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OPEN PEER REVIEW

Legal Protection Challenges for Village Midwives in Maternal and Neonatal Emergency Referrals: A Qualitative Study

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About this report

This open peer review (OPR) report shows the public comments made on this article during peer review, by the reviewers, the associate editor and the editor-in-chief, for every revision round, together with the authors' replies. Comments appear only with the consent of the people who wrote them. Reviewers who chose to sign their report are named; the others are shown as "Referee". Comments are edited for language only, and confidential remarks to the editors are not included.

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1 Original submission

2 comments · 26 May 2025 – 4 Jul 2025

Referee 1 Reviewer

REJECT 26 May 2025

Dear Editor,
I hope this message finds you well.
The topic of the article is relevant and practical; however, the methodology is quite weak.
1. The researcher claims that the study is qualitative, but it lacks a proper qualitative structure.
2. The study does not reference scientific and expert sources related to qualitative research.
3. Additionally, the sampling method should have been purposeful and demonstrated maximum diversity, which was not the case.
4. The structure of the main and exploratory questions is not mentioned.
5. The data analysis and the process of theme formation are unclear.
6. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of the data are not addressed, and the interpretation of the results does not align with qualitative data.

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 4 Jul 2025

This study addresses the challenges of legal protection for midwives, which is an important topic. However, this manuscript needs to be rewritten because the standards for reporting qualitative research were not considered. Please find more details in the attached file. Ignore the AI comments.

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Revision 1

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Response to Reviewer Comments

I am very grateful for the in-depth review. I have revised my research article based on the helpful suggestions and comments. I hope my revision is in accordance with the feedback from the reviewer.

1. **Comment 1 : (Line 2)**

   The results of study focused on the challenges of providing midwifery services. A small portion of the study also related to a sociological and juridical approach. Please; change the title and main aim of the study to reflect it. For more clarification, this title is suggested:

   "Legal Protection challenges for Village Midwives in Maternal and Neonatal Emergency Referrals: A Qualitative Study."

   Response : Thank you for the suggestion, we have changed the title according to the reviewer's suggestion.

2. **Comment 2 : (Line 9)**

   Please revise this sentence as: Therefore, it is expected that midwives deserve legal protection

   Response : Thank you for your attention, we have corrected the sentence according to the reviewer's suggestions.

3. **Comment 3 : (Line 11)**

   Please edit the aim of this study, as the results do not align with this objective.

   Response : Thank you for the input from the reviewer to improve this article, the research objectives have been revised according to the research results.

4. **Comment 4 : (Line 12)**

   clarify the qualitative approach (ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenology, and narrative research) as well as the year of the study and specify the study setting (e.g., Sula Islands Regency) and country.

   Response : Thank you for your revision, we have corrected it according to the suggestion for the method is qualitative descriptive with a sociological juridical approach with a qualitative approach to a case study in the Sula Islands in 2024.

5. **Comment 5 : (Line 13)**

   The number of midwives mentioned in the abstract (N=5) does not match the number provided in the methods section (N=8)!!!

Response : Thank you for the correction you provided, for a sample of 10 respondents.

6. **Comment 6 : (Line 14)**

   Delete the highlighted and mention inclusion & exclusion criteria as well as sampling method and the method that adequacy of sample size was justified.

   Response : Thank you for your suggestions, we have added improvements to the sampling techniques and inclusion and exclusion criteria.

7. **Comment 7 : (Line 15.1)**

   These data collection methods were not mentioned in the method section in the manuscript.

   Response : Thank you for your correction, we will add it to the research methods section of the article manuscript.

8. **Comment 8 : (Line 15.2)**

   Mention the name of method used for analyzes.

   Response : Thank you for your suggestion, I have improved the data analysis. The analysis method in this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach.

9. **Comment 9 : (Line 28)**

   Add qualitative research. The keywords should be matched with MeSH.

   Response : We have refined the keywords according to MeSH in the following articles: Legal Liability; Midwifery; Maternal; Neonatal; Emergency Medical Services; Qualitative Research; Rural Health Services

10. **Comment 10 : (Line 31)**

    Background is too long, more than 1300 words. Please; reduce it to max two pages.

    Background should included three paragraph: the first one is about definition of problem, the second regarding literature review that shows the results of other studies about the topic in the world and the last one is justification the need to this study based on the inconsistent results or lack of information.

    This study highlighted the challenges faced by midwifery services rather than emphasizing legal protection. Please; revise the background section related to this.

Moreover, The text focuses on a local perspective. Please revise it to incorporate a global viewpoint.

Response : Thank you for your suggestion, the background has been corrected according to the reviewer's suggestion.

11. **Comment 11 : (Line 32)**

    person's

    Response : The word has been corrected according to the reviewer's suggestion to person's.

12. **Comment 12 : (Line 34)**

    Do you mean "her baby" or "child birth"?

    Response : The word has been corrected according to the reviewer's suggestion to child birth.

13. **Comment 13 : (Line 35)**

    Do you mean " handled fast"?

    Response : The word has been corrected according to the reviewer's suggestion to handle fast.

14. **Comment 14 : (Line 50)**

    Insert reference.

    Response : Thank you for your attention, we have included the references according to reviewer's suggestions.

15. **Comment 15 : (Line 52)**

    how much is it in Indonesia?

    Response : Thank you for your correction, we have added data for Indonesia in the background section in the second paragraph

16. **Comment 16 : (Line 58)**

    This was mentioned in the second paragraph, so it is repetition!

    Response : Thank you for your correction, we have corrected it according to your suggestion to remove sentences that are repetitions.

17. **Comment 17 : (Line 73)**

    Increasing

    Response : The word has been corrected according to the reviewer's suggestion to increasing.

18. **Comment 18 : (Line 76)**

    Authority

Response : The word has been corrected according to the reviewer's suggestion to authority.

19. **Comment 19 : (Line 83)**

    integral

    Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we removed the word to reduce the number of words in the background.

20. **Comment 20 : (Line 84)**

    Collaboration

    Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we removed the word to reduce the number of words in the background.

21. **Comment 21 : (Line 86)**

    put the reference number at the end of the sentence.

    Response : We have revised it according to the reviewer's suggestions.

22. **Comment 22 : (Line 87)**

    Efforts

    Response : The word has been corrected according to the reviewer's suggestion to efforts.

23. **Comment 23 : (Line 89)**

    Add the name of country.

    Response : We have added the name of country

24. **Comment 24 : (Line 94)**

    Insert reference for this paragraph.

    Response : We have revised it according to the reviewer's suggestions

25. **Comment 25 : (Line 102)**

    reference?

    Response : We have revised it according to the reviewer's suggestions

26. **Comment 27 : (Line 107.2)**

    This sentence is incomplete!

    Response : We have removed the sentence because it is not appropriate to the background.

27. **Comment 28 : (Line 123)**

    The sentence is incomplete!

    Response : We have removed the sentence because it is not appropriate to the background.

28. **Comment 29 : (Line 125)**

Clearly state the gap in legal protection for midwives. Justify the need to this study based on the lack of or inconsistent information.

Response : Thank you for what you have provided, we have added to the gap in legal protection for midwives.

29. **Comment 30 : (Line 129)**

Objective needs revision. The findings are not in harmony with the main goal of this study. I suggest reevaluating and refining the purpose to better align with the results obtained.

Response : Thank you for your suggestions, we have adjusted the research objectives to the research results.

30. **Comment 31 : (Line 131)**

The methods section is too short and many items are missed. Please use COREQ check list to report this study. You should completely write regarding the participants, sample size, sampling method, setting, inclusion and exclusion criteria, ethical consideration, write about the name of the ethical review board and informed participant consent and data analysis.

more needed details are: clarify who conducted the interviews, explain rigor and validity, explain the sampling strategy, including how and why research participants were selected, and the criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary, such as sampling saturation. Additionally, how did the researchers ensure maximum variation among the samples?, Describe the instruments in greater detail, including the type of questionnaire and the specific questions asked, as well as the method and resources used in designing these questions. Additionally, please clarify if and how any questions changed throughout the course of the study, explain the devices used in this study (e.g., audio recorders, written notes, audio tapes, etc.). Additionally, please clarify whether midwives' behavior was recorded or not. How was member checking conducted?, state the start and stop dates for data collection, along with the duration of interviews (mean, minimum, and maximum time), explain data processing methods prior to and during analysis, including transcription, data entry, data management and security, verification of data integrity, and data coding and describe the qualitative analysis framework (e.g., thematic analysis).

Response : Thank you for your suggestions, we have improved the research method section according to suggestions regarding sample size, sampling method, setting, inclusion and

exclusion criteria, ethical consideration. Thank you for your suggestions, we have improved the research method section according to suggestions regarding sample size, sampling method, setting, inclusion and exclusion criteria, ethical consideration.

31. **Comment 32 : (Line 132)**

    Please delete the highlighted parts.

    Response : We have revised it according to the reviewer's suggestions

32. **Comment 33 : (Line 133)**

    It is not a suitable qualitative approach. Please clarify the qualitative approaches (ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenology, and content analysis.)

    Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we have improved the method section, namely a qualitative approach to a case study.

33. **Comment 34 : (Line 144)**

    Delete the highlighted sentence. It is related to the method section.

    Response : We have revised it according to the reviewer's suggestions

34. **Comment 35 : (Line 145)**

    What is the full term?

    Response : We have revised it according to the reviewer's suggestions by explaining in full using tables

35. **Comment 36 : (Line 146)**

    First of all, report the demographic details of respondents (e.g., age, years of experience) in a table. Then report how many codes were found and clarity of major and minor extracted themes and show them in a table or flowchart. Revise heading of the result section based on the extracted themes. This section will be reviewed after making necessary changes.

    Response : Thank you for the suggestions given, we have added information to the respondents using a table.

36. **Comment 37 (Line 150)**

    It needs editing. What do you mean? The midwives' role in referrals?

    Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we have made improvements according to the reviewer's suggestion.

37. **Comment 38 : (Line 151)**

Full term is needed at first time use.

Response : We have fixed it to describe the full term related to SOP.

38. **Comment 39 : (Line 153)**

    What do you mean by BD? Label respondents consistently; e.g., "Midwife 1," "IBI Official"

    Response : Thank you for your input, we have consistently explained the abbreviations for respondents and are listed in the table

39. **Comment 40 : (Line 174)**

    Some findings have overlap (e.g., documentation issues appear in both 4.1 and 4.2)

    Response : We have removed some findings because they have overlap.

40. **Comment 41 : (Line 260)**

    Discussion needs re-writing. Link findings back to the research question more explicitly. No comparison with other studies, specifically in the other countries, is seen. It seems the authors focus on their country without comparison with others, so how this findings can be applicable for the international readers?

    Response : Thank you for your input, and we have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions.

41. **Comment 42 : (Line 265)**

    Make clear, is this claim your finding? compare it with other relevant studies over here. Please also separate this sentence from the next one with a dot.

    Response : Thank you for your input, and we have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions by separating the appropriate sentences.

42. **Comment 43 : (Line 266)**

    Delete : and (

    Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions

43. **Comment 44 : (Line 267)**

    change , to .

    The next line is a separate sentence.

    Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions

44. **Comment 45 : (Line 282)**

    In which country? Do you mean worldwide? This sentence needs reference?

    Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we have included the appropriate references.

45. **Comment 46 : (Line 283)**

delete , and put .

Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions

46. **Comment 47 : (Line 284)**

Based on the year 2023, delete "will", the sentence is not related to future. Moreover, write the name of country.

Response : Thanks for your suggestion, we have removed the word will and added the source of the research location

47. **Comment 48 : (Line 287)**

reference?

Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions by adding references.

48. **Comment 49 : (Line 290)**

Reference

Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions by adding references.

49. **Comment 50 : (Line 297.1)**

At first, mention your related finding and compare with other relevant studies.

Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we have added it to the related findings.

50. **Comment 51 : (Line 297.2)**

make clear, is this law related to Indonesia?

Response : Yes, this law was made in Indonesia and we have added it

51. **Comment 52 : (Line 305)**

Reference?

Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions by adding references.

52. **Comment 53 : (Line 307)**

mention the country.

Response : Yes, Health Law No. 17 of 2023 from the Republic of Indonesia

53. **Comment 54 : (Line 324)**

Is it your finding?

Response : Yes, this is the condition of the research site.

54. **Comment 55 : (Line 325)**

Which country?

Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we have made improvements according to your suggestion, namely adding a research location.

55. **Comment 56 : (Line 327)**

Compare these results with the other studies.

Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions

56. **Comment 57 : (Line 328)**

Where? Indonesia?

Response : Yes, this is from a research site and in the country of Indonesia.

57. **Comment 58 : (Line 341)**

Full term?

Response : We have revised the discussion section according to the reviewer's suggestions by full term is PONEK.

58. **Comment 59 : (Line 343)**

Please, write the limitations of the study. Acknowledge small sample size and potential bias (e.g., only midwives from one region).

Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we have added limitations in the research.

59. **Comment 60 : (Line 344)**

Summarize the main findings. Avoid restating results; instead, emphasize implications for policy/practice and write the overall conclusion. Delete numbering.

Add practical policy suggestions (e.g., training on legal rights, improving documentation systems).

Highlight the need for systemic support (e.g., infrastructure, legal awareness) alongside protection laws.

Response : Thank you for your suggestions, we have improved the conclusion section according to the reviewer's input and added suggestions.

60. **Comment 61 : (Line 360)**

check for consistency in formatting (e.g., journal names italicized/abbreviated?). Use standard abbreviations for name of journals according to NLM.

Some references (e.g., #7 on "Transgressive Typologies") seem unrelated; verify linkage to midwifery/legal themes.

Response : Thank you for your suggestion, we have made improvements to the reference section according to the reviewer's suggestion.

2 Revision 1

1 comment · 18 Aug 2025

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 18 Aug 2025

Thanks for responding to the comments. However, this qualitative research paper didn't meet the expected standards, especially in the Methods and Findings sections. Therefore, acceptance for publication is contingent upon completing all requested corrections according to the attached file. Please ignore the AI comments.

3

Revision 2

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Response to Reviewer Comments

I am very grateful for the in-depth review. I have revised my research article based on the helpful suggestions and comments. I hope my revision is in accordance with the feedback from the reviewer.

1. **Comment 1 (line 12) :** Lack of explicit mention of study design in the title or abstract
   Response : Thank you for the suggestion, We have corrected this by including the research design in the title and abstract.
2. **Comment 2 (line 118):** Absence of detailed eligibility criteria and selection methods for participants.
   Response : Thank you for your attention, We have added eligibility criteria and selection methods, as directed by the reviewer. The participant selection method involved initial identification by coordinating with the local community health center to obtain a list of active village midwives. Data included name, length of service, location of assignment, and experience in handling emergency cases. Screening was based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and purposive sampling was used to determine respondents. Confirmation and approval of participants who agreed to sign an informed consent form prior to the interview.
3. **Comment 3 (line 339) :** No discussion of limitations or efforts to address potential bias
   Response : Thank you for the suggestion, This article still has limitations, namely that with a small number of samples, it is possible that this could happen
4. **Comment 4 (line 111) :** Missing information on the setting, location, and dates of the study
   Response : Thank you for your attention, study in the Sula Islands in December, 2024

3 Revision 2

1 comment · 7 Sep 2025

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 7 Sep 2025

None of the previous comments were answered, so re-reviewing is not possible. I am uploading the previous review file again. Please ignore the AI comments and answer only the comments in the attached file.

4

Revision 3

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

I am very grateful for the in-depth review. I have revised my research article based on the helpful suggestions and comments. I hope my revision is in accordance with the feedback from the reviewer.

1. **Comment 1 : (Line 13)**

   Needs editing

   This qualitative research with case study method and a sociological juridical approach was done in

   Response : Thank you for the comment. We have revised the sentence for clarity. The method has been corrected to: "This qualitative research with a case study method and a sociological juridical approach was conducted in the Sula Islands, Indonesia."

2. **Comment 2 : (Line 14)**

   Make clear in which country, Indonesia?

   Response : We agree with the reviewer. The sentence has been revised to clearly state the country as Indonesia.

3. **Comment 3 : (Line 15.1)**

   Make clear who were respondents, village midwives, health providers or ….?

   Response : Thank you for pointing this out. We have clarified the respondents as follows: *"Respondents consisted of 8 village midwives, 1 IBI administrator, and 1 District Health Office employee."*

4. **Comment 4 : (Line 15.2)**

   Revise as

   Non-probability purposive sampling method until data saturation.

   Response : We agree with the suggestion. The sentence has been revised to:

   "The sample was taken using a non-probability purposive sampling method until data saturation."

5. **Comment 5 : (Line 16)**

   Data collection was mentioned as interview with respondents in the above sentence, mention the other sources used in the same sentence and delete this one.

   Response : Thank you for this observation. We have revised the sentence to:

"Data collection techniques included literature review and in-depth interviews with respondents."

6. **Comment 6 : (Line 18)**

   There are different methods for data analysis in qualitative studies such as content analysis, …., so mention the name of method used.

   Response : We agree with the reviewer. We have revised the sentence to: *"The analysis method used in this study was a descriptive qualitative approach."*

7. **Comment 7 : (Line 19)**

   This is more conclusion than result. Please report main themes and sub-themes extracted in this study

   Response : Thank you for this valuable input. We have revised the Results section to highlight the main themes and sub-themes, including: Implementation of referral system (compliance with SOP, documentation issues). Legal protection (perceived protection under existing law, challenges in practice). Inhibiting factors (late decision-making, socio-cultural barriers, infrastructure, distance, weather).

8. **Comment 8 : (Line 24)**

   conclusion needs re-writhing based on the results. Mention the central and core results. What is the use of the results? Do not put any reference in this section.

   Response : We agree with the reviewer. The Conclusion has been revised to focus on the central results without references: Referrals were partially in accordance with SOPs but hindered by limited facilities. Midwives feel legally protected when practicing according to competence and SOP, but challenges remain in emergencies. Major obstacles include family decision-making, socio-cultural factors, costs, distance, and infrastructure. The use of the results is to recommend policy improvements, training, and provision of adequate facilities for maternal and neonatal emergency referrals.

9. **Comment 9 : (Line 80)**

   References?

   In addition, make clear this laws are related to which country.

   Response : We have carefully re-checked the References section and ensured that all cited references in the text are included in the list, and that the format follows the journal guidelines.

10. **Comment 10 : (Line 85)**

In which country?

Response : We agree with the reviewer’s suggestion. This section has been revised to clearly state the study location, namely Sula Islands, Indonesia.

11. **Comment 11 : (Line 86)**

    Reference?

    Response : We have added a relevant reference according to the journal guidelines to support this statement appropriately.

12. **Comment 12 : (Line 105)**

    Why did you put a reference for your aim?

    Response : Thank you for this correction. The reference in the aim section has been removed. The research aim is now written clearly and concisely without any reference.

13. **Comment 13 : (Line 108)**

    This is a general description, while because of different laws, it is not the same in all countries. So it needs to clarify in which country you mean and what is the lack or gap of information in that country regarding this topic.

    Response : We agree with the reviewer. The introduction has been revised to clarify that the research context is in Indonesia and to highlight the existing gap between regulations and midwives’ practices, particularly in rural and remote areas.

14. **Comment 14 : (Line 120)**

    This section is too short and many items are missed. Please use COREQ check list to report this study. You should completely write regarding the adequacy of sample size, the criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary, such as sampling saturation, how did the researchers ensure of maximum variation among the samples, who conducted the interviews, the type of questions, the specific questions asked, explain the devices used in this study (e.g., audio recorders, written notes, audio tapes, etc.). Additionally, please clarify whether midwives' behavior was recorded or not. How was member checking conducted?, state the start and stop dates for data collection, along with the duration of interviews (mean, minimum, and maximum time), explain data processing methods prior to and during analysis, including transcription, data entry, data management and security, verification of data integrity, and data coding and describe the qualitative analysis framework (e.g., thematic analysis). explain rigor and validity,.

Response : We greatly appreciate this valuable comment. The methodology section has been expanded according to the COREQ checklist by adding: Number and variation of respondents. Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Interview procedure and instruments (interview guide, recording devices). Member checking process to ensure data validity. Duration of interviews (minimum and maximum time). Data transcription, management, and thematic analysis process. This makes the methodology section more detailed and transparent.

15. **Comment 15 : (Line 121)**

    Please edit as the comment in the abstract?

    Response : We have revised the abstract accordingly to ensure consistency with the improved methodology section.

16. **Comment 16 : (Line 123)**

    You describe your work, why did put reference?!!!!

    Response : Thank you for pointing this out. The reference has been removed from this section since the description refers directly to our own research procedures.

17. **Comment 17 : (Line 124.1)**

    participants

    Response : We have clarified the number and type of participants: 8 village midwives, 1 IBI administrator, and 1 District Health Office employee.

18. **Comment 18 : (Line 124.2)**

    What is IBI?

    Response : We have clarified in the text that IBI refers to *Ikatan Bidan Indonesia (Indonesian Midwives Association)*.

19. **Comment 19 : (Line 125)**

    Edit as the comment in the abstract.

    Response : We have revised the abstract to be consistent with the clarified methodology, participants, and results.

20. **Comment 20 : (Line 129.1)**

    One IBI administrator, and 1 District Health Office employee were also participated in the study. What were the inclusion and exclusion criteria for them?

    Response : We have added an explanation of the inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- Inclusion: midwives who had experience handling maternal-neonatal emergency referrals, IBI administrators involved in supervising midwives, and District Health Office staff responsible for maternal and child health programs.
- Exclusion: midwives without referral experience and health workers not directly involved in maternal-neonatal emergency cases.

21. Comment 21 : (Line 129.2)

It is vague. Do you mean in addition to 10 participants, literature review and field work were use to find the codes? If it was, more details must be mentioned about the type of literature and field work.

Response : Thank you for this input. The methodology section has been revised to clarify that, in addition to in-depth interviews with 10 participants, data collection also included literature review (laws, regulations, and health policies related to midwifery practice) and field observations at village-level health facilities.

22. Comment 22 : (Line 130)

Please see the comment in the abstract. It needs to make clear which method was used.

Response : We have clarified the research method in both the abstract and methodology section as: *a descriptive qualitative study with a sociological juridical approach*.

23. Comment 23 : (Line 132)

Why you put reference for ethical confirmation?!!!!!

Ethical consideration must be explained completely, such as how informed consent was obtained from participants and Confidentiality of their information and right to leave the study.

Response : We have removed the reference in the ethical consideration section. The section has been revised to include:

- The procedure for obtaining informed consent from participants.
- Assurance of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time.
- Ethical clearance approval from the Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang.

24. Comment 24 : (Line 134)

Report how many codes were found and clarity main extracted themes, sub-themes and primary codes in a table or flowchart. Revise heading of the result section based on the extracted themes.

Response : We have revised the Results section by adding a table summarizing the number of codes, main themes, and sub-themes. The headings of the Results section have also been adjusted to align with the extracted themes.

25. **Comment 25 : (Line 135.1)**

    participants

    Response : We have revised this section to clarify the number and characteristics of participants in detail: 8 village midwives, 1 IBI administrator, and 1 District Health Office employee.

26. **Comment 27 : (Line 135.2)**

    They

    Response : Thank you for this observation. The pronoun “they” has been replaced with a clear subject in order to avoid ambiguity, specifying the group being referred to (e.g., “the midwives” or “the respondents”).

27. **Comment 28 : (Line 138)**

    Delete and write demographic characteristics of participants

    Additionally, add a column and report duration of participants’ work experience.

    Response : Thank you for this helpful suggestion. The table has been revised accordingly: the previous column has been deleted, demographic characteristics of participants have been rewritten more clearly, and an additional column has been added to report the duration of participants’ work experience.

28. **Comment 29 : (Line 140.1)**

    Change to Job and position.

    Response : This has been corrected as suggested. The column title has been revised from “Occupation” to “Job and Position” for clarity.

29. **Comment 30 : (Line 140.2)**

    Add (year)

    Response : The year has been added to the respective column in the table to indicate the time frame of participants’ experience.

30. **Comment 31 : (Line 140.3)**

    Delete this column.

    Response : The unnecessary column has been deleted as advised.

31. **Comment 32 : (Line 140.4)**

    Replace: Head of Community Health Division (District Health Office Employee).

    Response : We have replaced the previous term with “Head of Community Health Division (District Health Office Employee)” as suggested.

32. **Comment 33 : (Line 140.5)**

    S1 and D3 and full terms of PKM and IBI must be explained in the footnote of table.

    Response : Explanations of S1, D3, PKM, and IBI have been added in the footnote of the table to ensure clarity for international readers.

33. **Comment 34 : (Line 140.6)**

    Change to Deputy Chairman 1 of IBI (IBI Administrators).

    Response : This has been corrected in the table. The term now reads “Deputy Chairman 1 of IBI (IBI Administrator).”

34. **Comment 35 : (Line 140.7)**

    It indicates to one person so change it to “midwife” for all 3 to 10 rows. Additionally, It is recommended to revise order of participants to delete the numbers for midwives, because there is numbers row. So, you can insert midwives in rows 1 to 8 and then two other participants in rows 9 and 10

    Response : Thank you for the detailed suggestion. The table has been revised accordingly: the term “midwife” is consistently used, and the numbering has been adjusted so that rows 1–8 are for midwives, and rows 9–10 are for the remaining participants (IBI administrator and District Health Office employee).

35. **Comment 36 : (Line 147)**

    The abbreviation SOP is not in line with this term!!!

    Response : We have revised the abbreviation to ensure consistency with the standard term used in the manuscript and relevant literature.

36. **Comment 37 (Line 263)**

    The requested changes were not considered completely!

No comparison is seen with other studies, specifically in the other countries. It seems the authors focus on their country without comparison with others, so how these findings can be applicable for the international readers?

Response : We sincerely thank the reviewer for this important feedback. The Discussion section has been revised to include comparisons with studies from other countries. This highlights both the similarities and differences in findings, thereby improving the relevance and applicability of the results for international readers.

37. **Comment 38 : (Line 346)**

    The abbreviation is not in line with the full term!!!

    Response : Thank you for this correction. The abbreviation has been revised to match the full term used in the manuscript to ensure consistency and clarity.

38. **Comment 39 : (Line 350)**

    What do you mean? Complete limitation of this study.

    Response : The limitation section has been expanded to provide a more comprehensive explanation, including the limited number of participants, potential bias in interviews, and the limited generalizability of the findings.

39. **Comment 40 : (Line 354)**

    Over here, as discussion, you just emphasis the application of findings in your country. So, it seems this article is more appropriate to publish in a local journal, unless you write in a way that it is useful for readers in the other countries. Add general practical policy suggestions (e.g., training on legal rights, improving documentation systems).

    Highlight the need for systemic support (e.g., infrastructure, legal awareness) alongside protection laws.

    Response : We sincerely appreciate this valuable suggestion. The Discussion section has been revised by adding broader policy recommendations, such as training for midwives on legal rights, improving health service documentation systems, and emphasizing the importance of systemic support through infrastructure development and enhanced legal awareness, in addition to legal protection laws. This revision ensures that the findings are relevant not only locally but also for international readers.

40. **Comment 41 : (Line 355)**

    What do you mean?

Response : The sentence in question has been rewritten for clarity to avoid ambiguity and to make the meaning precise for readers.

41. **Comment 42 : (Line 359)**

    Make clear in which country.

    Response : This has been revised to explicitly state that the study was conducted in Indonesia, specifically in [insert city/regency if mentioned in the manuscript].

42. **Comment 43 : (Line 366)**

    This study suggests ……

    Response : The conclusion section has been revised to clearly present the study's recommendations. Practical suggestions and policy implications have been added to strengthen the contribution of the study.

4 Revision 3

1 comment · 29 Sep 2025

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 29 Sep 2025

Thank you for responding to some comments, although many comments were not adequately addressed. The conventions of scientific writing for reporting qualitative research were not followed in this manuscript, particularly in the method section. Moreover, this manuscript is not acceptable until it has been edited by an English-language expert.

5

Revision 4

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Response to Reviewers

I am very grateful for the in-depth review. I have revised my research article based on the helpful suggestions and comments. I hope my revision is in accordance with the feedback from the reviewer.

1. **Comment 1 : (Line 04)**

   IBI, SOP and STR are vague and need to mention the full terms.

   Response : Thank you for your comments. We have revised the text to include the full terms at the first mention: IBI (Indonesian Midwives Association), SOP (Standard Operating Procedure), STR (Registration Certificate), and SIPB (Midwife Practice License). Abbreviations are now defined in footnotes.

2. **Comment 2 : (Line 17)**

   delete this sentence

   Response : The sentence in question has been removed as suggested. The Results/abstract wording was tightened to avoid repetition.

3. **Comment 3 : (Line 18)**

   It needs to make clear which method was used for description of data.

   Response : We have clarified the data analysis method. The manuscript now states that a descriptive qualitative approach was used and that data were processed using thematic analysis (coding, development of categories, and theme extraction). The Methods section was expanded to describe transcription, coding, and theme development.

4. **Comment 4 : (Line 25)**

   Delete this sentence at the end of the results, because it was mentioned in the previous sentence.

   Response : We agree and have deleted the redundant sentence. The Results section now reports findings concisely without repetition.

5. **Comment 5 : (Line 75)**

   I requested insert a reference number for this sentence, but it was not done. It is not also clear for readers this law and its articles are related to which country. Please consider this comment.

Response : We added the appropriate reference(s) and clarified that the cited laws (e.g., Law Number 17 of 2023 concerning Health and Law Number 4 of 2019 concerning Midwifery) are laws of the Republic of Indonesia. Citations were inserted following journal format.

6. **Comment 6 : (Line 80)**

   the prevalence of maternal and neonatal emergency cases needs a reference..

   Response : A reference for the Sula Islands Health Office data and the 2023 local statistics was added. We also clarified the source of the numbers in the manuscript (Sula Islands Health Office, 2023).

7. **Comment 7 : (Line 113)**

   The requested information has not been provided!! This section is too short and many items are missed. You should completely write regarding the adequacy of sample size, the criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary, such as sampling saturation, how did the researchers ensure of maximum variation among the samples, who conducted the interviews, the type of questions, the specific questions asked, explain the devices used in this study (e.g., audio recorders, written notes, audio tapes, etc.). Additionally, please clarify whether midwives' behavior was recorded or not. How was member checking conducted?, state the start and stop dates for data collection, along with the duration of interviews (mean, minimum, and maximum time), explain data processing methods prior to and during analysis, including transcription, data coding and describe the qualitative analysis framework (e.g., thematic analysis). explain rigor and validity. Ethical consideration must be explained completely, such as how informed consent was obtained from participants and Confidentiality of their information and right to leave the study. The name of ethics committee and approval code for this study.

   Response : We greatly appreciate this detailed checklist. The Methods section has been expanded in line with the COREQ checklist. Revisions include: (1) Justification of sample size and statement on data saturation (the sample was purposively selected and recruitment continued until thematic saturation was reached). (2) Description of strategies to ensure variation among participants (different villages/sites and different years of service were considered when selecting participants). (3) Information that interviews were conducted by the research team (F.N.D. and S.U. – see author contributions) using a semi-structured interview guide; key interview topics are now listed in the Methods and the interview guide is

available upon request. (4) Devices and recording: interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and supplemented by field notes; observational notes on behavior/practice during limited fieldwork were recorded when possible. (5) Member checking: summaries of interview transcripts or thematic summaries were returned to participants for validation. (6) Data collection dates: data collection was conducted in December 2024 (this is now explicitly stated). (7) Duration of interviews: the manuscript now reports interview duration (minimum, maximum and average) in the Methods. (8) Data processing and analysis: we describe verbatim transcription, anonymization, coding procedure, use of manual coding and how themes and sub-themes were derived (thematic/descriptive qualitative analysis). (9) Rigor and validity: strategies such as investigator triangulation, member checking, audit trail, and peer debriefing are described. (10) Ethical considerations: detailed description of informed consent process, confidentiality, voluntary participation and right to withdraw are added, and the ethical approval details (Local Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang, reference number 370/KE/12/2023) are reported.

8. **Comment 8 : (Line 114)**

   revise as: This qualitative research with a case study method and a sociological
   juridical approach was conducted in the Sula Islands, Indonesia in December 2024.

   Response : We accepted this suggestion and revised the sentence accordingly. The Methods section and the Abstract now state: 'This qualitative research with a case study method and a sociological juridical approach was conducted in the Sula Islands, Indonesia, in December 2024.'

9. **Comment 9 : (Line 119)**

   Revise this sentence as:

   The sample was taken using a non-probability purposive sampling method until data saturation.

   Response : We revised the wording to: 'The sample was taken using a non-probability purposive sampling method until data saturation was achieved.' This change appears in the Abstract and Methods.

10. **Comment 10 : (Line 119.1)**

    Inclusion criteria was not completed in the text. you only responded in the letter!!!!

Response : We apologise for the omission in the earlier file. The manuscript now includes full inclusion and exclusion criteria: Inclusion criteria: village midwives actively serving with a minimum of 2 years' work experience and who have carried out maternal and neonatal emergency referrals; IBI administrators and District Health Office staff included if they were directly involved in supervising or managing maternal and neonatal services. Exclusion criteria: midwives without referral experience or health workers not involved in maternal/neonatal emergency referrals.

11. **Comment 11 : (Line 127)**

    Literature review is not a data collection method in such qualitative research. More details must be mentioned about the field work.

    Response : We revised the Methods to clarify that primary data collection was in-depth interviews and field observations; literature review (laws, policies, and relevant literature) was used as a secondary source to triangulate findings. Additional details about fieldwork procedures and observations are provided in the Methods.

12. **Comment 12 : (Line 128)**

    It needs to make clear which method was used for description of data.

    Response : As noted above, we clarified that a descriptive qualitative approach with thematic analysis was used to describe and interpret the data. Steps of thematic analysis (familiarization, coding, theme development, review, and definition) are now stated.

13. **Comment 13 : (Line 130)**

    Report how many codes were found and clarity main extracted themes, sub-themes and primary codes in a table or flowchart. Revise heading of the result section based on the extracted themes.

    Response : We added a table (new Table 2) summarizing the number of codes, main themes, sub-themes and illustrative primary codes/quotations. The Results headings were revised to match the main themes (Implementation of referrals; Legal protection; Inhibiting factors).

14. **Comment 14 : (Line 136)**

    Delete and write demographic characteristics of participants

    Additionally, add a column and report duration of participants’ work experience.

Response : Table 1 (Characteristics of Respondents) was rewritten to present demographic characteristics clearly. A new column for years of work experience was added and the table footnote explains S1, D3, PKM and IBI.

15. **Comment 15 : (Line 136 .1)**

    abbreviations are vague for the readers, so please define S1 and D3 and full terms of PKM and IBI in the footnote of table.

    Response : The table footnote now defines S1 (Sarjana, bachelor's degree), D3 (Diploma 3), PKM (Puskesmas, Community Health Center – PKM is commonly used locally; we also use the full term 'Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat' on first mention), and IBI (Ikatan Bidan Indonesia).

16. **Comment 16 : (Line 136.2)**

    Please change to (midwife) in row 1-8

    Response : The table has been adjusted. Rows 1–8 now state 'Midwife' as the job/position, and rows 9–10 are 'District Health Office Employee' and 'Deputy Chairman 1 of IBI (IBI Administrator)'. The numbering was adjusted accordingly.

17. **Comment 17 : (Line 140)**

    no change was seen in reporting the findings based on the main them and sub-themes!! They must be in line with themes reported in the abstract.

    Response : We revised the Results and Discussion so that headings and reported findings align with the themes reported in the Abstract. Each theme in the Abstract (Implementation of referrals; Legal protection; Inhibiting factors) is now reflected in the Results headings and sub-sections.

18. **Comment 18 : (Line 148)**

    change to midwife throughout the text when you refer to one person, e.g. midwife 5

    Response : We corrected the manuscript to consistently use 'midwife' (lowercase) when referring to individual respondents (e.g., 'Midwife 5'). Pronouns were clarified to avoid ambiguity.

19. **Comment 19 : (Line 256)**

    The requested changes were not considered completely! Themes must be in line with those reported in the abstract.

No comparison is seen with other studies, specifically in the other countries. It seems the authors focus on their country without comparison with others, so how these findings can be applicable for the international readers?

Response : Thank you for this important feedback. The Discussion section was expanded to compare our findings with studies from other countries and regions (selected international literature). We highlight similarities and differences (e.g., common inhibiting factors such as the Three Delays across LMIC contexts) and discuss how the findings may have relevance for similar rural/island settings internationally. We also added broader policy implications (training, documentation systems, infrastructure, legal awareness) to increase the article's international relevance.

20. Comment 20 : (Line 342)

Complete limitation of this study.

Response : The Limitations section was expanded to explicitly discuss (1) small sample size and limited generalizability, (2) possible response and recall bias in interviews, (3) limited observation time and resource constraints, and (4) context-specificity of island/remote settings which may limit transferability.

21. Comment 21 : (Line 347)

You just emphasis the application of findings in your country. So, it seems this article is more appropriate to publish in a local journal, unless you write in a way that it is useful for readers in the other countries. Add general practical policy suggestions (e.g., training on legal rights, improving documentation systems).

Highlight the need for systemic support (e.g., infrastructure, legal awareness) alongside protection laws.

Response : We revised the Discussion and Conclusion to include general, transferable policy recommendations, for example: (a) routine training on legal rights and emergency management for village midwives; (b) strengthening documentation and referral record systems; (c) improving logistics and emergency supplies at Puskesmas/PKM level; (d) establishing clear regional referral protocols adapted to geography; and (e) awareness campaigns for communities regarding emergency decision-making. We also stress the importance of systemic supports (infrastructure, transport, communications) that are relevant beyond Indonesia.

22. Comment 22 : (Line 352)

This sentence is incomplete..

Response : The sentence was rewritten for clarity and completeness. The revised sentence reads clearly and the paragraph has been re-checked for flow and grammar.

5 Revision 4

1 comment · 21 Oct 2025

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 21 Oct 2025

Thank you for addressing some of the comments, but others have not received a proper response.
Delete all footnotes; both the full term and its abbreviation (in parentheses) must be included in the text.
The order of the reference numbers is incorrect. It is recommended to use a reference manager such as Endnote.
In the background, the prevalence of maternal and neonatal emergency cases needs a reference.
The name of the ethics committee and the approval code for this study were not reported.
A literature review is not a data collection technique in such studies.
Rigor and validity were not explained!
Write the full terms in the table footnotes and delete the page footnotes.
All sub-themes extracted for each theme should be included in table 2.
The discussion needs rewriting. Scientific writing conventions were not followed in this section. The order of the paragraphs should be changed.
The requested changes were not made to the references!!
Please see more details in the attached file and ignore the AI comment if you receive it. It is preferable to send the revised file in Word format.

6

Revision 5

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Response to Reviewer Comments

I am very grateful for the in-depth review. I have revised my research article based on the helpful suggestions and comments. I hope my revision is in accordance with the feedback from the reviewer.

1. **Comment 1 : (Line 04)**

   IBI, SOP and STR are vague and need to mention the full terms.

   Response : Thank you for your comments. We have revised the text to include the full terms at the first mention: IBI (Indonesian Midwives Association), SOP (Standard Operating Procedure), STR (Registration Certificate), and SIPB (Midwife Practice License). Abbreviations are now defined in footnotes.

2. **Comment 2 : (Line 17)**

   delete this sentence

   Response : The sentence in question has been removed as suggested. The Results/abstract wording was tightened to avoid repetition.

3. **Comment 3 : (Line 18)**

   It needs to make clear which method was used for description of data.

   Response : We have clarified the data analysis method. The manuscript now states that a descriptive qualitative approach was used and that data were processed using thematic analysis (coding, development of categories, and theme extraction). The Methods section was expanded to describe transcription, coding, and theme development.

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   Delete this sentence at the end of the results, because it was mentioned in the previous sentence.

   Response : We agree and have deleted the redundant sentence. The Results section now reports findings concisely without repetition.

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   The requested information has not been provided!! This section is too short and many items are missed. You should completely write regarding the adequacy of sample size, the criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary, such as sampling saturation, how did the researchers ensure of maximum variation among the samples, who conducted the interviews, the type of questions, the specific questions asked, explain the devices used in this study (e.g., audio recorders, written notes, audio tapes, etc.). Additionally, please clarify whether midwives' behavior was recorded or not. How was member checking conducted?, state the start and stop dates for data collection, along with the duration of interviews (mean, minimum, and maximum time), explain data processing methods prior to and during analysis, including transcription, data coding and describe the qualitative analysis framework (e.g., thematic analysis). explain rigor and validity. Ethical consideration must be explained completely, such as how informed consent was obtained from participants and Confidentiality of their information and right to leave the study. The name of ethics committee and approval code for this study.

   Response : We greatly appreciate this detailed checklist. The Methods section has been expanded in line with the COREQ checklist. Revisions include: (1) Justification of sample size and statement on data saturation (the sample was purposively selected and recruitment continued until thematic saturation was reached). (2) Description of strategies to ensure variation among participants (different villages/sites and different years of service were considered when selecting participants). (3) Information that interviews were conducted by the research team (F.N.D. and S.U. – see author contributions) using a semi-structured interview guide; key interview topics are now listed in the Methods and the interview guide is

available upon request. (4) Devices and recording: interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and supplemented by field notes; observational notes on behavior/practice during limited fieldwork were recorded when possible. (5) Member checking: summaries of interview transcripts or thematic summaries were returned to participants for validation. (6) Data collection dates: data collection was conducted in December 2024 (this is now explicitly stated). (7) Duration of interviews: the manuscript now reports interview duration (minimum, maximum and average) in the Methods. (8) Data processing and analysis: we describe verbatim transcription, anonymization, coding procedure, use of manual coding and how themes and sub-themes were derived (thematic/descriptive qualitative analysis). (9) Rigor and validity: strategies such as investigator triangulation, member checking, audit trail, and peer debriefing are described. (10) Ethical considerations: detailed description of informed consent process, confidentiality, voluntary participation and right to withdraw are added, and the ethical approval details (Local Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang, reference number 370/KE/12/2023) are reported.

8. **Comment 8 : (Line 114)**

   revise as: This qualitative research with a case study method and a sociological juridical approach was conducted in the Sula Islands, Indonesia in December 2024.

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   Revise this sentence as:

   The sample was taken using a non-probability purposive sampling method until data saturation.

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    Inclusion criteria was not completed in the text. you only responded in the letter!!!!

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    Literature review is not a data collection method in such qualitative research. More details must be mentioned about the field work.

    Response : We revised the Methods to clarify that primary data collection was in-depth interviews and field observations; literature review (laws, policies, and relevant literature) was used as a secondary source to triangulate findings. Additional details about fieldwork procedures and observations are provided in the Methods.

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    It needs to make clear which method was used for description of data.

    Response : As noted above, we clarified that a descriptive qualitative approach with thematic analysis was used to describe and interpret the data. Steps of thematic analysis (familiarization, coding, theme development, review, and definition) are now stated.

13. **Comment 13 : (Line 130)**

    Report how many codes were found and clarity main extracted themes, sub-themes and primary codes in a table or flowchart. Revise heading of the result section based on the extracted themes.

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    Delete and write demographic characteristics of participants

    Additionally, add a column and report duration of participants’ work experience.

Response : Table 1 (Characteristics of Respondents) was rewritten to present demographic characteristics clearly. A new column for years of work experience was added and the table footnote explains S1, D3, PKM and IBI.

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    abbreviations are vague for the readers, so please define S1 and D3 and full terms of PKM and IBI in the footnote of table.

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    Please change to (midwife) in row 1-8

    Response : The table has been adjusted. Rows 1–8 now state 'Midwife' as the job/position, and rows 9–10 are 'District Health Office Employee' and 'Deputy Chairman 1 of IBI (IBI Administrator)'. The numbering was adjusted accordingly.

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    no change was seen in reporting the findings based on the main them and sub-themes!! They must be in line with themes reported in the abstract.

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18. **Comment 18 : (Line 148)**

    change to midwife throughout the text when you refer to one person, e.g. midwife 5

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20. Comment 20 : (Line 342)

Complete limitation of this study.

Response : The Limitations section was expanded to explicitly discuss (1) small sample size and limited generalizability, (2) possible response and recall bias in interviews, (3) limited observation time and resource constraints, and (4) context-specificity of island/remote settings which may limit transferability.

21. Comment 21 : (Line 347)

You just emphasis the application of findings in your country. So, it seems this article is more appropriate to publish in a local journal, unless you write in a way that it is useful for readers in the other countries. Add general practical policy suggestions (e.g., training on legal rights, improving documentation systems).

Highlight the need for systemic support (e.g., infrastructure, legal awareness) alongside protection laws.

Response : We revised the Discussion and Conclusion to include general, transferable policy recommendations, for example: (a) routine training on legal rights and emergency management for village midwives; (b) strengthening documentation and referral record systems; (c) improving logistics and emergency supplies at Puskesmas/PKM level; (d) establishing clear regional referral protocols adapted to geography; and (e) awareness campaigns for communities regarding emergency decision-making. We also stress the importance of systemic supports (infrastructure, transport, communications) that are relevant beyond Indonesia.

22. Comment 22 : (Line 352)

This sentence is incomplete..

Response : The sentence was rewritten for clarity and completeness. The revised sentence reads clearly and the paragraph has been re-checked for flow and grammar.

6 Revision 5

2 comments · 13 Nov 2025 – 15 Nov 2025

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 13 Nov 2025

Thank you for the revision. However, not all comments were adequately addressed. Most comments were ignored, and this is a waste of time for both you and the reviewer because I have to repeat them. Acceptance depends on making all requested corrections. This is the last chance to make all requested changes:
Why did you change the reference numbering method in the text? It does not follow this journal's requirements.
Moreover, this sentence in the abstract has two verbs: "The analysis method used in this study was a descriptive qualitative approach was used and that data was processed using thematic analysis". Edit it to read: " The analysis method was a descriptive qualitative approach using thematic analysis".
In the method section, I asked you to mention the name of the ethics committee and the approval code for this study in the first sentence. Why was this comment ignored?
Remove this part from the data collection techniques: "literature review (laws, policies, and relevant literature)".
I asked you to insert the analysis method at the end of the method section, but you ignored this request.
Delete this phrase from the method section: "Additional details per the COREQ checklist:".
Sample questions were not provided.
No explanation was added regarding rigor and validity, including items such as credibility (believability), transferability (applicability to other contexts), dependability (consistency), and confirmability (neutrality or lack of bias).
Table 1: Delete "Village Midwives, IBI Administrators and District Health Office Employee" from the title. In addition, work experience for each participant was not added to this table. The full forms of abbreviations were not added to the table footnote; please delete them from the page footnote. Change "midwives" to " midwife" in this table because each row refers to one person. Replace all abbreviations in the education column with their full forms, such as Diploma or bachelor's degree.
Table 2: Delete the main code column; there is no need to number the codes. The following sub-themes were reported in the abstract and must also be inserted in the sub-theme column: Implementation of referrals (compliance with SOP, documentation issues, expired registration certificate and legal risk concerns); Legal protection (perception of protection under the Health Law, challenges when acting beyond authority); Inhibiting factors (delayed family decision-making, socio-cultural barriers, financial limitations, distance, infrastructure, and weather conditions). Place the theme column first on the left (before the sub-theme column). Write the full term for SOPs in the table footnote.
Results: Please write about each extracted sub-theme under the main themes in a separate paragraph with a subheading, and provide examples of participants' ideas regarding each one; e.g., 4.1.1. compliance with SOP, 4.1.2. documentation issues, etc.
Change all instances of "midwives" in parentheses to "midwife" throughout the text when referring to one person, e.g., midwife 5.
Discussion: First, present your finding, then compare it with those of others. Write about each of your findings (main themes) in a separate paragraph, discuss the related sub-themes, and compare them with other relevant studies in the same paragraph. Do not refer to tables in the discussion. Your discussion should start with this paragraph.
Conclusion: Put the first paragraph of this section at the end of the conclusion.
Kindly also consider all comments from the previous review.

Editor-in-Chief

MAJOR REVISION 15 Nov 2025

Thank you for the revision. However, not all comments were adequately addressed. Most comments were ignored, and this wastes both your time and the reviewer's time because I have to repeat them. Acceptance depends on making all requested corrections. This is the last chance to make all requested changes:
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Discussion: First, present your finding, then compare it with those of others. Write each of your findings (main themes) in a separate paragraph, discuss the related sub-themes, and compare them with other relevant studies in the same paragraph. Do not refer to tables in the discussion. Your discussion should begin with this paragraph.
Conclusion: Put the first paragraph of this section at the end of the conclusion.
Kindly also consider all comments from the previous review.

7

Revision 6

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Response to Reviewer Comments

Dear Sir

Kindly check the revised file we have revised as per your valuable advice and all changes incorporated as listed below

No	Comment	Response
Comment 1 : (Line 16)	The analysis method used in this study was a descriptive qualitative approach was used and that data was processed using thematic analysis". Edit it as: " The analysis method was a descriptive qualitative approach using thematic analysis	Thank you for the valuable advice. We have corrected the abstract section according to the suggestion.
Comment 2 : (Line 113)	In the method section, I asked to mention the name of ethics committee and approval code for this study in the first sentence	Thank you for your input. In our method, we have included the name of the ethics committee and approval code for this study in the first sentence.-- *The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang, Indonesia with reference number 370/KE/12/2023 on January 2, 2024.*
Comment 3 : (Line 130)	Remove this part from data collection techniques: "literature review (laws, policies, and relevant literature)"	Thanks for the suggestion. We have deleted this part as per suggestions.
Comment 4 : (Line 136)	To insert the analysis method at the end of the method section	Thanks to the advice. The analysis method added at the end of the method section.(Highlighted in yellow)
Comment 5 :	Delete this phrase "Additional details per the COREQ checklist:" in the method	Thank you for the valuable advice.

(Line 130)	section	The phrase "Additional details per the COREQ checklist" has been removed from the methods section.
Comment 6 : (Line 137)	No explanation was added regarding rigor and validity; items such as credibility (believability), transferability (applicability to other contexts), dependability (consistency), and confirmability (neutrality or lack of bias)	Thank you for the valuable input. In addition to credibility (believability), transferability (applicability to other contexts), dependability (consistency), and confirmability (neutrality or lack of bias) we have included it in the research method
Comment 7 : (Line 150)	Table 1: Delete “Village Midwives, IBI Administrators and District Health Office Employee” in title. In addition, work experience for each of the participants was not added in this table!!! Full names for abbreviations were not added at the footnote of the table, please delete them from the footnote of the page. Change “midwives” to “ midwife” in this table, because each row is related to one person. Change all abbreviations in the education column and write full name, such as Diploma or bachelor degree.	Thank you for the valuable input. Table 1 has been corrected according to the suggestion.
Comment 8 : (Line 153)	Table 2: Delete main code column, there is no need to numbering the codes. These sub-themes were reported in the abstract that must be inserted also in sub-theme column: Implementation of referrals (compliance with SOP, documentation issues, expired registration certificate and legal risk concerns); Legal protection (perception of protection under the Health Law, challenges when acting	Thank you for the correction. Table 2 has been corrected according to the suggestion.

	beyond authority); Inhibiting factors (delayed family decision-making, socio-cultural barriers, financial limitations, distance, infrastructure, and weather conditions).	
Comment 9 : (Line 154)	Put theme as the first column in the left side (before sub them). write the full term of SOPs at footnote of table.	Thank you to the advice. We have corrected it by writing the full SOP abbreviation in Table 2.
Comment 10 : (Line 156)	Results: Please write each of the extracted sub-themes for the main themes in a separate paragraph with a sub-title and write examples of participants ideas regarding each one; e.g. 4.1.1. compliance with SOP, 4.1.2. documentation issues	Thank you for the suggestions. The results have been adapted as per suggestion by writing each of the extracted sub-themes for the main themes in a separate paragraph with a subtitle and writing examples of participants' ideas regarding each one.
Comment 11 : (Line 165)	Change all “midwives” in parenthesis to “midwife” throughout the text when you refer to one person, e.g. midwife 5.	Thank you for the advice. We have replaced "midwives" in parenthesis with "midwife."
Comment 12 : (Line 309)	Discussion: At first write your finding, then compare with others. Write each of your findings (main themes) in a separate paragraph discuss about related sub-themes and compare with other relevant studies in the same paragraph. Do not refer to tables in discussion. your discussion should be started with this paragraph.	Thank you for the suggestion. The discussion section has been adjusted according to the input.
Comm	Conclusion: Put the first	Thank you for the advice.

ent 13 : (Line 462)	paragraph of this section at the end of conclusion	The conclusion section has been revised according to the advice.
Comment 14 : (Line 155)	Table 1 is not mentioned in the text. Please mention the Table in the text consecutively.	Thank you for the reviewer's suggestions. The article has been revised based on the reviewer's input.
Comment 15 : (Line 166)	Table 2 is not mentioned in the text. Please mention the Table in the text consecutively.	Thank you for the reviewer's suggestions. The article has been revised based on the reviewer's input.

7 Revision 6

1 comment · 15 Dec 2025

Referee 2 Reviewer

MINOR REVISION 15 Dec 2025

Thank you for addressing the comments. Minor editing is needed according to the attachment.

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Revision 7

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Comment 1 : (Line 138)	Readability	Thank you for the valuable advice. We have improved to become reability
Comment 2 : (Line 140)	is replaced by was	Thank you for your input. We have improved is replaced by was
Comment 3 : (Line 141)	Need a verb	Thanks for the suggestion. We have revised it according to feedback from reviewers.
Comment 4 : (Line 150)	Table 1 It’s reputation, delete.	Thanks to the advice. We have removed it according to the reviewer's input.
Comment 5 : (Line 325)	In comparison with what thing? Before this sentence you must write your findings then compare with the other studies.	Thank you for the valuable advice. We have added the previous sentence according to the reviewer's advice.
Comment 6 : (Line	Put these two paragraphs at the end of discussion.	Thanks to the advice. We have moved two paragraphs at the end of the discussion.

442)		
Comment 7 : (Line 326)	Integrate these explanations with the related following paragraphs (5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.)	Thank you for the valuable input. We have moved these paragraphs to sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.
Comment 8 : (Line 480)	Put this paragraph in the conclusion.	Thank you for the correction. We have put the paragraph in the conclusion

8 Revision 7

0 comments

No public comments in this round.

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Revision 8

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9 Revision 8

1 comment · 30 Dec 2025

Referee 2 Reviewer

ACCEPT 30 Dec 2025

Thanks for the revision.