



Professional Identity in Midwifery

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ABSTRACT

Professionalism is defined as "the service conducted by highly educated professionals, prepared to use their knowledge and skills in the interests of others, adhered to ethical standards, and supported by relevant professional organizations."

Professionalism affects both the individual and the society. The development of professionalism in a professional group provides quality service delivery to the community while the strengthening of professional identities for professional members.

Midwifery; women are an important professional group because of its role in child, family and community health. Thus, it is important for the maternity profession that provides the health and well-being of the community, to choose a conscious and optional career. To do this, professional informations must be made to students who will make college choices. It is necessary to organize seminars on the development of professional midwifery identity, to identify and identify factors affecting their professionalism, in which midwifery students are taught about values and ethics during the course of education and training.

In Turkey, there are factors that result in parents becoming embroiled in professional identity. The most significant cause of this confusion is due to legal regulations concerning the duties of midwives with different duties and responsibilities from nurses, but there are still ongoing complexities between the two professional groups in the workplace. The work of midwives in non-professional areas causes identity confusion and negatively affects their role as professionals. In this context, it is recommended to carry out more cross-sectional and experimental studies that will enable the development of professional identities of midwives.

Keywords: Professionalism, midwifery, professional identity

Ebelikte Profesyonel Kimlik

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ÖZ

Profesyonellik, "alanında yüksek düzeyde eğitim almış uzman kişilerce yürütülen, bilgi ve becerilerini başkalarının çıkarları doğrultusunda kullanmaya hazır olan, etik standartlara bağlı ve ilgili meslek örgütleriyle desteklenerek sunulan hizmet" şeklinde tanımlanmaktadır. Profesyonellik hem bireyi hem toplumu etkilemektedir. Bir meslek grubunda profesyonelliğin gelişmesi, topluma kaliteli hizmet sunumu sağlarken, meslek üyelerin de ise profesyonel kimliklerinin güçlenmesine olanak tanır.

Ebelik; kadın, çocuk, aile ve toplum sağlığında rol alması nedeniyle önemli bir meslek grubudur. Bu nedenle toplumun sağlığı ve refahını sağlayan ebelik mesleği için meslek seçiminde bilinçli ve isteğe bağlı meslek tercihi önemlidir. Bunun için ise üniversite tercihi yapacak öğrencilere mesleki bilgilendirmeler yapılmalıdır. Ebelik öğrencilerinin ise eğitim-öğretim süresince değerler ve etik konusunda eğitildiği, profesyonel ebelik kimliğini gelişmesini sağlayacak toplantılar seminerler düzenlenmesi ve profesyonelliklerini etkileyen faktörlerin belirlenmesi ve bunlara yönelik girişimlerin yapılması gerekmektedir.

Türkiye'de ebelerin mesleki kimlik karmaşası yaşamasına neden olan faktörler vardır. Bu karmaşaya neden olan en önemli sebep, ebelerin hemşirelerden farklı görev ve sorumluluklarının olduğu ebelerin görevleriyle ilgili yasal düzenlemelerine karşın, çalışma alanlarında iki meslek grubu arasında halen devam eden karmaşalar bulunmaktadır. Ebelerin meslek dışı alanlarda çalışması kimlik karmaşası yaşanmasına neden olmakta ve profesyonel kimliklerini rollerini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bu bağlamda, ebelerin mesleki kimliklerinin gelişmesini sağlayacak daha fazla kesitsel ve deneysel çalışmalar yapılması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Profesyonellik, ebelik, mesleki kimlik

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Introduction

Professionalism which is valued in contemporary societies can be described as "a practice conducted by the individuals who have received higher education of their specialty, who are ready to utilize their knowledge on behalf of other people's wellbeing, who stand on their own legs, who are stucked to the moral standards, who are supported by professional associations and people who proved themselves" ^{1,2}.

Occupational professionalism, on the other hand, is a kind of professionalism that turned into institutive professionalism rather than individual.^[2] Professionalism is an integration of an individual's characteristics with their occupational skills and knowledge.

Professional individuals are the people who try to improve society in terms of altruism; they are autonomous, researchers open to learning. They have creative and innovative ideas and unique skills. They are well-informed and stucked to moral and occupational values ³.

Professionalism is such an important concept in any kind of occupational group since it affects both individuals and society. While professionalism create conditions for establishing occupational standards and lead to offering quality services, it also plays a crucial role in improving professional identities and therefore, all employees must adopt it. Losing occupational professionalism may lead to a decrease in service quality and disruption of care, dissatisfaction of the service recipients, and job satisfaction of the service providers, along with institutional problems.

The common goal of health systems all over the world is to provide effective and qualified services to society. In order to reach to the services with preferred quality health workers must be qualified and skilled. Midwives who play an active role in prenatal, delivery and postnatal maternal and newborn care and tracing; sexual and reproductive health services for the community are such an important professional group because of their role in women, children, family, and community health. ⁴. They also preserve, improve, and enhance health within public health services ^{4,5}. As the midwifery profession is a profession group based on knowledge and moral values, which is carried out with the master-apprentice relationship passed down from generation to generation, there have been developments made following the alterations and innovations in the field of health. In modern

days, it has become a professional group which has achieved a professional identity by education.

In our country, midwifery education started with primary school, continued with health schools, high schools, and associate degree. The most important decision in midwifery education is 'The decision of the Supreme Health Council in 1995 to carry out midwifery education at bachelor's degree level in Health Colleges'. Since 1996, with the decision numbered 96/8655, bachelor's degree level education has been given in universities. Following that, post-graduate education, master's degree (2003), and doctorate program have been commenced. Now, it is aimed by YÖK that students who enter university must be equipped with specific standards in their education. These standards, which include occupational knowledge and skills, are:

- Prenatal examination and counseling of at least 100 pregnant women,
- Pregnancy examination of at least 40 pregnant women,
- Delivering at least 40 births, (In cases where the birth counts are not enough, if the student participates 20 births, this number can be downgraded to 30.)
- Active participation to breech delivery or working on a simulation,
- Application of episiotomy or working on a simulation,
- Examination of at least 40 women with potential risk factor during birth or postnatal periods.
- Examination of at least 100 puerperant and newborn children and caring,
- Caring for newborns who require special care such as premature, postmature, low birth weight,
- Caring for women with gynecological diseases,
- Participate in medical and surgery care ⁶.

The midwifery profession has been developing over the years with its education and academic staff ⁴. In order for the occupational identities of midwives to be improved, education in bachelor's degree and post-graduate degree is significant. With increasing researches in the field, midwives nowadays became people who are self-developing, innovative, capable of leadership, responsible, and who have high communication skills. Therefore, midwives have made progress in professionalism. However, they couldn't have sufficient occupational authority¹. In Turkey, there are factors that lead midwives to experience professional identity confusion and prevent their professionalization. The most important and primary reason for this confusion is the difficulties in defining midwifery, and despite

the legal regulations on the duties and responsibilities of midwives, which are different from those of nurses, there are still ongoing conflicts between the two professions in their working areas ⁷. While nursing is defined as a professional group that takes part in the protection and improvement of the health of individuals, family, and society and which plays a role in recovery and rehabilitation processes in cases of illness; the occupational professionalization strategies of the midwifery profession were reconsidered in the 1990s. Regarding these strategies, professional midwives are defined as people who can handle crises, have problem-solving skills, are educated, can take initiatives to protect and improve public health, and independently manage newborn and women's health during pregnancy, birth, and postnatal periods. Additionally, holistic care's ethical and social justice principles are becoming increasingly important in midwives' practice. In this way, the roles of midwives have been quite extended. ^{8,9}. However, because of the challenges in the professionalization process of midwifery, such as being supervised by the medical profession, and because of the education based on conventional practices, midwifery has been described as a semi-professional profession ¹⁰.

The second reason is that there are not yet a sufficient number of academic midwives in universities providing midwifery undergraduate and postgraduate education and that midwifery education is generally carried out by faculty members in the field of nursing ¹¹. Because of the lack of academic staff in midwifery programs, education quality is poorly affected. The reason for this is the lack of staff appointments. Thirdly, there are differences in midwifery education levels ¹². Fourth, they are de-identified as "family health workers" within the health system. And finally, midwives' working in unprofessional fields causes identity confusion and negatively affects their professional identity and role ¹³.

Conclusion

Midwives play a key role in enhancing public health. For this reason, it is a profession that is required to be professionalized in the field of health. The basis of professionalism is professional commitment and

organization ¹⁴. And professional identity influences the choice of profession ¹⁵. The foundations of adopting the profession and professional practices are created during the student years. Therefore, conscious and voluntary choice of profession is important for the midwifery profession, which provides the health and welfare of society ¹⁵. In this regard, vocational information should be provided to students who will make university choices. Preferring this profession willingly lets students be more successful both during the student period and during the professional period, and to do the profession by enjoying it, to adopt midwifery, and to contribute to innovations in the profession and to professionalize. Education is the primary condition for professionalization. Midwifery students should be educated about values and ethics during their education and training, meetings and seminars should be organized to develop their professional midwifery identity, and factors affecting their professionalism should be identified, and attempts should be made to let them improve their identities ¹⁵. It is considered that midwives who will start working in their field thusly can make more positive contributions to the profession. In this study, it was found that there is a statistically significant difference between the grades of the students and the professional attitude towards the profession. The professional attitude scores of the sophomore and junior grade students were higher than those of the senior grade students ¹⁶. This is because senior students may have disregarded professionalism because of their concerns about finding a job and not being able to fulfill the criteria for graduation ¹⁶. In-service training should be organized to overcome the differences and inadequacies of midwives and nurses, which are two different professional groups, and professional promotions should be organized to create a positive image of midwives on social media. In conclusion, it is recommended that more cross-sectional and experimental studies be conducted to improve the professional identity of midwives.

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