

Topic 1: Unveiling Midwives' Experiences of Newborn Health in Rural Birth Spaces in Southern Ghana

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Abstract

Midwives' experiences of newborn care in rural communities have been minimally explored over the past two decades globally in spite of their rich experiences as frontline health workers in maternal and newborn health. In Ghana, the slow decline of neonatal mortality is shaped by inequitable health coverage, lapses in health care delivery, weak community engagement strategies and policy implementation challenges. Understanding the dynamic contextual factors that impact rural newborn health care delivery is critical to meeting the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.2 - i.e. reducing neonatal mortality to at least 12 per 1000 live births. The aim of this study was to explore and unveil the experiences of midwives involved with newborn health care in rural birth settings, Southern Ghana. Interpretive phenomenology that incorporates Heideggerian and African philosophy were used to explore the meanings embedded in the experiences of thirteen midwives who volunteered to participate in the study. Emerging themes were synthesized from the verbal transcripts, field notes, reflective journal and commentaries from two independent reviewers to produce rich narratives of the midwives' embodied experiences. The study findings establish that maternal and neonatal care are delivered in health facilities, domiciliary settings and unpredictable spaces in rural communities where silent suffering occur. The knowledge generated in the study serves as basis for setting newborn health care delivery priorities, scaling up research-informed interventions, and refining policies to improve newborn health care delivery and midwifery practice in rural settings within Ghana.

Topic 2: “The Mother Beyond Delivery”: The Midwife and Maternal Mental Health

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Abstract

Mental illness is a major contributor to maternal morbidity and mortality, globally. Health professionals, specifically midwives' have significant roles to play in reducing maternal mortality to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030, particularly in developing and resource constraint countries, as envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3. Consequently, following a systematic and integrated literature review, this presentation critically examines midwives involvement in promoting maternal mental health, such as identifying women at risk, assessing and referring women appropriately in Ghana and beyond. Also, in view of calls to integrate mental health into general maternal health care, the presentation examines how midwives' can be empowered, taking into consideration sociocultural dynamics and mental illness, to screen and deliver evidenced-based, low-cost interventions through routine maternal health and reproductive care services, or make appropriate psychiatric care referrals. Midwives' are highly skilled in developing relationships with childbearing women and their families, a privileged position that affords a unique opportunity to enhance and promote maternal mental health to contribute to the attainment of SDG 3.