

Current Issues and Challenges of Clinical Education in Nursing and Midwifery in Africa: Protocol of a Scoping Review Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Quality clinical education is regarded an essential component of nursing and midwifery education. However, poorly trained nurses or midwives with skills and knowledge deficits provide ineffective nursing care with serious consequences on patients safety. The overall aim of this study is to provide a documented evidence of issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa as well as identify areas that require primary research.

Methods and Analysis: The research team develops a search strategy following a preliminary search for databases. The following computer-assisted, data-based engines are used for the search: Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Nursing and Health Sciences, Scopus, EBSCO host (i.e Science Direct, Medline), Google and Google Scholar. Data extraction will be done by five reviewers in parallel. A thematic analysis of the studies will be carried out to extract relevant outcomes.

Discussion: We envisage finding a large number of studies on clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa, if summarized, will be relevant in guiding future studies.

Dissemination: The findings will be disseminated electronically and in print in peer-reviewed journals as well as at conferences.

Keywords

Clinical education, Nursing, Midwifery, Scoping review, Africa.

Background

Clinical skills underpin professional practice in nursing and midwifery which fundamentally dependent on the knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired through clinical education during training [1]. According to the World Health Organization (WHO)

[2], the increasing demands of the dynamic and complex health care system globally and African countries in particular requires that academic institutions tailor their clinical education and trainings towards imparting on students, practical skills that will make them suitable and successful at the work place in meeting the needs of the population. Although high quality clinical education is regarded an indispensable and essential component of nursing and midwifery education internationally [1,3], Africa is hit hardest

with much daunting challenges such as poor communication and collaboration between nursing educational institutions and healthcare organizations, problem of theory-practice nexus, inadequate faculty and hospital staff with increasing student population as well as lack of time and heavy workload at clinical learning environment [3,4]. These collectively or individually contribute to inadequate supervision and guidance of student nurses and midwives during clinical placement inter alia [3-6].

Evidence from studies conducted in Ghana and South Africa show that there is a disconnect between nursing colleges and healthcare facilities in providing clinical education for students' practical learning experiences [7-9]. This is sufficiently demonstrated by the seeming failure of nurse educators from nursing colleges and preceptors as well as clinical nurses from the healthcare facilities to collaborate in preparing an educated nursing workforce [1]. According to Anarado, Agu and Nwonu [10] and Senti and Seekoe [11], this may be exacerbated by the lack of clear, direct role of nurse educators and clinical nurses on clinical teaching for students on placement.

Qualitative studies conducted in Malawi and South Africa by Msiska, Smith and Fawcett [6] and Senti and Seekoe [11] respectively found that, clinical nurses do not take the role of clinical teaching as their responsibility positing that their duty is to provide care rather than facilitate students' learning in the ward. Meanwhile, nurse educators who have gained academic training on pedagogical strategies are equally viewed as purely educators and not practicing clinical nurses and therefore, are perceived not to have clinical teaching roles for students during placement in the clinical environment [10].

Yet, other studies in Ghana show that preceptors who are trained and mandated to facilitate clinical teaching are few and therefore, not available at all health facilities or units every time for students' guidance and support [4,8]. This is particularly problematic in the wake of the current dramatic increase in student population which makes clinical learning environments overcrowded, busy and chaotic [4,8]. Consequently, these student nurses and midwives are neglected and do not get adequate constant supervision and guidance from nurse educators, preceptors or clinical staff during their clinical placements as expected [8,12,13]. Eventually, poorly trained nurses or midwives are produced with skills and knowledge deficits, who provide ineffective nursing care with serious consequences on patients' safety [6]. Sometimes adverse incidents occur as a result.

In a cross-sectional descriptive study in Southeastern Nigeria, students reported that they were neither supervised during their shift in the ward by clinical nurses from the healthcare facility/nurse educators from the school nor evaluated at the end of each clinical experience [10]. The preceptors were not available at each shift to coach students and were not given assignments during clinical rotation periods. Student nurses were left with no one to rely on, causing frustration and confusion among them [10]. This goes to affirm that a clinical learning environment that is rich in

learning experiences, but lacks support from key players of clinical education in nursing and midwifery, discourages the student nurse or midwife to seek experiences for his or her professional growth and development [14]. This demonstrates a clear lack of focus and common objective and vision for clinical education in some African countries [15]. It is therefore of utmost importance that the challenges and related issues of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa context be explored and remedies prescribed for the overall benefit of the students and patients.

Aim and Review Questions

The overall aim of this study is to provide an overview of documented evidence of the issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa as well as identify areas that require primary research. Through an iterative process as suggested by Arksey and O'Malley [16], the following guiding research questions are developed:

- What is known in existing literature about the issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa?
- Which areas of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa need primary research?

Methods and Design

The research team considered several systematic methods for reviewing published studies and chose to conduct a scoping review as the best approach to map the current issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa over the last decade. A scoping review is a transparent, methodical and rigorous systematic literature review approach that permits mapping or exploring of broad spectrum of studies to determine the extent, range and nature of research on a particular subject which provides a mechanism for summarizing and disseminating the research findings to policy makers, practitioners and consumers [16]. The scoping review methodological framework by Arksey and O'Malley is adopted for designing this review protocol, because it enables the research team to (1) identify the research question, (2) identify relevant studies, (3) select studies that are relevant to the research question, (4) map or chart, and (5) gather, summarize and report the results on the pertinent literature on the study phenomenon [16]. The first stage is discussed under the background of the study; the next three stages are discussed in this methods/design section and the last stage in the results section.

Identifying relevant studies

The principal aim of scoping review is to comprehensively address a broad spectrum of research questions; nevertheless, parameters are needed to guide the search. The research team deliberated and created inclusion and exclusion criteria, databases to search, and developed a search strategy and key terms.

Inclusion criteria

The following inclusion criteria (Table 1) were used to guide the search and will be used to scrutinize all potentially relevant studies to confirm their eligibility and contribution to the study in addressing the central research question:

- Relevant studies with focus on clinical education in nursing and midwifery
- Relevant studies with focus on student nurses and midwives
- Relevant studies conducted in Africa
- Relevant literature published from 2005 up to 2019
- Relevant studies published in the English language
- Review articles include; peer-reviewed journal articles, scoping reviews, systematic reviews, rapid reviews, meta-synthesis and meta-analysis
- Primary and secondary studies using quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods designs will be included
- Grey literature includes; Academic dissertations/theses, reports from conferences, government and non-governmental organizations
- Exclusion criteria identified are:
 - Studies conducted outside Africa will be excluded
 - Studies conducted in Africa but used participants outside the continent will be excluded
 - Publications in non-English language will be excluded
 - Studies with no focus on clinical education in nursing and midwifery will be excluded
 - Studies published before 2005 and after 2019 will be excluded
 - Letters and case studies will be excluded

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time period	From 2005 to 2019	Before 2005 and after 2019
Study focus	Clinical education in nursing and midwifery	Clinical education in other professions other than nursing and midwifery
Type of article	Peer-reviewed journal articles and grey literature	Letters and case studies
Language	English	Publications in non-English language
Country of origin	Studies conducted in Africa	Studies conducted outside Africa

Table 1: Summary of inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Search strategy

The research team develops a search strategy following a preliminary search of research databases. The search includes the use of the following computer-assisted, data-based engines: Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Nursing and Health Sciences, Scopus, EBSCO host (i.e Science Direct, Medline), Google and Google Scholar. An iterative process was used to search and filter data and to ensure that the literature was covered in a comprehensive way. The following key search terms were used (separately and in combination): “clinical education in nursing in Africa”; “clinical education in midwifery in Africa”; “issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa”. The filtering methods included the time frame (within the last 14 years), clinical education, nursing, midwifery, Africa. Three researchers would independently keep an update of the number of articles reviewed, search engine(s) and key word(s) used and the date search is conducted (Table 1). Upon completion, the searches from each database will be documented for screening and selection.

Date	Search engine	Key term/word	Number of articles reviewed

Electronic search record.

Study selection (screening of articles)

The researchers will independently screen the reference lists of the included articles using a Google form which details the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the reviewers’ decisions. During the first stage of screening, the titles and abstracts will be examined individually by the five researchers after the systematic search. Correspondingly, the same researchers will examine the full-text articles in the second screening process. An article will be included or excluded if it meets the above criteria (Table 2). At each stage of the screening process, the researchers would reach consensus about the outcome of the results for inclusion if differences arise before proceeding to the next stage. Quality assessment of studies to be included in this review will not be done in any formal sense as it does not form part of the remit of scoping review studies [16].

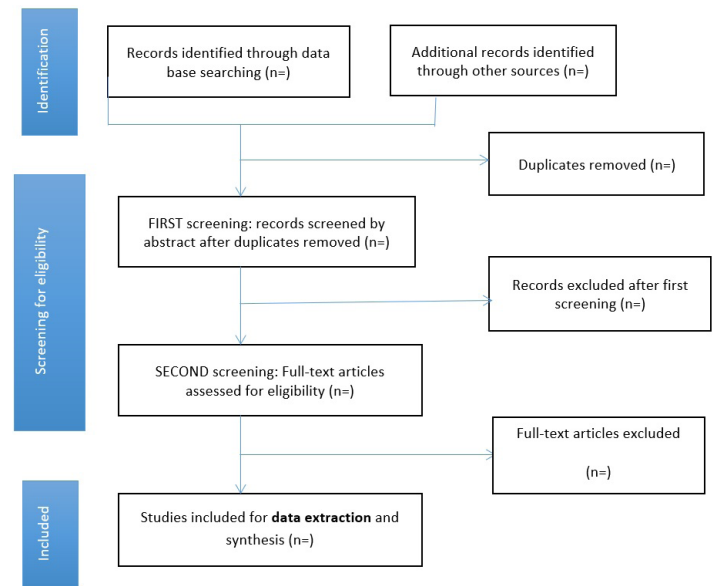


Figure 1: Flow chart of search strategy for extraction of relevant studies for the review.

Data extraction and charting

Five researchers would apply the inclusion and exclusion criteria to all the citations. Full copies of the complete articles will be obtained for those studies that appear to represent “best fit” with the central research question as stated by Arksey and O’Malley [16]. Based on a preliminary exercise done to guide the extraction and charting of the data from the titles and abstracts. The researchers developed a data charting form using database programme Excel, to determine and identify variables in order to extract data from all eligible studies to address the central research question.

Gathering, summarizing and reporting results

The overall aim of this study is to aggregate and summarize findings as presented across the various studies in order to provide an overview of the current issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa. While this is an iterative work

in progress, the research team will conduct a thematic analysis of all the relevant studies reviewed to obtain significant outcomes and report the results which will be significant in informing future studies. This process will involve two phases. In the first phase, the author (s), year of publication, study design, study populations, number of participants, study setting and conclusions of interest of studies included will be scrutinized (Table 3).

At phase two, results of the studies on current issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa will be examined and coded individually by the researchers. Subsequently, the researchers would come together and cross-validate the codes and the resulting themes and their relationships with the central research question. Coupled with these, the research team will critically examine the significance of the findings in relation to the principal aim of the study and discuss the implications for clinical practice and future studies.

No	Author	Study title	Year	Study setting/ Country	study design	Study population	Important results

Table 3: List of included articles and summary of results.

Discussion

Clinical education in nursing and midwifery has received little research attention in some African countries and more difficult to source in those countries, despite the overwhelming need for increasing the frontiers of clinical practice for student nurses and midwives at the clinical settings [8]. For instance, there are studies with specific focus on current issues and challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa. So, what is known in existing literature about this subject? To the best of our knowledge, there are no existing scoping review studies conducted in Africa to directly address the question in this proposed study.

In light of the above, the researchers envisage finding a dearth of empirical studies on clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa, albeit, when summarized and results reported will be useful and relevant to academics, health service administrators and researchers for improved clinical education. This review will highlight areas where systematic reviews and primary research studies are required.

Strength and Limitations

This scoping review is a novel approach that offers a feasible means of synthesizing a wide range of literature specific to the subject under study. As this study will be the first scoping review of reviews within this topic and context, the results will advance the scoping review methodology and provide unique insight concerning the extent of the challenges of clinical education in nursing and midwifery in Africa. However, it is worth pointing out that, potentially relevant articles and papers would be missed using English language only. Because, studies published in other languages will not be included for analysis in this review.

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