

The nature and manifestations of bullying in midwifery

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Abstract

Bullying in midwifery is a stark reality for many midwives, yet it is relatively uncharted and poorly understood.

The aim of this study was to define and examine the nature and manifestations of bullying in midwifery.

Literature on bullying in schools and other workplace bullying literature was reviewed to determine what is already known about bullying in the workplace. This study used an exploratory descriptive design and took a mixed method approach in four sequential phases. A tentative framework took a timeline (before/during/after) approach.

In Phase one, in-depth telephone interviews were undertaken with midwives from practice and academia. In Phase two of the research a concept analysis using Walker and Avant's (1995) framework provided a sound theoretical basis for the study. Phase Three confirmed, validated and contextualised the findings of the concept analysis through focus groups with practicing midwives, midwife managers, academic midwives and union representatives. A more substantial theory emerged at this stage.

In order to develop a survey tool to measure the defining attributes of bullying, a self-administered questionnaire was developed, piloted and distributed to a

convenience sample of student midwives (n=400) at a student conference. The response rate was 41% (n=164). This work confirmed the theoretical development comprehensively.

Bullying in midwifery has now been identified, defined, validated and confirmed. The defining attributes were confirmed as being a repeated behaviour which had a negative effect on the victim and against which the victim found it difficult to defend themselves. Intention of the bully was also considered to be an important defining attribute with more than half of the student midwives who had been bullied (53%; n=31) perceiving the bullying behaviour experienced to be intentional.

Recommendations for research, education and practice are made. This research contributed to knowledge through the completion of a concept analysis of workplace bullying which had not been done before. An additional confirmatory process was designed and incorporated within the concept analysis process and a new model of bullying in midwifery has been formulated.

