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Midwifery is a Mirror: Reflective Observation Turns our Experience into Insight

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To probe the efficacy of reflective observation as a conduit for enhancing midwifery practices and fostering improved patient care. This research adopts a qualitative inquiry methodology, drawing insights from personal experiences and engagements within Swedish birthing units. Leveraging reflective observation and dialogues with midwives representing diverse backgrounds, the study seeks to glean profound insights into the challenges and opportunities entailed in integrating reflective practices into midwifery care. The study's findings underscore the pivotal role of reflective observation in nurturing a culture of safety, professionalism, and holistic care within midwifery practice. By nurturing the foundational pillars of experience, observation, reflection, and responsiveness, midwives are empowered to cultivate an environment conducive to safe practice and harmonious patient interactions. A salient contribution of this study lies in its exploration of the transformative potential inherent in reflective observation within midwifery care. By delineating the inherent challenges and opportunities, the research illuminates novel pathways for professional growth and skill enhancement among midwives. The implications of this research transcend the confines of midwifery practice, permeating broader societal contexts. By fostering a culture of reflective practice, midwives stand poised to optimize patient outcomes and contribute to the overall well-being of communities. The cultivation of reflective observation within midwifery holds the promise of a ripple effect, extending from individual practitioners to healthcare administrators, community stakeholders, and ultimately, global society.

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1. Introduction

Midwifery, as a profession deeply rooted in the nurturing and care of expectant mothers and newborns, serves as a mirror reflecting the intricate interplay between practice and reflection (A 2015). In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the significance of reflective observation in midwifery practice, as it transforms clinical experiences into valuable insights for professional growth and development (Hainsworth et al. 2023). This introduction explores the multifaceted aspects of midwifery as a mirror, shedding light on the transformative power of reflective observation (Carter, Creedy, and Sidebotham 2018). Over the past decade, there has been a notable shift in the midwifery landscape, with an increasing emphasis on the integration of reflective practices into clinical settings. De Leo et al. (2021), McKellar et al. (2023) have highlighted the growing recognition of reflective observation as a cornerstone of midwifery education and practice. These studies have underscored the importance of midwives engaging in reflective practices to enhance their clinical skills, promote critical thinking, and improve patient care outcomes.

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Despite the growing recognition of reflective observation in midwifery, challenges persist in its implementation and integration into clinical practice. Goemaes et al. (2018), Prosen (2022) have identified barriers such as time constraints and lack of institutional support, hindering the full realization of reflective practice in midwifery. Additionally, cultural and organizational factors may influence the willingness of midwives to engage in reflective activities, further complicating the integration of reflective observation into daily practice (Becker et al. 2022).

Theoretical frameworks such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Schön's Theory of Reflective Practice provide valuable insights into the process of reflective observation in midwifery (Bass et al. 2020). Carter (2017), O'Connor et al. (2022), Sweet et al. (2019) has demonstrated the applicability of these theoretical models in enhancing reflective skills among midwives. These studies have highlighted the importance of structured reflection in facilitating deep learning and professional development among midwives, allowing them to critically evaluate their practice and identify areas for improvement (Sweet et al. 2019).

The integration of reflective observation into midwifery practice emerges as an urgent and novel imperative within contemporary healthcare landscapes. This urgency is propelled by the escalating demands placed on midwives to deliver proficient and evidence-based care amidst evolving patient needs. Despite the wealth of literature on reflective practice in healthcare, including nursing and medicine, there persists a conspicuous gap in research specific to midwifery. Bradfield et al. (2019), Wiseman et al. (2022) have elucidated the barriers faced by midwives in engaging in reflective activities, citing constraints such as time and institutional support. However, these studies predominantly delineate challenges rather than solutions or efficacy assessments of reflective practice interventions. Furthermore, research findings exhibit discrepancies, with some studies demonstrating its efficacy in enhancing decision-making and patient satisfaction (Miller et al., 2016), while others report inconclusive outcomes (Clark et al., 2018). Vedam et al. (2019) women (95.2%) preferred to be the lead decision-maker during care. Patients of physicians had significantly lower autonomy (MADM) scores than midwifery clients as did women who felt pressured to accept interventions. These incongruities necessitate further exploration into the mechanisms of reflective observation in midwifery and the contextual factors influencing its effectiveness. As midwives navigate increasingly intricate healthcare domains, the imperative for reflective practice as a conduit for professional growth and continual enhancement becomes undeniable (Hansson et al. 2021). Bridging this gap and addressing the variances in research findings hold promise for empowering midwives to optimize their clinical skills, foster critical thinking, and ultimately elevate patient outcomes. Therefore, future research endeavors should be directed toward aligning theory with practice, devising innovative strategies for integrating reflective observation into midwifery education, and evaluating its enduring impact on practice and patient care. By navigating these challenges and leveraging the transformative potential of reflective observation, midwives can fortify their practice and deliver unparalleled care to expectant mothers and newborns (Masso guijarro and Triviño-caballero 2022).

The primary objective of this research is to delve into the impact of reflective observation on midwifery practice and patient outcomes. By delving into the experiences of midwives who actively engage in reflective practice, this study aims to glean insights into the effectiveness of reflective observation in bolstering clinical skills, fostering professional development, and ultimately enhancing patient care. Through a meticulous examination of extant literature and qualitative interviews conducted with practicing midwives, this research endeavors to furnish evidence-based recommendations for the seamless integration of reflective observation into midwifery education and practice. In essence, this introduction lays the groundwork for a comprehensive exploration of reflective observation within the realm of midwifery, elucidating its significance, challenges, theoretical underpinnings, and potential ramifications on both practice and patient outcomes. By conscientiously addressing prevailing gaps in current research and offering pragmatic recommendations, this study aspires to make meaningful contributions to the continual advancement of midwifery practice and education on a global scale.

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2. Method Innovation

The method used uses whose theory or whose findings include references from credible articles and use citation through Mendeley. (TNR 11)

The study was conducted across various birthing units and antenatal clinics in Sweden, spanning a period of ten years. The locations were chosen strategically to encompass a diverse range of midwifery practices and experiences, providing a comprehensive understanding of reflective observation within the Swedish midwifery context (Karlun et al. 2020). Observations were conducted using a structured observational framework tailored to the objectives of the study (Vermeulen et al. 2016). This framework focused on capturing key aspects of midwifery practice, including abdominal examination techniques, perineal support during childbirth, and communication with expectant mothers (Alexander and Bogossian 2018). The observational instruments were designed to ensure consistency and reliability in data collection across different settings.

Data analysis involved a qualitative approach, with a focus on identifying patterns, themes, and discrepancies in midwifery practice (Aein 2018). The analysis process was iterative, with observations and findings informing subsequent data collection and analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to explore emerging themes and concepts related to reflective observation in midwifery practice (Capper, Williamson, and Chee 2023). Additionally, comparative analysis techniques were utilized to examine variations in practice across different settings and contexts.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study findings, several strategies were employed. These included triangulation of data sources, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation involved corroborating findings from observational data with insights gleaned from qualitative interviews with practicing midwives. Member checking involved validating interpretations and findings with participants to ensure accuracy and credibility. Peer debriefing sessions were conducted to facilitate critical reflection and discussion among the research team, enhancing the robustness of the study findings. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional review boards prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study process. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion.

The methodological approach adopted in this study facilitated a comprehensive exploration of reflective observation in midwifery practice. By combining structured observations with qualitative interviews, the study was able to capture rich insights into the nuances of midwifery practice and the role of reflective observation therein (Vernon, Chiarella, and Papps 2018). The rigorous data analysis process ensured the validity and reliability of the study findings, enhancing their relevance and applicability to the wider midwifery community. Overall, the methodological innovation employed in this study lays a solid foundation for advancing our understanding of reflective observation in midwifery practice and its implications for patient care.

3. Result Discussion

The narrative presented unveils a profound exploration into the integration of reflective observation within midwifery practice. The author's firsthand encounters and reflections upon Swedish midwifery practices illuminate both commendable strengths and notable areas for improvement. Through a meticulous analysis, this section delves into the implications of the observations made, synthesizing them with existing literature and research findings to offer insights into the broader landscape of midwifery care.

The narrative underscores the intrinsic connection between reflective observation and the enhancement of midwifery care. By elucidating the author's personal journey and encounters with Swedish midwives, it becomes evident that reflective practice serves as a catalyst for professional growth and skill refinement. The author's emphasis on the pillars of experience, observation, reflection, and responsiveness resonates with established principles of reflective practice (Brown et al. 2016). However, the narrative also highlights the

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need for a concerted effort to cultivate these pillars within the midwifery profession, thereby fostering an atmosphere of safe practice and holistic care.

The narrative sheds light on the discrepancies and challenges observed within Swedish midwifery practice, particularly concerning abdominal examination and perineal support during childbirth (Rotstein 2022; Swift 2019). Through astute observation and reflection, the author identifies gaps in knowledge and technique among Swedish midwives, underscoring the potential implications for patient care and outcomes. Drawing upon existing literature and research findings, the narrative emphasizes the critical importance of technique (know-how) in midwifery decision-making and the provision of quality care (Moore & Moorhead, 2013). Moreover, the discussion navigates through strategies for addressing these challenges, such as mindfulness, skill refinement, and collaborative reflection.

Central to the discussion is the transformative power of reflection in promoting continuous improvement within midwifery practice. By advocating for a mindful and introspective approach to practice, the narrative advocates for the cultivation of a reflective mindset among midwives. Through the metaphor of reflection as a bell, the author encapsulates the essence of reflection as a tool for self-awareness, growth, and professional development (Graham 2022). Furthermore, the discussion underscores the role of reflection in addressing prevalent challenges within midwifery practice, such as perineal support and abdominal examination techniques. The findings revealed two categories of midwifery practices: rites of passage and rituals of protection (Reed, Rowe, and Barnes 2016). Rites of passage align with the specific requirements of women during childbirth and encompass the management of disturbances and the contemplation of interior knowledge. Protection rituals entail doing clinical evaluations to ascertain the welfare and advancement of childbirth.

The synthesis of personal experiences, observations, and scholarly insights culminates in actionable recommendations for advancing midwifery practice. From enhancing technique proficiency to fostering a culture of reflective practice, the narrative advocates for multifaceted approaches to drive positive change within the profession. By intertwining personal reflections with evidence-based principles, the discussion offers a nuanced perspective on the potential avenues for improvement and innovation within midwifery care. In conclusion, the results and discussion presented herein underscore the transformative potential of reflective observation within midwifery practice. By navigating through challenges, synthesizing insights, and offering actionable recommendations, this narrative contributes to the continual advancement of midwifery care on an international scale. Through a collective commitment to reflective practice, midwives can navigate complexities, optimize patient outcomes, and uphold the holistic principles of midwifery care. This new midwife appears ready to thrive in environments that prioritize collaborative care, where obstetricians and midwives collaborate to treat maternity patients in a supportive atmosphere, erasing the long-standing division between them. In this study, I adopt an autoethnographic perspective as a midwife working in a collaborative obstetric environment. I investigate the topics of professional integrity and satisfaction, the balance between professional competition and cooperation, and the influence of institutional and organizational biases. Through the lens of my own experiences as a midwife, I examine the role of midwives in this particular setting. I discover that the collaborative approach can actually weaken the role of the midwife and uphold the medical hierarchy among the two professions, rather than expanding the potential role of the midwife, using feminist theory, critical medical anthropology, and grounded theory as the theoretical framework (McFarland 2017).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the narrative journey through reflective observation within midwifery practice illuminates both the challenges and opportunities inherent in the pursuit of excellence. By traversing Swedish birthing units and

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engaging with midwives, the author underscores the pivotal role of reflective practice in fostering professional growth and enhancing patient care. The delineation of observed discrepancies in technique and the advocacy for mindfulness and introspection serve as poignant reminders of the ongoing quest for improvement within the profession. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that reflection is not merely a tool for criticism but a beacon for transformative change. By embracing a culture of reflective practice and embracing continuous learning, midwives can navigate complexities, refine their skills, and ultimately elevate the quality of care provided to expectant mothers. Thus, this exploration serves as a testament to the enduring power of reflection as a catalyst for innovation and excellence within the field of midwifery.

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