

An Examination of Sport Retirement Through Concept Analysis of Occupational Retirement

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Abstract

Occupational retirement is a major life transition that involves extensive planning, preparation, and coping strategies to navigate. Many retirees feel relief and freedom upon retirement, but others note feelings of loss, grief, and identity crisis (Eagers et al., 2022). These feelings are also experienced by athletes navigating retirement from competitive sports. After a major life transition, individuals will either adapt or fail to adapt to the new identity and lifestyle (Schlossberg, 1981). With the goal of adaptation in mind, concept analysis of occupational retirement was completed to further understand the complexities that lead to successful adjustment to sport retirement. An additional goal was to find a measure of adaptation that can be applied to sport retirement. The Walker and Avant (2019) method of concept analysis was used as the guide for analyzing occupational retirement. Thirty-nine occupational retirement articles were included in the final analysis. After determining the defining attributes, antecedents, and consequences to occupational retirement, the findings were then compared to sport retirement literature.

Defining attributes of occupational retirement include a job/occupation and subsequent cessation of the job/occupation. Similarly, sport retirement includes sport participation and subsequent termination of participation. The antecedents to the two types of retirement are where they differ the most. Occupational retirement is typically based on age, benefit eligibility, and financial status. Sport retirement is often dictated by eligibility, graduation, deselection, or injury. Consequences to occupational and sport retirement are more similar. Retirees of both types can experience feelings of loss, grief, sadness, anxiety, and identity crisis (Eagers et al., 2022; Harry & Weight, 2021). The adverse emotions often peak at six months post-retirement and subside within one year (Man & Man, 2019; Stephen et al., 2003). Factors that promote successful adaptation include; diversifying identity, social support, preparation, and viewing the change as a gain rather than a loss. In occupational literature, life satisfaction, quality of life and well-being, physical functioning, and depression were used as measures of adaptation. These instruments could be utilized in future sport-related research to quantify adaptation to sport retirement.