

# Advancing Professional Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery in Nigeria: Educational, Clinical and Regulatory Perspectives

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## Abstract

Nurses and midwives are the backbone of healthcare systems around the world, and their contributions to professionalism, illness prevention, and the delivery of quality care are undeniable and irrefutable. Promoting professional excellence in nursing and midwifery is an important priority for strengthening healthcare systems and improving patient outcomes. This paper explored the interrelated practice, education, and regulatory aspects of promoting professional excellence and standards in both nursing and midwifery. Given the ongoing conversations and evidence used in the classroom, the paper suggested that excellence results from ongoing investments in competency-based education, lifelong learning, and evidence-based clinical practice. The paper also highlighted the need for strong regulatory systems to foster accountability, ethical practice, and quality assurance in the healthcare sector. It examined the limitations inherent in Nurses and Midwives' ability to perform optimally and attain excellence in education, practice, and policy. However, the paper identified opportunities to be realized through curriculum innovation, better clinical mentorship, and changes to the regulatory framework. The paper found that a coordinated, systemic action plan must involve educators, practitioners, and regulatory stakeholders to establish a culture of excellence. This will not only improve professional practice but also play a vital role in providing safe, effective, and patient-centered health services in Nigeria. It was recommended that policies and professional regulatory bodies implement mandatory, structured, continuous professional development programs that incorporate modern clinical and digital health skills, as well as ethical training, to maintain professional excellence among nurses and midwives.

**Keywords:** Professionalism, Excellence, Nursing, Midwifery, Education, Clinical practice, Regulations.

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## INTRODUCTION

The quality, competence, and ethical standards of the healthcare system's staff, particularly those who directly contact patients, depend heavily on them. In this context, professional excellence in nursing and midwifery is considered a basic component of safe, effective, and patient-centered healthcare services. Excellence in these professions is characterized by the practitioner's ability to apply knowledge, develop clinical competence, uphold ethical values, and adapt to the changing requirements of the health care system. As Nigeria's healthcare system evolves and faces numerous challenges, the importance of professionalism in nursing and midwifery has grown significantly, particularly amid high population density, the increasing complexity of healthcare needs, and a shortage of healthcare workers [1].

Nurses and midwives form the backbone of healthcare systems, playing vital roles in preventive and clinical care, as well as in delivering high-level clinical services. They go hand in hand with the patients they serve, and their professionalism directly impacts the quality of healthcare services. Education begins the process of achieving professional excellence by providing practitioners with theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and ethical approaches to effective practice. Modern Nursing and Midwifery education is competency-based, with competencies being measurable skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills required to address a range of health challenges [2]. This process is further supported by continuous professional development, including ongoing learning and skill development, keeping practitioners relevant in the constantly changing healthcare landscape.

Clinical practice is the field in which the professional should excel at applying knowledge and skills to real-life situations. The use of evidence-based practice (EBP) has become critical to making clinical decisions and optimizing patient care. To perform effectively in clinical practice, a practitioner must demonstrate not only technical skills but also effective communication, collaboration, and ethical decision-making. These are the key components of delivering quality care and keeping patients safe in health care settings [3]. Clinically supportive environments, such as mentorship and supervision, are important for developing nurses' and midwives' abilities.

The regulatory system still plays an important role in regulating standards and holding the profession accountable. Professional bodies in Nigeria provide guidelines for education, licensing, and practice that help ensure consistency and discipline in health care settings. Regulatory mechanisms can help protect public health by ensuring that only qualified and competent practitioners can practice [4]. However, constraints such as resource limitations, staffing shortages, and policy implementation issues still exist and are preventing the best professional practice.

Professional excellence in nursing and midwifery requires a concerted effort involving education, clinical practice, and regulatory bodies. Improving these areas will strengthen practitioners' capacity, enhance healthcare provision, and improve health outcomes in Nigeria.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Specifically, this narrative review was conducted using the following databases: Nature, PubMed, EMBASE, Cochrane Library, PubMed Central (PMC), Medicare, Springer, Francis, and Taylor database, with search criteria such as “advancing professional excellence in nursing and midwifery in Nigeria” and “educational, clinical and regulatory perspectives”.

The bibliographies of the selected articles were also examined to identify additional studies of interest. Only full articles published in English were considered as adapted from other similar literature [5-9].

The selected articles are related only to the study's thematic area, including nursing and midwifery, professional excellence, educational, and regulatory guidelines. Articles not related to or not directly applicable to establishing the novel concept were excluded [10-18].

### **Theoretical Underpin**

The Novice to Expert Theory outlines the stages of nursing competence in terms of learning and clinical experience, including novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. The theory holds that

professional development in nursing and midwifery does not happen overnight; it is a process that takes time to complete and requires ongoing practice, reflection, and real-life patient scenarios. Novices and advanced beginners differ in that novices are more dependent on rules and guidelines. In contrast, advanced beginners have some clinical experience and are beginning to notice commonalities in patient care situations. The proficient level, however, indicates that nurses have a more sophisticated understanding of clinical scenarios, allowing them to effectively prioritize patient care at this stage and plan and organize care at the competent level [19-20]. At the expert level, it is all about intuition—clinical skills developed from experience and individual knowledge help the nurse navigate complex health care circumstances. This sequence demonstrates the need for experience to develop and increase professional excellence in nursing and midwifery practice.

Benner's theory is relevant to professional excellence in nursing and midwifery because experiential learning underpins clinical competence and better patient outcomes. The theory supports the idea that excellence is not based solely on theoretical knowledge gained in formal education but is also greatly influenced by clinical exposure and continuous practice in the actual healthcare setting. It affirms that nurses and midwives need to participate in continuous learning and reflective practice to progress from basic to high levels of professional expertise. This is especially vital in today's healthcare environment, where patients' conditions are becoming more complex and require greater clinical judgment, critical thinking, and decision-making. Additionally, the theory emphasizes the value of mentoring and supervision in clinical environments, where seasoned practitioners provide guidance and support to help new practitioners develop their skills.

In light of the present study, which focused on professional excellence in nursing and midwifery in Nigeria, Benner's theory provided a conceptual background. It helped clarify the role of educational preparation and clinical practice in equipping professionals with competence. The theory is applicable and can be used to explain the role of nursing education institutions as places where students begin learning what they must, and clinical environments as places where students learn skills and gain experience. It also emphasizes the need for ongoing professional development for nurses and midwives to move through competence over time. Moreover, the theory implies the need to organize a structured clinical mentorship program and to provide effective supervision systems to help the novice become an expert practitioner. The use of Benner's theory is relevant to the Nigerian healthcare context, where resources are scarce, the number of individuals available for clinical practice is unequal, and clinical experience is unequal. Strategies to enhance professional competence and achieve excellence in

nursing and midwifery practice must be informed by Benner's theory.

## Conceptual Justifications Advancing Professional Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery

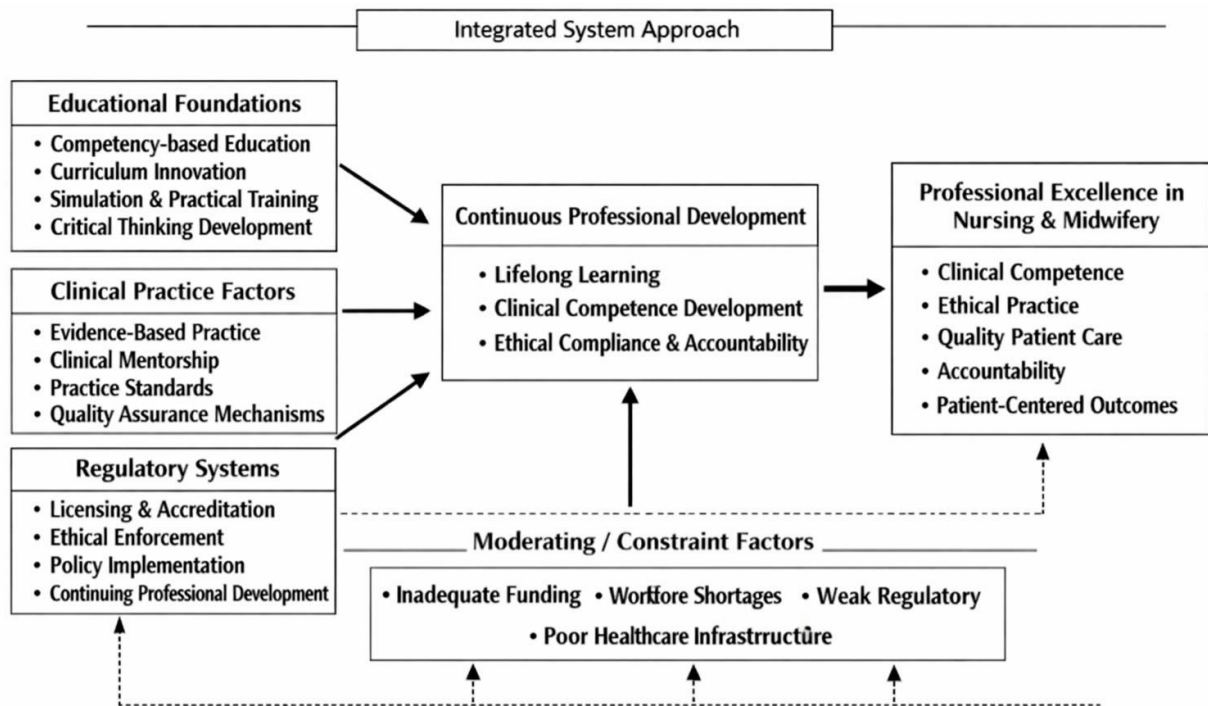


Figure 1: Core Conceptual Framework for Advancing Professional Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery

The input, process, and output systems model (Figure 1) is designed to support the professional excellence of student nurses and midwives. The education foundations, clinical practice factors, and regulatory systems are inputs to the mediating mechanisms of continuous professional development, lifelong learning, competence enhancement, and ethical accountability. The outcome variable, professional excellence, is believed to be achieved through processes that include clinical competence, ethical practice, quality patient care, accountability, and patient-centered outcomes. Other factors, such as inadequate funding, workforce shortages, weak regulatory controls, and poor Healthcare infrastructure, have constraining impacts across all stages. At the apex of the framework, system integration highlights the close ties among education, regulation, and practice as the driving force for continued professional excellence [21].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Concept of Professional Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery

Professional excellence in nursing and midwifery is the ongoing evidence of high standards of competence, ethical practice, and quality patient care in health care settings. It includes applying theory, clinical skills, and professional values to provide safe and effective health care services. Professional excellence is demonstrated by nurses and midwives who make good decisions and use sound clinical judgment, treat patients

with respect, and follow codes of practice closely. Excellence is also about accountability, as practitioners take responsibility for their choices and actions in clinical situations and work to build trust in professional relationships.

The ethical dimension remains a key element of professionalism and influences patient care behavior and decision-making. Ethical practice of nursing and midwifery is guided by respect for patient autonomy, confidentiality, and dignity. This does not mention the importance of reflective practice, which allows practitioners to assess and develop their skills. This will enable professional development and ensure care provision is in line with current standards. Evidence-based practice supports professional excellence by using current research findings, and effective communication and teamwork ensure coordinated, patient-centered care within a health care system [22].

The commitment to continuous learning ensures the sustained competence of nurses and midwives and contributes to the effectiveness of nursing and midwifery services. Ongoing continuing education enables practitioners to keep their knowledge and skills up to date and adapt to the changing needs of healthcare. Professional excellence is a lifelong journey that involves dedication, ethical responsibility, and respecting standards of practice [23].

## **Role of Nursing and Midwifery in Healthcare Systems**

Nursing and midwifery are integral to the health service system, as they are directly involved in patient care and service provision. They offer a variety of services that can encompass health promotion, disease prevention, health treatment assistance, and rehabilitation. They are always present in healthcare institutions, enabling patients to receive consistent care throughout their treatment. Nurses and midwives are also key players in coordinating care, ensuring that the healthcare team communicates effectively and that patient needs are met efficiently.

Nurses and midwives have a responsibility to educate and advocate for patients. They deliver information that helps people make informed decisions about their health and healthy behaviors. This function is essential for responding to public health problems, including maternal and child health issues, infectious diseases, and chronic diseases. They can recognize health risks early and take action to address them, ultimately reducing the risk of patients developing complications and improving health care outcomes and well-being through close collaboration with patients [24].

Also, nurses and midwives assist in the management and administration of health services. They are involved in the planning, decision-making, and policy implementation in healthcare institutions. Their contribution helps to use resources effectively and to achieve organizational objectives. They are flexible and can be used in a variety of healthcare environments, helping enhance healthcare delivery systems, especially in rural areas and underserved communities [25].

## **Educational Foundations for Professional Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery**

The foundations of professional excellence in nursing and midwifery are educational. Through formal education, practitioners acquire the knowledge, skills, and ethics needed to practice effectively in health care environments. The training programs are designed to ensure that students gain in-depth knowledge of patient care, clinical procedures, and professional responsibilities. This preparation will equip graduates to provide safe and effective healthcare services.

The integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience enhances the development of clinical competence. Cutting-edge clinical situations are introduced into the classroom where students apply their learning under supervision. This method allows skills to be learned and confidence to be gained in conducting clinical activities. Teachers' work across various healthcare settings provides students with flexibility and responsiveness in managing diverse patients [26].

Another goal of educational institutions is to build critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These skills are critical for evaluating patients, informing patients of decisions, and evaluating patient care outcomes. The students are given opportunities to practice and improve their skills in controlled environments through modern pedagogical techniques, such as simulations and case-based learning. Technological progress has increased access to educational materials and enhanced the quality of training, enabling interactive learning and new knowledge [27].

## **Competency-Based Nursing and Midwifery Education**

In competency-based nursing and midwifery education, the emphasis is on developing and demonstrating the skills necessary for competent clinical practice. This emphasizes measurable outcomes and allows learners to develop competencies needed to provide safe and efficient patient care. Training programs are structured around clear objectives and learning goals for each training level. In competency education, assessment is grounded in the skills students need to perform clinical activities, communicate effectively, and apply ethical principles in clinical practice. This approach will help students to understand that learning is relevant and applied to healthcare services. Through continuous assessment and feedback, the learner becomes aware of areas they need to work on and can master important skills [28].

The approach also enables individualized learning, allowing each student to learn at their own pace and complete all competencies. Skill development and refinement through practical training, simulations, and supervised clinical experiences. This real-world learning approach builds confidence and equips students for work. Competency-based education aligns with international health education practices and is desirable to ensure uniformity in the quality of graduates [20].

## **Continuous Professional Development and Lifelong Learning in Nursing**

Professional competence and excellence in nursing require continuous learning and lifelong learning. These include continuous learning and training to ensure practitioners stay current with changes in healthcare practice and have the opportunity to learn and grow. Nurses need to stay up to date on the latest treatments and technologies, as well as best healthcare practices, to provide the best possible care.

Workshops, seminars, conferences, and advanced academic programs are all forms of professional development. Engaging in these activities improves clinical skills and leads to the use of better methods of patient care. Lifelong learning also promotes research and the use of evidence-based practices, which can lead to improved health outcomes [29].

Career growth and continuous learning. Developing nurses are better equipped to take leadership roles and specialize in certain areas of nursing. This helps them to contribute more to the health systems and increases organizational efficiency. Institutional support is also important in facilitating ongoing professional development through access to professional development opportunities and the encouragement of knowledge sharing, and regulatory expectations contribute to ongoing professional development as a requirement for maintaining professional licensure [30].

### **Clinical Practice Standards and Quality Assurance in Healthcare Delivery**

Evidence-based clinical practice in nursing and midwifery is the intentional application of current, credible research findings to inform nursing and midwifery practice. This method ensures that clinical interventions are based on scientifically tested evidence, not on routine or assumptions. Nurses and midwives work with evidence, their clinical knowledge, and the patient's choices to ensure effective and safe health outcomes. This practice reinforces decision-making and promotes uniformity in health care across settings.

Access to reliable research, the ability to interpret findings, and the willingness to incorporate the knowledge gained into clinical practice are all important for implementing evidence-based practice. Nurses and midwives carry out a critical appraisal of research to assess its relevance and applicability to individual patient situations. This will help to improve the quality of care and minimize the potential for mistakes in care practice. Standardization of procedures is also facilitated by evidence-based practice, thereby increasing efficiency and ensuring that patients receive the necessary care in accordance with guidelines [31].

Moreover, evidence-based practice supports professional development by fostering ongoing education and research into contemporary advances in healthcare. Those practitioners who follow this practice keep up with current treatment methods, technologies, and care options. Researching and implementing these new practices also encourages innovation and enhances patient satisfaction. For effective implementation, there needs to be institutional support, availability of resources, and a culture that enables the use of research for decision-making in clinical practice [32].

The conduct of practitioners in the provision of health services. The behavior and processes of health practitioners in health service provision.

The consistency and reliability in healthcare delivery depend on clinical practice standards and

quality assurance mechanisms. Practice standards are clear statements that identify the expected level of nursing and midwifery practice in different situations. These standards help to ensure that the care delivery is organized, safe, and meets professional expectations. In contrast, quality assurance processes are systematic monitoring and evaluation of health care services to ensure that the defined standards are met.

Using clinical standards helps standardize care and minimize variation that could lead to errors or poor outcomes. Audits, supervision, and performance review are examples of quality assurance activities that can highlight gaps in practice and opportunities for improvement. These processes help improve healthcare quality and maintain patients' performance in the desired direction [33].

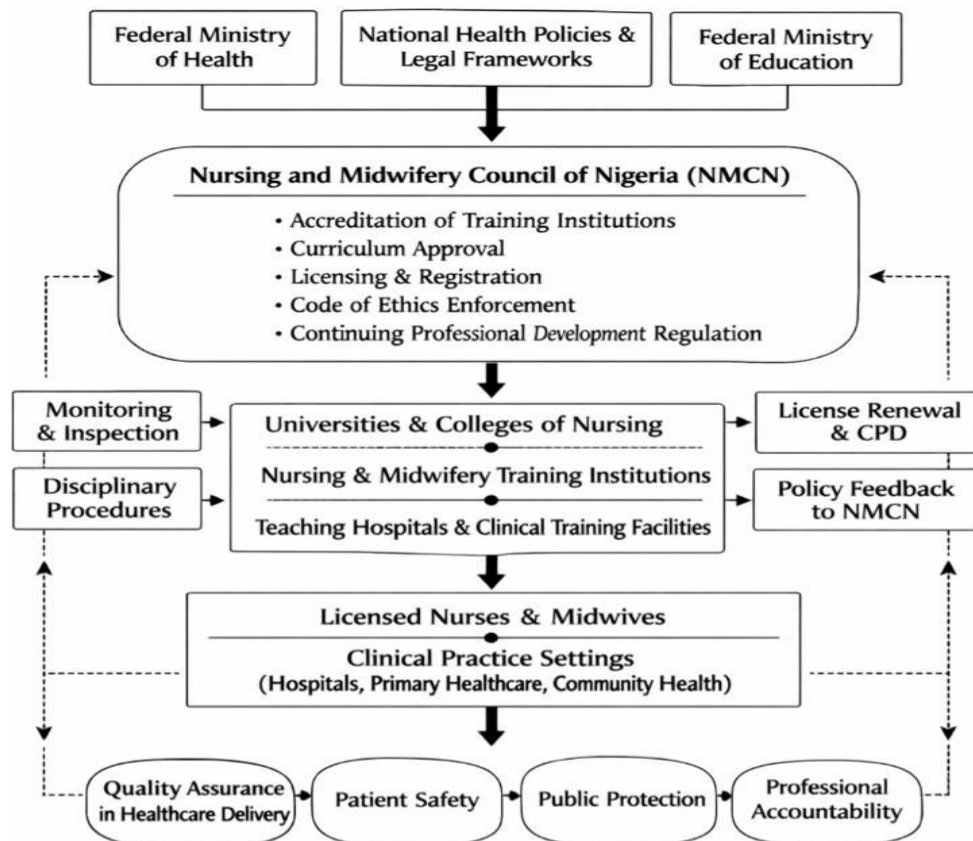
Quality assurance helps to ensure transparency and accountability from healthcare practitioners by enforcing adherence to guidelines and high-performance standards. In the healthcare sector, ongoing monitoring and evaluation help healthcare organizations evaluate their service performance and take corrective actions as needed. Good commitment to upholding clinical standards and quality assurance includes ensuring that healthcare delivery is safe, efficient, and responsive to patients' needs [34].

### **Regulatory Frameworks Governing Nursing and Midwifery in Nigeria**

The structure for maintaining standards of nursing and midwifery practice in Nigeria is provided by regulatory frameworks that promote accountability and protect public health. These frameworks comprise laws, policies, and guidelines set by regulators that govern the education, licensing, and practice of nurses and midwives.

Such frameworks are important because they ensure that only qualified practitioners are permitted to practice and that professional standards are upheld across all healthcare contexts. These functions will ensure that the graduates have the appropriate knowledge and skills for effective practice. Regulation also applies to the monitoring of professional conduct and disciplinary action to be taken in the event of misconduct or negligence. This is to ensure that the public is confident in the nursing and midwifery professions and that the safety of their loved ones is paramount [35]. Good regulation requires robust institutional capacity, effective policy setting, and enforcement. Improving regulation enhances the quality-of-care provision and helps ensure that professional standards are met [36].

## Regulatory Framework Structure Governing Nursing and Midwifery Practice in Nigeria



**Figure 2: Regulatory Framework Structure Governing Nursing and Midwifery Practice in Nigeria**

Figure 2 shows the hierarchical organization of the nursing and midwifery practice in Nigeria. The framework starts at the national level with the national policy and legal foundation, including the Federal Ministries of Health and Education, and the national health policies that outline the legal underpinning for the regulation of professionals. The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, at the heart of the system, is tasked with accreditation, curriculum approval, licensing, ethical enforcement, and regulation of the continuous professional development. Implementation is carried out by universities, training institutions, and teaching hospitals that comply with regulatory requirements. Pro Prac Env is the area of professional practice that involves standards and licensed practitioners or clinical environments. The outcome layer focuses on quality assurance, patient safety, public protection, and accountability. Monitoring, disciplinary action, license renewal, and policy feedback are mechanisms that enable continuous improvement and responsiveness in the regulatory system.

### Ethical Compliance and Accountability in Nursing Practice

Professional nursing practice is grounded in ethical principles and accountability. Ethical compliance refers to following the moral principles and professional codes that direct behavior in clinical settings. Nurses and

midwives are required to demonstrate values, including respect for patients' dignity, confidentiality, honesty, and fairness in providing care. These principles uphold patients' rights and provide for respectful and humane care.

Nurses and midwives need to be held accountable for what they do and what they decide to do in clinical practice. This involves responsibility for the consequences of care delivered and that actions are in line with professional standards. Accountability promotes transparency and builds trust between healthcare providers and patients. It also helps inform practitioners of the importance of upholding high standards of practice and refraining from actions that could compromise patient safety.

In an ethical decision-making process, the nurse may encounter a situation that requires a complex choice, balancing various aspects of patient care and the demands of her profession. In such contexts, ethical principles must be applied, and their application depends on sound judgment and an understanding of the profession's values. Ongoing education and training in ethical issues expand nurses' skills to manage them. Compliance and accountability in healthcare systems are further enhanced by institutional support and clear ethical guidelines [37-38].

## Curriculum Innovation in Nursing and Midwifery Education

Innovation in nursing and midwifery education is directed towards the ongoing development of training programs to meet current and evolving healthcare needs and professional requirements. It means remodeling learning content to address new health concerns, technological progress, and changing patient care demands. To create graduates with the ability to work effectively in complex clinical environments who are competent and adaptable.

The focus of curriculum development in recent years has been on integrating theory and practice to enhance students' clinical readiness. The students are introduced to new knowledge and practical experiences to expand their opportunities to apply what they have learned in the classroom in real health care situations. To improve learning outcomes and confidence in clinical practice, teaching methods such as simulation, case-based learning, and skills laboratories are frequently used. These strategies provide students with opportunities to learn to think critically and solve workplace-related problems.

Curriculum innovation also uses Digital Learning Tools and Technology-based teaching. Current information and flexible learning on online platforms and electronic resources. This will keep nursing and midwifery education relevant and responsive to the evolving trends in healthcare worldwide. The key to maintaining quality and keeping training programs up to professional standards is to continually review curriculum content [39].

Further, fostering curriculum innovation promotes interdisciplinary learning, thereby encouraging cooperation among health care practitioners. This helps students learn how to work in teams that deliver healthcare services. Therefore, successful curriculum change enhances the quality of nursing and midwifery education and nursing and midwifery outcomes [27].

## Clinical Mentorship and Capacity Building in Nursing Practice

Clinical mentorship and capacity building play a crucial role in cultivating the quality of nurses. Mentorship is a formal relationship between an experienced nurse and another, less experienced nurse or student, in which the more experienced nurse provides guidance, support, and supervision. This connection is important for knowledge transfer, skill acquisition, and professional socialization in clinical settings. It also contributes to the development of confidence and competence in patient/client care. Furthermore, capacity building involves developing nurses' skills through targeted training, skill enhancement, and ongoing education opportunities. It helps practitioners to be well-equipped to meet evolving health care needs. Clinical mentorship also helps in capacity building by offering

hands-on learning opportunities in clinical practice. This enables nurses to acquire practical skills and enhance decision-making skills with guidance from experienced professionals.

To be effective, mentorship requires supportive clinical environments. Healthcare organizations that foster learning, offer support and guidance, and promote professional development create an environment for better performance. Feedback and evaluation are regular events that help mentees identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This process enhances professional development and quality of Patient Care [40]. Mentorship initiatives also contribute to workforce development by helping address skill gaps and retain healthcare professionals. Safe and effective nursing practice is gained through structured guidance. Thus, mentorship for capacity building has a positive impact on health care outcomes and enhances the nursing profession [41].

## Reforms in Regulatory Oversight and Professional Standards

Changes in regulation and professional standards are needed to enhance nursing and midwifery practice. Regulatory frameworks are the rules and guidelines that regulate education, licensing, and conduct. Reforms seek to make these systems more effective by strengthening policy frameworks, improving enforcement, and ensuring regulatory bodies maintain professional standards.

Contemporary reforms in regulation involve more stringent licensing standards, license renewal, and CPD (Continuing Professional Development). Practitioners remain up to date and competent through these measures. Regulating also means keeping tabs on professional conduct and dealing with misbehavior to hold professionals accountable and keep the public safe. Another way the reform takes place is through cooperation among regulatory agencies, schools, and medical facilities. This helps to make training standards and expectations for professional practice consistent. Enhanced coordination can improve the quality of nursing education and help ensure that students have competencies upon graduation that meet the required standards prior to entering practice [42]. Regulatory reforms also improve healthcare outcomes by establishing ethical and professional standards that practitioners adhere to. Efficient oversight encourages discipline in the healthcare sector and helps foster public confidence in healthcare services. Improving regulatory systems is thus a key way of raising professional standards and healthcare outcomes [43].

## **The Development and Implementation of Competencies for Advanced Practice Nurse Professionals**

### **Integrated Approaches to Advancing Professional Excellence**

A coordinated approach to professional excellence involves an integrated approach between education, clinical practice, and regulatory systems. These strategies acknowledge that no one can do everything at a high level, and that everyone in the health care system has a role to play. Training, practice, and regulation all contribute to competence and effectiveness as health professionals through integration. The partnership with Schools and Healthcare Units improves the relevance of Nursing Education. It provides students with proper training aligned with the latest clinical practice and introduces them to real healthcare environments. There are opportunities to apply theory in the clinical setting, and regulatory bodies ensure standards are upheld across all aspects of practice.

Integrated approaches also foster continuous feedback processes to pinpoint gaps in education and clinical practice. Feedback helps to improve continually and keeps training programs relevant to healthcare requirements. When responsibility is shared, it increases accountability and drives the adoption of best practice in nursing and midwifery. Professional development is strengthened, and healthcare delivery is improved when systems are well integrated. It provides uniformity in training, practice, and regulation, enabling nurses and midwives to provide high-quality care. Stakeholder coordination remains important for maintaining professional excellence and enhancing health outcomes [44].

### **Challenges Hindering Professional Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery**

Several systemic, institutional, and individual factors influence professional excellence in nursing and midwifery and are ingrained in the quality of practice and service delivery. Nurses and midwives are central to the healthcare system but face many challenges that hinder their optimal performance. The challenges affect education, clinical practice, and regulatory requirements, and are delaying the achievement of high professional standards in many healthcare environments, especially in developing health systems.

### **Inadequate Funding and Poor Healthcare Infrastructure**

Poor funding remains a significant challenge to professional excellence in nursing and midwifery. Without proper financial assistance, many healthcare institutions are unable to equip themselves with modern facilities, learning materials, and functional clinical settings. This can hamper effective practice and the quality of the care that nurses and midwives provide for patients. Worse, poor infrastructure compounds the problem, with outdated facilities, a lack of hospital beds,

and a shortage of essential medical equipment limiting clinical efficiency. There is also an impact on training institutions due to a lack of funds, which affects the availability of simulation laboratories and updated training materials. This creates a divide between theory and practice, hindering the development of competence among students and practitioners [45].

### **Workforce Shortages and High Patient Load**

The lack of workers is a major constraint on professional excellence in nursing and midwifery. Healthcare providers have inadequate staffing levels, leading to high workload and stress for nursing and midwifery staff. This makes people more stressed and less able to receive personalized patient care. High nurse-to-patient ratios lead to fatigue, burnout, and lower job satisfaction. Nurses often find they need to focus on tasks with immediate needs rather than providing full care, which is detrimental to service quality. Likewise, a shortage of staff hinders mentoring and training, as time-constrained experienced staff are less likely to support newer employees [46].

### **Limited Opportunities for Continuous Professional Development**

Access to ongoing professional development (CPD) is restricted, limiting professional development in nursing and midwifery. CPD is vital for refreshing knowledge, refining practice, and adjusting practice. However, many practitioners lack sufficient resources, too many responsibilities, and inadequate institutional support. However, if CPD is unavailable, nurses may practice outdated methods that are not aligned with current evidence-based best practices. This decreases the quality of care and impacts patient outcomes. At other times, staffing levels make it impossible to attend training programs. A lack of a structured CPD system reduces competence and delays professional development [47].

### **Weak Regulatory Enforcement and Policy Implementation**

The lack of regulation is a considerable problem for the profession of nursing and midwifery. Regulatory bodies set rules for learning and practice, but poor compliance occurs due to weak enforcement. In some instances, unqualified persons may be practicing due to insufficient monitoring. Inadequate policy implementation leads to differences in practice standards across healthcare institutions. This impacts patients' care and the consistency of care. However, limited resources and inadequate staffing in regulatory agencies also hamper their ability to inspect and ensure compliance. Efforts should be made to improve the regulatory systems to enhance accountability and professionalism [48].

## **Sustainable Strategies for Advancing Nursing and Midwifery Excellence**

A sustainable approach to promoting the excellence of nursing and midwifery is long-term and focuses on enhancing competence, service quality, and the continuity of quality healthcare. These strategies focus on education, clinical practice, workforce development, and regulation. The goal is to encourage a nursing and midwifery workforce that is resilient, able to respond to the changing needs of health care, and that upholds high professional standards.

### **Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Education**

Enhancing education for nurses and midwives is an essential approach to sustainable professional excellence. Practitioners acquire the knowledge, clinical competence, and ethical values necessary for effective practice through quality education. Providing up-to-date curriculum material that reflects today's healthcare helps close the gap between theory and practice. This involves embedding evidence-based content, Digital health skills, and patient-centered care strategies into training programs. The educational institutions must also equip themselves with modern pedagogical techniques (simulation teaching, clinical skills laboratory). These methods not only improve clinical skills but also help students prepare for real-world clinical settings. Sufficient resources and qualified teachers are needed to maintain good training standards. Continuous review of educational programs ensures that graduates remain competent and responsive to healthcare challenges [49].

### **Promoting Continuous Professional Development**

Continuous professional development is an important part of maintaining excellent nursing and midwifery practice. It keeps practitioners up to date on new healthcare trends and technologies, helping them maintain their skills and knowledge. Nurses maintain their competence and enhance their clinical performance through regular training programs, workshops, and professional courses. Continuous learning is greatly enhanced by institutional support. Healthcare providers need to offer employee training programs and foster learning and innovation. This is reinforced by regulatory bodies, which require professional development for license renewal. Continuous learning leads to increased confidence, better decision-making, and quality care [30].

### **Strengthening Workforce Capacity and Support Systems**

An effective workforce is the key to sustainable excellence in nursing and midwifery. Quality staffing ensures that nurses and midwives can provide quality care without undue workload pressure. Recruitment and retention strategies are used to overcome shortages and enhance services in health care facilities. Other support systems, including mentorship and supervision, also assist in workforce development. Junior staff are mentored by experienced staff to build confidence and

enhance their clinical skills. Better working conditions, wages, and appreciation of professionalism increase job motivation and satisfaction. These measures work together to help ensure the stability and effectiveness of the healthcare workforce [47].

### **Enhancing Regulatory Systems and Policy Implementation**

Effective regulatory systems are a key part of standardization and accountability in the practice of nursing and midwifery. Enforcement, strengthening monitoring systems, and compliance with professional guidelines are sustainable strategies. Funding and staffing for regulatory bodies must be sufficient to ensure effective inspections and enforcement of standards. Simultaneously, any implemented policy must be uniform across healthcare institutions to minimize practice differences. Uniform standards are maintained with clear guidelines for licensing, practice, and professional conduct. The constant review of regulations keeps them current and responsive to health care issues. Regulation fosters public confidence and improves the quality of health care [43].

## **CONCLUSION**

High-quality, high-value nursing and midwifery practice remains vital to supporting the quality of health services and patient outcomes. The combination of quality education, effective clinical practice, ongoing professional development, and robust regulatory systems achieves it. All of these contribute to nurses' and midwives' knowledge, skills, and values, enabling them to deliver competent services. While there are several ongoing issues, including limited resources, insufficient staffing, and ineffective policy implementation, there are areas for improvement through curriculum change, mentoring, and organized professional development programs. Improving competence, accountability, and quality of health services will rely on strengthening these areas. Ensuring continuous improvement and building a resilient healthcare workforce requires a systems approach from all stakeholders. Finally, Professional excellence in nursing and midwifery will make a strong contribution to safer, more effective, and patient-centered healthcare delivery in the system.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

The following suggestions guided the paper:

1. National health and education policies should be reinforced to ensure professional excellence in the field of nursing and midwifery through proper funding, policy consistency, and strategic planning. Structures and support systems need to be established to facilitate competency-based education, continuous professional development, and the use of new healthcare technologies in training and practice.
2. Educational institutions need to reimagine the design of nursing and midwifery programs in relation to healthcare needs and best practices

in the world today. The focus should be on competency-based training, hands-on learning, and the integration of digital health tools into learning and teaching.

3. Healthcare administrators should foster high-quality clinical practice and continuous improvement in work environments. Medical equipment, learning resources, and a safe working environment should be provided to optimize job performance.
4. Nursing and midwifery practitioners need to be committed to lifelong learning and to uphold standards of ethical practice in all their work. We should encourage active involvement in continuous professional development programs to increase knowledge, improve clinical skills, and maintain clinical competence.
5. Regulatory bodies must ensure that the standards, ethics, and licensing are strictly adhered to. Training institutions and healthcare facilities should be regularly monitored, evaluated, and accredited to ensure quality.
6. Professional associations should champion aspects of the welfare and professional development of nurses and midwives, and ensure that standards underpin practice. These bodies should facilitate this through conferences, training, and the sharing of ideas, which could help develop skills and professional networking.
7. Patients and the public should be involved in health care processes and given opportunities to give feedback as well as engage in health promotion processes. Greater awareness of patients' rights and expectations can help to promote accountability within the healthcare industry.

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