience, adaptability, and prior coping experiences. Positive consequences include improved mental health, enhanced family relationships, and increased paternal involvement in child-rearing. This concept analysis provides nursing with a comprehensive framework for understanding how fathers adapt to parenthood and manage postpartum depression. Future research should develop interventions to support fathers in embracing change and examine long-term mental health outcomes.

Keywords: concept analysis, embracing change, paternal postpartum depression, fatherhood transition

Abstrak

Transisi menjadi seorang ayah memerlukan adaptasi emosional dan perilaku yang signifikan, namun banyak ayah mengalami depresi ketika tidak dapat menyesuaikan diri dengan peran baru mereka. Memahami "menerima perubahan" sebagai sebuah konsep sangat penting untuk mengembangkan intervensi keperawatan yang efektif guna mendukung kesehatan mental ayah dan kesejahteraan keluarga. Analisis konsep ini bertujuan untuk memperjelas makna, karakteristik yang mendefinisikan, antecedent, dan konsekuensi dari "menerima perubahan" dalam konteks depresi postpartum paternal dan perawatan keperawatan maternitas. Metode analisis konsep sistematis Walker dan Avant digunakan untuk meneliti konsep tersebut melalui tinjauan pustaka yang komprehensif dan konstruksi kasus. Temuan Utama, "Menerima perubahan" dalam konteks paternal ditandai oleh tiga atribut penting: (1) kesadaran diri yang kuat terhadap emosi dan perubahan identitas, (2) lingkungan yang mendukung dengan empati dan validasi, dan (3) komunikasi yang efektif dengan pasangan dan penyedia layanan kesehatan. Antecedent mencakup ketahanan, adaptabilitas, dan pengalaman mengatasi sebelumnya. Konsekuensi positif termasuk kesehatan mental yang lebih baik, hubungan keluarga yang lebih baik, dan peningkatan keterlibatan ayah dalam pengasuhan anak. Analisis konsep ini memberikan perawat kerangka kerja yang komprehensif untuk memahami bagaimana para ayah beradaptasi dengan peran sebagai orang tua dan mengelola depresi pascapersalinan. Penelitian selanjutnya harus mengembangkan intervensi untuk mendukung para ayah dalam menerima perubahan dan meneliti hasil kesehatan mental jangka panjang.

Kata Kunci: analisis konsep, menerima perubahan, depresi pascapersalinan pada ayah, transisi menjadi ayah



Introduction

The Greek philosopher, Heraclitus of Ephesus, said “The only constant in life is change”. The concept of change is an inherent aspect of human existence. It is, therefore, imperative to determine how we respond to this phenomenon. By embracing change, adapting to new circumstances, and viewing it as an opportunity for growth, we can navigate the inevitable fluctuations of life with resilience, wisdom, and a positive outlook. It is crucial to recognize that change is not only inevitable but also a fundamental aspect of personal and collective development (Adaptovate, 2022; Councillor Kiri Dicker, 2023; Mawdudur Rahman, 2017).

The arrival of a child leads to profound changes that impact nearly every aspect of one's life. Adapting to these changes can be challenging for new mother and new father. New parents who are unable to adapt to the changes that occur following the birth of their child may experience postpartum depression. While postpartum depression is commonly associated with new mothers, research shows that up to 1 in 10 fathers also experience depression after the birth of a child (Edelstein et al., 2015).

The transition to fatherhood entails significant emotional adaptation, encompassing the experience of profound feelings of love and attachment to the infant, as well as the navigation of emotional challenges such as sleep deprivation, stress, and in some cases, postpartum depression (Da Costa, Zelkowitz, Letourneau, Chan, 2017). Additionally, there are changes in routine, which may necessitate the balancing of time between work, the partner, and responsibilities as a father. Furthermore, fathers must adapt to the lack of sleep and the irregular sleep schedule of the infant. Saxbe & Schetter (2020) identify the acquisition of a new role in caregiving as a significant aspect of this transition. This entails direct involvement in daily tasks such as feeding, nappy changing and soothing the infant, as well as the acquisition of skills in caring for and understanding the infant's needs. Furthermore, research indicates that fatherhood has an impact on self-identity, resulting in a transformation in self-perception as a father (Saxbe & Schetter, 2020).

Paternal postpartum depression is a significant issue that requires greater awareness, screening, and support from healthcare providers to improve outcomes for fathers, mothers, and their children (Edelstein et al., 2015; Pedersen, Maindal and Ryom, 2021). However, it's important to note that while there is evidence of paternal depression, specific screening and treatment services for affected men are still limited, indicating a need for further research and support services (Garthus-Niegel and Kittel-Schneider, 2023).

Role of nursing in addressing paternal postpartum depression by embracing change and adopting strategies to increase public awareness, provide support, and facilitate early intervention. Nurses can increase public awareness of by including information about it in existing programs geared to pre-natal and postpartum families (Chai and Shen, 2018; Young, 2019). Nurses can also connect fathers with support groups, counselling services, and online resources specifically tailored for paternal postpartum depression (Paulson and Bazemore, 2010; Chai and Shen, 2018; Young, 2019). Encouraging fathers to prioritize their physical and mental health through activities such as exercise, adequate sleep, and engaging in hobbies can have a positive impact on their well-being (Paulson and Bazemore, 2010). Finally, following up with new fathers or their family members about where to go for help with overcoming depression is critical (Chai and Shen, 2018; Young, 2019).



Nurses play a crucial role in addressing this gap. Nurses are uniquely positioned at the intersection of prenatal, intrapartum, and postpartum care, providing them with multiple opportunities to screen, educate, and support families, including fathers. Nurses can implement evidence-based strategies to increase public awareness, provide targeted support, and facilitate early intervention with fathers experiencing postpartum depression. These nursing strategies include incorporating paternal mental health information into existing prenatal and postpartum education programs, connecting fathers with resources and support services, and facilitating follow-up care.

Despite the growing acknowledgment of paternal postpartum depression, there persists a deficiency in clearly defining how fathers adjust to the significant psychological and societal transformations linked with fatherhood. The term "Embracing Change" is often hinted at but seldom explicitly outlined or methodically examined concerning paternal mental well-being. This lack of conceptual precision hampers the progression of tailored nursing strategies and evaluation instruments. Consequently, a concept elucidation employing the Walker and Avant technique is imperative to elucidate the definition, characteristics, precursors, and outcomes of "Embracing Change," furnishing a theoretical groundwork for clinical application and forthcoming investigations.

Methods

This concept analysis employs the systematic, eleven-step Walker and Avant method for concept analysis. This method is particularly well-suited for clarifying concepts of interest to nursing practice and theory, providing a structured approach to examining the meaning, attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents of a concept. The Walker and Avant method is one of the most widely utilized approaches in nursing concept analysis and has been extensively validated for clarifying nursing concepts that require operational definitions and theoretical development. This study employs the eight-step Walker and Avant (2019) method for concept analysis.

There are 5 objectives of this conceptual analysis: (1) selecting the concept, (2) determining the aims of analysis, (3) identifying all uses of the concept, (4) determining defining attributes, (5) constructing model and additional cases, (6) identifying antecedents and consequences, (7) defining empirical referents, and (8) defining hypotheses and implications for further development

Based on the background literature, the analyst's clinical experience in maternal-child nursing and family health nursing, and recognition of the critical gap in nursing science regarding paternal mental health, the concept selected for analysis is "embracing change" in the specific context of paternal adaptation to fatherhood and management of postpartum depression in fathers.

Results and Discussions

All Uses of the Concept

A comprehensive literature review is conducted to identify all uses of the concept of embracing change. This includes examining various definitions and perspectives from nursing and other fields.



Embracing Change in Nursing

Embracing change in Nursing is crucial for nurses to deliver exceptional patient care and effectively manage their professional trajectories. Embracing change allows nurses to get out in front of stress and adapt to new situations more effectively (Carlson, 2015).

Embracing Change in Relationships

Embracing change in relationships involves adapting to the partner's evolving needs and preferences and being open to new experiences together. This strengthens the bond and allows the relationship to grow (Huynh, 2024).

Embracing Change in Education and Learning

Embracing change in education means being open to exploring new subjects, methods, and perspectives. This fosters adaptability, critical thinking, and the ability to thrive in an ever-evolving world (Gerbi, 2024).

Embracing Change in Creative Pursuits

In creative fields, embracing change means being open to innovative ideas, experimenting with new techniques, and adapting to changes in your creative domain. This can lead to unique artistic expressions and keep you relevant (Christian, 2023).

Embracing Change in Fatherhood and Parental Adaptation

In the context most relevant to this analysis, embracing change in fatherhood involves a father's capacity to acknowledge and accept the profound transformation of identity, lifestyle, relationships, and responsibilities that accompany the birth of a child; to view this transformation as an opportunity for personal growth and development; to acquire new skills and knowledge necessary for effective parenting; and to maintain emotional well-being and healthy family relationships despite the substantial stressors inherent in the postpartum transition. This use of the concept integrates elements from all other contexts it requires openness to new learning (education), flexibility in relationships (relationships), resilience and stress management (nursing), and creative adaptation to new life circumstances (creative pursuits).

Defining Characteristics/Attributes

Through analysis of the literature and careful examination of the concept across contexts, three essential defining characteristics emerge as central to the concept of embracing change, Strong Self-Awareness: Having highly self-aware to understanding and interpret of our own feeling, thoughts and action; Supportive Environment: A safe space where someone can freely express their feelings, thoughts, and emotions. This approach focuses on providing empathy, understanding, and unconditional positive regard; Communication: Interaction with the intention to understand the patient's concerns, experiences, and opinions. Using verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

Constructing Model, Borderline, Related and Contrary Cases of Embracing Change*Model Case*

David, a 32-year-old male, has recently become a first-time father. In the months following the birth of his son, David began to present with symptoms of depression, including persistent sadness, fatigue, and difficulty bonding with his child. In reflecting on his difficulties, David came to recognize that a significant contributing factor was his inability to adapt to the evolving expectations associated with fatherhood. David had been socialized



within a traditional masculine paradigm, wherein men were expected to assume the primary role of breadwinner and disciplinarian within the family unit.

However, David 's wife, Sari, had encouraged him to assume a more active role in the provision of care and the performance of domestic tasks. David experienced feelings of being overwhelmed and inadequate as he attempted to relinquish his previous self-image as a stoic, emotionally distant father. With the assistance of a local parenting group, David commenced the process of reframing his understanding of masculinity and fatherhood. He came to understand that the notion of a "good father" did not necessitate adherence to rigid gender roles. Instead, it entailed a capacity for presence, nurturance, and emotional availability in the context of parenting.

Over time, David came to accept the changes in his life, deriving pleasure from the mundane aspects of childcare and forming a bond with his son. Furthermore, he endeavored to communicate openly with Sari about his difficulties, and they collaborated to establish a more equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities. As David became more at ease with his evolving role as a father, his symptoms of depression began to abate. He experienced a renewed sense of purpose and connection, not only with his child but also with his wife and the broader community of fathers.

Borderline Case

David, a 32-year-old male, had recently become a first-time father. In the months following the birth of his son, David began to display symptoms of depression, including persistent sadness, fatigue, and difficulty forming a bond with his child.

In reflecting on his difficulties, David came to recognise that a significant contributing factor was his inability to adapt to the evolving expectations associated with fatherhood. David had been socialised within the traditional masculine paradigm, which entails the expectation that men will assume the primary role of breadwinner and disciplinarian within the family unit.

However, David's wife, Sari, has encouraged him to assume a more active role in the provision of care and the execution of household tasks. David experiences feelings of being overwhelmed and inadequate as he attempts to shed his self-image as a stoic and emotionally distant father. Despite realising what was happening to him, David did not seek social support and help from friends, family, or social groups, so he continued to experience depression.

Related Case

David, a 32-year-old male, had recently become a first-time father. In the months following the birth of his son, David began to display symptoms of depression, including persistent sadness, fatigue, and difficulty forming a bond with his son.

In reflecting on his difficulties, David came to recognise that a significant contributing factor was his inability to adapt to the evolving expectations associated with fatherhood. David had been socialised within the traditional masculine paradigm, which entailed the expectation that men would assume the primary role of breadwinner and disciplinarian within the family unit.

However, David's wife, Sari, has encouraged him to assume a more active role in the provision of care and the execution of household tasks. David experienced feelings of being overwhelmed and inadequate as he attempted to shed his self-image as a stoic and emotionally distant father. David sought social support and help from friends and family,



who provided good support to David, but unfortunately neglected to provide mental health support to David.

Contrary Case

David, a 32-year-old father, recently had his new baby boy. David are experiencing significant fluctuations in mood, feelings of sadness, anxiety, and overwhelming emotions. David is struggling with paternal depression. David is experiencing difficulties in adjusting to their new roles as parents, and they are feeling a sense of disconnection from each other and their newborn child. David is experiencing difficulty in managing the demands of caring for a newborn. David experiences feelings of overwhelming distress, irritability, and anxiety. David is experiencing difficulties in reconciling his work commitments with his new parenting. The lack of sleep and the demands of caring for a newborn have resulted in exhaustion for David. David has supportive families who live nearby, but they are reluctant to request excessive assistance. Additionally, David has a few close friends, but their social circle has diminished due to the demands of new parenthood. He is aware that new mothers can experience baby blues, but he was previously unaware that fathers can also be affected. He is uncertain about how to navigate their new roles and provide effective support

Identify the Antecedents and Consequences

Antecedents

Antecedents are conditions or events that precede a concept and contribute to its emergence, helping to clarify and refine it (Walker & Avant, 2019). Previous experiences with mental health issues can influence someone cope with the stress and changes. Traits such as resilience, adaptability, and openness to new experiences can facilitate the acceptance of change. Confidence in one's ability to manage new responsibilities and challenges. Proactive parenting style and advantageous family background characteristics in early childhood. Fathers who were more involved and engaged in parenting during their child's early years tend to adapt better to the paternal role later on. Harsh, restrictive discipline and earlier child externalizing problems Fathers who used more controlling and psychologically manipulative parenting practices in the past, and whose children displayed more behavioral issues, may struggle more with paternal adaptation (Aytuglu et al., 2025; Mancini et al., 2024a, 2024b; Zheng et al., 2026)

Consequences

Improved mental health and well-being. Enhanced family relationships and support systems. Increased awareness and destigmatization of paternal mental health issues. Increased monitoring and supervision of adolescent behavior Fathers who have adapted well to the paternal role tend to be more involved in monitoring and regulating their children's activities, which is associated with fewer delinquent behaviors. Lower levels of adolescent anxiety, depression, and delinquency Successful paternal adaptation is linked to better psychosocial outcomes for children, especially girls, during the adolescent years. Greater paternal involvement and engagement in child-rearing Fathers who have adapted well to the parental role are more likely to be actively involved in caring for and raising their children over time (Bouchard et al., 2007; Gebresilase et al., 2025; Xu & Hanafi, 2025)

Empirical Referents Used to Measure Embracing Change

Empirical referents are observable, measurable phenomena that indicate the presence of a concept. The following instruments and indicators can be used to assess whether and to what degree a father is embracing change:



Paternal Adaptation Questionnaire (PAQ) A valid and reliable instrument specifically designed to assess fatherhood adaptation and identify fathers' adaptation-related needs (Eskandari et al., 2018).

Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) While designed originally for maternal postpartum depression, the EPDS has been validated for use with fathers and measures depressive symptoms that may interfere with embracing change (Areias et al., 1996; Baldoni & Giannotti, 2020).

Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) A brief, validated depression screening tool that identifies depressive symptoms (Kroenke et al., 2001)

Structured interviews In-depth qualitative interviews asking fathers about their process of adaptation, their beliefs and feelings about fatherhood, their sources of support, and their communication patterns can provide rich description of whether and how they are embracing change (Škvařil & Presslerová, 2024).

Self-awareness indicators. Observable behaviors and self-report indicators of self-awareness include: father's ability to describe his emotional experience; capacity to discuss his beliefs about masculinity and fatherhood; willingness to acknowledge limitations or areas of difficulty; ability to discuss how his family history influences his current responses; and willingness to seek feedback (Sutton, 2016)

Social support assessment. Measurement of available support through tools such as the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) or the Social Support Questionnaire can assess the presence of a supportive environment (Lakey & Cohen, 2007)

Partner and family satisfaction. Reports from partners and family members regarding the father's engagement, emotional presence, and contribution to family well-being provide external perspectives on whether embracing change has occurred (Bogdan et al., 2022)

Defining Hypotheses and Implications for Further Development

Based on the findings of this concept analysis, several hypotheses and implications for future research and nursing practice can be proposed. It is hypothesized that fathers who demonstrate higher levels of self-awareness, receive adequate social support, and engage in effective communication are more likely to successfully embrace change and experience better mental health outcomes during the postpartum period.

Furthermore, this analysis implies that “Embracing Change” can serve as a theoretical foundation for developing nursing interventions aimed at improving paternal adaptation and reducing the risk of postpartum depression. Future research is needed to empirically test these hypotheses and to develop validated intervention models and measurement tools based on this concept.

Conclusions

Embracing change in the context of paternal depression is characterized by strong Self-Awareness, supportive environment and communication. This approach leads to improved mental health outcomes for fathers and stronger family support systems. Change is inevitable, whether it's beneficial or unfavorable, pleasant or troubling. How we handle it will affect it later. How we use it to improve or overcome our lives. We'll be more successful personally and professionally if we can adapt to our circumstances by embracing change. By using Walker and Avant's method, we gain a comprehensive understanding of what it means



to embrace change specifically for addressing paternal baby blues and how this concept can be applied in practical, supportive strategies for new fathers.

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