



Midwifery Education in Practice

Exploring factors that influence students' attitudes toward midwifery in Jordan: Measuring psychometric properties of a newly developed tool



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Midwifery
Students
Motivation
De-motivation
Jordan

ABSTRACT

Students' professional choice to proceed in midwifery is influenced by many factors. This study validated an instrument developed to assess students' attitudes toward midwifery in Jordan. It also addressed the motivating and de-motivating factors influencing students' decision concerning joining and continuing in midwifery. A descriptive, cross-section study was conducted on a convenience sample of 374 midwifery students representing private, governmental, and military midwifery colleges. The researchers developed the study questionnaire through conducting a comprehensive literature review, organizing common themes and consulting experts. Exploratory factor analysis and tests of normality and reliability, including Cronbach's Alpha and Bartlett's test, were used in the analysis. The result was three factors were explained by 23 items. They were as follows: professional knowledge, professional motivation factors, and de-motivating professional factors. The first 8 items explained nearly 61% of the variance. Cronbach's Alpha was 0.834 with a range of 0.835–0.839. The Spearman-Brown coefficient was 0.81 and Guttman Split-Half coefficient was 0.83. Issues of reliability and validity require a repetitive process of testing under a range of circumstances to ensure both stability and representation of the construct. However, addressing factors found to have impact of students' decisions is crucial to improve retention of high quality students.

1. Introduction

The midwives' role is key to maternal care during all childbearing stages. They provide comprehensive care focusing on the health of the woman and her newborn infant. The common philosophy of this care depends heavily on the relationship between the woman and the midwife, and the role of midwives is defined during their interaction (Halldorsdottir and Kartsdottir, 2011). As midwifery students commence their clinical practice and engage in the caring process, their attitude toward the profession evolves. Several factors influence this attitude including family, or a role model in the community, friends and peers, counselors at high school, media, and the community (McInnes and McIntosh, 2012). In Jordan, we could not locate any study exploring these factors despite the importance of the topic to the profession. There are also a few studies found in international literature exploring the motivational and the de-motivational factors influencing students choosing and staying in midwifery. However, there were no

research instruments investigating this topic in published studies in the region. Because little is known about the topic and no research instrument in the Middle East using the Arabic language, this study was designed to validate a tool that explored factors influencing student's attitudes toward midwifery in Jordan.

2. Midwifery in Jordan

Midwife education in Jordan is available from the Ministry of Health in a 27-month diploma program in two colleges, one under the supervision of the Military Health Service, and another one under the supervision of Al Balqa University. There is only a single university based four-year-program offering a baccalaureate degree in Midwifery, this is at Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST). Accepting only females, students usually join the program after passing the Tawjihi (i.e., High School), science stream (that includes mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology courses) with a minimal average

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2018.02.005>

Received 12 April 2017; Received in revised form 30 January 2018; Accepted 7 February 2018
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of 65%. The common practice in Jordan is to join the undergraduate program once the student finishes high school. Therefore, students' age when joining the program is usually between 17 and 19 years, and age is not one of these criteria.

Licensing is awarded by the Jordanian Nursing and Midwifery Council. The total number of midwives in Jordan by the end of 2015 was estimated to be 1923 working in different areas. There remains a need for more midwives to join the profession, especially in the remote and rural areas where the midwives to population ratio falls below the national average. The majority of midwives have a diploma degree ($n = 1557$, 81% of the total number of midwives), and only 366 are baccalaureate-prepared midwives (MOH, 2016). The average ratio of midwives per population is 2.02/10,000, working mainly at the Ministry of Health ($n = 1399$, 72.8%) (MOH, 2016).

3. Background

Midwifery is a feminine profession that is ranked as one of the most preferable choices of female students where feminist philosophy underpins the profession (Carolan, 2013; Cullen et al., 2016). The decision to become a midwife might begin during childhood, which would then develop driven by the individual's beliefs, values, and thoughts with the presence of role models (Carolan and Kruger, 2011). The family usually influences how the personalities of students develop followed by the community, and peers (Cullen et al., 2016). However, the decision to choose midwifery as a career is linked to other factors, either motivating or de-motivating.

Midwifery is a profession that treats its mothers as part of the team throughout pregnancy, caring for the woman in labor in a home-like environment (Dencker et al., 2017). Therefore, most motivating factors could relate to the relationship created and nurtured during the period of care and after discharge. As reported by Cullen et al. (2016), who studied the reasons young students decided to study midwifery and enrolled in an Australian Bachelor of Midwifery program, reported that among the influential motivational factors were that students were exposed to storytelling and shared positive experiences of childbirth.

Among the motivating factors are the empowerment of childbearing women to give birth (Halldorsdottir and Kartsdottir, 2011; Carolan, 2013), with feelings of happiness and joy when dealing with babies, feeling strong, unique, autonomous and professionally separated from nursing, as well as other health professions, advocating women's rights, practicing different roles such as a community midwife at birthing centers, and being respected as a role model coming from the practice field (Özcan et al., 2012; Church and Ekberg, 2013). Carolan and Kruger (2011) investigated the motivations and beliefs of 32 newly admitted midwifery students to a Bachelor's program in Australia. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the students' reflective essays, which influenced the decision to become a midwife, including a sense of altruism (willingness to help others), a fascination with pregnancy, and a view of midwifery as a personally satisfying career. Students, who had managed their own birthing situation and described it as empowering, reported willingness to facilitate this experience for other pregnant women (Carolan and Kruger, 2011).

Other motivating factors include availability of career counselors at high schools, health professionals advice from friends and relatives, and the financial reward (Carolan, 2013). Researchers like Karaoğlu et al. (2007) and Warmelink et al. (2017) reported that de-motivating factors could be: low payment, working on evening or night shifts, long working hours, employment and liability concerns, midwife's health risks from dealing with body fluids, career development, negative public image portrayed by media, and no recognition from the community. Schölmerich et al. (2014) suggested that lack of recognition outside the midwifery profession was a key de-motivating factor among midwives, which could influence how students shape their attitudes toward the profession and might even consider leaving the profession early in their career.

Similarly, student experience while studying is important considering that they formulate their attitudes during this period, and would stay or leave the program (Green and Baird, 2009). McKenna et al. (2013) suggested that midwifery students' preceptors had a significant role in empowering students who had enrolled in the midwifery program, by working with them, encouraging them, showing interest, and providing support. There are different studies reporting factors that influence midwifery students' choice and intentions regarding the profession. However, the literature addressing this topic in Jordan is rare, and the researchers could not locate instruments measuring these factors in the Middle East. Therefore, the conduct of this study to develop and validate an instrument addressing factors that influence midwifery students' attitude toward the profession is reasonable.

4. Methods

4.1. Design

A descriptive, cross-sectional, quantitative research design was used in this study. Data collection was performed between December 2014 and January 2016.

4.2. Sample

Midwifery students had already enrolled in their study at the time of data collection. No year or course limitations were indicated so that all students could participate. A convenience sample of 374 midwifery students representing private, governmental, and military midwifery colleges participated in this study. After obtaining necessary approvals from each institute, the researchers approached candidates in their colleges (e.g., lecture rooms, library, and laboratories) and explained the purpose and the requirements of this study. Students consented to participate by taking a copy of the study questionnaire, and were instructed to complete the questionnaire, and return it when finished, into a locked box at the college.

4.3. Ethical considerations

The institutional review board of the Ministry of Health and the Royal Medical Services in Jordan approved this study. Participation was voluntary and the questionnaire was anonymous as the required data were non-identifying, treated confidentially, and used only for research purpose. The researchers assured students that participation was entirely their choice and they could withdraw or choose not to participate freely without it having any impact on them.

4.4. Statistical analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS 20 (SPSS@IBM). Central tendency tests including mean, median, standard deviation, were measured in this study. Tests of normality adopted in this study included Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness of fit statistic. Exploratory factor analysis using an axial principal factoring with direct oblimin rotation was used on the 36 items of the instrument (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Item loadings of greater than 0.50 were used as the cut-off point for significant loading on the factor (Field, 2000; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, in addition to other reliability tests, such as Guttman Split-Half.

4.5. Instrument development

The first step in developing the instrument was a comprehensive review of literature that examined how midwifery students perceived the profession. A search for surveys developed for the same purpose in this study was conducted in electronic databases (Goodwin, 2002). This

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