

CLINICAL RESEARCH / KLİNİK ARAŞTIRMA

The Identification of the Perceptions of Final-Year Midwifery Students on The Profession of Midwifery

Ebelik Son Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Meslek Algılarının Belirlenmesi

 Ayla Ergin¹  Resmiye Kaya Odabaş²  Gözde Demir³

¹Prof. Dr., Kocaeli University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Midwifery Department, Kocaeli, Türkiye

²Research Assistant, Kocaeli University Faculty of Health Sciences, Midwifery Department, Kocaeli, Türkiye

³Midwifery, Sağlık Bilimleri University Kocaeli Derince Training and Research Hospital, Kocaeli, Türkiye.

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Abstract

Background: Thoughts and perceptions of midwifery students, who are the midwives of the future, about the profession of midwifery are quite important.

Objective: This study aims to identify the perceptions of final-year midwifery students on the profession of midwifery.

Methods: This analytical cross-sectional study was conducted from December 2021 to January 2022. The population was final-year undergraduate midwifery students enrolled in 11 public universities selected by lot in Turkey, whilst the sample comprised final-year midwifery students selected from this population (n=330). The data were collected online using a Personal Information Form and the Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale. In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, the Mann-Whitney U test, and the Kruskal-Wallis H test were used.

Results: The participants had a mean age of 22.06±2.02 years. Of all participants, 93.3% stated that they viewed the profession of midwifery positively. Moreover, the mean Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale score of the participants was 75.58±5.14, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .89. There was no statistically significant difference in the mean Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale scores of the participants based on their age, marital status, family type, economic status, employment status, maternal education level and employment status, paternal education level and employment status (p>.05), Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale scores of those who viewed the profession positively (76.03±4.58) were statistically higher than those who thought negatively (69.18±7.85) (p<.05).

Conclusion: In this context, it was discerned that the final-year midwifery students had high levels of positive perceptions about the profession.

Keywords: Midwifery, Perception of the Profession, Professionalism, Student

Correspondence: Ayla ERGİN, Prof. Dr., Kocaeli University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Midwifery Department, Kocaeli, Türkiye. **Email:** ergina@kocaeli.edu.tr, **Telefon:** +90 262 303 4701.

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Öz

Giriş: Geleceğin ebe olmaya aday öğrencilerinin mesleğe yönelik düşünceleri ve meslek algıları oldukça önemlidir.

Amaç: Bu araştırma, ebelik son sınıf öğrencilerinin ebelik mesleğine ilişkin algılarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem: Araştırma analitik-kesitsel tipte olup, Aralık 2021-Ocak 2022 tarihleri arasında yapıldı. Araştırma evrenini, devlet üniversitelerinde öğrenim gören lisans son sınıf ebelik öğrencileri, örnekleme ise kura ile belirlenen bu üniversitelerde öğrenim gören (n=330) ebelik son sınıf öğrencileri oluşturdu. Araştırmanın verileri "Tanıtıcı Bilgi Formu ve Ebelik Meslek Algısı Ölçeği" ile çevrimiçi ortamda toplandı. Verilerin analizinde; tanımlayıcı istatistikler, Mann Whitney U Testi ve Kruskal Wallis Testleri kullanıldı.

Bulgular: Çalışmamıza katılan öğrencilerin yaş ortalaması 22.06 ± 2.02 idi. Öğrencilerin % 93.3'ü mesleğe olumlu baktıklarını ifade etti. Öğrencilerin Ebelik Meslek Algısı Ölçeği puan ortalamasının 75.58 ± 5.14 ve Cronbach alfa katsayısının ise .89 olduğu belirlendi. Ölçek puan ortalaması ile yaş, medeni durum, aile tipi, ekonomik durum, çalışma durumu, anne eğitim ve çalışma durumu, babanın eğitimi ve çalışma durumu gibi değişkenler arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlılık saptanmazken ($p > .05$), mesleğe olumlu bakanların (76.03 ± 4.58) Ebelik Mesleki Algı Ölçeği puanları, olumsuz düşünenlerden (69.18 ± 7.85) istatistiksel olarak daha yüksek bulundu ($p < .05$).

Sonuç: Ebelik son sınıf öğrencilerinin mesleki algı düzeylerinin yüksek düzeyde olduğu belirlendi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ebelik, Meslek Algısı, Profesyonellik, Öğrenci

INTRODUCTION

Professions play an effective role in the satisfaction of the needs of societies in a variety of areas. A profession is defined as an occupation that has certain legal and ethical rules, relies on the possession of certain knowledge and skills, and requires special training. Being a member of a profession lets members of the profession gain autonomy, social acceptance, prestige, power, and authority. To be deemed as a profession, occupations need to meet certain criteria. A profession that meets these criteria is the entire set of activities that are performed to produce goods and services beneficial to human beings and earn money in exchange for this production, are conducted with a certain level of training, are based on systematic knowledge and skills, and have rules that are designated by society and cover ethical values (Demirbaş & Kaya, 2018; Peksoy,

Şahin, Demirhan & Kaplan, 2020).

The profession of midwifery, which can be traced back to the earliest humans and is a profession that has had a prestigious place in all societies throughout history, is a professional health discipline that develops with scientific and technological advancements and covers scientific, artistic, and ethical values (Demirbaş & Kaya, 2018, Ergin, Özcan, Acar, Ersoy & Karahan, 2013, Dereli Yılmaz & Aksoy Erkal, 2019). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the midwife as a person trained to provide the necessary care and advice during pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period, conduct normal deliveries on their own responsibility, provide care for the newborn, and offer family planning consultancy (WHO, 2018). Continuous change and development are put in place in midwifery education with a goal to raise midwifery profes-

sionals who will fulfill all responsibilities. While midwifery used to be learned through observation and practice, it continues to change and develop as an evidence-based science and profession covering ethical issues today (Dereli Yılmaz & Erkal Aksoy, 2019).

An individual's feelings, attitudes, behaviors, and world views toward a profession are defined as their "professional perceptions". The perception of a profession covers the concepts of "professional qualifications" and "professional status". The midwife's professional perception is an expression of what members of the profession of midwifery and society think about midwifery. Perceptions of midwives, who have crucial roles in healthcare, about their profession are also highly important. The views and perceptions of midwives about their profession can affect their motivation and professional performance (Bilgin & Doğan Merih, 2021). Whether society and individuals have positive thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions toward a profession is also of importance to a person's professional choices, adaptation to their profession, and attainment of high productivity (Eşer, Khorshid & Denat, 2008). Individuals choosing their professions willingly have positive perceptions of their professions, and hence, they feel happier and more comfortable in their professional lives. On the other hand, individuals choosing their professions unwillingly have negative perceptions of their professions, and they feel unhappy (Nalçacı & Sökmen, 2016). Numerous factors such as the characteristics of an individual, members of the individual's family, the structure of society, the profession, the presence of a harmonious relationship between the individual and the profession, and the status of the profession in society play a key role in the development of the individual's perception of that profession (Arıkan Saltık, Avcı & Kaya, 2016).

Studies performed on the profession of midwifery across the world and in Turkey have usually focused on the job satisfaction and professional attitudes of midwives. In Turkey, with a goal to identify the perceptions of midwives towards the profession of midwifery, only one study, which included scale development, was performed (Bilgin & Doğan Merih, 2021). To gain professionalism during undergraduate education, students need to develop positive thoughts regarding their profession, as well as gaining perceptual awareness about the profession. Thoughts and professional perceptions of midwifery students, who are midwives of the future, about midwifery are quite important for the satisfaction of this need. The feelings, thoughts, and education of students about this profession and its practices are quite effective in the development of their perceptions toward the profession, and hence, having a negative perception of the profession will lead students to work unwillingly in the profession, experience burnout sooner, and want to quit the profession in the future (Slatyer, Coventry, Twigg & Davis, 2020). Furthermore, the identification of the perceptions and future expectations of midwifery students about the profession of midwifery is expected to guide the way for the enhancement of their satisfaction with the profession, the improvement of healthcare quality, and solutions to professional problems. In the relevant literature, there is a limited number of studies about the identification of professional perceptions in midwifery students who set out to attain professionalism (Ay, Keçe, İnci, Alkan & Acar, 2018; Akça, Gökyıldız Sürücü, Akbaş, & Şenoğlu, 2019).

Aim

This study aimed to evaluate the professional perceptions of final-year midwifery students with a scale well-suited to Turkish culture and

make a contribution to the relevant literature. In this respect, this study has a unique aspect in terms of filling a gap in the literature.

Research Question

What are the levels of the positive and negative professional perceptions of final-year midwifery students?

METHODS

The type of the Research

This study used a cross-sectional design. The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) Checklist was used in preparing this paper (Karaçam et al., 2014).

The Place of the Research

The study was conducted online in Turkey between December 2021 and January 2022.

Universe/Sample of the Research

Regarding scale studies, it is put forward that the sample size should be at least 10 times as large as the number of items in the scale (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 2006). Costello and Osborne (2005) conducted simulations in the case where the sample size was 10 times as large as the number of items of the scale and stated that exploratory factor analyses produced erroneous results. On the other hand, Kline (2016) asserted that having a sample size 20 times as large as the number of items would produce reliable results. Accordingly, to calculate the sample size required for this study, the number of items in the scale was multiplied by 20 (16x20), and it was found that at least 320 participants needed to be included in the sample.

The population of the study consisted of final-year midwifery students enrolled in public universities in Turkey. In Turkey, 41 public uni-

versities offer undergraduate-level midwifery education (the Council of Higher Education of Turkey, 2021). In this framework, the names of 41 public universities with undergraduate-level midwifery departments were included in lots to be drawn for the selection of universities whose students would take part in the study. The total numbers of final-year midwifery students at universities selected by lot were learned from each department of midwifery. Considering that there could be data losses, and not every invited person would agree to participate in the study, lots were drawn until at least two times the targeted sample size was achieved, and 667 students were invited to participate in the study. According to the results of drawing lots, the sample of the study consisted of 330 final-year midwifery students at 11 universities, which were selected by lot (n=330). A pilot implementation was carried out at a selected university. Because no change was made in the data collection forms after the pilot implementation, the data collected from the participants of the pilot implementation were also included in the analyses, which resulted in a total population size of 766. The study was completed with a total of 330 participants (n = 330). Students from universities determined by lottery were selected by simple random sampling method.

Students who were final-year students of undergraduate-level midwifery departments during the study period, used smartphones, had internet access, and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study were included. Not filling in the data collection form completely was the exclusion criterion.

Data Collection Instrument- Validity and Reliability Information

The data were collected by using a Personal Information Form and the Midwifery Vocational

Perception Scale.

Personal Information Form: This form was created by the researchers as per the review of the relevant literature (Ay et al., 2018; Akça et al., 2019; Bilgin & Doğan Merih, 2021). The form included a total of 13 questions about the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants.

Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale (MVPS): MVPS, which was developed by Bilgin and Doğan Merih (2021), contains 16 items. It is a five-point Likert-type scale (1: I do not agree at all, 2: I disagree, 3: I am in between, 4: I agree, 5: I strongly agree). MVPS has three factors, namely Role Perception (Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), Professionalism Perception (Items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), and Duty-Responsibility Perception (Items 13, 14, 15, 16).

None of the items of MVPS is inversely scored, and the minimum and maximum scores to be obtained from MVPS are 16 and 80. Higher MVPS scores indicate more positive professional perceptions and views, whereas lower MVPS scores refer to more negative professional perceptions and views. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scale were reported as .86, .80, .76, and .72 successively for the overall MVPS, the Role Perception dimension, the Professionalism Perception dimension, and the Duty-Responsibility Perception dimension (Bilgin & Doğan Merih, 2021). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were calculated as .896 for the overall scale, .802 for its Role Perception dimension, .761 for its Professionalism Perception dimension, and .694 for its Duty-Responsibility Perception dimension.

To evaluate the comprehensibility and applicability of the Personal Information Form, a preliminary study was performed with 25 students, and since no change was made in the form in

this pilot study, the data of the participants of the pilot implementation were included in the main analyses.

Before the research was conducted, permission to perform the study was obtained from each university whose students were included in the sample. The data collection form was created by using Google Forms, and students and relevant undergraduate-level midwifery departments were informed about the study with announcements. Final-year undergraduate midwifery students were asked to fill in the online data collection form. The contacted departments of midwifery sent the online data collection form to their students by using a variety of platforms. The introductory part of the online data collection form included an informed consent form that explained the objective of the study at the beginning and included a box, in the end, to be clicked by the student to provide consent to participate. The online form was organized in a manner to ensure that it could be accessed solely by the researcher once the form was submitted by the participant. Identifying information was not collected from the participants.

Evaluation of the Data

In the statistical analysis of the collected data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 was used. As descriptive statistics, means, standard deviations, medians, and minimum and maximum values were calculated for the continuous variables, and frequencies and percentages were used for the categorical variables. Besides, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized to evaluate whether the data were normally distributed. As the data were non-normally distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test were used in the analyses. Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated for MVPS to

test its reliability in the sample of this study. In all analyses, the level of statistical significance was accepted as a p-value below .05 ($p < .05$).

Variables of the Research

The dependent variable of the study was selected as the total score of the Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale, which was adapted to Turkish. The independent variables of the study consisted of the sociodemographic and profession-related characteristics of final-year midwifery students, including their age, marital status, family type, economic status, employment status, university of enrolment, reasons for choosing the profession of midwifery, and the education statuses, employment statuses, and occupations of their parents.

Ethical Aspect of the Research

Before conducting the study and starting to collect data, ethical approval was obtained from the Non-Invasive Clinical Research Ethics Committee of a university (No. E-21447663-302.08.01-147426). Additionally, permission to conduct the study was received from the rectorate of each university included in the study. Next, the contacted students were informed about the research process and asked to consent to participate. Permission to use MVPS in this study was received via e-mail from the researchers who developed the scale. During the conduct of this study, no material or immaterial harm was inflicted upon the participants, and all procedures were carried out in compliance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

RESULTS

The distributions of the participants at the universities that were included are given in Table 1.

It was discerned that the participants had a mean age of 22.06 ± 2.02 years (min: 20, max: 40), whi-

le 96.7% of the participants were single, 86.7% lived in a nuclear family, 81.8% perceived their economic status as medium-level, and only 6.1% had a job (Table 2).

Table 1. Distributions of The Participants at the Included Universities (n=330)

Characteristics	n	%
Universities included in the study		
Kocaeli University	50	15.2
Atatürk University	39	11.8
Amasya University	36	10.9
Sakarya University	32	9.7
Kastamonu University	31	9.4
Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	29	8.8
Selçuk University	25	7.6
İnönü University	23	7.0
Gaziantep University	23	7.0
Çukurova University	22	6.7
Fırat University	20	6.1

Table 3 displays the data about the family characteristics of the participants. It was determined that the mothers of 48.8% of the participants and the fathers of 34.2% were elementary school graduates, 3.9% of the participants had lost at least one of their parents, the mothers of 20% and the fathers of 92.4% were working, the occupation of the mothers of the participants was mostly laborer (n=65), the occupation of their fathers was mostly laborer (n=97), and the number of those whose fathers were retired was close to the number of participants with laborer fathers (n=94) (Table 3).

Table 2. Descriptive Characteristics of The Participants (n=330)

Characteristics	n	%
Age Mean±SD* (years (min-max)): 22.06±2.02 (20-40)		
20-21 years	144	43.6
22-23 years	171	51.8
24 years or above	15	4.6
Marital status		
Single	319	96.7
Married	11	3.3
Family type		
Nuclear family	286	86.7
Extended family	44	13.3
Perceived economic status		
High level (income above expenses)	27	8.2
Medium level (income equaling expenses)	270	81.8
Low level (income below expenses)	33	10.0
Employment status		
Working	20	6.1
Not working	310	93.9

* Standard deviation

Upon the review of the views of the participants about the profession of midwifery and their reasons for choosing midwifery, it was found that 308 participants (93.3%) viewed the profession positively and chose the profession for reasons such as the possibility of finding a job easily (27.7%), liking the profession (20.7%), obtaining a matriculation exam score just high enough to enter the undergraduate department of midwifery (18.3%), and enjoying helping people (18.2%) (Table 4).

The mean total MVPS score of the participants and their mean scores in the MVPS dimensions of Role Perception, Professionalism Perception, and Duty-Responsibility Perception were successively 75.58±5.14 (min: 49.0, max: 80.0) and 28.52±2.04 (min: 19.0, max: 30.0), 28.19±2.18 (min: 18.0, max: 30.0), and 18.86±1.52 (min: 12.0, max: 20.0). The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were calculated as .896 for the overall scale, .802 for its

Table 3. Descriptive Characteristics of The Families of The Participants (n=330)

Characteristics	n	%
Mother's education level		
Literate with no formal degree	54	16.4
Elementary school	161	48.8
Middle school	61	18.5
High school	43	13.0
Bachelor's or master's degree	11	3.3
Father's education level		
Literate with no formal degree	18	5.5
Elementary school	113	34.2
Middle school	74	22.4
High school	91	27.6
Bachelor's or master's degree	34	10.3
Parents alive/deceased (n=13)		
Participant's mother deceased	1	7.7
Participant's father deceased	12	92.3
Mother's employment status (n=329)		
Working	65	20.0
Not working	264	80.0
Mother's occupation (n=65)		
Laborer	34	52.3
Retired	11	16.9
Private sector	8	12.4
Small business owner	6	9.2
Civil servant	5	7.6
Farmer	1	1.6
Father's employment status (n=318)		
Working	294	92.4
Not working	24	7.6
Father's occupation (n=294)		
Laborer	97	32.9
Retired	94	31.9
Small business owner	44	14.9
Civil servant	30	10.2
Farmer	8	2.8
Self-employed	8	2.8

Role Perception dimension, .761 for its Professionalism Perception dimension, and .694 for its Duty-Responsibility Perception dimension (Table 5).

Table 4. Views of the Participants About Midwifery and Their Reasons for Choosing Midwifery

Characteristics	n	%
View about the profession of midwifery (n=330)		
Positive	308	93.3
Negative	22	6.7
Reason for choosing the profession of midwifery (n=635)*		
The possibility of finding a job easily	176	27.7
Liking the profession	131	20.7
Obtaining a matriculation exam score just high enough to enter the undergraduate department of midwifery	116	18.3
Enjoying helping people	115	18.2
Receiving recommendations in favor of the profession	57	8.9
Economic opportunities offered by the profession	30	4.9
Being urged by the family	5	0.7
Others	5	0.7

* Multiple response options were allowed.

Table 5. Mean Total MVPS and MVPS Dimension Scores of The Participants

MVPS & Its Dimensions	Number of Items	Mean±SD*	Median (Min-Max)	Cronbach's alpha Coefficient
Factor 1. Role Perception	6	28.52±2.04	30.00 (19.0-30.0)	.802
Factor 2. Professionalism Perception	6	28.19±2.18	29.00 (18.0-30.0)	.761
Factor 3. Duty-Responsibility Perception	4	18.86±1.52	20.00 (12.0-20.0)	.694
Overall MVPS	16	75.58±5.14	78.00 (49.0-80.0)	.896

* Standard deviation

According to the results of the comparisons of the MVPS scores of the participants based on certain variables, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean MVPS scores of the participants solely based on their viewpoints about the profession of midwifery. Accordingly, Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale scores of those who viewed the profession positively (76.03±4.58) were statistically higher than those who thought negatively (69.18±7.85) ($p<.05$).

Table 6. Mean MVPS Scores of The Participants Certain Variables

Characteristics	Mean±SD*	Test value and significance
Age		
20-21 years	75.50±5.66	KW=.370 p=.831
22-23 years	75.62±4.68	
24 years or above	75.80±5.33	
Marital status		
Single	75.57±5.73	U=1,667.50 p=.777
Married	75.63±5.13	
Family type		
Nuclear family	75.68±5.21	U=5,447.00 p=.145
Extended family	74.90±4.71	
Perceived economic status		
High level (income above expenses)	76.72±4.25	KW=1.949 p=.377
Medium level (income equaling expenses)	75.48±5.26	
Low level (income below expenses)	76.72±4.25	
Employment status		
Working	75.35±7.66	U=3,248.50 p=.715
Not working	75.66±4.95	
Maternal education level		
Literate with no formal degree	76.03±4.53	KW=0.815 p=.936
Elementary school	74.42±5.15	
Middle school	75.95±4.93	
High school	75.20±6.22	
Bachelor's or master's degree	75.00±5.05	
Paternal education level		
Literate with no formal degree	75.33±5.15	KW=5.101 p=.277
Elementary school	75.00±5.45	
Middle school	76.28±5.08	
High school	75.35±4.91	
Bachelor's or master's degree	76.70±4.77	
Maternal employment status (n=329)		
Working	75.76±4.83	U=8,801.00 p=.744
Not working	75.53±5.24	
Paternal employment status (n=318)		
Working	75.71±5.15	U=4,097.00 p=.182
Not working	74.33±5.56	
View about the profession of midwifery		
Positive	76.03±4.58	U=1,398.50 p<.001
Negative	69.18±7.85	

* Standard deviation; KW: Kruskal Wallis Test; U: Mann Whitney U Test

There was no statistically significant difference in the mean Midwifery Vocational Perception Scale scores of the participants based on their

age, marital status, family type, economic status, employment status, maternal education level and employment status, paternal education level and employment status ($p > .05$). (Table 6).

DISCUSSION

In this study, it was identified that the final-year midwifery students had high levels of positive professional perceptions.

In the relevant literature, it has been asserted that numerous factors such as individual, familial, and societal characteristics, features of the profession, the presence of a harmonious relationship between the individual and the profession, and the status of the profession in society affect the perception of the profession (Arıkan Saltık et al., 2016, Nalçacı & Sökmen, 2016). Moreover, in the study performed by Tadesse et al. (2020) with preparatory high school students, it was emphasized that the more positive perceptions the students had about the profession of midwifery, the more likely they were to be interested in the profession. Therefore, analyzing the perceptions of midwifery students regarding the profession of midwifery and associated factors is quite important in terms of its likely contribution to the development of the individual and societal perception of the profession and the enhancement of healthcare quality.

To enhance the professionalism of a midwife, first of all, the midwife's perception of the profession should be identified (Saydam Karaca, 2015; Demirbaş & Kaya, 2018). The perception of a profession which is built up in the early years of school alongside the student's desire to develop constantly in the profession, as well as their embracement of the profession, continues throughout their lifetime. Therefore, it is important that students have positive viewpoints about their profession in the early years, their percep-

tual awareness about the profession is identified, and they succeed in gaining this awareness (Ertekin et al., 2013; Uğurlu & Karahan, 2020). Considering that the maximum score to be obtained from MVPS is 80.0, it may be stated that the participants of our study had highly positive professional perceptions. Departing from this point, our study had promising findings for the development of professionalism in the profession of midwifery. It should also be borne in mind that professionalism is important to ensure that the profession of midwifery can reach its high targets.

Bilgin and Doğan Merih (2021) developed MVPS and found that this scale had validity and reliability for application in Turkish society. In the study performed by Bilgin and Doğan Merih (2021) with midwives, it was stated that MVPS had three factors, namely Role Perception, Professionalism Perception, and Duty-Responsibility Perception, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for these three factors were reported consecutively as .80, 0.76, and .72. In the same study, it was found that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .86 for the overall MVPS, the minimum and maximum scores to be obtained from the overall MVPS were 16 and 80 (Bilgin & Doğan Merih, 2021). In a similar vein, in our study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the MVPS dimensions of Role Perception, Professionalism Perception, and Duty-Responsibility Perception were identified respectively as 0.80, 0.76, and .69. In this context, it was discerned that while the midwifery students who were included in our study had role and professionalism perceptions similar to midwives who were their future co-workers, their duty and responsibility perceptions were slightly less positive than those of midwives as expected, since the midwifery students had not started their midwifery careers yet. Again, in our study, the Cronbach's alpha

coefficient of the overall scale was 0.89, and the mean MVPS score of the participants was 75.58 ± 5.14 (min: 49.0, max: 80.0) (Table 4). All these results of our study showed that MVPS is a measurement tool that has validity and reliability for application to midwifery students.

Yılmaz et al. (2014) put forward that individuals who chose their professions willingly and voluntarily perceived their professions positively, and hence, they would feel more comfortable and happier in their professional lives. In the study conducted by Atasoy and Ermin (2016) to assess the viewpoints of nursing and midwifery students about their professions, the majority of the participants (66.7%) asserted that their perceptions of the profession were shaped in the positive direction throughout the education that they had (Atasoy, 2016). In the study performed by Ay et al. (2018) with midwifery students, it was highlighted that choosing the profession willingly had a positive effect on the development of positive thoughts about the profession. In the study conducted by Çakalöz and Çoban (2019) with master's students in the field of midwifery, the participants stated that midwifery is perceived as a difficult profession by society, and they referred to the concept of professionalism as being in the process of learning and education constantly, being open to development, using evidence-based practices, making decisions independently, behaving ethically, showing empathy, having a holistic approach, and enjoying the profession (Çakalöz & Çoban, 2019). These results have suggested that individuals choosing their professions willingly had more positive perceptions of their professions. A positive viewpoint developed by a midwife, who is a professional member of the healthcare team, about the profession of midwifery during the education process affects the midwife's perception of the profession positively. The perception developing particularly

at the education stage has effects on the development of the career plans of individuals and the composition of their plans for the future. The perception of the profession that is built up in school years is also a factor that is effective in the development of the scientific aspect of the profession and its use in practice by the individual. In our study, no statistically significant difference was found in the mean MVPS scores of the participants as per their age, marital status, family type, economic status, employment status, maternal education level, maternal employment status, paternal education level, paternal employment status ($p > 0.05$). On the other hand, the participants who viewed the profession of midwifery positively had higher levels of positive perceptions regarding the profession of midwifery than those viewing the profession negatively ($p < 0.05$) (Table 6). These results are important to the development of positive perceptions regarding the profession of midwifery, and the absence of other studies on this topic shows that our study is a unique effort.

In this study, it was determined that final-year midwifery students had highly positive professional perceptions.

Limitations

The limitation of this study was that the participants were selected solely from among students who volunteered to take part in the study, and the research process relied on self-report data based on the participants' responses to the questions and items in the data collection form.

IMPLICATION FOR NURSING PRACTICE

In addition to the development of theoretical and practical knowledge, undergraduate education also refers to a period in which important qualities such as commitment, professionalism, and professional perceptions are developed. The de-

velopment of positive professional perceptions among students in the undergraduate education process is important in terms of the achievement of job satisfaction in their future professional lives. Considering that it will be beneficial to investigate the professional perceptions of midwives and midwifery students at healthcare institutions and make improvements in both educational and professional settings in the context of these perceptions in terms of the social image and promotion of the profession of midwifery, importance should be paid to this issue, and positive professional perceptions should be developed among midwifery students throughout their education process. Accordingly, we recommend researchers to conduct similar studies with larger samples including midwives and midwifery students in different cultures to investigate their professional perceptions and examine the factors that influence these perceptions.

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