

2nd World Congress on

Midwifery and Neonatal Nursing

August 28-30, 2017 Philadelphia, USA

Is mentoring effective for midwifery students in the clinical area? Midwives perceptions at a provincial hospital in Zimbabwe

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Midwifery is a competency based profession in which midwifery students acquire most of their guided learning in the clinical area, hence the need to ensure optimal mentoring which would promote the acquisition of the ideal clinical skills. Failure to support and prepare midwifery students may affect their ability to deliver the required level of midwifery care. This study purposed at exploring the midwives' perceptions regarding mentoring of midwifery students in the clinical area at Marondera midwifery training institution. A qualitative phenomenological design based on the principles of naturalistic inquiry underpinned this study. The study sample was composed of six recently qualified midwives and ten senior midwives who met the inclusion criteria. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample until saturation was reached. Data were generated using tape-recorded unstructured individual interviews. Colaizzi's thematic analysis was used to synthesize the findings, and data were presented using the emergent themes. The results generally revealed that mentorship was perceived as an important supportive, teaching and learning strategy. Four themes emerged from the interview data, namely; gross inconsistencies in the mentoring of midwifery students, lack of standardized procedures, poor communication between the school of midwifery and the clinical area and lack of ideal infrastructure which hinder effective mentoring of midwifery students. The results gave rise to the adaptation of Bandura's social learning theory which was used as an explanatory framework for understanding the study's findings. Several recommendations were proffered; allocating individual mentors to midwifery students, training programs specifically for mentors, benchmarking to improve training of midwifery students and standardization of mentoring guidelines. Communication between the school of midwifery and the clinical area must improve and there is need for creation of an active national midwifery education board which oversees midwifery teaching and mentoring. The authorities should be committed to the provision of adequate resources to enhance mentorship of midwifery. Further research should focus on identification of where midwives differ and sources of their differences, and then establish solutions to the challenges.

Biography

Mrs Elizabeth Silumba Nee Kasaira is a midwifery educator in Zimbabwe. She holds a Master's degree in midwifery education from the National University of Science and Technology Zimbabwe. She did her BSc Nursing degree majoring in nursing education, a Diploma in midwifery and a Diploma in general nursing plus a certificate in maternal and child health for trainers from Tenshi College Japan. She is passionate for midwifery research, education and practice. She teaches midwifery and supervises midwifery research. She is an Active Member of the Zimbabwe Confederation of Midwives Association, as a Vice Chairperson in her province.

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