

EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF NURSE ENGAGEMENT RELATED TO PATIENT EXPERIENCE

EXPLORANDO EL CONCEPTO DE COMPROMISO DE LA ENFERMERA EN RELACIÓN A LA EXPERIENCIA DEL PACIENTE

Lorraine Keith *

DNP, ARNP, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Operating Officer, St. Vincent's Medical Center, Jacksonville, Florida.

Rosina Cianelli

PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN, Associate Professor, School of Nursing and Health Studies, University of Miami. Profesor Adjunto Escuela de Enfermería, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

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ABSTRACT

Nurses who engage with their work are more productive, provide safer care, and are more likely to provide an outstanding patient experience. However, the concept of nurse engagement has been used in different contexts and with different meanings, transforming into an ambiguous concept. The aim of this article is to analyze the concept of nurse engagement, as it relates to the patient experience, using the Walker and Avant method. The concept analysis revealed: a) various meanings and uses of the concept; b) attributes (self-efficacy; autonomy and control over nursing practice; and optimizing nurse communication); c) antecedents (empowerment and job resources); d) consequences (greater satisfaction with their working environment; more autonomy within their practice; better commitment to their job and their patients; and a stronger patient safety culture); and e) empirical referents. The Institute of Medicine recognized nurse engagement as a significant factor having a direct effect on the patients experience. Consequently, having a clear concept of nurse engagement can generate further research and lead to developing interventions and education that will encourage and enhance nurse engagement, and the patients experience. **Key words:** nurse, engagement, patient, experience, concept analysis.

RESUMEN

Las enfermeras comprometidas con su trabajo son más productivas, entregan un cuidado más seguro y tienen mayores posibilidades que sus pacientes tengan una excelente experiencia. Sin embargo, el concepto de la "enfermera comprometida" ha sido utilizado en diferentes contextos y con diferentes significados, transformándolo en un concepto ambiguo. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar el concepto de enfermera comprometida en relación con la experiencia del paciente; para el análisis se utilizó el método de Walker y Avant. El análisis de concepto reveló: a) diferentes significados y usos del concepto; b) atributos (autoeficacia, autonomía, control de la práctica de enfermería; y optimización de la comunicación en enfermería); c) antecedentes (empoderamiento, recursos en el trabajo); d) consecuencias (alta satisfacción con el ambiente de trabajo, mayor autonomía en la clínica, mayor dedicación a su trabajo y una mayor cultura de seguridad para sus pacientes); e) referentes empíricos. El Instituto de Medicina (IOM) reconoce el compromiso de la enfermera como un factor que tiene efecto directo en la experiencia de los pacientes. En conclusión, teniendo claro el concepto de enfermera comprometida, se pueden generar nuevas investigaciones que conduzcan a desarrollar intervenciones educativas que incentiven el compromiso de las enfermeras y mejoren la experiencia de los pacientes. **Palabras clave:** compromiso, enfermera, experiencia, paciente, análisis de concepto.

* Correspondencia e-mail: tkeith01@comcast.net

INTRODUCTION

A concept analysis is a process where the basic elements of an idea are carefully studied¹. Nurse engagement has been identified as a predictor for a strong patient safety culture. Nurses who are involved in decisions in their workplace are proven to be more productive, provide safer care, and are more likely to provide an outstanding patient experience². According to Fisoli³ seventy seven percent (77%) of nurses who responded to a public survey were satisfied with their job, however; only 18% of them were engaged in their work³.

Bacon and Mark⁴ conducted a multisite study designed, in the United States, to investigate relationships among hospital context, nursing unit structure, and nurse staffing, as they relate to the patient experience and outcomes. Investigators found positive correlations between higher nurse engagement, higher patient satisfaction, quality of care and work effectiveness⁴. The concept of nurse engagement has been used in different contexts and with different meanings transforming into an ambiguous concept.

As noted by Rafferty and Clark⁵ the difficulty with concepts like engagement, is that they can become unwieldy, fuzzily-defined terms invoked as panaceas for the dilemmas of workforce management. The concept of nurse engagement was selected for analysis because of its importance in nursing, specifically as it is related to patient experience. In an effort to bring clarity to the definition of nurse engagement and explore its relationship to patient experience, this concept was selected for analysis..

Aims of the analysis

Using the Walker and Avant¹ method, the concept of nurse engagement related to the patient experience will be explored. This method will be used to clarify and define the concept in the context of nursing practice. The Walker and Avant¹ method describes eight steps for completing a concept analysis: 1) select a concept; 2)

determine the aims or purposes of the analysis; 3) identify all uses of the concept that you can discover; 4) determine the defining attributes; 5) identify a model case; 6) identify borderline, related, contrary, invented, and illegitimate cases; 7) identify antecedents and consequences; and 8) define empirical referents¹. For this article, steps 5 and 6 were not included.

The sources used to find information about engagement were: (a) Database (e.g., PubMed, CINAHL, Medline, and Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, using the search terms: nurse, engagement, patient, experience, used alone or in combination, (b) dictionaries which provide the definition of the word engagement, (c) books using the aforementioned search terms, and (d) journals that contain articles related to the concept. The criteria used for selecting articles were: (a) articles published from 2005 to 2014, (b) articles in English.

Definitions and uses of the concept

Engaged employees are energetic, have a strong identification with their work and look at their work as challenging instead of stressful⁶. "When there is a fit between personal expectation and the condition of their work environment, employees experience a sense of engagement with their work, characterized by energy (vs. exhaustion), involvement (vs. cynicism), and effectiveness (vs. inefficacy)" (p440)⁷.

The word engagement will be emphasized as a distinctive characteristic of this concept. The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary⁸ describes several uses for the word "engagement". The most common definition, as a noun, is related to betrothal, or an agreement to be married. In the mechanical arena, engagement is a term used when a device is in gear, or fits together. The word engagement can also be used when there is an arrangement to meet someone; as the act of sharing in activities as a group, as well as emotional involvement and commitment. In the military, engagement is used as a hostile encounter

with the enemy while the employment world defines engagement as the act of giving someone a job. In medical terminology, engagement is described as the parturition in which the fetal head passes into the pelvis, and in nursing the term engagement is frequently used with infant bottle feeding or breastfeeding of infants⁸.

Engagement in the workplace has been described as a positive, satisfying work-related state represented by three characteristic vigor, dedication, and absorption⁹. The definition can be further clarified by addressing the terms vigor, dedication and absorption. Simply stated, the excitement of going to work is described as vigor. Dedication is when there is pride while doing the work, and absorption is when time goes by quickly when doing the work^{9, 10}. Engagement has been said to be the best prevention for burnout⁹.

Defining attributes

According to Walker and Avant¹ the heart of the concept analysis is its defining attributes. The attributes associated with nurse engagement are: self-efficacy, autonomy and control over nursing practice, and optimizing nurse communication⁹.

The attribute of self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in his or her capacity to perform the behaviors necessary to produce a desired outcome. These processes shape a person's view of their abilities¹¹. Self-efficacy is also associated with a person's motivation, for example a person with low self-efficacy exhibits low self-esteem and is less motivated¹². Nurses who are highly self-efficacious are likely to meet the demands of their work with optimism and satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the organization⁶.

Autonomy and control over nursing practice is associated with positive outcomes, including nursing satisfaction, reduced staff turnover and lower patient mortality rates¹³. Additionally, when the nurse is able to make decisions related to their work life, unit operations, and nursing practice, they become more committed

and motivated thus positively impacting their degree of engagement¹³.

Nurse communication is a key element in The Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Survey (HCAHPS) which focuses on the patient experience¹⁴. Communication with nurses leads all other measures of the patient experience survey, and when nurse communication is rated high, all other dimensions follow closely¹⁴. Engaged nurses who are energetic and connect with their patients are more likely to provide better patient care and therefore enhance the patient experience.

Antecedents

Walker and Avant¹ describe antecedents as events that must occur prior to the existence of the concept. The antecedents of engagement are empowerment and job resources these two antecedents must transpire prior to the concept occurring¹³.

Empowerment promotes behaviors which encourage autonomy, self-confidence and engagement in nurses¹³. Empowerment is acknowledged to be a model for new, non-hierarchical structures, and as a result, promotes employee engagement resulting in positive outcomes⁷. Furthermore, nurses who feel their environments are empowering, are more satisfied with their jobs, are more loyal to their organizations, and have a high quality of nursing care in their units¹⁵.

Employees who have more resourceful work environments are more likely to have higher levels of engagement⁶. Additionally, job resources, such as support from peers and supervisors, performance feedback, and learning opportunities, can be motivating to the employee because they foster growth, learning and development, and are positively associated with engagement⁶.

Consequences

According to Walker and Avant¹ consequences are events that happen as a result of the occurrence of the concept.

The consequences resulting from nursing engagement are: greater satisfaction with their environment; more autonomy within their practice; better commitment to their job and their patients; and a stronger patient safety culture¹⁴. The antecedents, attributes, and consequences of nurse engagement related to patient experience are summarized in Figure 1.

Empirical referents

The last step for the analysis is the empirical referent, the actual phenomena that demonstrate the existence of the concept itself¹. Empirical references relate to the theoretical foundation of the concept therefore contribute to the content and construct validity of instrument development.

Empirical references are useful in practice because they offer a delineation of observable phenomena that identify the existence of the concept in a particular setting¹⁶. To evaluate engagement the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) has been the instrument most often used, it has been translated to different languages⁹. Another tool used to measure engagement is the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI). This instrument was originally designed to measure burn out, but it has also been used to assess engagement. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory includes positively and negatively framed items to assess the two core dimensions of burnout: exhaustion and disengagement from work¹⁷.

CONCLUSION

The concept analysis presented in this paper indicates that the attributes of nurse engagement are self-advocacy, autonomy and control over nursing practice and communication. In addition, empowerment and job resources were found to be antecedents to nurse engagement and the patient experience. The importance of nurse engagement was recognized by The Institute of Medicine (IOM) during a roundtable on evidence based medicine and

the changing nature of healthcare¹⁸, as an important factor that has a direct effect on the patient experience. Consequently, to have a clear concept about nurse engagement can help to generate further research to develop interventions and education that could encourage and enhance nurse engagement and the patient experience.

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