

CONCEPT ANALYSIS

Paternal Adaptation and Role Attainment: A Concept Analysis

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Abstract

Becoming a parent is a significant life transition accompanied by various experiences and emotions that may be both fulfilling and rewarding, as well as challenging and stressful for both the mother and father. Mercer's theory of becoming a mother provides a framework for mothers' adaptation and role attainment throughout the perinatal period. However, a theoretical gap exists surrounding fathers' adaptability and role attainment, as fathers are frequently forgotten, and their experiences are overlooked. Although becoming a father can be a rewarding or satisfying experience that results in positive changes in men's lives, some fathers experience concerns and contradictions as a result of a shift in their roles, responsibilities, and social expectations, which result in maladaptation and mental health challenges. Given the significance of fathers in the family, community, and society, this concept analysis aimed to bridge the gap by proposing a theory that will guide fathers in successfully adapting to and reaching a solid role identity. The concept analysis methodology from Walker and Avant (2011) was utilized to define the concept of paternal adaptation and role attainment, attributes, antecedents, consequences, cases, and empirical referents. This paper concludes that perinatal fathers' adaptability and role attainment improve psycho-emotional, cognitive, relational, and behavioral outcomes, improving paternal-maternal-infant quality of life and developmental products when influenced by positive personal resources, adequate family, friends support, and community resources. Given the implications of paternal maladaptation on the family, a theoretical framework for fathers is crucial. Hence, the theory of paternal adaptation and role attainment is proposed.

Keywords: *fatherhood, paternal adaption, role attainment, perinatal period, concept analysis*

Introduction

Becoming a parent is a significant life transition accompanied by various experiences and emotions that may be both fulfilling and rewarding for the mother and father. Despite this, many parents, both prepared and unprepared for the role of parenthood, go through significant biological, psychological, emotional, financial, social, and spiritual changes during this time, which can be both challenging and stressful, culminating in adaptation problems and poor parent-infant outcomes (Williams, 2018; Shorey et al., 2019). Some studies have revealed that positive experiences during the perinatal period contribute to the parent's confidence and their ability to master new roles, accentuating the need for innovative solutions to support parents throughout the transitional period (McKellar et al., 2009; Kluwer, 2010; Wang et al., 2021).

According to nursing theorist Mercer (1995), the adaptation process and role attainment during the perinatal period are complex and challenging for mothers. In her theory of becoming a

mother, Mercer (1995) emphasized that women becoming mothers deal with fewer role models and more complicated conditions. Since there is much uncertainty leading up to the transition into their new persona- from pregnancy to the first year—they are compelled to seek information and assistance. Therefore, the kind of guidance or care they get may dramatically impact them and their children. Therefore, for such assistance or care to be valuable, the caregiver must be cognizant of the challenges women face now.

By establishing a framework for nurses to devise appropriate healthcare intervention strategies for mothers that facilitate their formation of a robust maternal role identity and augment maternal-child outcomes, Mercer's (1995) focus on becoming mothers contributed to advancing the field of maternal and child health and mental health nursing. Nevertheless, a literature search suggested limited data on paternal adaptation and role attainment as these fathers are frequently forgotten, and their

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experiences are overlooked. As a result, there is a theoretical gap regarding paternal adaptation and role attainment. A theoretical framework for fathers is indispensable, given the significance of fathers' roles within the family, community, and society and the effects of paternal maladaptation. Therefore, using Walker and Avant's (2011) concept analysis methodology, this concept of paternal adaptation and role attainment attempts to close the gap by explaining a concept that explains factors that facilitate a successful and seamless paternal transition and role attainment.

Definition and Use of Concept

Per the Oxford Dictionary, adaptation is the act of adapting or the process of adapting (Stevenson, 2010). According to Cramer (2000), psychological adaptation refers to the ongoing interaction between man and the constantly changing environment in which he evolves. As an alternative, the National Geographic Society (2022) defines adaptation in biology as the process by which organisms change to survive better. Roy (2011) also defines adaptation as the process and result of individuals and groups using conscious knowledge, self-reflection, and choice to develop human and environmental integration. Adaptation happens when people react favorably to environmental changes.

Ricci and Kyle (2009) posited that men's efforts to take on their fatherly responsibilities and the challenges accompanying them are paternal adaptation and role attainment. As per Eskandari et al. (2018), the process of paternal adaptation includes understanding the idea of fatherhood, embracing the anticipations of fatherhood (acquiring paternal traits and behaviors, carrying out tasks and functions), and understanding the evolution and changes related to fathering. Ultimately, this understanding will result in stability in the paternal position concerning self-efficacy and parental satisfaction.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term "role" as the function assumed or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation. Alternatively, the Cambridge English Dictionary defines the role as the position or purposes someone or something has in a situation, organization, society, or relationship. In a literature search of "paternal role attainment," all Google searches found Mercer's definition of maternal role attainment. Mercer (1995) stated:

The maternal role may be considered attained when the mother feels internal harmony and its expectations, and when her behavior responses to the role expected are reflexive and are seen in her concern for and competency in caring for her infant, in her love and affection for and pleasure in her infant, and [in] her acceptance of the responsibilities posed by the role.

Now defining paternal, Merriam-Webster's (2002) dictionary defined it as "of or relating to a father."

The Oxford Dictionary also provides varied definitions of paternal but with a central idea of fatherly; "or appropriate to a father," "related through the father," or "showing a kindness and care associated with a father; fatherly." Therefore, adapting Mercer's (1995) definition and incorporating the various definitions from the dictionary, the paternal role may be deemed to have been fulfilled when the father experiences internal harmony and expectations, when his behavior responses to the expected role are reflexive and can be seen in his love and warmth for and desire in his child, in his acceptance of the responsibilities posed by the role, and in his concern for and capability in caring for his infant.

As Mercer (1995) stated, from pregnancy to more than the first year, the perinatal period is when a person transitions into a new identity. Wang et al. (2021) attested that becoming a father can be challenging and demanding, which can harm a man's general health and well-being. Several variables, including marital satisfaction, education, social isolation, income level, substance abuse, social support, infant cues, parenting readiness, etc., have an impact on the complex, multifaceted phenomenon of paternal adaptation and role attainment (Veskrna, 2010; Paulson et al., 2016; Nezhad et al., 2022).

The perinatal era is distinguished by significant change, the loss of regimen, and the many joys. According to McCoy (2012), both parents go through a lot of the same changes and difficulties, including issues with sleep, exhaustion, strained relationships, and financial worries. However, many fathers are oblivious to how a baby impacts their lives, and some believe that transitioning to parenthood will be daunting (McKellar et al., 2009). Alipour et al. (2022) revealed that pregnancy is the most challenging period for adaptation because fathers recognize and acknowledge their concepts of self during that period. Others also report dramatic emotional fluctuations during labor and childbirth, ranging from anxiety and powerlessness to dignity and contentment.

Veskrna (2010) emphasized that fathers' roles have changed substantially due to the unprecedented social change in recent decades. The conventional roles that define men's relationships inside families have undergone several alterations. As a result, males are now expected to play an equal and active role in raising their children. Guzzo (2011), on the other hand, claimed that some fathers may not have had a mentor from whom to learn appropriate fathering skills because they grew up in a time when men were either not involved in childrearing at all or were involved only minimally, and thus exhibit parenting incompetence, inefficacy, poor parenting styles, attitudes, and behavior.

As indicated by Veskrna (2010), some fathers who grew up in single-parent families where their mothers had to manage

alone may feel unprepared and inadequate as they begin their fatherhood journey. The difficulties of parenthood and the inability to adjust during the peripartum period have been shown to increase the prevalence of a high coexistence of stress, fatigue, anxiety, depression, diminished self-efficacy, and possibly suicidal thoughts (Top et al., 2016; Cameron et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021).

Zheng et al. (2022) asserted that The postnatal period is complicated for fathers because they must balance their needs with those of their families, their careers, and their roles as fathers during this period. Eskandari et al. (2018) have confirmed that Some fathers experience role strain during the adaptation and role attainment processes, which causes stress when incompatible behaviors, expectations, or responsibilities are connected to their roles as fathers. Further hindering their ability to adapt and maintain their well-being are role conflicts, which occur when competing demands are made to fulfill their various societal roles (such as father, employee, and husband).

The father's health may suffer from an inability to adapt and achieve role identity, and there may be additional unfavorable effects on the mother's and child's health and well-being. Paulson et al. (2016) also found that some fathers go through the peripartum period with less-than-ideal marital relationships, decreased marital intimacy, and marital dissatisfaction. Other difficulties during the transitional period include emotions of detachment from their infants, negative infant perception, and feelings of separation from their infants (Skjothaug et al., 2020).

Related Concepts

Related concepts are similar to paternal adaptation and role attainment but with subtle differences that have been thoroughly researched in the literature. Parental coping and adaptation are two of the most commonly used terms for paternal adaptation. Parental role identity, paternal attachment, and paternal involvement are all terms used to describe paternal role attainment.

Gelkopf et al. (2019) define parental coping as specific efforts made by parents to manage a stressor or crisis that affects optimal psychosocial health in families. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) classified stress-management coping strategies as either adaptive (problem-solving, seeking social support), which results in better outcomes for mothers, fathers, and infants, or maladaptive (avoidance, distancing, acceptance).

Parental adaptation is the ability of parents or other family members to recover from stress and crises. The ability of the family to adjust to changing circumstances may help the family recover by reducing or eliminating stress. The family can resume their regular routines and reestablish stability (Schrooyen et al., 2021).

Parental role identity, according to Prakash (2019), is an evaluation of a person's identity as a parent based on the amount of personal exploration they have undertaken to form their perspective on parenting challenges (e.g., the ideas, values, and rules they see necessary in rearing offspring). To be happy and have a strong marriage, they must adhere to the new parental identity domain and successfully affirm their parental role.

The term "paternal attachment" refers to The affectionate connection, desire for, and development of the emotions and interactions that may make a child feel incredibly connected to his or her father (Howard, 2010). The ability of both parents and youngsters to interact with each other while expressing positive emotions is correlated with secure child-father attachment.

Paternal involvement is the extent to which fathers interact positively with their children, are trustworthy and make decisions that are in their children's best interests. For instance, it has been evidenced that encouraging the father's active participation in a child's upbringing leads to moderate to significant improvements in cognitive functioning (Testa & Jackson, 2021). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that paternal involvement influences pregnancy and newborn outcomes, including a decline in detrimental maternal health behaviors.

Defining Attributes

Individual-related factors, family and friends, and community factors are the variables that influence the process of the father's adaptation and role attainment in this concept. The father-related factors include empathy, spirituality, positive self-esteem, positive self-concept, strong self-efficacy, meaning, knowledge and skills, maturity and flexibility, predictability and clarity, understanding, and adaptive coping mechanisms. Family and friends construct strong spousal support, continuous family and friends support, good father-infant interaction, good financial support, and strong role-modeling influence paternal adaptation and role attainment process. Community-related factors comprise good work-family culture, robust support systems, and continuous healthcare resources.

The concept of paternal adaptation and role identity is considered attained when the father can integrate and balance their duties as an independent individual and as a father. Consequences of this are manifested in improved psycho-emotional outcomes (changes in role strain, role conflicts, overall mental health, parenting stress, parenting competency, reduced anxiety, and depression), enhanced relational outcomes (feeling of attachment to child; the process of building and developing a relationship with the infant and partner, improvement in marital satisfaction, marital intimacy), improved cognitive outcomes (changes in intentions for

Figure 1. Paternal Adaptation and Role Attainment Model



subsequent births, renewed sense of role identity, respect for and understanding of paternal transition and development) and enhanced behavioral outcomes (changes in parenting styles, attitude, and behavior).

Antecedents

Walker and Avant (2011) define antecedents as the events or attributes that must arise before a concept's occurrence. The process of adaptation and role attainment is an antecedent to this concept.

Consequences

If the transition to fatherhood is successful, they can integrate and balance their duties as independent fathers. Consequently, the father waking to a new person or the adapted father will have improved psycho-emotional outcomes such as reduced parenting stress, role strain, and conflict, reduced paternal

anxiety and depression, improved parenting competency, improved parenting satisfaction, and increased psychological well-being. Second, there are better relational consequences, with the adapted father having higher marital satisfaction, intimacy, and feelings of attachment to the child. Additionally, the adopted father will improve cognitive outcomes such as an improved sense of role identity, improved intention for subsequent childbirths, and increased respect for and understanding of the paternal transition and development. Lastly, there is an improvement in behavioral outcomes such as improved parenting style, attitude, and parenting behavior. These outcomes will ultimately improve paternal quality of life and maternal and infant outcomes (Doss & Rhoades, 2017; Testa & Jackson, 2021; Schrooyen et al., 2021).

However, men with issues during the perinatal period have difficulty recognizing themselves as fathers and have a poor perception of their infant. As a result, the newborn's growth

and development are hampered, and these fathers may have difficulty building attachments, performing their roles, and the like (Kim et al., 2016). Furthermore, it can cause some fathers to report adverse psycho-emotional outcomes such as depression, anxiety, helplessness, and guilt for failing to adequately perform the role of the father (Veskrna, 2010).

Model Case

A model case represents all the attributes of the paternal adaptation and role attainment model during the perinatal period. Mr. Cosmos is a 35-year-old man whose wife became pregnant after they had been married for three years. He and his wife regularly visited the antenatal clinic until his newborn was born. He had not adjusted to his new role/identity and was not participating in newborn care as expected after two days. Mr. Cosmos expressed a desire to hold and care for his newborn. However, the posture of holding a newborn was initially uncomfortable, and even when changing diapers or bathing the baby, he was cautious and clumsy in his handling.

However, thanks to nurse Lisa's infant caregiving instructions and parenting education, as well as strong family support, Mr. Cosmos' father and uncle not only serve as good role models but also financially support their family, friends, and community peers who experienced childbirth recently, he gained knowledge and skills and understood the meaning of the current situation. Mr. Cosmos gradually adapted to his new role. They gained confidence in caring for their child as a result of these factors, as well as his strong self-efficacy, problem-solving coping skills, empathy, positive self-esteem, maturity and flexibility, and his strong faith in God (individual-related factors), despite initially complaining about parenting stress and anxiety, role strain and conflicts in his performance as a father and a husband, he verbalized reduced anxiety, improved psychosocial well-being, and improved competency in performing his responsibilities (psycho-emotional outcomes).

After birth, instead of being addressed by his name, he is now called "Anna's dad"; it was unusual, and he felt like he had lost himself. However, seeing his newborn rely on him, on the other hand, increased his respect for and understanding of the parental transition and development, and he felt that his presence was essential, making him feel proud and pleased to be a father. He has now discussed his intentions for another child in two years with his wife (cognitive outcomes). At first, Mr. Cosmos and his wife loved each other passionately and put each other. However, since the birth of their baby, they were no longer a priority for each other. Initially, he and his wife felt awkward and unhappy. However, as time passed, they became more supportive of each other once again, and Mrs. Cosmos offered her full support to her husband as she guided him in the care of baby Anna; this has strengthened not only their marital

intimacy but also a strong sense of satisfaction in their new family relationship and a feeling of attachment to his child (relational outcomes).

Mr. Cosmos is a caring, supportive, firm, consistent, and involved parent who continuously promotes his child's health and well-being and ensures that he has everything she needs to flourish (behavioral outcomes). Mr. and Mrs. Cosmos' quality of life has generally improved, and baby Anna is thriving and reaching all her developmental milestones physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Analysis

This case exemplifies the attributes of parental adaptation and role attainment. Mr. Cosmos initially encountered problems but gradually overcame them with the help of his related factors, including strong support from friends, family, the community, and healthcare resources. Strong marital, family, and community support systems, according to Eskandari et al. (2018), considerably improve men's adaptation and paternal well-being outcomes. Kumar et al. (2018) emphasized that depressive symptoms and other mental postpartum challenges in new fathers were linked to financial instability and inadequate resources. Nonetheless, Livingston et al. (2021) highlighted in another study that the father's coping strategies and other personal abilities speed the process of adaptation and aid men in achieving a solid role identity.

As Mr. Cosmos adapted and attained his role identity, he demonstrated enhanced psycho-emotional, relational, cognitive, and behavioral consequences. For instance, he gained competence and expressed satisfaction in performing his roles, increased marital intimacy and satisfaction, showed a feeling of attachment to his child and spouse, improved succeeding childbirth intentions, and portrayed positive parenting styles, attitudes, and behaviors. Ultimately, this enhanced the couple's quality of life and their baby's physical growth and emotional and mental development without any failures or delays.

Borderline Case

The borderline case contains some essential attributes of the concepts but not all. Mr. Koomson, a 17-year-old high school student, is in a relationship with his 16-year-old girlfriend, who became pregnant and dropped out. His companion gave birth three days ago by cesarean section and is still recovering. Mr. Koomson initially expressed enthusiasm for being involved in his newborn's care. However, he later claimed that he was incompetent because he and his girlfriend are both young and lack adequate knowledge and abilities in neonatal caregiving. He expressed concern to Nurse Jane that he might be unable to

care for his newborn due to a lack of financial assistance and role models. He stated that in the past when confronted with stressful situations, he would either smoke or drink.

Nurse Jane provided postpartum instruction to him and his spouse on infant caregiving, coping, and parenting. His family was encouraged to offer him significant social support, and he was directed to the community for financial assistance. Mr. Koomson verbalized knowledge of the paternal transition and growth following Nurse Jane's postnatal teaching, and he was pleased when Nurse Jane addressed him as "Amy's dad" (cognitive outcomes). He initially complained about the tremendous stress and anxiety caused by his infant's incessant crying. However, with the assistance and guidance from his family and community, he progressively adapted and acquired confidence in caring for his child, expressing his happiness, and reducing parenting stress and role strain (psycho-emotional outcomes).

However, Mr. Koomson revealed that he and his girlfriend were not getting along as well as they used to and frequently quarreled since they shared tasks and responsibilities. After that, Mr. Koomson opted to return to school and no longer participated in his child's welfare clinic visits or the care of his infant.

Analysis

Some aspects of parental adaptation and role achievement occurred in this example, but not all. Mr. Koomson faced difficulties adjusting to his new situation and role initially. However, nurse Jane's postnatal education boosted his knowledge and skills, and he established adaptive coping strategies. He was able to take on fatherly roles and express better psych-emotional and cognitive outcomes. However, there was no improvement in relational outcomes.

Furthermore, he left for school, and his child became the responsibility of his partner. Therefore, long-term behavioral outcomes such as improved parenting styles, attitudes, and behavior were not improved or exhibited. Shorey et al. (2019) state paternal participation or involvement in infant care is significant and linked to better infant developmental outcomes. Consequently, minimal or no paternal engagement has been linked to children's poor psychological, social, and adaptive behavioral outcomes.

Contrary Case

Mr. Ferguson is 42 years old, has been married for seven years, and is a working man who exercises daily, takes good care of himself, and is recognized at work. Over the past four years, he and his wife had been desperately wanting a baby and had

undergone artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization several times but failed. After long consideration, Mr. Ferguson offered that they adopt a child, but his wife was unsupportive and advised that they try conception again. After deliberation, the couple adopted a 2-month-old baby girl and decided to raise her well. Mrs. Ferguson is a businesswoman who travels for about two weeks on business and is sometimes absent for a month. Due to this, a babysitter was hired to care for the baby during the daytime, and Mr. Ferguson only spent time with the baby after work.

However, he became increasingly tired and overwhelmed as he watched the baby cry constantly. Despite figuring out why the infant was screaming, his efforts were futile, and Mr. Ferguson started to resent the baby. He told his wife that raising a child was difficult, but instead of consoling and supporting him, she told him that it was his choice and that he should do his best in the role. None of his acquaintances had children in his town, and he also had an absent father whom he had not seen in years.

Mr. Ferguson expected to be happy once he got the child he so desperately desired; nevertheless, he grew to detest the infant and assumed it was because the child was not biologically his. In contrast to his work satisfaction, his sense of burden in caring for the baby grew heavier over time. As a result, he worked hard to advance his job while neglecting his daughter after work. When the child began screaming for no apparent reason one day, he rushed her to the emergency department. Nurse Jim inquired about the child, but he could not react because he was unsure what his daughter's regular wailing meant adequately. He was fatigued, depressed, and cried uncontrollably as he voiced shame and guilt at the idea of being unable to accomplish anything as a father.

Analysis

None of the paternal adaptation and role attainment attributes were demonstrated in this case. Positive personal-related resources, such as family/spousal support or community resources, were absent. Hence, there were no improvements in psycho-emotional, relational, cognitive, or behavioral outcomes. Mr. Ferguson assumed he despised the child because she was not biologically his. Mr. Ferguson had no support systems or role models to guide him in his roles. His wife assumed that it was his role since he had initially brought up the idea of adoption and refused to support him when he asked. Consequently, his inability to perform his roles led to poor psychological well-being and cognitive, relational, parenting styles, attitudes, and behavior. Eskandari et al. (2018) affirmed that a lack of spousal, family, and community support systems significantly results in poor paternal and infant outcomes.

Empirical referents

The empirical referents assist in demonstrating the occurrence of a concept. In this concept, there is an instrument that measures paternal adaptation. The Paternal Adaptation Questionnaire (PAQ) developed by Eskandari et al. (2018) is comprised of five subscales that measure the ability to perform the roles and responsibilities, perceiving parental development, stabilization in paternal position, spiritual stability and internal satisfaction, and challenges and concerns. However, this does not include the positive psychological well-being outcomes. Furthermore, other scales measure some attributes of the concept. For example, the Paternal Antenatal Attachment Scale (PAAS- IT) developed by Condon (1993) and the Paternal Postnatal Attachment Scale created by Condon et al. (2008) is used to measure the bonding or binding-in between the father and the child prenatal and postnatal, respectively. As a result, there is a need for research studies to develop a tool that measures the psycho-emotional, relational, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of paternal adaptation and role attainment during the perinatal period.

Conclusion

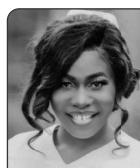
Mercer's theory of becoming a mother provides a framework to adjust and achieve a solid role identity. However, a theoretical gap exists in fathers' adaptability and role attainment throughout the perinatal period. This paper concludes that positive personal resources, adequate family, friends, and community resources all work together to affect the adaption and role attainment process of perinatal dads, resulting in improved psycho-emotional, cognitive, relational, and positive behavioral outcomes, which in turn enhance the paternal-maternal-infant quality of life and developmental outcomes. As a result, a theoretical framework for the forgotten fathers is essential to improve paternal, maternal, and infant outcomes due to fathers' unique role in the family. Hence, the theory of paternal adaptation and role attainment is proposed.

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