

By using an appropriate model of reflection identify one aspect of your own practice or behaviour that you may choose to modify and how this would contribute to a more sustainable society. Your proposed change should be supported by reference to theories of sustainability.

As global citizens we have a responsibility to act responsibly for our planet (Cranor, 1985), whether we believe in sustainability or not, as it is a contested concept (Jacques, 2015), Tonn and Stiefel (2014) believe there is a threat of human extinction from environmental risks. The Brundtland Report (1987, p.16) defines sustainability as meeting 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Therefore in order to act as a responsible citizen I will proceed to use the Gibbs Model of Reflection (Gibbs, 1988) to consider modifying the practice of using disposable nappies (DN) to a more sustainable product that will minimise the environmental impact my practice creates.

Description

Having had my daughter in October 2018, I commenced using DN, initially store branded before moving to the Pampers brand, for two reasons, the first, DN were used by family and friends, especially my mother using Pampers branded nappies. Secondly, I was given Bounty packs that included DN.

It is estimated that an infant will utilise between 4000 - 6000 nappies by the time they are fully toilet trained, and around 3 billion a year in the UK are discarded at landfill (WRAP, No Date), and causing detrimental impact to the environment (Environment Agency, 2008). Therefore, to minimise this impact, I felt the need to consider finding an alternative product.

I undertook an exploration of the other options available, these being cloth and reusable nappies (RN), and of the upkeep process (Pendry, Mewse and Burgoyne, 2012). I currently cannot see that I would be in a position to transition from DN, especially considering that the Environment Agency Report (2008) highlights that RN can only be better for the environment if consumer's behaviour allows for the appropriate laundering process be followed.

Feelings

I had not thought about the environmental consequences; having researched I was shocked at the statistics and of the detrimental effects that DN have on the environment. Norgaard (2011) believes that individuals lack information and awareness of the harm caused by using disposable products. I have now been feeling guilty for adding to the concern of nappies disposed at landfill. Pendry, Mewse and Burgoyne (2012) assert that this is a feeling many others have felt in their research into the use of DN and their disposal.

Evaluation

My daughter was born through emergency caesarean. I had to rest as much as possible during the 6 weeks post-partum, and as a single parent with limited support I now believe that using RN would have been difficult, with the upkeep of the washing and drying and therefore initially DN were the best solution for me. NHS (2019) assert the importance for self-care and ensuring that plenty of rest is taken to assist in the recovery process, and for this reason the use of DN could be considered as being convenient (Jones, 1997; Aishwariya and Priyanka, 2020).

Although convenient, I am now aware of the number of nappies that end up in landfill and how this is detrimental to the environment (Environment Agency, 2008). Therefore, knowing how I have contributed to an ongoing issue has increased my awareness to not only nappy use, but to many other practices where I am not being sustainable. I am also questioning why nappy options are not clearly provided during prenatal care, and this is an area I will discuss with the health visitor.

Analysis

Regarding my decision to utilise DN, research showed that behaviour in product consumption is influenced by family and peer-based, through social interactions and observation of others' consumption (Childres and Rao, 1982). It is also considered that an offspring will, more than likely, purchase the same brand that their parents used, this is known as intergenerational

influence (Childres and Rao, 1982) and I noted above that I changed from store branded nappies to Pampers, the same brand my mother used

Pampers utilised the Bounty pack promotional scheme to assist in marketing strategies, alongside advertising on television, in printed media, and online (Boothby, 2003). Kirkham (2004) asserts that the Bounty packs would be provided with no further verbal communication, allowing for mums to make an informed choice on product use, however Askins and Bulkeley (2005) note that an informed choice could not be made, due to the absence of information on an alternative product, such as cloth or RN, and that providing a sample of these would be advantageous, as mums prefer to have first-hand experience, seeing and feeling the products available.

Cognitive dissonance is the theoretical perspective proposed by Festinger (1957) where one can have a mental conflict that influences attitudes and behaviour, in this reflective account it is evident that my cognitive dissonance draws me to focus on the DN aspect rather than focus upon the change.

Conclusion

On reflection, I should have looked at all available options, instead of being influenced by marketing strategies, however I was not educated of the other options available to me. Having considered my daughter's age, now 2, I believe that changing to RN now would not be financially or environmentally justifiable, however by focusing on potty-training we will substantially reduce our nappy use before fully eliminating them.

Action Plan

My action plan will be set out using the SMART action plan. Day and Tosey (2011) assert that it is essential to have a robust plan to accomplish an intended goal.

Specific

To be specific, my plan is to potty train my daughter to decrease our nappy consumption, initially from six nappies per day to one overnight, and to then eliminate the overnight nappy.

Measurable

I will be able to measure that the plan is being accomplished through reducing from six nappies to one in the initial period, and then when fully toilet trained day and night there will no longer be a need to utilise any nappies.

Achievable

I am confident that this goal is achievable; I will follow guidance from NHS (2018) when potty-training my daughter.

Realistic

I believe this task is realistically achievable, because many children are potty trained from the age of two onwards, however it is advised to take the process slowly and take it at a pace the child can manage (NHS, 2018).

Timely

Over the coming weeks, I will slowly encourage some nappy free time, and during the Christmas holidays I will have more time to dedicate to the potty-training process.

If I were to have another baby, I would undertake research of the options of RN, seek advice, and gather information on what products would be suitable to meet my goal of becoming more environmentally sustainable.

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