

Midwifery Students' Participation in Fetoscope Delivery Ceremony Opinions on the Effect on Professional Affiliation: A Qualitative Study

Ebelik Öğrencilerinin Fetoskop Teslim Törenine Katılımının Mesleki Bağlılığa Etkisi Hakkındaki Görüşleri: Nitel Araştırma

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ABSTRACT Objective: The aim of this study was to examine the effects of midwifery students' participation in the fetoscope delivery ceremony on their professional commitment and to evaluate their experiences in this process from a qualitative perspective. **Material and Methods:** This study, conducted using a phenomenological design, was carried out in March-April 2024 with 20 1st midwifery students who participated in the Fetoscope Delivery Ceremony organized by a university's midwifery department. Research data were collected through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview form and recorded with a voice recorder. Deductive content analysis was employed for data analysis. Raw data were read line by line, and in the initial phase, open coding was performed, followed by typological coding to create sub-themes and themes. **Results:** Students' feelings and thoughts about the ceremony were analyzed in two themes: 1) perspectives on midwifery profession and 2) the meaning attributed to the fetoscope delivery ceremony. It was determined that the students felt mixed emotions such as happiness, enthusiasm, excitement, stress and anxiety during the fetoscope ceremony. It was emphasized that they felt the value of the midwifery profession more after the fetoscope ceremony was over. **Conclusion:** Ceremonies in health sciences are important rituals to reinforce students' professional identity, commitment and sense of belonging. These ceremonies symbolize students' first steps towards becoming health professionals and emphasize the seriousness of the profession. The organization of a fetoscope handover ceremony for midwifery students is a necessity in this respect. In addition, remembering the Pinard fetoscope, which was frequently used in midwifery in the past, is important for the perception of professional commitment.

Keywords: Fetoscope; midwifery; organizational affiliation; students

ÖZET Amaç: Bu araştırmanın amacı, ebelik öğrencilerinin fetoskop teslim törenine katılımının mesleki bağlılıklarına etkilerini incelemek ve bu süreçteki deneyimlerini nitel bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirmektir. **Gereç ve Yöntemler:** Fenomenolojik desende gerçekleştirilen bu çalışma, bir üniversitenin ebelik bölümü tarafından düzenlenen Fetoskop Teslim Töreni'ne katılan 1. sınıf ebelik öğrencilerinden 20 kişi ile Mart-Nisan 2024 tarihleri arasında yürütülmüştür. Araştırma verileri, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılarak ses kayıt cihazına kaydedilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde tümevarımsal içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Ham veriler satır satır okunmuş ve ilk aşamada açık kodlama, daha sonra tipolojik kodlama yapılarak alt temalar ve temalar oluşturulmuştur. **Bulgular:** Öğrencilerin tören hakkındaki duygu ve düşünceleri iki tema altında incelenmiştir: 1) ebelik mesleğine bakış açısı ve 2) fetoskop teslim törenine atfedilen anlam. Öğrencilerin fetoskop töreni sırasında mutluluk, coşku, heyecan, stres ve kaygı gibi karışık duygular hissettikleri belirlenmiştir. Fetoskop töreninin sona ermesinin ardından ebelik mesleğinin değerini daha fazla hissettikleri vurgulanmıştır. **Sonuç:** Sağlık bilimleri alanında düzenlenen törenler, öğrencilerin mesleki kimliklerini, bağlılıklarını ve aidiyet duygularını pekiştirmek için önemli ritüellerdir. Bu törenler, öğrencilerin sağlık profesyoneli olma yolundaki ilk adımlarını simgeler ve mesleğin ciddiyetini vurgular. Ebelik öğrencileri için fetoskop teslim töreninin düzenlenmesi bu açıdan bir ihtiyaçtır. Ayrıca, geçmişte ebelik mesleğinde sıkça kullanılan Pinard fetoskopunun hatırlanması, profesyonel bağlılık algısı için önemlidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fetoskop; ebelik; örgütsel bağlılık; öğrenciler

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In societies, various rituals are organized for individuals in order to determine, bless and celebrate the new status in the transition from one status to another.¹ In this context, various rituals (such as wearing gowns) are observed in nursing, medicine, and dentistry faculties. Since the 1940s, nursing students have received their caps, candles, or lamps as symbols of nursing and have held ceremonies by reciting the Florence Nightingale oath. In medicine, the 1st full-fledged White Coat Ceremony took place at Columbia University in 1993, pioneered by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, making it an annual event. The ceremony establishes a psychological, intellectual, and ethical contract for the profession, encouraging empathy from the start of medical education.² The White Coat Ceremony is historically associated with medical school, but it is also a ritual adopted by various health professions.^{3,4} In pharmacy schools, the white coat ceremony is seen as an effective first step towards the professionalization of students; it is also seen as a positive reflection on professional values in the field of nursing.^{3,5,6} The development of professional identity is crucial for every profession. A strong professional identity is essential for achieving professional status and providing quality service. The educational period plays a key role in shaping and continuously developing professional identity.⁷ Scientific activities such as trainings and seminars, as well as social activities like ceremonies, are organized to mobilize and develop students' feelings of professional sensitivity and affiliation.⁸ Today, midwifery is practiced as a profession that continues its development in the light of evidence-based practices, includes science and art, and is based on ethical values.⁹ A midwife's adoption and loving practice of her profession is an indicator of professional belonging. Due to the challenging working conditions, it is important for midwives to have a high level of professional affiliation.¹⁰ To achieve this, activities that increase professional belonging should be organized in midwifery education. An entry ritual at the beginning of the education can enhance professional affiliation. Using a profession-specific symbol, such as a fetoscope, in this ritual would attract more attention and be beneficial. A fe-

toscope, a hollow tube made of wood, plastic, or metal, is used by midwives to easily hear fetal heart sounds.¹¹ A study conducted in rural Tanzania noted that the fetoscope was easily used by midwives and provided the advantage of not requiring charging during pregnancy monitoring.¹² However, its importance for intrapartum fetal monitoring is declining due to advancements in health technology and the country's level of development.¹³ In 2023, UNESCO added midwifery to the list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". Midwifery is based on evidence-based practices and traditional knowledge, passed down through direct experience and interaction. The fetoscope, a key symbol of midwifery, represents the profession. When UNESCO announced this, the media featured an image of a midwife using a fetoscope on a pregnant woman.¹⁴ To help future midwives adopt their professional identity, it is important to organize scientific and social activities during their education. Entrance rites should be organized at the beginning of midwifery education, similar to other professions, and their results should be evaluated. There is no study on this subject in the literature. In this study, the fetoscope, which is thought to represent midwifery, was used in an entrance ceremony and it was aimed to examine the effects of midwifery students' participation in the fetoscope delivery ceremony on their professional commitment.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

STUDY DESIGN

The current study was conducted in a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods, in order to examine the effects of midwifery students' participation in the fetoscope delivery ceremony on their professional commitment. Phenomenological approach is a qualitative research method that enables people to express their understanding, feelings, perspectives and perceptions about a particular phenomenon or concept and is used to describe how they experience this phenomenon.¹⁵ In addition, in this study, the "Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research" guidelines were followed for reporting qualitative studies.

STUDY SETTING AND SAMPLING

The population of the study consisted of 1st year midwifery students who participated in the Fetoscope Delivery Ceremony organized by the midwifery department of a university's faculty of health sciences. The research sample was determined according to the purposive sampling method. In the literature, it is reported that the sample size of qualitative research can be determined according to the saturation point (repetition) of the answers given to the research questions and generally 5-25 people are sufficient.¹⁶ The study was completed with 20 students by collecting data until the saturation point where concepts and processes started to repeat.

Participants

- **Inclusion Criteria:** Attending the Fetoscope Handover Ceremony, Being a 1st year midwifery student.

- **Exclusion Criteria:** Students who do not meet the necessary conditions for participation.

DATA COLLECTION TOOL

The data of the study were collected with a semi-structured interview form with questions prepared by the researchers by reviewing the literature.¹⁷ The interview form included questions about some descriptive characteristics of the students (age, place of residence, voluntary preference for midwifery) and how the Fetoscope Handover Ceremony affected their belonging to midwifery (Table 1). Two experts in the field of qualitative research and midwifery were consulted to ensure the content validity of the form. In addition, a pre-application was made with two students to evaluate the comprehensibility and applicability of the interview form. Students who were pre-interviewed were not included in the study.

DATA COLLECTION

Throughout the study, the ethical requirements outlined in the Helsinki Declaration were adhered to. The Fetoscope Delivery Ceremony was held on February 19, 2024, with first-year midwifery students. After ethics committee approval and institutional permission were obtained, the research data were collected between March 21 and April 15, 2024.

TABLE 1: Semi-structured interview guide.

Questions
Could you introduce yourself?
How would you describe the midwifery profession?
Your reasons for choosing
Importance of midwifery
What do you think about the qualities midwives should have?
How would you define the concept of affiliation to the midwifery profession?
Importance necessity of
How to improve
What do you think about the Fetoscope Handover Ceremony organized by your university?
Emotions felt at the ceremony
How did your feelings and thoughts about the value of the profession change after the ceremony?
The effect of the ceremony on your affiliation to the profession

The data were gathered using the “in-depth interview technique”, one of the qualitative data collection methods, by the primary researcher. Before data collection, students were informed about the research and invited to participate. Appointments were scheduled according to the students' availability, and interviews were conducted at the planned times. Empty classrooms in the faculty were used for the interviews. Participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without providing an explanation. Written and verbal consent was obtained from the students regarding their participation in the study and the use of a recording device for data collection. Throughout the study, the ethical requirements outlined in the Helsinki Declaration were adhered to. Each interview lasted approximately 40-45 minutes.

DATA EVALUATION

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the traditional content analysis method proposed by Graneheim and Lundman.¹⁸ In the analysis process, firstly, the interviews recorded by the researchers were transcribed in Microsoft Word (Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010, ABD) program. While writing the data, students' names were not used and each student was given a number (S1, S2, ...). In the second step, the interviews were read several times

to understand the overall text. All the texts obtained were divided into meaningful units and then primary codes were obtained. Codes with similar meanings were divided into subcategories and then grouped into main categories. In the last stage, themes were identified as the expression of the hidden content of the text. After the theme, the findings were interpreted and reported.

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE STUDY

The ethics committee approval of the study was obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee of a state university (date: March 5, 2024, no: 2024/145). After obtaining the necessary permissions, this study followed in full accordance with the ethics principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. The participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to leave the study whenever they wished.

RIGOUR OF STUDY

In this study, credibility, reliability, verifiability and transferability criteria were taken into consideration in terms of reliability. The data collection form was submitted to expert opinion. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by allocating sufficient time for data collection and analysis processes. The characteristics of the participants and the methods of data collection and analysis were clearly explained. The researchers reached a common opinion on the themes obtained. The themes were presented to two participants and their approval was obtained. In addition, direct statements of the participants were also included in the text.

RESULTS

Twenty first-year midwifery students aged between 18 and 21 years were included in the study. It was determined that most of the students lived in the city center and most of them preferred the midwifery department willingly (Table 2). Two themes were identified in the study: “Students’ perspectives on midwifery profession” and “The meaning attributed to the fetoscope delivery ceremony”. The thematic map of these themes and sub-theme clusters is presented in Figure 1. Each theme is discussed in detail

TABLE 2: Distribution of students according to their identifying characteristics.

Participant	Year	Age	Longest lived in	Prefer midwifery willingly
S1	First year	19	Province	Yes
S2	First year	19	Province	Yes
S3	First year	21	Province	Yes
S4	First year	19	Province	Yes
S5	First year	19	Province	Yes
S6	First year	19	Province	Yes
S7	First year	21	Province	No
S8	First year	19	Province	Yes
S9	First year	20	District	Yes
S10	First year	20	District	Yes
S11	First year	20	District	Yes
S12	First year	18	District	Yes
S13	First year	19	Village	Yes
S14	First year	19	Province	Yes
S15	First year	18	Province	Yes
S16	First year	18	Province	Yes
S17	First year	20	Province	Yes
S18	First year	19	Province	No
S19	First year	19	Province	Yes
S20	First year	19	Province	Yes

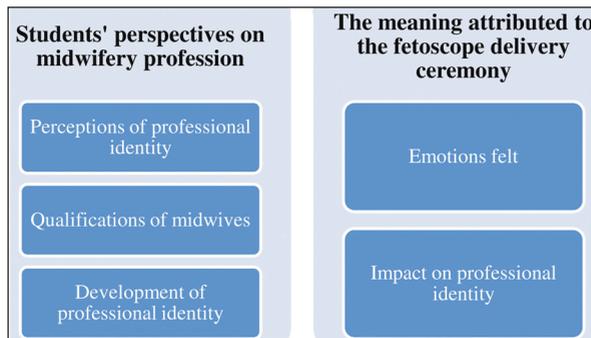


FIGURE 1: Thematic map of emerging themes and sub-themes.

below and exemplified with quotes from the interviewees.

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON MIDWIFERY PROFESSION

Perceptions Of Professional Identity

Students described midwifery as the 1st sacred profession starting with humanity and emphasized that midwives witness the unique miracle of birth, providing crucial support to women and babies through-

out pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. They believe that midwifery is not only about childbirth but also essential to public health. Most students characterized midwives as guardian angels, the greatest supporters, and safe, miraculous hands, viewing midwifery as a profession with high spirituality. These perceptions indicate a positive view of the profession. Therefore, the profession's perspective impacts professionalism and service, and students should be supported in developing their professional belonging during their education.

“Midwifery is a special occupational group that is with the pregnant woman in all matters before, during and after birth and is a professional physical and emotional support for the individual she serves.” (S6)

Qualifications Of Midwives

Most of the students stated that the midwifery profession is not known and valued by the society. In order to raise awareness of the value of the midwifery profession, they emphasized the qualities that midwives should have. According to all of the students, loving their job is the most important condition for a midwife to be successful and unforgettable, while being knowledgeable, friendly, compassionate, helpful and patient are among the basic characteristics of midwives. It is important for midwives, who witness the most painful and at the same time the happiest moment of a woman's life, to be able to keep the process under control. While providing supportive care with a gentle approach, they should be able to reassure women and make them feel comfortable. In addition, students stated that midwives should be health professionals who are open to development, forward-thinking, instructive, and have communication skills.

“Midwifery is a profession that follows the path of patience and persistence... In a field with such a high level of spirituality, the share of approaching with love cannot be overlooked because, as Steve Jobs said, the only way to do great things is to love what you do.” (S8)

Development Of Professional Identity

In order to raise the position of the midwifery profession, it is important to implement practices that will improve professional identity. In this direction,

most of the students emphasized the qualified education process for midwives to be competent and competent. In order to increase the professional affiliation of the students during the education process, they stated that meetings/conferences should be organized by experienced, leader-spirited midwife educators, clinical practices should be increased, activities should be carried out to make them feel valuable and midwifery clubs should be more effective. It was found important that midwives should continuously improve themselves by attending in-service trainings and courses. Students think that professional associations have great responsibilities for the visibility of the midwifery profession and therefore should be a member of associations. In addition, the students stated that they were uncomfortable with the confusion of midwives with nurses, and that midwives should be provided with their personal rights and work in areas appropriate to their job description.

“Midwives should have detailed information about the profession. They should know the definition of the profession and their rights. Because this is the most effective way to protect the status of the profession ...” (S19)

MEANING ATTACHED TO THE FETOSCOPE DELIVERY CEREMONY

Emotions Felt

The fetoscope, called the eyes and ears of midwives, is the instrument used to listen to the heartbeat of the baby in the womb in ancient times when technology was not developed. It is very valuable to integrate the fetoscope, a symbol of the midwifery profession, into a ceremony that will improve students' professional identity and motivation. All of the students emphasized that every student midwife should experience the fetoscope ceremony, which celebrates their first steps into the profession, raises awareness about their profession, and enables them to meet and mingle with their colleagues. During the fetoscope ceremony, the students felt mixed emotions such as happiness, enthusiasm, excitement, stress and anxiety. They stated that being the center of attention made them feel valuable and proud. They mentioned that the lecturers who gave speeches at the ceremony increased their morale and motivation, and that the ceremony pro-

vided an atmosphere of solidarity with friends and lecturers. Students stated that the fetoscope ceremony will remain in their memories as a fun and unforgettable memory.

“I saw it as a great morale boost for midwifery students. It was a great event for solidarity and cohesion.” (S10)

Impact On Professional Identity

All of the students stated that they felt the value of the midwifery profession more after the Fetoscope ceremony. It was especially noteworthy that a few students who had chosen the midwifery profession reluctantly increased their sense of professional belonging and responsibility after the ceremony. It is seen that the sense of pride and excitement felt by the students during the ceremony motivated them to strive harder to be successful, the greatness of the profession penetrated into them and made them feel more like midwives.

“I had very good feelings and my feelings for the profession increased even more. I felt like I was a real midwife and this ceremony made me feel special.” (S12)

DISCUSSION

In the current study, it was aimed to examine the effects of midwifery students' participation in the fetoscope delivery ceremony on their professional commitment and to evaluate their experiences in this process from a qualitative perspective. We could not find a study on midwifery students' rite of entry into the profession. It is thought that the use of the fetoscope as a professional representation tool in the ritual of entry into the midwifery profession makes this study more interesting. In addition, this study examined the effect of “Fetoscope Handover Ceremony” on students' professional affiliation. For these reasons, the discussion of the study is based on the findings obtained from studies investigating the thoughts on ceremonies organized for students studying in the field of health sciences.

Research in the education of health professionals suggests early intervention to support professional development. The concept of being a professional

should be encouraged from the first year of education.¹⁹ When the literature is examined, it is seen that a white coat ceremony is held in this context in areas where education is provided in the field of health.^{3,20} This ceremony has become a ritual in health professions. In addition to signaling the transition from student status to health professional status, the ceremony is also a powerful symbol of transformation. It is thought that the color white in the white coat ceremony represents purity and symbolizes the purity of purpose on the way to becoming a health professional.²¹ Ceremonies are held with the idea that the activities organized for students studying in the field of health will have a positive impact on the professionalism of the students. It is observed that such ceremonies have a positive impact on professional commitment.²² Most of the students stated that they enjoyed the “Tooth Brushing Ceremony”, which was conducted to define professional identity and teach professionalism in dental students. However, there are mixed evaluations about its effectiveness in teaching professionalism.²³ In another study, opinions were obtained from the lecturers regarding the White Coat Ceremony. In order to create a professional identity, 79% of the lecturers made positive statements about the “White Coat Ceremony” organized for students after the Family Medicine Residency Program. They mentioned that the ceremony reminded the values of Family Medicine and was an important transition activity in terms of identity development.²⁰ In a qualitative study conducted with senior midwifery students, it was concluded that students had a higher sense of belonging in areas such as obstetrics and delivery room and that practices had positive effects on professional development.²⁴ The midwifery students in this study stated that the fetoscope ceremony had a positive effect on professionalization and professional belonging. In similar studies in the literature, it was found that ceremonies related to professions focused on the concept of professionalism. As a result, the ceremonies have a positive effect on professionalization.

In the current study, when the students' expressions were analyzed, it was seen that they developed quite meaningful emotions towards the ceremony. It was seen that students experienced mixed emotions

such as excitement, stress, excitement and enthusiasm. Similarly, in a white coat ceremony for medical students, students described the ceremony as “inspiring”.²⁵ After the white coat ceremony held after the orientation training of first-year pharmacy students, students were asked to express their thoughts about the ceremony. 75% of the students mentioned that the ceremony was a “seminal” experience.⁵ In another study, nursing students mentioned the positive side of attending the White Coat Ceremony. It is recommended that these ceremonies be used in professional health education settings.³ After the “White Coat Ceremony” held at the University of Colorado College of Nursing in 2021, all participants were asked an open-ended question, and it was concluded that the ceremony strengthened the concept of being a nurse. The themes obtained present positive expressions such as recognition, transition, symbolism, and connection.⁶

Internationally, it is seen that midwifery departments hold professional entrance ceremonies with different names and arrangements. In “The capping ceremony of midwifery graduates” organized by the University of Warsaw for graduating midwives, students are seen wearing caps.²⁶ A “water ceremony” was organized by the University of Manitoba for newly enrolled students in the midwifery program. The ceremony was found meaningful by the students. The fact that water is a source of life-giving power and that midwifery is meaningful with water honored the students.²⁷ North Eastern Mindanao State University Midwifery Department organized “BS Midwifery 2nd Pinning & Candle Lighting Ceremony” for its graduates. In this ceremony, new graduates receive their pins and light their candles. The lit candles represent the midwifery profession and it is thought that each birth brings light and hope to the world.²⁸ To celebrate the Royal College of Midwives “Student Midwife Celebration Day”, the Midwifery Society at the University of the West of Scotland organized a summer party. At this party, winners were selected for each category for three years and each student midwife was given a gold pinard fetoscope, a necessity for their personal bag.²⁹ The ceremonies organized seem to stimulate students’ feelings about their profession. This situation provides motivation for stu-

dents continuing their vocational education and facilitates their learning process.

LIMITATION

The fact that the ceremony was conducted with first grade students is an important limitation of this study. Considering that students’ perceptions and understandings may change as their educational process progresses, it can be said that the findings obtained belong only to a certain age group and will not be generally valid. This may limit the applicability of the results of the study to a wider range of students.

CONCLUSION

In the first years of health professionals’ education, especially before they start clinical practice, they organize white coat/uniform wearing ceremonies. Some sources think that the white coat represents medicine and perform these rituals with symbols representing their profession. It is thought that it would be an appropriate decision to use the pinard fetoscope, which is thought to increase professional affiliation and is frequently used by midwives during pregnancy follow-up and delivery, in these ceremonies. 1st year students were given a pinard fetoscope during the rite of entry into the profession and the effects and results of this ceremony were evaluated in the present study. As can be understood from the results of the study, organizing this ceremony for the formation of professional affiliation is a need for midwifery students. In addition, remembering the pinard fetoscope, which was frequently used in the past in the midwifery profession, is important for professional affiliation and midwifery is much more than a job.

Source of Finance

During this study, no financial or spiritual support was received neither from any pharmaceutical company that has a direct connection with the research subject, nor from a company that provides or produces medical instruments and materials which may negatively affect the evaluation process of this study.

Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest between the authors and / or family members of the scientific and medical committee members or members of the potential conflicts of interest, counseling, expertise, working conditions, share holding and similar situations in any firm.

Authorship Contributions

Idea/Concept: Betül Uncu, Nurten Kaya; **Design:** Betül Uncu, Feyza Aktaş Reyhan, Nurten Kaya; **Control/Supervision:** Betül Uncu, Nurten Kaya; **Data Collection and/or Processing:** Betül Uncu, Feyza Aktaş Reyhan; **Analysis and/or Interpretation:**

Feyza Aktaş Reyhan; **Literature Review:** Betül Uncu, Feyza Aktaş Reyhan, Nurten Kaya; **Writing the Article:** Betül Uncu, Feyza Aktaş Reyhan, Nurten Kaya; **Critical Review:** Betül Uncu, Feyza Aktaş Reyhan, Nurten Kaya; **References and Fundings:** Betül Uncu; **Materials:** Betül Uncu.

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