

Commitment: A Key Concept of Postpartum Weight Management



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A concept analysis is a meaningful interpretation of the function and structure of a word or combination of words. Elements in a concept analysis that are essential include defining all possible meanings and theories related to the key concept (Walker & Avant, 2011). An examination of a concept also consists of exploring the avenues of how the concept correlates to a phenomenon of interest. The process of a concept analysis is basic and unique. The following concept analysis will address the idea of commitment as it relates to the phenomenon of interest, postpartum weight management.

The Relevance of Commitment to the Scholarly Project

The phenomenon of interest for the scholarly project is postpartum weight management. General considerations for weight management often coincides with the three aspects of nutritional choices, physical activity, and eating behaviors (Leahy, Berlin, Banks, & Bachmann, 2017). When a person is making changes in the three aspects, commitment to the actions required for the changes is paramount. Ambivalence about making the necessary changes in the daily routine of a postpartum woman results in limited resolution of weight issues that some battle after delivery (Devlieger et al., 2016). There is a personal connection to the concept of commitment. As a woman who has struggled with the balance of nutrition, physical activity, and healthy eating behaviors, the author relates to the postpartum women who are seeking guidance as they set plans and work towards their health goals. The effects of commitment to healthy goals offer current and long-lasting benefits. Specifically, commitment to weight management offers prevention of cardiovascular, diabetic, and musculoskeletal complications related to obesity (Devlieger et al., 2016; Lynes et al., 2017). The effects of the concept of commitment to weight management will resonate in years to come in the population of interest.

Aims Related to Scholarly Project Goals

The reason for the current concept analysis is to analyze how commitment relates to postpartum weight management. Commitment is necessary for progression in a goal. A commitment can be weak or strong. By researching the term, commitment, the scholarly project can be further developed to explore different ways to increase the level of commitment postpartum women will need as they manage their weight goals. Examination of multiple definitions of the term will be performed. The attributes of the word commitment will also be a reference for model cases in the paper. Antecedents and consequences of commitment will be identified along with defining empirical references (Walker & Avant, 2011).

Uses of the Concept of Commitment

Commitment is a concept that is present in many disciplines. The literature identifies commitment as an essential concept in the disciplines of social relationships, business management and organizations, legal profession, and weight management. To explore the uses of the concept of commitment, the meaning of the term needs to be part of the discussion. Commitment has the word commit within it. Commit is from the fourteenth century with a Latin origin from the word *committere*, meaning to bring together or unite as noted from the *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Around the 1600s, the development of the word commitment evolved. By 1793, commitment began to carry the meaning of a pledge or a promise. The meaning of obligation was associated with commitment by 1864 (Commitment, 2018). The online *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* demonstrates three meanings of the noun commitment. The definitions of commitment are “(a) an agreement or pledge to do something in the future; (b) something pledged; (c) the state of or an instance of being obligated or emotionally impelled” (Commitment, 2018). A few synonyms of commitment include adhesion, allegiance,

attachment, dedication, devotion, loyalty, and steadfastness. Antonyms associated with commitment include disloyalty, inconsistency, infidelity, and unfaithfulness (Commitment, 2018).

Commitment in social relationships is one of the more well-known concepts of the term. In the sense of a social implication, commitment means the individuals have a serious and lasting romantic relationship (Commitment, 2018). A trusting partnership built on loyalty and fidelity is also present in the literature for meanings of commitment in the social realm.

The discipline of business management and organizations examines commitment as it relates to employees. The literature identifies open and shared communication as a vital component of strong employee commitment and allegiance to a business organization (Reed, Goolsby, & Johnston, 2016). Enduring persistence in employees is a quality business employers' value. Information from a study demonstrates employees develop a stronger attachment to the business organization when a positive listening environment is present in the workplace (Reed et al., 2016). Employee connectedness and commitment promotes a sustainable organization heading forward in the competitive world of business. Employee commitment also translates to lower absenteeism and position turnover (Anthun & Innstrand, 2016). It is interesting that commitment to an organization does not carry the same meaning across various age groups. Factors that affect employee commitment include work role overload, the demand for competency, and conflicts between the work and home environment. In a study performed by Anthun and Innstrand (2016), employees in the greater than 50 years-old group scored highest on organizational commitment scores. The increase in commitment is likely due to multiple variables including progression in a higher ranked position and coming to terms with the previously mentioned factors that affect employee commitment.

Through the legal vocation, the meaning of commitment reviews the professional relationship of a client to a lawyer, as a customer to a supplier. Trust is a prerequisite to two parties cooperating to achieve a goal to a mutually beneficial outcome (Frow, 2007). The literature points to the importance of long-term professional relationships as a key component in obtaining and retaining customers in a competitive market. Lawyer and client relationships are a demonstration of how the trust of duties, competence, and commitment of seeking justice lies within the relationship. Additionally, the lawyer must obtain deep and personal client information along with details of the situation in question to seek justice. Obtaining the information often requires repeated interactions consistent with a long-term professional relationship. Examples of clients a lawyer may build the relationship with can include individuals, institutions, government, and business entities. In a study completed by Frow (2007), different clients were questioned on the meaning of commitment along with lawyers from three areas of the major law firm. The three departments were property, corporate, and litigation. Respondents described commitment as most frequently meaning partnership, impression management, and personal. Interestingly, the study emphasized the importance of commitment needing to be defined and expressed in terms of those involved in the professional relationship, as it can connote a different meaning to different individuals.

Commitment in weight management is the last area that will be considered in the literature discussion. The literature reflects on public commitment in the role of sustained motivation for weight loss. In a public commitment to weight loss, there is a binding act between the individual and the proclamation of the decision (Nyer & Dellande, 2010). The public declaration of the goal promotes consistent acts towards the achievement of the goal and an increase in confidence level. Fear of failure to achieve is a driving force that pushes higher

motivation and greater compliance with the behavior required to achieve the public proclamation of weight loss. Results from a study by Nyer and Dellande (2010) found that individuals seeking weight loss, who made long-term public commitments, had greater weight loss results than those individuals who made no public commitment or a short-term public commitment. Repeating the public commitment to weight loss also helps in the maintenance of the lost weight.

Defining Attributes

There are four defining attributes that will be used in the concept analysis of commitment. Defining attributes are essential characteristics that can bring the focus back to the concept, even when the defining attribute stands alone (Walker & Avant, 2011). The attributes are repeatedly found in literature, etymology and dictionary definitions.

The first attribute is agreement. It is difficult to make a commitment without making an agreement. An agreement may be between two people or more (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2018). The second attribute is steadfastness. Committing to a goal requires steadfastness. Steadfastness is being firmly fixed in achieving a goal (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2018). Dedication is the third defining attribute. Dedication demonstrates devotion to a purpose (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2018). The last attribute is fortitude. Fortitude is associated with strength when encountered with adversity (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2018). Commitment during adversity is a difficult endeavor to continue. Therefore fortitude is a necessary attribute of commitment.

Case Examples

Model Case

The first case example of commitment is a model case. A model case is a pure case, meaning it exemplifies “all the defining attributes of the concept” (Walker & Avant, 2011, p.

163). The following is a fictitious creation of a model case.

MRE is a 43-year-old female who has gradually watched her weight increase over the years after having five children. Her body mass index is sitting at 31.7, the most it had ever been outside of pregnancy. She contacts a friend who has recently been losing weight. MRE asked the friend how she could work on losing the pounds, stating she felt it was time to commit to her health. Principles of healthy eating and physical activity were discussed between the two friends. MRE decided to order some healthy food choices through a company. She made an agreement with the company to receive monthly auto-ship orders of their products. Over the next several months, she was strict about her nutrition and portions with steadfastness. She previously bought a bike and used it occasionally in the past. She began to feel the difference in her commitment to nutritive eating. With the energy gained from eating better, her dedication to her health increased. She added riding her street bike or Peloton at least five days a week. Within six months after making her commitment to healthy changes, she reached her health goals of decreasing her body mass index to below 25. Holidays and vacations came and went but her fortitude continued, and she was able to maintain her weight loss.

In the previous example of a model case of commitment, all the defining attributes are present. The woman initiates an agreement to make healthy changes. She moves forward with her goals with steadfastness and dedication. In the face of holidays and vacations, her fortitude helps maintain her commitment.

Contrary Case

The next case example is a contrary case. A contrary case describes what the concept is not (Walker & Avant, 2011). None of the defining attributes are in the case, as it demonstrates the opposite meaning of the concept. The following contrary case is fictitious.

RDR is a 38-year-old male who was athletic in his youth. He has gradually become inconsistent with physical activity. Over the years, he has not been faithful in eating nutritious options and has been careless in portion control. His loyalty to a healthy weight has been lacking. He is now obese with concerns for sleep apnea. The weight on his knees and other joints is causing pain, which decreases his desire further to move and exercise. His wife is frustrated with his appearance and nonexistent desire to make changes. There is a significant amount of stress and contention in their marriage over the topic.

The example above excludes all the defining attributes of commitment. The case portrays the opposite meanings of commitment. The contrary case describes inconsistency, unfaithfulness, and disloyalty to RDR's health. All of the opposite attributes are antonyms associated with commitment (Commitment, 2018).

Borderline Case

The last case example is a borderline case. Walker and Avant (2011) define a borderline case as an example that depicts some of the defining attributes, yet excluding some of the attributes. The following example illustrates a fictitious borderline case.

TRC is a 30-year-old a postpartum mother who has gained a significant amount of weight during her last pregnancy. She was slightly overweight at pre-pregnancy, with a body mass index of 25.8. Now at six weeks postpartum, she has a body mass index of 34.2. She understands the need to take better control of her health or there may be later consequences. It is not realistic for her to go outside or to the gym to exercise since she has a newborn and another little child at home. TRC starts with healthier food choices, portion control, and frequency of eating. She is dedicated to this measure. TRC has not told anyone of her goal, as she does not want anyone to know if she fails. The holidays arrive, and she struggles to be steadfast in her

goals. With so many parties to attend and sweet treats available, felt conflicted in her desire to stick with her commitment to healthy eating. She gives up for the time being and decides she will start again with making healthier choices after the holidays.

In the borderline case, TRC recognizes changes to her health are necessary to avoid further health implications. She dedicates herself to better eating habits. She is afraid of being recognized as a failure if she does not succeed in her plans, and therefore does not express her goals or makes an agreement about her goals with anyone. When faced with conflicts in her desire for health, she lacks the fortitude for making the best nutritional choices during the holidays. She is steadfast in her goals for only a short time. In the example, the defining attributes of dedication and steadfastness were apparent for a short time. TRC did not demonstrate agreement or fortitude.

Antecedents

Antecedents in a concept analysis are conditions or events that need to be in position for the concept to happen (Walker & Avant, 2011). None of the antecedents should be defining attributes. For a commitment to occur, a need for change must be acknowledged (Taylor, 2012). Once the aspect that needs changing is identified, there must be a desire to make the change or an emotional attachment for the change to occur (Soumyaja, Kamlanabhan, & Bhattacharyya, 2015). Goals need to be formulated to achieve a change. The goals provide direction for the changes (Taylor, 2012). Changes cannot take place without an action plan. An action plan bridges an idea into a concrete manifestation of the change. The action plan provides the tools to achieve the change.

Another important antecedent is to recognize what obstacles will likely be present in achieving a goal for a specific change. Determining what obstacle are presents allows an

individual to address ways to surpass the obstacle (Taylor, 2012). The obstacles may be a lack of support or a lack of direction. In regards to the concept of commitment, an obstacle may also include cultural behaviors that contradict the issue that needs to be changed. For the borderline case, TRC encountered the obstacle of feasts and sweet treats that were prevalent during the holiday season. Managing the conflict of cultural behaviors with the obligation for change is an example of anticipating obstacles to commitment

Consequences

Walker and Avant (2011) describe consequences as conditions or events that happen as a result of the concept. As with antecedents, consequences cannot be defining attributes of the concept. An outcome of the concept of commitment is satisfaction in achieving a goal. Along with the satisfaction of achieving a goal are the feelings of happiness and accomplishment. In a study completed in China, achieving goals was positively related to life satisfaction (Wang, Li, Sun, Cheng, & Zhang, 2017). Another consequence of commitment is gaining more self-confidence. In an article on ways to build confidence, the author reflects on the commitment to achieve goals by stating, “Confidence is built on accomplishment. If you achieve small and big goals, you are going to feel much better about yourself” (Bridges, 2017, para. 2). Long-term behavior changes are also an outcome of a commitment. Daily application, or daily action to a commitment, lead to changed thought processes which result in changed behaviors (Taylor, 2012).

Indirect Empirical Referents

Indirect empirical referents are phenomena that lead to the existence or the occurrence of a concept. The defining attributes are closely related to the indirect empirical referents (Walker & Avant, 2011). The referents are abstract and subjective descriptions of the existence of the

concept which assists in building direct empirical measurements.

An example of an indirect empirical referent of commitment is fortitude. Fortitude is an abstract and subjective characteristic of commitment. Merriam-Webster, Incorporated (2018) describes fortitude as a strength of mind. The strength of mind allows the individual to face adversity with courage. Fortitude is an individual attribute that is different for each person. Although it is not a measurable empirical referent, fortitude is a necessary step in pursuing a commitment.

Direct Empirical Referents

Direct empirical referents are categories or attributes of the phenomena that can be measured or directly recognized. The defining attributes of the concept also associate with the direct empirical referents, similarly to the indirect empirical referents. The direct empirical referents allow the defining attributes to lead to possible construction of an instrument that can measure the concept (Walker & Avant, 2011).

One example of a direct empirical referent of commitment is agreement. An agreement can be a written contract or arrangement which states a responsible party will complete an action. Sometimes agreements have deadlines for completion. The agreement can also be legally binding. Agreements can also be observed or heard. The individuals completing the agreement can raise a hand to sustain the compact, or they can nod their acceptance to the agreement. Another example of a direct empirical referent is dedication. Dedication to a commitment is an observable act. In the realm of weight loss, dedication can be measured by observing changes in the scale, waist circumference, and body mass index

Theoretical and Operational Definitions

A theoretical definition uncovers the meaning of a concept while expressing the defining

attributes. The theoretical definition is the basis for building operational definitions. The concept of commitment carries a theoretical definition which must convey essential features and conceptual meaning (Chinn & Kramer, 2011). Commitment can theoretically be defined as a persistent steadfastness and fortitude towards completing a goal or an agreement.

An operational definition explains how assessment and measurement of the concept will occur empirically. The operational definition builds off of the theoretical definition. (Chinn & Kramer, 2011). Behaviors that are associated with the concept will be assessed by using the operational definition. In the general sense of the concept of commitment, there is not an exact instrument or tool available to empirically measure commitment.

Conclusion

The concept of commitment is an essential aspect in the management of weight as it pertains postpartum women for this DNP project. An operational definition of commitment can be explained as an agreement that requires dedication, fortitude, and steadfastness to complete, sometimes in a given timeframe. By completing the commitment, the concept can be measured as done or not done, in a dichotomous state. Commitment is relevant and required for making good nutritional choices, aligning eating behaviors, and participating in physical activity to meet expressed goals as done or not done. Progression towards healthy commitments can result in daily and long-term benefits.

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