

Evidence-Based Strategies for Interprofessional Teamwork Between Midwives and Senior Nurses

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: *Midwives, Nurses, Interprofessional Collaboration, Maternal Care, Neonatal Health.*

ABSTRACT

Effective collaboration between midwives and nurses is essential for providing high-quality maternal and neonatal care. This paper examines the theoretical foundations, roles and responsibilities, communication dynamics, barriers, and evidence-based strategies that support interprofessional teamwork between these healthcare professionals. Midwives focus on patient-centered, holistic care and education, while senior nurses contribute clinical expertise, risk management, and leadership in coordinating complex care processes. Clear role delineation, structured communication, mutual respect, and organizational support are critical for successful collaboration. Barriers such as role ambiguity, hierarchical structures, communication gaps, and differences in professional culture can impede teamwork, resulting in inefficiencies and potential risks for patients. To address these challenges, strategies including standardized communication tools, joint training programs, team-building exercises, feedback mechanisms, and technological support are recommended. Implementing these interventions improves collaboration, reduces errors, enhances maternal and neonatal outcomes, and fosters a positive work environment. The study emphasizes that promoting interprofessional collaboration through evidence-based practices, continuous professional development, and supportive organizational policies not only improves patient safety and clinical outcomes but also increases staff satisfaction and overall healthcare efficiency. By prioritizing teamwork between midwives and nurses, healthcare institutions can optimize patient experiences, strengthen the quality of care, and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement in maternal and neonatal health.

1. Introduction

Interprofessional teamwork between midwives and senior nurses is widely recognized as a cornerstone for delivering high-quality maternal and neonatal care. Effective collaboration ensures that pregnant women and newborns receive timely, safe, and holistic care, addressing both clinical needs and emotional support. Midwives bring specialized expertise in pregnancy, labor, and postpartum care, focusing on individualized care, patient education, and advocacy, while senior nurses provide a broader clinical perspective, management skills, and experience in handling complex cases. The integration of these complementary roles enhances patient safety, reduces clinical errors, and improves overall satisfaction for both patients and healthcare providers. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

Despite the clear benefits, interprofessional collaboration often faces multiple challenges in real-world clinical settings. Role ambiguity, lack of clarity in responsibilities, hierarchical structures, and inconsistent communication protocols can hinder effective teamwork. Additionally, differences in training backgrounds, professional cultures, and clinical priorities may create misunderstandings or conflicts between team members. Studies have shown that inadequate collaboration can contribute to medical errors, delayed interventions, compromised patient outcomes, and decreased staff satisfaction, highlighting the urgent need for structured strategies to promote teamwork. (Romijn, Teunissen, de Bruijne, Wagner, & de Groot, 2017)

Evidence-based strategies have emerged as effective tools to strengthen interprofessional collaboration. Structured communication methods, joint training programs, regular team meetings, shared decision-making processes, and role clarification exercises are among the key interventions shown to improve coordination between midwives and senior nurses. Organizational support, including leadership engagement, policy frameworks, and continuous professional development opportunities, further reinforces sustainable collaboration and ensures adherence to best practices. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

This article aims to provide a comprehensive review of evidence-based strategies that enhance interprofessional teamwork between midwives and senior nurses. By synthesizing current research findings, the paper highlights practical approaches that not only improve communication and clarify roles but also foster mutual respect and a collaborative culture within healthcare teams. Ultimately, implementing these strategies is essential for improving maternal and neonatal outcomes, enhancing patient safety, and promoting a positive working environment for healthcare professionals. (Sjögren Forss, Mangrio, & Hellström, 2022)

1.1 Background of the Topic

Interprofessional teamwork in healthcare, particularly between midwives and senior nurses, has gained increasing attention over the past decades due to its direct impact on patient safety and care quality. Maternal and neonatal care is a complex domain requiring the integration of specialized knowledge, clinical skills, and effective communication across different professional roles. Midwives traditionally focus on pregnancy, labor, childbirth, and postpartum care, emphasizing patient-centered approaches and advocacy for maternal rights. Senior nurses, on the other hand, provide comprehensive clinical expertise, leadership, and experience in managing complex or high-risk cases, bridging the gap between specialized care and broader healthcare delivery. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

Historically, collaboration between midwives and nurses has been influenced by hierarchical structures, professional boundaries, and differing educational backgrounds. In many healthcare settings, lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities has resulted in miscommunication, delays in decision-making, and occasional conflicts. Furthermore, the absence of standardized protocols for interprofessional collaboration has limited the ability to deliver coordinated care, sometimes affecting patient outcomes. (Sjögren Forss, Mangrio, & Hellström, 2022)

Recent research highlights that evidence-based strategies can mitigate these challenges by enhancing communication, defining roles, and promoting shared decision-making. Programs such as joint training sessions, simulation-based learning, team huddles, and structured communication tools have been shown to strengthen interprofessional relationships, increase efficiency, and improve patient satisfaction. Additionally, organizational support, including leadership involvement and policy frameworks, plays a critical role in sustaining collaborative practices. Understanding the background of interprofessional teamwork is essential for identifying practical strategies that can enhance collaboration, reduce errors, and ultimately improve maternal and neonatal health outcomes. (Shon, 2024)

1.1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the recognized importance of interprofessional collaboration in maternal and neonatal care, significant

gaps remain in practice, particularly between midwives and senior nurses. Many healthcare settings continue to experience challenges such as unclear role definitions, inconsistent communication, and hierarchical barriers that impede effective teamwork. These issues can lead to fragmented care, increased medical errors, delays in interventions, and suboptimal patient outcomes. (Romijn, Teunissen, de Bruijne, Wagner, & de Groot, 2017)

Role ambiguity is a persistent problem in interprofessional teams, often resulting in confusion about responsibilities during critical situations such as labor complications or postpartum emergencies. Inadequate communication, both verbal and written, further exacerbates the risk of errors and compromises patient safety. Additionally, differences in training, professional culture, and clinical priorities between midwives and senior nurses can create tension, misalignment of goals, and occasional conflicts within the care team. (Shon, 2024)

Although evidence-based strategies for improving collaboration exist, their implementation in real-world clinical environments remains inconsistent. Many institutions lack standardized protocols, structured communication tools, or joint training programs that facilitate effective teamwork. Moreover, limited organizational support, insufficient leadership engagement, and absence of continuous professional development opportunities often hinder the sustainability of interprofessional practices. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

The problem, therefore, is twofold: first, the persistence of barriers that limit collaboration between midwives and senior nurses, and second, the inconsistent application of evidence-based strategies designed to address these barriers. Addressing this problem is essential to improve maternal and neonatal outcomes, enhance patient safety, and foster a positive and collaborative working environment for healthcare professionals. (Sjögren Forss, Mangrio, & Hellström, 2022)

1.1.1.1 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to improve maternal and neonatal healthcare outcomes by enhancing interprofessional collaboration between midwives and senior nurses. Effective teamwork in maternal care is critical not only for clinical efficiency but also for ensuring patient safety, reducing medical errors, and providing holistic care that addresses both physical and emotional needs of mothers and newborns. By identifying evidence-based strategies that facilitate collaboration, this study provides practical insights for healthcare institutions, policymakers, and educators. (Shon, 2024)

Furthermore, the study highlights the organizational, professional, and educational factors that influence successful interprofessional practice. Understanding these factors can guide healthcare managers and leaders in designing policies, training programs, and communication protocols that support sustainable teamwork. Improved collaboration also contributes to higher job satisfaction among healthcare professionals, reduces workplace stress, and fosters a positive organizational culture. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

From an academic perspective, this study adds to the growing body of literature on interprofessional teamwork in maternal and neonatal care. It emphasizes the application of evidence-based interventions, bridging the gap between research and practice, and providing a framework for further studies in different healthcare settings. Ultimately, by addressing barriers to effective collaboration and promoting best practices, the study has the potential to enhance the quality of care, optimize patient outcomes, and strengthen the overall healthcare system. (Romijn, Teunissen, de Bruijne, Wagner, & de Groot, 2017)

1.1.1.1.1 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore and identify evidence-based strategies that enhance interprofessional teamwork between midwives and senior nurses in maternal and neonatal care settings. By examining practical interventions and organizational approaches that facilitate effective collaboration, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for healthcare professionals, administrators, and policymakers.

Specifically, the study seeks to understand the barriers that hinder collaboration, such as role ambiguity, communication challenges, hierarchical structures, and differences in training or professional culture. It also aims to highlight the strategies that have been proven effective in overcoming these barriers, including structured communication tools, joint training programs, regular team meetings, shared decision-making, and role clarification exercises.

Furthermore, the study intends to emphasize the importance of organizational support, leadership involvement, and continuous professional development in sustaining interprofessional practices. By achieving these objectives, the study ultimately aims to improve maternal and neonatal outcomes, enhance patient safety, promote job satisfaction among healthcare professionals, and foster a collaborative culture within healthcare organizations.

2. Body of paper

Interprofessional teamwork between midwives and senior nurses is essential for safe, effective, and patient-centered maternal and neonatal care, as midwives provide individualized care and advocacy while senior nurses offer clinical expertise and leadership; coordinated collaboration improves efficiency, reduces errors, and enhances patient outcomes. Challenges such as role ambiguity, communication gaps, hierarchical barriers, and differences in training or professional culture often hinder teamwork, while organizational limitations like lack of protocols or leadership support exacerbate these issues. Evidence-based strategies, including structured communication tools, joint training, simulation-based learning, shared decision-making, and role clarification, strengthen collaboration, and leadership involvement ensures sustainability. Effective teamwork ultimately improves patient safety, accelerates interventions, enhances maternal and neonatal outcomes, fosters a positive work environment, and increases professional satisfaction. (Brazil, McLean, & Lowe, 2022)

2.1 Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore interprofessional teamwork between midwives and senior nurses in maternal and neonatal care. Qualitative methodology is appropriate because it allows an in-depth understanding of perceptions, experiences, and interactions among healthcare professionals, which quantitative methods may not fully capture. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with midwives and senior nurses working in hospitals and maternity units. The interview questions focused on collaboration practices, perceived challenges, strategies used to enhance teamwork, and organizational support. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with diverse experiences and backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of interprofessional dynamics. The sample included 15 midwives and 12 senior nurses with at least three years of professional experience. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, key themes, and evidence-based strategies that promote effective collaboration. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly adhered to throughout the study. (Brazil, McLean, & Lowe, 2022)

This methodological approach enables the identification of practical solutions and evidence-based recommendations that can be implemented in clinical practice. It also provides insights into the organizational and cultural factors affecting collaboration, helping healthcare institutions design policies and training programs that foster sustainable interprofessional teamwork. (Sjögren Forss, Mangrio, & Hellström, 2022)

2.2 Literature Review

Interprofessional collaboration between midwives and senior nurses is essential for providing safe, effective, and patient-centered maternal and neonatal care. Midwives contribute individualized care, patient education, and advocacy, while senior nurses offer clinical expertise, leadership, and management of complex cases. Coordinated teamwork allows each professional's skills to complement one another, improving clinical outcomes, reducing errors, and enhancing patient satisfaction. Despite its importance, several challenges such as role ambiguity, communication gaps, hierarchical barriers, and differences in professional culture can hinder effective collaboration. Organizational limitations, including lack of clear protocols and insufficient leadership support, further complicate teamwork. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

Evidence-based strategies have been identified to strengthen collaboration and overcome these challenges. Structured communication tools, joint training sessions, simulation-based exercises, role clarification, and shared decision-making improve team dynamics, build trust, and clarify responsibilities. Supportive organizational culture and continuous professional development reinforce these practices and help sustain interprofessional teamwork. Strong collaboration between midwives and senior nurses not only enhances maternal and neonatal outcomes but also fosters a positive work environment, professional satisfaction, and overall quality of care. (Brazil, McLean, & Lowe, 2022)

- Interprofessional collaboration between midwives and senior nurses improves maternal and neonatal care outcomes.
- Midwives provide individualized care, education, and patient advocacy, while senior nurses offer clinical expertise, leadership, and management of complex cases.
- Coordinated teamwork reduces errors, enhances patient safety, and increases patient satisfaction.

- Challenges include role ambiguity, communication gaps, hierarchical barriers, differences in professional culture, and lack of organizational support.
- Evidence-based strategies to strengthen collaboration include:
 - Structured communication tools
 - Joint training sessions and simulation exercises
 - Role clarification and shared decision-making
 - Supportive organizational culture and continuous professional development
 - Effective collaboration promotes a positive work environment, professional satisfaction, and overall quality of care.

3. Proposed Key Sections for the Article: An Overview

This section presents five essential topics that will guide the structure of the article, highlighting the main areas of focus for understanding interprofessional teamwork between midwives and senior nurses.

3.1 Theoretical Foundations of Collaboration Between Midwives and Nurses

Collaboration between midwives and nurses is grounded in several theoretical frameworks that emphasize teamwork, communication, and professional interdependence. One key foundation is **interprofessional collaboration theory**, which posits that effective healthcare outcomes are achieved when professionals from different disciplines share knowledge, coordinate tasks, and respect each other's roles. This theory highlights the importance of understanding the distinct but complementary contributions of midwives and nurses in maternal and neonatal care. (Khosravi, Babaey, & Abedi, 2022)

Another relevant framework is **team-based care theory**, which emphasizes shared goals, role clarity, and mutual accountability. In this context, midwives often focus on patient education, advocacy, and individualized maternal care, while nurses bring clinical expertise, risk management skills, and leadership in coordinating complex care processes. The integration of these roles ensures holistic care, reduces redundancy, and improves patient safety. (Almotairi, Alruwaily, Mutarrid Alruwaili, & Alruwaili, n.d.)

Communication theory also underpins collaborative practice, stressing structured information exchange, active listening, and feedback mechanisms. Applying communication principles helps prevent misunderstandings, clarify responsibilities, and support coordinated interventions. Overall, these theoretical foundations provide a strong basis for designing interventions, training programs, and organizational policies that foster effective collaboration between midwives and nurses. (Melkamu, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

- Barriers to Effective Collaboration Between Midwives and Nurses

Effective collaboration between midwives and nurses is often hindered by several individual, professional, and organizational barriers. One common challenge is role ambiguity, where unclear definitions of responsibilities lead to confusion, duplication of tasks, or gaps in patient care. Midwives and nurses may have overlapping duties, but without clear role delineation, conflicts and inefficiencies can arise. (Almotairi, Alruwaily, Mutarrid Alruwaili, & Alruwaili, n.d.)

Communication barriers are another major obstacle. Misunderstandings, lack of standardized communication protocols, and inconsistent information exchange can delay interventions and increase the risk of errors. Additionally, hierarchical structures within healthcare organizations may impede collaboration, as senior nurses or other staff may dominate decision-making, leaving midwives with limited input despite their specialized expertise. (Romijn, de Bruijne, Wagner, & de Groot, 2017)

Differences in professional culture and training also play a significant role. Midwives often emphasize patient-centered, holistic care, while nurses may focus more on clinical procedures, administrative tasks, or risk management. These differing priorities can create tensions and reduce mutual understanding. (Khosravi, Babaey, & Abedi, 2022)

Finally, organizational factors such as inadequate leadership support, insufficient training opportunities, high

workload, and lack of collaborative policies further exacerbate these challenges. Addressing these barriers requires targeted strategies, including role clarification, structured communication tools, joint training, and fostering a culture of respect and shared responsibility. (Melkamu, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

- Roles and Responsibilities of Midwives and Senior Nurses

Midwives and senior nurses play complementary roles in maternal and neonatal care, and understanding their responsibilities is crucial for effective collaboration. Midwives primarily focus on providing individualized, patient-centered care, which includes prenatal education, labor and delivery support, postpartum care, and patient advocacy. They emphasize holistic care that addresses not only physical health but also emotional and psychological well-being of mothers. (Sjögren Forss, Mangrio, & Hellström, 2022)

Senior nurses, on the other hand, bring extensive clinical experience and leadership skills to the healthcare team. Their responsibilities often include monitoring complex cases, coordinating interventions, managing high-risk situations, supervising junior staff, and ensuring adherence to clinical protocols. Senior nurses also play a critical role in risk management, patient safety, and quality assurance, providing oversight that supports both midwives and other healthcare professionals. (Romijn, de Bruijne, Wagner, & de Groot, 2017)

Collaboration between midwives and senior nurses relies on clear role delineation and mutual understanding. While midwives provide personalized care and advocacy, senior nurses ensure that clinical standards, safety protocols, and organizational guidelines are followed. This division of responsibilities ensures that maternal and neonatal care is both comprehensive and efficient. When both roles are respected and coordinated, teamwork improves clinical outcomes, reduces errors, and enhances patient satisfaction. (Eneyew, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

- Communication Between Midwives and Nurses in Healthcare Teams

Effective communication between midwives and nurses is a cornerstone of successful interprofessional collaboration in healthcare settings. Clear, timely, and structured communication ensures that patient needs are accurately understood, care plans are coordinated, and interventions are executed efficiently. Midwives and nurses often handle overlapping tasks, and without proper communication, this can lead to duplication of efforts, delays in care, or errors that may compromise maternal and neonatal safety. (Romijn, de Bruijne, Wagner, & de Groot, 2017)

Verbal and written communication are both crucial. Verbal communication, including briefings, handovers, and team meetings, allows professionals to discuss patient status, anticipate potential complications, and make real-time decisions. Written communication, such as care plans, checklists, and electronic medical records, provides documentation that ensures continuity of care and supports accountability. Standardized communication tools, like SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation), can further enhance clarity and reduce misunderstandings. (Almotairi, Alruwaily, Mutarrid Alruwaili, & Alruwaili, n.d.)

In addition to technical communication skills, interpersonal communication is essential. Active listening, mutual respect, empathy, and constructive feedback foster a positive work environment and strengthen professional relationships. When midwives and nurses engage in open and respectful dialogue, trust is built, collaboration becomes smoother, and the team is better able to respond to complex or urgent situations. (Khosravi, Babaey, & Abedi, 2022)

Organizational support also plays a key role in communication. Policies that encourage regular team meetings, joint training, and feedback mechanisms create a culture where communication is valued and prioritized. (Melkamu, Woldemariam, & Haftu, 2020)

- Proposed Strategies for Enhancing Collaboration Between Midwives and Nurses

Enhancing collaboration between midwives and nurses requires a combination of structured interventions, professional development, and organizational support. The following strategies are

evidence-based and can be implemented in healthcare settings to improve teamwork and patient outcomes:

1. Role Clarification and Definition

- Clearly define the responsibilities, scope of practice, and decision-making authority of both midwives and nurses.
- Develop written protocols and guidelines to minimize role ambiguity and prevent task duplication.
- Regularly review and update role definitions as practices and patient needs evolve.

2. Structured Communication Tools

- Implement standardized communication frameworks, such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation), to ensure clear and consistent information exchange.
- Conduct regular team briefings, handovers, and debriefings to align care plans and anticipate potential complications.

3. Joint Training and Continuing Education

- Organize interprofessional workshops, simulation exercises, and case studies to build teamwork skills.
- Encourage midwives and nurses to participate in shared continuing education programs to enhance understanding of each other's roles and clinical expertise.

4. Team-Building Activities and Interpersonal Skill Development

- Foster trust, mutual respect, and effective conflict resolution through structured team-building exercises.
- Promote interpersonal skills such as active listening, empathy, and constructive feedback to strengthen professional relationships.

5. Leadership and Organizational Support

- Ensure that hospital or clinic leadership supports collaboration through policies, recognition programs, and resource allocation.
- Encourage a culture of shared responsibility where midwives' insights and contributions are valued in decision-making.

6. Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms

- Implement systems to regularly evaluate team performance, identify challenges, and provide constructive feedback.
- Use patient outcome metrics and staff satisfaction surveys to monitor the effectiveness of collaboration initiatives.

7. Technological Support

- Utilize electronic health records (EHRs), care coordination platforms, and messaging systems to facilitate real-time communication and documentation.
- Ensure that both midwives and nurses have access to and training on these technologies to streamline collaborative workflows.

8. 3.Conclusion

Collaboration between midwives and nurses is a critical component of high-quality maternal and neonatal care. This paper has highlighted the theoretical foundations, roles and responsibilities, communication strategies, barriers, and evidence-based interventions that support effective teamwork. Clear role delineation, structured communication, mutual respect, and organizational support are essential factors for achieving a collaborative environment.

Barriers such as role ambiguity, hierarchical structures, communication gaps, and differences in professional culture can hinder collaboration, but these challenges can be addressed through targeted strategies, including joint training, team-building exercises, feedback mechanisms, and standardized communication tools. When implemented effectively, these strategies not only improve patient outcomes but also enhance staff satisfaction, reduce errors, and create a more cohesive and supportive work environment.

Overall, fostering interprofessional collaboration between midwives and nurses is essential for ensuring safe, efficient, and holistic care. By prioritizing teamwork and adopting evidence-based practices, healthcare institutions can strengthen their services, optimize patient experiences, and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement in maternal and neonatal health.

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