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PII: S2666-142X(23)00028-0
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnsa.2023.100144>
Reference: IJNSA 100144

To appear in: *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances*

Received date: 18 March 2023
Revised date: 6 June 2023
Accepted date: 17 July 2023

Please cite this article as: Naomi Simpson , Dianne Wepa , Rachael Vernon , Annette Briley , Mary Steen , Midwifery students' knowledge, understanding and experiences of workplace bullying, and violence: An Integrative Review, *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances* (2023), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnsa.2023.100144>

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Title

Midwifery students' knowledge, understanding and experiences of workplace bullying, and violence: An Integrative Review

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Abstract

Background: Workplace bullying, and violence within the midwifery profession, has been a well-documented concern in health literature since the early 1990's. However, contemporary research highlights that workplace bullying, and violence is often inflicted upon midwifery students. Workplace bullying, and violence has both short- and long-term effects on the student, including psychological trauma and poor mental health, loss of passion for the midwifery profession and absenteeism. To consider a solution to this phenomenon, current literature regarding midwifery students' knowledge, understanding and experiences of workplace bullying, and violence has been reviewed.

Objective: To explore and critique current literature on midwifery students' knowledge, understanding and experiences of workplace bullying, and violence.

Design: An integrative review.

Review Methods: Toronto & Remington's six-stage systematic framework was used to conduct the review, with rigor and validity for the research process.

Results: Following critical appraisal, 12 articles met the inclusion criteria. Four themes emerged: (1) Prevalence and types of workplace bullying, and violence towards midwifery students. (2) Impact of workplace bullying, and violence on midwifery students' experiences during the degree. (3) Impact of negative workplace culture on the midwifery profession. (4) The requirement to develop strategies for midwifery students to address workplace bullying, and violence.

Conclusions: Workplace bullying, and violence is a global health concern within the midwifery profession with evidenced impact on midwifery students' professional and personal lives. Organisational systems and approaches were identified as causes of a toxic clinical environment and workplace bullying, and violence, which impacted midwifery students' experiences. Suggestions supported universities incorporating conflict resolution strategies into midwifery degree programs, to prepare midwifery students to manage workplace bullying, and violence.

Tweetable abstract:

Workplace bullying, and violence is a global health concern entrenched within the midwifery profession, impacting midwifery students' professional and personal lives. Incorporating conflict resolution strategies into Bachelor of midwifery degree programs, may help prepare midwifery students to manage workplace bullying, and violence.

Keywords

Midwifery; students; workplace; conflict; bullying; violence.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE PAPER

What is already known

- ◁ Workplace bullying, and violence is a global health concern entrenched within the midwifery profession.
- ◁ Midwifery students are particularly vulnerable to workplace bullying, and violence.
- ◁ Midwifery students perpetuate the cycle of violence to 'fit in' and secure jobs on completion of their university degree.

What this paper adds

- ◁ This integrative review identified the important position universities play in preparing and educating midwifery students to manage potential conflict in the workplace.
- ◁ This integrative review highlights the importance of improved reporting pathways for midwifery students who have experienced workplace bullying, and violence.
- ◁ This integrative review emphasises that stronger repercussions for perpetrators of workplace bullying, and violence are required to deconstruct bullying and violence within the midwifery profession.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Workplace bullying, and violence within the midwifery profession, have been a well-documented concern in health literature since the early 1990s. Contemporary research highlights that workplace bullying, and violence are often inflicted upon midwifery students. Workplace bullying, and violence has both short- and long-term effects on the student, including psychological trauma and poor mental health, loss of passion for the midwifery profession, and absenteeism. To consider a solution to this phenomenon, current literature regarding midwifery students' knowledge, understanding and experiences of workplace bullying, and violence has been reviewed.

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Conclusions: Workplace bullying, and violence is a worldwide health concern within the midwifery profession with evidenced impact on midwifery students' professional and personal lives. Organisational systems and approaches were identified as causes of a toxic clinical environment and workplace bullying, and violence, which impacted midwifery students' experiences. Suggestions supported universities incorporating conflict resolution strategies into midwifery degree programs, to prepare midwifery students to manage workplace bullying, and violence.

Key words: midwifery, students, workplace, conflict, bullying, violence.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying, and violence is an international health concern, with studies in the United Kingdom and Australia exposing a culture of violence in the midwifery profession since the early 1990s (Hastie 1995; Killingley 2016; Pich 2019; Capper et al. 2020a; Capper et al. 2022). More recently, research has highlighted that midwifery students have become targets of workplace bullying, and violence (Hegney et al. 2006; Gillen, et al. 2009; Primanzon & Hogan 2015; Capper et al. 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021a). Despite a universal lack of defining workplace bullying, and violence (Van Fleet & Van Fleet 2022), it has been defined by the Oxford University Press (2021) as: “seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone seen as vulnerable”. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) describes bullying as a repetitive pattern of violence, which brings harm to the victim/s (ANMF 2018). For the midwifery student, the term ‘workplace’ incorporates venues that the student attends to conduct their clinical placements and continuity of care experiences (UniSA 2022).

Workplace violence may be the result of individual or group behaviour that is abusive, threatening, intimidating, or disruptive in the workplace (Safework Australia 2020). Midwifery students have reported experiencing workplace violence manifesting as physical, verbal & emotional abuse, and bullying (McKenna & Boyle 2016). As a result of workplace violence, victims report long-term damaging effects on their emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being, including absenteeism, stress, fatigue, psychological trauma, poor mental health, job dissatisfaction and poor job retention (Catling, Reid & Hunter 2017; McKenna & Boyle 2016; Capper, Muurlink & Williamson 2020a; Hassard et al. 2018; Hegney et al. 2006). Despite these identified negative consequences, minimal improvements have occurred over the last 35 years (Hills, Lam & Hills 2018), thereby confirming acceptance of this culture within the midwifery profession (Capper et al. 2021a).

Research has reported workplace bullying, and violence is inflicted on junior staff, including midwifery students, both vertically and horizontally (Hegney et al. 2006; Gillen et al. 2009; Capper et al. 2020a; Primanzon & Hogan 2015). Furthermore, the imbalance of power between midwifery students and midwives has been cited as contributory (Lash et al. 2006). Midwifery students’ exposure to workplace bullying, and violence was first reported by Lash et al. (2006), highlighting the vulnerability and risk of workplace bullying, and violence for midwifery students.

Capper and colleagues (2020a) recommended that workplace bullying, and violence of midwifery students be addressed at a policy level, due to the potential for attrition, whilst McKenna and Boyle (2016) proposed the inclusion of formal education on workplace bullying, and violence in the Bachelor of Midwifery degree, to better prepare midwifery students for clinical settings.

clinical settings: An exploratory study.	workplace violence during clinical placements.	Victorian University	during clinical placement, experiencing intimidation, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and sexual harassment. Midwifery students are more vulnerable than midwives and this increases their risk of experiencing WPV. WPV results in a lack of trust, confidence, and attrition from studies. There is a need to provide midwifery students with education and the development of strategies around managing WPV at a University level. There needs to be a transparent hospital reporting system that is anonymous, therefore no retribution for the student.
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Capper, T, Muurlink, O & Williamson, M. 2020c. Australia.	Being bullied as a midwifery student: does age matter?	To explore whether the age of midwifery students influences the experience of being bullied while on clinical placement.	40 midwifery students from UK and Australia, which included. 20 midwifery students aged between 18-21 years old and 20 midwifery students aged 43 years old or above.	Qualitative	The pattern of bullying was similar between the two groups, suggesting that age is not a factor for midwifery students experiencing bullying. Both groups experienced bullying from the same set of perpetrators, primarily within birthing areas. The nature of bullying was different in the
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					two groups. Younger midwives experienced a power disadvantage when compared with their older counterparts. Younger midwifery students experience more verbal and overt forms of bullying.
Gillen, P, Sinclair, M, Kernohan, G & Begley, C. 2009. United Kingdom	Student midwives' experience of bullying	To define and examine the nature and manifestations of bullying in midwifery as experienced by a cohort of student midwives in the UK.	164 midwifery students in the UK.	Quantitative	There is a strong prevalence of bullying in the midwifery profession with midwifery students experiencing being treated badly, suffering intimidation, excessive criticism, belittling of their work, undervaluing of their skills, questioning of their competency, and undervaluing their effort. Midwifery students' were commonly bullied by another midwife or mentor, highlighting power imbalances in midwifery. The impacts of bullying on midwifery students' included loss of confidence, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, and thoughts of leaving the course. The majority of midwifery students' enjoyed their clinical placements, but those that did not

cite reasons that were linked to poor treatment by midwifery colleagues. Future research into the bullying culture of midwifery is required in Australia. A proactive approach to bullying is required, moving toward a culture change. This includes including education around bullying phenomena in curricula.

Capper, T, Muurlink, O & Williamson, M. 2021a. Australia	Social culture and the bullying of midwifery students whilst on clinical placement: A qualitative descriptive exploration	Explore how the social culture of the maternity setting influences midwifery students' experiences of being bullied whilst on clinical placement.	120 midwifery students, comprising 53 from the UK and 67 from Australia.	Qualitative descriptive study	There is an acceptance of bullying culture in the midwifery profession, which therefore leads to replication of the problem. Bullying is quite brazen, occurring in public, with midwives who bully students, not fearful of repercussions. Bullying impacts midwifery students' education – clinical experiences are intrinsically linked to theory, the experience and quality of care for women and their partners, and the reputation of the midwifery profession. Midwifery students turn to each other for support when
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					bullied. The study supports the body of literature on midwifery students' attrition after experiencing bullying. Change is urgently needed.
Boyle, M & McKenna, L. 2016 Australia.	Paramedic and midwifery student exposure to workplace violence during clinical placements in Australia – A pilot study.	To identify the type of workplace violence experienced by undergraduate paramedic and midwifery students.	393 students, which included 132 BEH students, 158 BN/BEH students, and 103 BMid students	Cross-sectional study	69% of midwifery students had experienced either verbal abuse, intimidation, or sexual assault. The most common form of abuse to midwifery students' was verbal abuse (83.3%). Only female students in the study experienced sexual assault. Midwifery students experience more acts of violence against them during clinical practice, when compared with paramedic students. A need for education on managing workplace bullying and violence is needed for undergraduate students. There is currently no formalised education in midwifery curricula at Monash University where the study was completed. Students need awareness of and access to reporting systems for violence, so this

					can be followed up with the student.
Capper, T, Muurlink, O & Williamson, M. 2021b Australia	The parents are watching: Midwifery students' perceptions of how workplace bullying impacts mothers and babies.	To examine how midwifery students, who self-identify as having been bullied, perceive the repercussion on women and their families.	120 midwifery students, comprising 53 from the UK and 67 from Australia.	Qualitative descriptive study	Bullying of midwifery students impacts women and their families in several ways, including putting women's safety at risk, fracturing relationships between the woman and midwifery student, damaging rapport, damaging woman-centred care, and impairing women's confidence in the midwifery student and the midwifery profession. Women and their families feel compelled to step in and defend midwifery students, which impacts their overall birth experience and care.
Hogan, R, Orr, F & Fox, D, Cummins, A & Foureur, M. 2018 Australia	Develop nursing & midwifery students' capacity for coping with bullying and aggression in clinical settings: Students' evaluation of a learning resource.	To develop nursing and midwifery students' capacity for coping with bullying and aggression that they may encounter in clinical settings.	210 nursing & midwifery students from an urban university in Australia. Due to the anonymity of the survey, it was impossible to discern between the two clinical professions.	Qualitative descriptive study	Developing a blended learning resource that builds capacity for nursing and midwifery students to effectively respond to aggression and bullying, provides a solution to managing some of the demands of the clinical setting. The realistic resources enriched students learning, with the online learning environment providing a convenient

					platform for students' to learn at their own pace. The strategies improved students' confidence to approach colleagues for support and assistance.
Steen, M. 2011 United Kingdom	Conflict resolution for student midwives.	Provide insight into the Start Treating Others Positively (STOP) model and how it has been adapted to develop an educational workshop for student midwives.	32 Midwifery students at the University of Chester, UK.	Educational workshop evaluation Student self-report	The STOP model was successfully adapted to meet the needs of midwifery students at the University of Chester. Students identified that skills learned regarding how to recognise anger signals, de-escalate anger, identify how you wind yourself up or down, how to have a balanced argument, and how positive self-talk can change anger behaviour, enabled them to manage conflict with their colleagues and peers. Students were able to identify past examples that they could have dealt with differently following the STOP workshop. The STOP model has the potential to be developed further, increasing transferability.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Systematic Reviews and Research Syntheses (2017)

Reviewer _____ Date _____

Author _____ Year _____ Record Number _____

	Yes	No	Unclear	Not applicable
1. Is the review question clearly and explicitly stated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Were the inclusion criteria appropriate for the review question?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Was the search strategy appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Were the sources and resources used to search for studies adequate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Were the criteria for appraising studies appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Was critical appraisal conducted by two or more reviewers independently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Were there methods to minimize errors in data extraction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Were the methods used to combine studies appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Was the likelihood of publication bias assessed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Were recommendations for policy and/or practice supported by the reported data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Were the specific directives for new research appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overall appraisal: Include Exclude Seek further info

Comments (Including reason for exclusion)

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Declaration of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests: