Empowerment: A concept analysis

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Abstract. This paper conceptually analyzed the concept of empowerment using the strategies of Walker & Avant (2005) the objective is to clarify the meaning of the concept and to clearly identify empowerment characteristic that will provide consistent definition for practice and future research. Empowerment is defined and examined using relevant resources of literatures and selected empirical referents that described empowerment as a complex and multidimensional concept. Within nursing context empowerment can be conceptualized as a combinations of attributes that relate to the empowerer (the client), and attributes that belong to the empowered (that can be both client and nurse). In a broad sense, empowerment is the process that involves two parties or more that are dynamic and multidimensional, where the activity is sharing power, and create mutual relationship, making it possible for people to increase their sense of control and can help optimize their independence. To clearly distinguish between empowerment and other concepts, related concepts are presented and by using related case we compared the concept with empowerment. The analysis demonstrates that the defining attributes of the concept are (1) a helping process, (2) A partnership which values self and others, (3) mutual decision making, identified resources and set goals, (4) opportunity and authority, (5) open communication, (6) freedom to make a choice and accept responsibility and (7) should come with honesty, openness and genuineness. Antecedents of the concept are (1) respect, (2) trust, (3) education or previous knowledge or experience, (4) interpersonal and communication skills, (5) acceptance of people as they are, and (6) shared visions. Consequences of empowerment are (1) enhanced and improved self esteem, (2) ability to set goals and reach goals, (3) a sense of control over life and change process, (4) a sense of hope for the future, (5) increase problem solving ability, (6) better communication and leadership skills, and (7) have the autonomy and responsibility. To understand the concept better all the defining attributes are identified and applied in the model case, while borderline, related and contrary case are also used to explicate the concept. Empirical referents were also provided. There are limited tools available to measure empowerment, which create the availability to develop tools to measure empowerment based on the context. In conclusion, empowerment is useful and significant concept for nursing practice, administration, education and research. Empowerment emphasizes in engaging the resources within self to create well - being. Therefore, clients need to become aware of their resources and need to purposefully participate in working toward the attainment of heath goals.

Key words: empowerment, concept analysis, helping process

Introduction

Concept defined as an idea, a mental image of reality or an abstraction and serves as an essentials part of theories (Meleis, 1991) (King, 1988). Concepts can be used to describe a phenomenon or a group of phenomenon and provides a concise summary of thoughts related to the phenomena under study (Meleis, 1997). Concept analysis is one of strategy used to develop concept. The objectives of analysis is to bring the concept closer to use in research or clinical practice and it also contribute to the development of measurement tools and theory testing (G. C. Davis, 1992; Meleis, 1997).

There are several strategies have been used in the nursing literature for analyzing concepts, the Wilson's methods, the simultaneous concept analysis (Haase, Britt, Coward, Leidy, & Penn, 1992), the hybrid model (Schwartz-Barcott & Kim, 1986) and the integrated strategy (Meleis, 1997). There are variations in the method describe by Wilson's (1963/1969) framework that become the foundation for Walker & Avant and Meleis in their strategies for concept analysis (Rodwell, 1996). This paper will analyze the concept of empowerment by using the published tool refered to the work of Walker and Avant (2005). Walker & Avant (2005) stated that this method is the easiest to understand and master especially for beginners (p.65). This article will give the definition of empowerment, followed by explaining the uses of the concepts, defining the attributes, give a pure case of the concept, borderline case, related case, ending with contrary case, antecendents and consequences and last but not least the empirical references of the concept.

Empowerment concept is explained and defined by various disciplines; including; social work, psychology, education, public health, sociology, economy, management and also nursing. The term empowerment also covers a vast landscape of meaning which is related to the phenomena. Today, empowerment is a popular word that being used and applied to a wide variety of phenomena. Such as women's empowerment (Longwe, 1998), the Black power movement (Davis, 1988), community empowerment (Labonte, 1989), students empowerment (Jones, Irvine, & Sambrook, 2007), patients empowerment

(Bawden & Lindsay, 2007), teachers empowerment (Fagan, 1989), empowerment of the marginalized people (Laverack, 2005), political empowerment (Maholtra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002) and empowerment of nurses (Laschinger, Gilbert, Smith, & Leslie, 2010) – to note a few.

From reviewing the related literature the word empowerment intuitively appealing for both nursing theory and practice, however there is no specific definition of empowerment because it used depend on the phenomena being investigated and the framework of the author or researcher studied. Empowerment is a difficult term to define and easier to understood by its absence, powerlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, oppression, alienation, victimization, subordination, paternalism, loss of sense of control over one's life and dependency (Gibson, 1991). Empower occurs between two or more people, the person who empowers and the person who is (are) empowered, since both party gained mutual relationship it is clearly that empowerment is a positive concept (Hess, 1984). The purpose of the analysis is to claryfy the meaning of the concept, hence providing a consistent definition for practice and future research.

Uses of the Concept

Dictionary definition of empowerment is an authorize license (a person to do) give power to, make able (person to do)(Hornby, 2002). The synonims for empowerment include to give or confer power, invest, endue, strengthen, arm and delegate. The suffix "-ment" is defined as a (1) result or product, or (2) the act, fact, process of art. Therefore by attaching the suffix "-ment" to the verb empower, empowerment changes in to a noun identified the word as the result or process of empowering (Hawks, 1992). The first time the word empowerment emerged in the literature during the 1950s, the time when social action organizations adressing the issues of power imbalances. Since then the word become widely used within the context of rights movement (Shearer & Reed, 2004).

From Swift & Levin (1987) in Zimmerman, theory of empowerment can be viewed as both, process and outcome, the process is the actions, activities or structures that empowering a person or community and the outcome of such process result in level of being empowered (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment is a concept that applicable to individuals, organization and community. From the process, empowerment for individuals can be in form of paricipation in community organizations, at organizational include collective decision making and shared leadership, at the community might include collective action to access government and other community resources (e.g. media). Outcome of empowerment for individuals include situation specific perceived control and resources mobilization skills, for organizational include development of organizational networks, organizational growth and policy leverage, and for the community includes evidence of pluralism, and existence of organizational coalitions, and accessible community resources (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

There are many description about empowerment based on the literature review, Kieffer (1984) described it as a transactional concept, because the process involves a relationship with others and developed by the result of collaborative efforts. Empowerment is a multidimensional concept because it is form of collaboration and resources between the individuals and the society are shared. Therefore, to study empowerment we need to understand the complex social issues, political and economic forces that attached to people or community (Gibson, 1991). Empowerment is a dynamic concept because power is shared and also dialetical concept because within the process of power shared, it yielded varying positions in the process and the outcome (Hess, 1984) (Katz, 1984; Rappaport, 1984)

Empowerment can be conceptualized as a developmental concept where individuals, family and community growth and enhanced their potential (Rappaport, 1984). Kieffer (1984) described defines four stage of developmental concept which is corresponded to Erikson developmental stage. First is the era of entry, in this stage individuals participate with feeling of unknown and unsure while the authority and power structured are clarified, this stage is paralells to the developmental stage of infancy. Second is the era of advancement which is paralells to the late childhood stage, this stage characterized by mentoring and supportive relationship which can lead to collaboration and supportive problem solving. Individuals gain understanding of their situation with the help from the

external enabler, this will developed their mechanism of action and accept their responsibility. The third stage is the era of incorporation, this is where activities are aimed at confronting and encountering the problem within their situation that can afflict their self determination. Organizational, leadership and survival skills are established in this phase. This era is corresponded to the adolesence stage. The fourth phase is the era of commitment which is paralells to the stage of adulthood, in this stage individuals integrates new personal knowlegde and skills into reality and structure of everyday life (Kieffer, 1984).

In management literature empowerement defined as the notion of individuals having the power to accomplish their work in a meaningful way. This power is obtained from working conditions that make this possible and enable employees to exercise their power to achieved their work goals (Rappaport, 1984). According to Rappaport's (1987) empowerment brings psychological sense and personal control and interest with social influence, political power and legal rights. Therefore, empowerment can exist at three levels; (1) at personal level, where empowerment is the experience of gaining control in everyday life and community partcipation (Kieffer, 1984), (2) at the small group level, where empowerment involves the shared experience, analysis and influence of groups on their efforts, and (3) at the community level, where empowerment revolves around the utilization of resources and strategies to enhances community control (Labonte, 1989). In the context of health, World Health Organization (WHO, 1985) defined empowerment as process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their own health. In the health promotion field, empowerment refers to ensuring individuals have the resources necessary to maintaining their health and well-being (Faulkner, 2001).

Nurses described empowerment as an active, internal process of growth that was based on culture and personal beliefs, aimed at actualizing an individual full potential and occured within nurturing nurse client relationship (Rafael, 2005). Shearer (2007) trying to establisehd the empowerment theory based on the work of Rogers (1992) who described empowerment as integrality between humans and their environments. This process creates ever evolving innovative change. Therefore empowerment define as purposefully participating in this process of changing oneself and their environment, identify the patterns and bring on board inner resources for well being (Shearer & Reed, 2004). The new view of empowerment based upon four assumptions derived from Rogerian theory and related theories, they are: (1) empowerment is inherent and ongoing (Labonte, 1989) (2) empowerment is a relational process, (3) empowerment is an ongoing process, (4) empowerment is expressive of human health pattern of well being (Shearer & Reed, 2004).

There are many competing ideas of empowerment, and based on many literature that talk about empowerment the idea of this concept have not always done adequately. Therfore i would like to define empowerment to mean: "the process that involves two party or more, at any levels (individuals, community, organization) that are dynamic and multidimensional, where the activity is sharing power and create mutual relationship, making it possible for people to increase their sense of control and can help optimize their independence"

Defining Attrributtes
Attributes are the characteristic that are common to all instances of concept being analyzed, to make a clear distinction from similar or related concepts (Walker & Avant, 2005). From the literatures authors like (Craddock & Skinner, 2000; Hawks, 1992; Katz, 1984; Rodwell, 1995) have indicated the attributes to empowerment, namely:
- A helping process
- A partnership which values self and others
- Mutual decision making resources and goal setting
- Opportunity and authority
- Open communication
- Freedom to make a choiche and accept responsibility
- Offers up to date improvement, promotion, support and focus on the development of individuals relationships

- Finally, in an attempt to empower individuals, the person requires some attributes such as loyalty, instinctive toughts, flexibility, supportive, courage, readiness, honesty, openness, and genuiness.

Model Case

A model case is an illustrative vignette of the concepts that associate with all of the important attributes of the concept (Walker & Avant, 2005). The following model case includes each of the critical attributes for empowerment. This model case is based on the article from (Gibson, 1991): A community health nurse (CHN) is involved in an educational program aimed at "healthy eating" with group of unemployed single mothers. Using the medium of discussion groups to generate a mutual exchange of ideas, the aim of the group is defined. The mothers believe that they possess knowledge about appropriate nutritional intakes for themselves and their children, but they express a desire to develop skills to enable them to save time and money on food. With the help of the community health nurse the group identifies appropriate agencies that may provide help to the group, such as the community dietician at the Primary Care Unot (PCU) and local food stores. The group reform itself into a self-help (client-directed) group, identifying its own agenda and determining it goals and resources. The CHN remain as a member of the group, who respect the contribution, she is able to act as a nurse and educationalist. The nurse benefits from observing and experiencing the dynamics of a client-directed group.

The CHN involved in the helping process with the mothers and using open communication. By enabling the group to identify their own need and set their own agenda, she encourages mutual decision making and mutual goal setting and a sense of freedom to make choices. The nurse also offers up to date improvement, promotion, support and focus on the development of individuals relationships. The mothers use her experience as a nurse and use her resources to gain the authority and opportunities needed to develop the group. The nurse values the group self-motivation and learns from it dynamic. For this group to able to achieved their goal they need to own personal attributes such as openness and honesty that can support their goals. The partnership nature is evident; the group is empowered by accepting responsibility for the running of the group.

Borderline Case

A borderline case is a case that contains most of the defining attributes of the concept but not all of them (Walker & Avant, 2005). A borderline case of empowerment based on the research project conducted in NHS Leeds Community Health Centre (Hanson, 2010) as follows: A CHN works with families where they children are at risk of obesity. She went to every family where obesity is an issue. She gave advices to the families on how to reduce the risk by creating a healthy life style and that by all mean the families need to modify their current life style. Then, the nurse started to give the "expert advice" by setting the program for the family. This program start from choosing the right meals, explaining about good eating pattern, scheduled exercise and many more information. Families were asked whether they agreed to the program that she made. And they say they'll try to compliant to the program. In this case the nurse helps the families to reduce the risk of obesity in the family. She also asks whether the family agreed or not with her program, this action shows the freedom to make choices. Partnership was not clear, since the nurse act upon her knowledge and didn't seek the resource within the family.

Related Concepts

Ideas that are similar to the concept of interest but have subtle differences when examined closely is called the related concepts (Walker & Avant, 2005). By performing this, will help to differentiate the concept being analyzed. The related concepts of empowerment derived from literature are:

- Patient/client participation
- Autonomy
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Advocacy
- Choice

- Motivation
- Authority

To make a claer distinction between empowerment and others related concept, it will be depicted using the related case, as follows: A nurse was caring for a child who was ventilator dependent as a result of severe head and neck injuries sustained during automobile accident. While repositioning the child, the parents asked if the child would ever be "normal again". The nurse knew that the child had a high cervical fracture and that the physician had told the family that their children would be ventilator dependent for life. Realizing that the family had not truly heard the prognosis, the nurse sat with the family and asked them what they wanted for their child. After listening to their tearful confession that they did not want their child attached to a ventilator for life, the nurse called a family meeting with the physician. During the meeting, the nurse help the family voiced their concerns and plan for the peaceful death of their child.

This case is an example of autonomy, where family were given the opportunity to make a decision. Autonomy is a unique phenomenon in nursing, and this phenomena also being portray in empowerment, however it has differencies when compared to empowerment.

Contrary Case

A contrary case illustrates the extrem opposition to the model case, a case that demonstrates what the concept is not. An example as follow: The patient was coming to the theatre for an evacuation of uterus. The nurse received the patient at the theatre door, and she noticed that her patient was anxious and worried judging from the patient facial expression and the fact that her patient continuously talking. At first the nurse thought that her patient was worried about the operation because the patient said it was her first time, but its not the operation that worried her but actually the needles, she hated needles. Then the nurse told the patient that all procedures carried out would be explained to her. She tried to make a general conversation to make the patient more at ease. When the butterfly was about to be inserted by anaesthetist, she told her patient that it would be only a little scratch and held her arm for comfort. She also told her patient that the operation would not last a long time, and soon she would wake up in the recovery room. Once the butterfly inserted, the nurse sense that her patient had a great relief, as the patient looked at her with a "knowing smile".

This case exemplifies the opposite of empowerment. The nurse in this example clearly sees herself in the caring role. The nurse reassures the patient by selectively presenting information, which will lead the patient to predict a safe and virtually pain free experiences. The main role of the nurse is to allay the patient worries by supplemented reassurance with distraction to conversation. The scope of empowering the patient must surely be virtually non-existent.

Antecedents

Antecedents are incidentals that are always present if the concept itself occur (Walker & Avant, 2005). Antecedents for the empowerer and the empowered are respect, trust, education or previous knowledge and shared commitment. The empowerer must possess good interpersonal and communication skills, while the empowered must possess willingness to accept empowering behaviour and participate in goal setting and making decision (Hawks, 1992).

Consequences

Consequences refers to product, results or outcome from the concept under analysis (Walker & Avant, 2005). The consequennces of empowerment according to several authors (Hawks, 1992; Labonte, 1989) include enhanced and improvement of self esteem, ability to set goals, a sense of control over life and change process, a sense of hope for the future, increase problem solving ability, better communication and leadership skills, autonomy and responsibility are reinforced. A conceptual map could illustrate the relationship between the antecedents, attributes and consequences of empowerment.
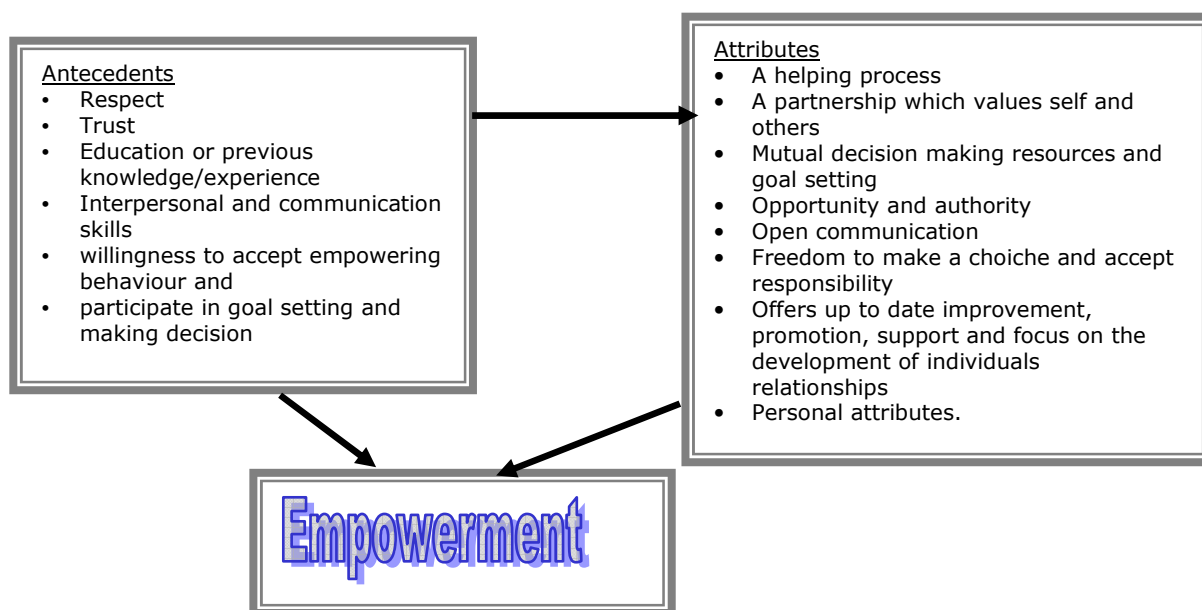
Empirical Referents

There are not many tool available to measure empowerment, however many studies measures other concepts that related to empowerment such as Power as Knowing Participation in Change Tool Version II (PKCPT; Barret, 1986) measured woman's perception of participating in change. Other tool is Nurse-Patient Interaction Tool (N-PIT; Krouse & Roberts, 1988) measured perceived professional support in terms of the woman's perception of the nurse-client relationship in regard to control, power, and issuess of treatment. Conditions of work effectiveness questionnaire-II (CWEQ-II) (Laschinger, et al., 2010) measured the underlying construct of structural empowerment. There is also Patients Empowerment Scale (PES) which is a 12 items tool (3 items perdimension), using 7 point Likert scale (Faulkner, 2001). Giving the nature of the concept that can be applied in many different setting, hence the probability to develop many tools that can be used to measure empowerement.

Conclusion

From the analysis we can conclude that empowerment is useful and significant concept for nursing practice, administration, education and research. Empowerment emphasizes engaging inner resources for well being, if a nurse wants to practicing from health empowerment perspective the need to remember that empowerment more than simply giving information, it incorporates strategies that foster awareness of and access to personal and social contextual resources. Clients need to become aware of and engaged to their resources to purposefully participate in working toward the attainment of health goals.

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