Parenting: What Are The Critical Attributes?

Saovakon Virasiri PhD, RN*,
Jintana Yunibhand PhD, RN**, Waraporn Chaiyawat DNS, RN**

* Faculty of Nursing, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand
** Faculty of Nursing, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Objective: *Identifying the critical attributes of the parenting concept.*
Material and Method: *The parenting attributes are the process, activity, and interaction regarding to rearing and educating a child, which is undertaken by parent or parental figure. Those aim at developing a child's growth, development, and well-being.*
Conclusion: *The specific parenting attributes can be applied to practice, education, and research in the area of pediatric, family and community health care.*

Keywords: *Parenting, Concept analysis*

Parenting is the most important public health issue facing Thai society and the world. It is the single largest variable implicated in childhood illness, accidents, teenage pregnancy, substance misuse, truancy, school disruption, underachievement, child abuse, inability to become employed, juvenile crime, and mental illness[1,2]. It plays a potential role in preventing health problems in children and the adolescent population[3,4]. Therefore, increasing precise knowledge of the parenting concept is a great necessity. Consequently, this scientific knowledge can make a strong contribution to health care providers and other disciplines involved in promoting the wellness of children, adolescents, and families. Such disciplines include, for example, psychology, education, social work, sociology[5], and health care providers.

Parenting, especially, the critical attributes that can be used in both practice and research have not been specified. The parenting definitions are not explicit in the domains of instruments of nursing studies[6]. As can be seen in the literature review, most studies in relation to the phenomenon of parenting have been conducted by using various terms and conceptual bases that represent the meaning and attributes of the parenting concept, such as parenthood, child-rearing, childcare, parental role and function, parent-child relationships, family process, and socialization. These varied terms can be confusing for people in health and related fields as to the real meaning and construct of these concepts and as a result, gaps in research in the area of parenting might occur. Especially, people might be confused about what constitutes the critical attributes of this concept and they then might apply this concept differently or in a distorted fashion from the original meaning and attributes. The purpose of the concept analysis is to identify the critical attributes of the parenting concept.

Material and Method

This concept analysis was conducted based on a literature search using a variety of online databases, and a manual search of books. These materials were taken from health and nursing science, psychology, education, and social science related to the topic of parenting. The research steps were accomplished by searching for the term "parenting" with only reference to human parenting presented in the titles, abstracts, and the contents of these articles, books, and documents. With the on-line databases, there were many articles found in a search on Medline, Social Science Index databases, ScienceDirect, Blackwell Synergy, and PsychINFO. References were excluded if they were not directed to the parenting concept such as parents, parenthood, fathering, and

Correspondence to:
Virasiri S, Faculty of Nursing, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand.
Phone: 043-204-012
E-mail: saovir@kku.ac.th

mothering. In addition, this concept analysis was conducted through the analysis process of Walker & Avant[7], which consists of eight steps: selecting a concept, determining the purposes of the analysis, identifying the uses of the concept, determining the critical attributes, constructing a model case, contrary and invented case, identifying antecedents and consequences, and defining empirical referents.

Uses of the concept

Walker and Avant present that one should consider all uses of a concept, and a careful analysis of the literature will assist the analyst in understanding the meaning of the concept[7]. Therefore, many sources were included for the current usage of the concept, including dictionaries and the published literature across the health, sociology, psychology, education, and humanity fields.

Dictionary definitions

Parenting refers to the rearing of a child or children, in particular the care, love, and guidance given by a parent. It consists of the methods, techniques and other activities that are used or required in the rearing of children. Parenting is a process of raising and educating a child from birth until adulthood, which is carried out in a child's family by the mother and father or biological parents[8]. Additionally, the new International Webster's dictionary defines parenting as the act or process of functioning as parents and of raising children[9]. It refers to the skill or activity of looking after children as a parent[10].

Historical usage of the term, parenting, and its current development

The uses of the concept parenting in the published literature were identified by searching the computer databases and through manual search. The following is a summary of the historical usage of the term "parenting" and its current development in health and related literature.

The term parenting comes from the Latin verb 'parere'–'to bring forth, develop, or educate'. This word, from its roots, is more concerned with the activity of developing and educating than with the person that does it[11]. 'To parent' is an active verb, which denotes the positive activities undertaken by parental figures toward children; however, the noun "parent" usually implies a natural or biological parent[12]. Hence, people besides parents can love, care for and guide a child. The term for such a person is "caregiver".

Some caregivers are relatives, such as grandparents, older brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles. Other caregivers may be non-relatives, for example, babysitters, teachers, coaches and professional childcare providers.

Parenting is not the same as parenthood, which means to be a father or a mother who gives birth. It is a more comprehensive term than child rearing[4], and it is limited to the relationships between parents and children, whereas grandparents or relatives, as well as teachers, can take part only in child rearing practices[13]. Certainly, this means 'being a parent'; however, it is more than that. It is the function, role, and responsibility of the parent in the family unit[14] that can imply the commitment of an individual or individuals to provide for the physical and psycho-social needs of a child[15]. In particular, parenting means the role performed by a person that possesses parental status in order to suitably and positively enhances development in every aspect of their child's life[4]. It is the primary method used by parents for socializing children[16].

In terms of task and function, parenting is the task of parents in bringing up their children. It is the main task of parents that provide care for a child or children and involves responsibility for their well-being[17]. This task occurs in the everyday parental behaviors with their children based on parents' cognition, emotion, attributions and attitudes and values[18,13,19]. Rutter emphasizes that parenting is predominantly seen as a task in relation to the socialization or education of children that includes dimensions of sensitivity to a child's needs, social communication and emotional expressiveness and disciplinary control[20]. It is one of the complicating, challenging, and potentially rewarding tasks that a family or an individual can perform. It is also a learned task, whereby an individual provides for the safety and physical and emotional well-being of a child. These parental tasks include sharing customs and traditions[21], fostering skills for economic survival, promoting interpersonal and communication skills and helping children become self-regulatory, productive and self-actualized[22]. It is also a parental functioning in a family[14], focusing on child caring and socializing[23]. In particular, parenting is the tasks and roles that parents might be expected to perform regarding a child or children[6].

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviors of parents or people that work individually and together to influence child

outcomes[24]. Hoghughi & Long state that parenting is a positive, purposive and nurturing activity which is specifically aimed at promoting a child's welfare or ensuring the survival and development of children, neither of which presumes a biological or age relationship[5]. It is the activity of providing support, care, and love[25]. Especially, parenting is the activities of parents that provide care, support, and love in a way that leads to a child's total development[26].

Parenting is both a biological and social process involving much more than only a mother and father who provides food, safety, and succor for the infant or child. It is the process of parent-child relationships that aim at raising and socializing a child. In particular, parenting can shape a child's attitude, behaviors, and emotional function[27]. It is the process of teaching and training children in which parents engage in order to encourage the child's growth, such as nourishing, protecting, and guiding a child through the course of his or her development[28,29]. It refers to the process that parents perform toward their children in the everyday life events of the family unit[30,31], which depends on parents' cognition, emotions, attributions, attitudes and values[13]. This process aims at providing care, encouraging a child's independent decision-making, fostering skills for economic survival, promoting interpersonal skills and helping children to become self-regulatory, productive and self-actualized in adulthood[22,32].

Bodman & Peterson emphasize that parenting is a dynamic bi-directional process from parent to child as well as from child to parent[33]. This process is an evolving process that starts from discussions between the couple. It is a thinking process of the couple carried out in order to achieve suitable guidelines for raising the child or children in specific situations of the family[34] that includes the processes of developing and utilizing knowledge and skills appropriately to plan for creating, giving birth, rearing, educating and providing for children[4].

In addition, parenting also consists of the complexity of behaviors of parents that involve multidimensional aspects of process, behaviors, and relationships between parents and their children[31]. In particular, parenting concerns the parent-child relationships that are a continuous series of interactions between parent and child[35]. These interactions involve bi-directional relationships between members of two or more generations, parent and child or grandmother/ father, and can extend through all major parts of the respective life spans of these groups[36].

As the literature review, the content analysis was carried out and then the important attributes of the concept were synthesized based on the evidence supported. According to the definitions of parenting from several sources, the meaning of parenting is presented frequently in terms of the 'activity,' 'task,' 'function', 'process,' and 'relationship and interaction' performed by a parent or people who posses parental role. Thus, the term parenting can be defined as the process and purposive activity, including interactions regarding to rearing and educating a child that parent or parental figure that perform for promoting child's growth, development, including health.

Defining critical attributes

Critical or defining attributes are those 'characteristics' of a concept that appear over and over again when the concept is defined or described[7]. Based on the literature review, the parenting has three defining attributes as follows.

1. Process, activity and interaction regarding to rearing and educating a child.

2. Being undertaken by parent/parents or parental figures in everyday life events.

3. Aiming at promoting a child's growth, development and well-being

Constructed cases

Once the critical attributes of parenting have been defined, the constructed cases, especially a model case, a contrary case, and an invented case, were created. These cases function as examples in demonstrating what the concept is and what it is not through the presentation or absence of these critical attributes.

Model case

A model case is a 'real life' representative of the concept in which all the defining attributes are presented. It is an example that demonstrates the purest of notions. In this way, one can be certain that a model case is an example of the concept[7]. The following is a model case depicting the concept of parenting. All of the critical attributes are presented within the model.

After they were married for three years, Mrs. and Mr. Somboon became the parents of a lovely boy. They planned to bring up their boy to become a successful and healthy adult. During his infant year, the mother breast-fed him, given him hygiene care, prevented accidents, gave him toys and played with

him. Sometimes, their son was naughty; they tried to stop him by giving reasons for not to do something. They sent him to kindergarten at three and changed schools when he reached his school years. Usually, they encouraged their child to do activities by himself, such as eating and dressing. When their child became a teen, they let him be more independent; however, they continued to protect him from risks and harm. In addition, when, he became an adult, they kept their distance from him. They just contacted him by phone or visited him regularly, including providing support when he needed it or when he was in trouble. They plan to watch over their son forever. They wish that their child would become successful and healthy adult in the future.

The model case reflects that the biological mother and father (parents) perform the process, activities, and interaction in relation to rearing and educating their child in everyday life events in the family unit those aim at promoting the child's growth, development, and health.

Contrary case

Walker & Avant describe a contrary case as a demonstration of what the concept is not through the absence of critical attributes[7]. The following case is apparently not an example of the concept being investigated.

Num is 18 years old, and got an unwanted pregnancy. After giving birth at a hospital, she did not breast-feed the baby and, sometimes, she spanked him when he cried so much, which made her irritable. She felt sad and unwanted bringing up her baby. She felt guilty and fearful about the punishment of her parents. Therefore, she left her baby and the hospital.

In this case, all three critical attributes of parenting are absent. The young woman was not to perform any process and activity of rearing and educating the baby continuously. She did not set any goals of nurturing her child. Finally, she did not interact with thus, neglected her baby.

Invented case

An invented case is constructed using ideas outside of our own experience and is useful for examining a familiar concept. In order to gain insight into the true picture of the critical defining attributes, the concept is taken out of its ordinary context and placed in an invented one[7].

Far from the world, in the land of Methevous, a Methevousian can give birth to a new generation through the dreaming process. When a Methevousian adult has his own child, they must follow the policy and value of Methevousians in bringing up their offspring to become a kind-hearted adult. The parents provide sunlight and a bath for their infant child every morning, which can help the child to be a warmhearted person. While a young child, parents use Carbon Absorber together with carbon from the atmosphere to make the child's diet and the parents anticipate and train their children about how to avoid risk and harm from Aliens in their daily living. During their teenage years, their child is sent to the government for a training program by the warmhearted Methovousians and taught how to give birth through the dreaming process.

This invented case shows all the critical attributes of parenting. The Methevousian parents intend to perform the process and activities that aim at promoting their child becoming an adult who can give birth by itself that includes being a kind-hearted Methevousian. The parents interact with their child continuously.

Antecedents and consequences

The identification of antecedents and consequences helps to refine the critical attributes and to illuminate the contexts in which the concept is commonly used. Antecedents are circumstances that must take place before the occurrences of the concept, whereas consequences are events that occur as a result of the concept[7].

Antecedents

The antecedents of parenting are, first, a 'parent' that is a biological parent or people that possess parental status in relation to a child and second, a 'child' that needs a parent or people that act as parent. Both of them must have relationships and a role in terms of parent and child, and these promote the process and purposive activity of rearing and educating the child in the everyday life of the family unit or in the social institute.

Consequences

Parenting is the process, activity, and interaction undertaken by parent or parental figure toward their child. Thus, positive or negative consequences can occur with both of them depending on the positive or negative parenting practice and behaviors. For example, while continuing their activities, parents can develop greater well-being,

high self-esteem, and enjoyment, and have good life satisfaction[29,37]. On the other hand, negative parental effects can occur when parents are troubled while raising and educating their child in daily living. Their life satisfaction and self-esteem are decreased because of lack of recreation and rest[29] and they can become nervous, depressed, and physically ill[38].

In terms of child consequences, parenting is significantly associated with a child's consequences or outcomes in several dimensions[39] such as academic achievement, social competencies, self-esteem and life-satisfaction[29,40], and sexual behaviors[41] including, child's and adolescent's adjustment[42,43]. Positive outcomes of child/children can result from positive parenting. These outcomes include physical maturation, internalized morality, autonomy, and self-identity[44]. On the other hand, negative outcomes can result from negative parenting, such as delinquency[45], alcohol misuse[46], adolescent marijuana use[47], poor life satisfaction, hopelessness, depression, and general psychiatric morbidity in adolescents[48].

Empirical referents

Walker and Avant propose the idea that empirical referents such as the occurrence of actual phenomena can provide evidence of a concept[7]. These referents can provide the clinician and researcher with clear and observable phenomena by which to distinguish the existence of the concept.

As seen in the literature review, there is less explicit evidence of parenting studied that demonstrates the same construct of measurements as the critical attributes synthesized from this concept analysis. Previous studies were conducted based on Baumrind's parenting typology, both in the Western and Eastern context[49]. In particular, the common evidence consists of the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles or patterns[50]. However, the construct of parenting style is used to explore parental behaviors and interactions of parent/parents and child that do not cover all of the critical attributes of parenting in terms of the process, activity, and interaction regarding to rearing and educating a child, which occur continuously in everyday life events. The measurement of parenting in terms of process and purposive activity is less evidence.

One measurement device, the "Alabama Parenting Questionnaire" is found[51]. The construct in this tool focuses on parental practices and parenting process and activity, which consist of six dimensions: involvement, monitoring/supervision, consistency discipline, positive parenting, corporal punishment and other discipline practices. Especially, this instrument was used to measure the typical frequency of parenting activities in the home, specifically, parenting in the family with a conduct disordered child. While in terms of process, Jacobson explored the parenting process from parents who were identified as having positive parenting outcomes[30]. However, the author did not use any measurement tool. She studied through the qualitative approach that could help understanding the parenting process that occurred in the family unit.

Result and Discussion

As this concept analysis, the meaning of parenting could be defined as the process and purposive activity, including interactions regarding to rearing and educating a child that parent or parental figure performs for promoting child's growth, development, including health. In term of critical attributes, parenting yielded three characteristics that involved with both parents and child (process, activity and interaction or relationship). Explicitly, parenting is a positive, purposive, nurturing activity and interaction process which is specifically aimed at promoting a child's welfare or ensuring the survival and development of children. It is the activity of providing support, care, and love. Thus, parenting focuses on on three key words: responsibility, guidance, and nurturing of parents[25].

However, parenting could be negative if a parent or parental figure dose not perform in positive way and process which depends on serveral factors and determinants. Especially, the parenting, according to results from the complex network and many factors that can affect it[4,35]. Bigner[35] identifies six categories of factors that can influence parenting processes and related activities that consist of: (a) cultural influences, e.g. social class or peer value system, (b) personality patterns of parents, (c) parental attitudes toward parenting tasks, (d) role modeling or the influence of observing others in parenting role, particularly one's own parents, (e) environment or factors related to parenting which may be situations, and lastly, (f) goals of child rearing, both short- and long-term expectations of appropriate child behaviors. As well as, Hamner & Turner[4] emphasizes that parenting could be both positive and negative activity and interaction process depended on the determinant factors regarding to parent, child and social factors.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The findings of this concept analysis can provide benefits for nurses and other health care providers that aim at promoting children's, adolescents' and families' health. The finding suggests that the parenting attributes can be gained into the construct of this concept and can be used to bridge the gap in practice, education and research. For example, educators and researchers that know about the definite critical attributes of the parenting concept can apply them in order to develop specific tool for assessing the parenting in the family unit. Nurses and other related disciplines can then analyze the parenting problems and create appropriate intervention for enhancing parent/parents or parental figure's capabilities to perform the process, activity and interaction in relations to rearing and training a child in the family unit. In this way, the growth, development and health of children will be promoted or improved. In research area; nurse and other health scholars can use the critical attributes to develop measurement devices that can study parenting variables and not deviate from the real construct of this concept. For instance, the measurement tool should be focused on exploring parenting in terms of the process, activity and interaction regarding to rearing and educating a child from parent/parents or parental figures. In particular, according to parenting is the process; therefore, ascertaining appropriate methodology for researching the parenting phenomenon is very important. Researchers that need to investigate the parenting process should select the appropriate methodology, especially, the qualitative approach, for gaining insight into the process, activity and interaction that parent/parents perform continuously based on an individual's real experience and perception. As well as, if researchers aim to explore the parenting through the quantitative method, they may be able to conduct through the longitudinal study and the Cross Sectional methodology that could help them to understand the parenting that occurs in everyday life events through a course of child development and lives.

Potential conflicts of interest

None.

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อะไรคือลักษณะสำคัญของมโนทัศน์เรื่องการเลี้ยงดูเด็ก?

เสาวคนธ์ วีระศิริ, จินตนา ยูนิพันธุ์, วราภรณ์ ชัยวัฒน์

การวิเคราะห์แนวคิดในครั้งนี้มีเป้าหมายเพื่อนำไปสู่การระบุลักษณะสำคัญ ของมโนทัศน์เรื่องการเลี้ยงดูเด็ก ซึ่งพบว่าลักษณะที่สำคัญของมโนทัศน์นี้ประกอบด้วย กระบวนการ กิจกรรม และการมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ในเรื่องที่เกี่ยวข้อง กับการเลี้ยงดูและการสอนเด็ก ซึ่งดำเนินการโดยบิดามารดาหรือบุคคลที่ทำหน้าที่ในบทบาทดังกล่าว อันมีผลทำให้ เกิดการพัฒนาในด้านความเจริญเติบโต พัฒนาการและความอยู่ดีมีสุขของเด็กที่ได้รับการเลี้ยงดูดังกล่าว ลักษณะสำคัญของมโนทัศน์ที่ระบุได้อย่างเฉพาะเจาะจงในครั้งนี้ สามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ในด้านการปฏิบัติ การศึกษา และการวิจัยในงานด้านกุมารเวชกรรม ตลอดจนการดูแลสุขภาพครอบครัวและชุมชน