
Lived Experiences of Obstetric Nurses And their Effects on Maternal Care at Selected Hospitals in Zamboanga City

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored obstetric nurses' lived experiences and their impact on maternal care at selected hospitals in Zamboanga City. Thirty (30) registered nurses were purposively sampled and interviewed. Using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, findings revealed heavy workloads, staffing shortages, emotional strain, and moments of professional fulfillment. Nurses reported physical fatigue, emotional burnout, and psychological stress, but demonstrated resilience through peer support, self-care, and reflective practices. Well-being was closely linked to the quality of maternal care—stress and fatigue impaired attention and communication, while professional commitment and support enhanced safe care. Institutional support, including training, counseling, and improved staffing policies, was critical to sustaining nurses' well-being and the quality of care.

Keywords: Obstetric nurses, Maternal care, Nurse well-being, Coping mechanisms, Lived experiences

INTRODUCTION

Obstetric nurses are vital in labor, delivery, and postpartum care but face high workloads, emotional stress, and systemic challenges, impacting both their well-being and patient outcomes. Studies indicate burnout, compassion fatigue, and anxiety are common due to staffing shortages, limited resources, and complex cases. Coping strategies such as mentorship, peer support, reflective practice, and self-care are essential for resilience.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study examined how obstetric nurses describe their professional experiences, clinical challenges, effects on well-being, impact on maternal care, and coping mechanisms.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study included 30 obstetric nurses in labor, delivery, prenatal, and postpartum units. Findings are based on self-reported qualitative data and may not be generalizable. Limitations include recall bias and institutional constraints.

REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

Obstetric nurses play a crucial role in ensuring safe and effective maternal care, yet their experiences are significantly shaped by demanding workplace conditions that also affect patient outcomes. Studies show that they frequently face high workloads, staffing shortages, and limited resources, which contribute to stress and burnout in clinical settings (Alsaraireh et al., 2025; Estreller et al., 2025; Dorie, 2025). In addition to these structural challenges, nurses experience emotional labor, including compassion fatigue, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, while caring for mothers and newborns (Karakaya et al., 2021; Kesbiç & Boz, 2021; Jarrad et al., 2024). These combined environmental and emotional stressors significantly influence their professional experiences and may affect the quality of maternal care they provide. However, literature also highlights that coping mechanisms such as mentorship, peer support, reflective practice, and self-care strategies help strengthen resilience and improve job satisfaction (Montaño et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2024, 2025; He et al., 2024). Supportive work environments and emotional intelligence further enhance nurses' ability to manage stress and maintain performance (Poorhosein Fookolaee et al., 2025). Overall, these studies show a strong connection between nurses' experiences, well-being, and maternal care quality, forming a basis for understanding obstetric nurses' lived experiences in Zamboanga City.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in Sister Callista Roy's Adaptation Theory (2009), Florence Nightingale's Environmental Theory (1859/1969), and Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory (2001). Roy's theory explains how nurses adapt to physical, emotional, and psychological stressors in maternal care settings. Nightingale's theory emphasizes how hospital conditions, such as staffing and workload, affect nurses' performance and patient outcomes. Orem's theory highlights the role of self-care and support systems in maintaining nurses' well-being. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens to understand how obstetric nurses manage challenges, cope with demands, and sustain quality maternal care.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore the lived experiences of obstetric nurses in selected hospitals in Zamboanga City. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's method. Ethical standards and trustworthiness were maintained throughout the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive qualitative research design was used to obtain rich and contextualized descriptions of obstetric nurses' experiences (Sandelowski, 2000). This approach enabled an in-depth understanding of their challenges, coping mechanisms, and perceptions of maternal care delivery (Creswell, 2014).

RESEARCH STEPS

The study began with a review of the related literature to identify key focus areas, including experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Three hospitals in Zamboanga City were purposively selected, and eligible obstetric nurses were identified. A semi-structured interview guide was developed, validated, and refined by experts. After ethical approval was obtained, interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and prepared for thematic analysis.

DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE SELECTION

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 30 obstetric nurses from three selected hospitals in Zamboanga City. Ethical clearance and hospital permissions were obtained before data gathering. Participants were informed about the study, and informed consent was secured prior to interviews. Purposive sampling ensured inclusion of nurses directly involved in maternal care until data saturation was reached.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method to interpret participants' lived experiences. Transcripts were read repeatedly, and significant statements were extracted and organized into themes. NVivo software was used to assist in coding and theme development. Findings were presented with direct quotations to ensure accuracy and depth of interpretation.

Research Assumptions and Validation

This study assumes that obstetric nurses' lived experiences influence their well-being and the quality of maternal care. It also assumes that workplace challenges and support systems shape their adaptation to clinical demands. The interview guide was validated by three experts for clarity and relevance. Member checking and technical review were used to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness of findings.

Study Limitation and Ethical Considerations

The study is limited to obstetric nurses in selected hospitals in Zamboanga City, which limits generalizability. It relies on self-reported data that may be affected by bias and workplace constraints. Ethical clearance was obtained, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1. What are the lived experiences and challenges encountered by obstetric nurses in their clinical practice?

Obstetric nurses experience heavy workloads, staffing shortages, emotional stress, and professional fulfillment. Managing multiple patients and high-risk cases often leads to fatigue

and psychological strain, while successful deliveries and patient appreciation provide motivation and job satisfaction.

RQ 2. How do these experiences affect their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being?

Demanding work conditions affect nurses' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Long shifts and continuous patient care cause exhaustion, stress, and emotional fatigue, although resilience and a strong sense of responsibility help them continue providing care.

RQ 3. How do obstetric nurses perceive the effects of their experiences and well-being on maternal care delivery?

Nurses believe their well-being directly influences maternal care quality. Fatigue and stress may reduce attentiveness and communication, while emotional stability and professional commitment promote safe, compassionate, and effective care.

SOP 4. What coping mechanisms and support systems do obstetric nurses utilize?

Nurses manage stress through peer support, self-care practices such as rest, prayer, and reflection, and institutional support including training, counseling, and staff rotation. These strategies help maintain resilience and quality care.

SUMMARY

The study found that obstetric nurses in selected hospitals in Zamboanga City experience heavy workloads, staffing shortages, and emotional strain in their clinical practice. Despite these challenges, they also encounter rewarding experiences such as successful deliveries and appreciation from patients' families. These positive experiences contribute to their motivation and professional satisfaction. Overall, their well-being is closely linked to the quality of maternal care they provide.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that obstetric nurses work in a demanding environment that significantly affects their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. However, intrinsic motivation and positive patient outcomes help sustain their commitment to maternal care. Their well-being is directly connected to the quality of care they deliver. Coping mechanisms and support systems are essential in maintaining resilience and performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Obstetric nurses are encouraged to continue practicing self-care and strengthening their resilience through reflection, rest, and healthy coping strategies. Hospital administrators should improve staffing levels, workload distribution, and provide mental health and support programs for nurses. Nursing education should include stress management and real-life obstetric

scenarios to better prepare future nurses. Policymakers should strengthen workplace support systems and ensure safe staffing standards in maternal care units. Future researchers are encouraged to explore similar studies in other settings to further validate and expand the findings.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT:

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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