Present Status of Studies in the Field of Midwifery in Turkey

Gizem Güneş Öztürk, Deniz Batman, and Zekiye Karaçam

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to determine the present status of studies as midwifery published over the period 2000–2015 in Turkey.

METHOD: The study, based on the literature, is of retrospective and descriptive design and was carried out between January and June 2016. Five hundred and forty-three articles were included in the field of midwifery found in a scan of the Google Academic, PubMed, and National Thesis Center databases in search of the keywords “*ebelik*” (“midwifery” in Turkish) and “*midwifery and Turkey*.” Numbers and percentage calculations were used in the evaluation of the data.

RESULTS: Of the articles included in the study, 30.6% were published in a journal that concerned all health-care professions, 84.7% were of observational studies, 24.2% were conducted by academics in the midwifery departments, 19.0% were thesis studies, and 75.0% were published in the Turkish language. Of academic authors in the midwifery departments, 31.6% were midwives. In an examination of the subject fields of the articles, 25.8% pertained to midwifery professional development, knowledge, opinions, roles, ethics, and malpractice in the sampling of midwives and student midwives, whereas 26.7% of the sample groups comprised midwifery and other students.

CONCLUSION: This study revealed that studies made in the field of midwifery education and practice were inadequate. Increasing studies in this area might contribute to ensuring improvements in the professional development of midwifery in Turkey and more globally.

KEYWORDS: midwifery; research; professionals; development; Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Besides the responsibilities they carry with regard to mother and child health, midwives also have significant obligations with respect to the protection and improvement of public health (International Confederation of Midwives Council [ICM], 2017). Today, midwifery has taken its place among the branches of medicine as a professional discipline that is based on a synthesis of science and art and scientific and ethical values (Apay, 2014; Arslan, Karahan, & Çam, 2008). The most important condition of professionalism in midwifery is that midwives continually improve themselves, both from the perspective of personal development and in

terms of professional competencies (Halldorsdottir & Karlsdottir, 2011). For this, the midwife needs to be familiar with and able to use communication technologies and techniques, have adequate knowledge of the field, act in the capacity of educator, conduct research, and employ the knowledge thus gained in the resolution of professional issues (Karaçam, 2015; Nicholls & Webb, 2006). ICM (2014) states that midwives play an important role in developing the body of knowledge on midwifery, and it is in this way that they contribute to improving women's and infant health. Additionally, ICM (2014) emphasizes that all women have the right to receive a high quality of evidence-based midwifery services that consider cultural characteristics. Indeed,

research on midwifery that encompasses cultural and social characteristics is necessary and important in establishing professional standards in the profession on a national basis and in improving the status quo.

The fundamental areas that define the work of midwives in the international literature are pregnancy, the prenatal and postpartum periods, sexual and reproductive health, and the neonate (ICM, 2017; World Health Organization, 2016).

In Turkey, on the other hand, job descriptions related to midwives have been expanded to also include the childhood years of ages 0–6 (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Health, 2014). Midwives need to conduct more research if the accumulation of knowledge and the services offered in these areas are to be improved.

The conditions of professionalization necessitate conducting scientific research, publishing, and making use of the results of research, which requires a significant accumulation of knowledge and skills. To improve professional knowledge and evidence-based practices unique to the field of midwifery, producing knowledge through scientific research, publishing, and employing this knowledge is a requirement (Karaçam, 2015). It is a fact that midwifery still shares accumulations of knowledge with the medical and nursing professions and uses this knowledge in its practices. The basic knowledge derived from these occupations must not only be used

but also another layer of knowledge unique to midwifery must be added to this accumulation. Research carried out in midwifery will improve the scope and quality of the services provided by midwives, enhance mother and child health, and contribute to the professional growth of the discipline.

In this study, it was focused on studies made the field of midwifery practice by midwives, student midwives, academic midwives, and other professionals. Midwifery practice in Turkey has been defined similar to described by the ICM. This field in Turkey also includes following and care of healthy children aged 0–6 years (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Health, 2014).

The beginning of midwifery graduate in Turkey in 1996 and postgraduate education in 2000 has led to the delay of the midwifery profession's scientific knowledge. The need to carry out the present study was prompted by the fact that no study was discovered in the literature on midwifery in Turkey that dealt with the accumulation of knowledge in this discipline. Thus, the goal of the present study was to examine the current status of midwifery research in Turkey. It is expected that the information obtained will reveal the current status of midwifery research in Turkey and contribute to the formulation of strategies that are needed to develop an enhanced body of knowledge in the field.

FIGURE 1. Selection of articles and process of inclusion.

METHODS

The study was conducted between January and June 2016 as retrospective-descriptive research based on the literature. The study included research published in Turkey over the years 2000–2015 in the field of midwifery. A scan was performed in the Google Academic, PubMed, and National Thesis Center databases in search for the keywords “*ebelik*” (“midwifery” in Turkish) and “*midwifery and Turkey*.” The study covered the areas in Turkey in which midwifery was practicing (ante-partum, intrapartum and postpartum periods, sexual and reproductive health, neonates, and the 0- to 6-year childhood period) and encompassed original research conducted by educators, practitioners, and student midwives. Because they do not produce original knowledge, traditional reviews, case reports, and letters to editor were excluded from the study.

The selections of studies and data extraction were examined independently by two researchers who midwifery doctoral students (first and seconds authors). Also, they have qualification in the English language. In the event a difference of opinion was seen between the researchers regarding any one of the studies, a re-evaluation was made by all researchers together, and a consensus was achieved.

In the first scan of the databases, 1,132 articles were accessed from the Google Academic database, 101 from the National Thesis Center, 190 from the PubMed database, comprising a total of 1,423 studies. After an examination of titles and abstracts, 880 articles that did not match the study inclusion criteria were excluded. In short, a total of 543 articles could be accessed in their entirety online were included. The processes of study selection were presented in Figure 1.

The researchers retrieved the study data from the literature with an instrument that consisted of 10 questions (type of journal, year of publication, type of study, language of publication, profession and number of authors, academic position of authors, field of study, participants, and whether or not the article was a thesis; Khorshid, Akın-Korhan, Hakverdioğlu, & Demiray, 2012; Şen, Karaçam, Çalışır, & Sarıkaya Budak, 2014; Ünsal & Sökmen, 2011). In order to have an idea about the profession and number of authors working in the researches carried out in the field of midwifery in general, these situations were investigated. In addition, using this information, it was determined how much of the academic authors were the midwives. Data were presented with the number and percentage.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Research by Journal, Publication Date, Type, Status of Being a Thesis, Language of Publication and Number of Authors (N = 543)

TYPE OF JOURNAL	NUMBER (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Journals in all health-care professions	166	30.6
Nursing journals	152	28.0
National thesis center	103	19.0
Medical journals	81	14.9
Midwifery journals	18	3.3
Social sciences journals	12	2.2
Educational sciences journals	6	1.1
Midwifery and nursing journals	5	0.9
Publication Date of Article Groups		
2011–2015	333	61.3
2006–2010	166	30.6
2000–2005	44	8.1
Type of Research		
Observational	460	84.7
Experimental quasi experimental	60	11.0
Methodological	11	2.0
Qualitative	7	1.3
Systematic review	5	0.9
Status of Being a Thesis		
Nonthesis	440	81.0
Master's thesis	101	18.6
Doctorate thesis	2	0.4
Language of Publication		
Turkish	407	75.0
English ^a	136	25.0
Number of Authors		
1	107	19.7
2	161	29.7
3	113	20.8
4	74	13.6
5	45	8.3
6	25	4.6
7–12	18	3.3

^aOf the English articles, 94.9% ($n = 129$) were published in international journals, and 5.1% ($n = 7$) in national journals.

RESULTS

Features of the Studies

A review of the articles by distribution according to journals revealed that 30.6% ($n = 166$) had been published in journals pertaining to all healthcare professions and 28.0% ($n = 152$) in nursing journals, whereas 19.0% ($n = 103$) were published by the National Thesis Center, and 14.9% ($n = 81$) appeared in journals of medicine. Only 3.3% ($n = 18$) of the studies were published in midwifery journals and 0.9% ($n = 5$) in midwifery and nursing

journals. It was seen that 61.3% ($n = 333$) of the published articles had been published over the period 2011–2015. Moreover, 84.7% ($n = 460$) of the research were observational (descriptive, cohort, and case-control studies). These were followed by a group of 11.0% ($n = 60$) that were experimental or quasiexperimental studies and 2.0% ($n = 11$) that were of methodological design. Of the studies, 81.0% ($n = 440$) were nonthesis works and 75.0% ($n = 407$) had been published in the Turkish language. Of the articles that had been published in English, 94.9% ($n = 129$) were published in international journals, and 16.9% of these were midwifery journals. Additionally, a group of 29.7% ($n = 161$) had been produced by two researchers (Table 1).

Subject Fields of the Studies and Participants

An analysis of the subject fields of the articles included in this study revealed that 25.8% ($n = 140$) had been conducted in the areas of midwifery professional development, knowledge, opinions, roles, ethics, and malpractice in the sampling of midwives and student midwives, 16.9% ($n = 92$) in the areas of personal development and mental health, and 11.2% ($n = 61$) on the subjects of reproductive or sexual health. The rest of the other subject fields of the articles were given in the Table 2. Of the studies, 26.7% ($n = 145$) were carried out with sample groups of midwifery and other students, 20.5% ($n = 111$) with healthy adults in the community, and 12.2% ($n = 66$) with healthy adults in the hospital (pregnant or puerperal women, individuals presenting for diagnosis or consultancy; Table 2).

Author Characteristics of the Studies

In all, 24.2% ($n = 212$) of authors included in this study were academics from the midwifery department, whereas 9.8% ($n = 86$) were midwifery students, and 3.3% ($n = 29$) were midwives (Table 3). Of the studies, 20.8% were done by midwife, student midwife, and midwifery academics. Of academic authors in the midwifery departments, 31.6% were midwives.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine the current status of midwifery studies in Turkey. It revealed that the research was largely observational in nature and

TABLE 2. Subject Fields of the Studies and Participants ($N = 543$)

CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Subject Field		
Midwifery professional development, knowledge, opinions, role, ethics, and malpractice in the sampling of midwives and student midwives	140	25.8
Personal development and mental health	92	16.9
Reproductive health/sexual health	61	11.2
Postpartum period/care	54	9.9
Antenatal period/care	47	8.6
Intrapartum period/care	34	6.3
Family planning	24	4.4
Neonate follow-up/care	21	3.9
Health protection and improvement	15	2.8
Health knowledge/environmental health	12	2.2
Children's health (0–6 years)	9	1.7
Early diagnosis	8	1.5
Violence	6	1.1
Menopausal period	5	0.9
Quality of care/patient satisfaction	4	0.7
Midwifery education	4	0.7
Pain and quality of life	2	0.4
Use of alternative treatments	2	0.4
Family physician system	1	0.2
Midwife employment in demand	1	0.2
Obesity	1	0.2
Participants (Place Where Data Were Collected)		
Midwifery and other students	145	26.7
Healthy adults (in the community)	111	20.5
Healthy adults (in the hospital)	66	12.2
Midwife and other health-care personnel	49	9.0
Midwife	39	7.2
Midwifery student	39	7.2
Adults (in the hospital)	27	5.0
Mothers–children	21	3.9
Adult patients (at home)	10	1.8
Ill neonates/children (in the hospital)	9	1.7
Adolescents	6	1.1
Healthy neonates/children (in the community)	5	0.9
Intensive care	5	0.9
Academics in the field of midwifery education	4	0.7
Neonates/children (at home)	2	0.4
Midwives and healthy neonates (in the community)	2	0.4
Websites	2	0.4
Healthy neonates/children (in the hospital)	1	0.2

TABLE 3. Positions of Article Authors (N = 875)

POSITION OF AUTHOR	NUMBER (%)
Midwifery department faculty member (67 midwives authors)	212 (24.2)
Nursing department faculty member	189 (21.6)
Health College/Faculty of Health Science faculty member	142 (16.2)
Midwifery student	86 (9.8)
Doctor	85 (9.7)
Unspecific	49 (5.6)
Midwife	29 (3.3)
Nurse	30 (3.4)
Nursing student	14 (1.6)
Biostatistics Department faculty member	9 (1.1)
Nutrition and Diet Department faculty member/dietician	6 (0.7)
Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Department faculty member/ physiotherapist	5 (0.6)
Other ^a	19 (2.2)

^aThe positions of the authors in this group were biology department faculty members ($n = 3$), educational sciences faculty members ($n = 3$), health services vocational college faculty members ($n = 4$), sociology department faculty members ($n = 2$), faculty of agriculture faculty members ($n = 3$), social services ($n = 1$), art history department faculty member ($n = 1$), hospital management ($n = 1$), Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health Mother-Child Health and Family Planning Directorate ($n = 1$).

nonthesis material, carried out by midwifery faculty members, published in Turkish. Also, few studies were made with participant groups of midwives, student midwives, and academics in the field of midwifery education and on the subject matter of professional development, knowledge, opinions, roles, ethics, and malpractice. The articles related to the field of midwifery defined by ICM, conducted by midwives, student midwives, and academic midwives, and published in midwifery journals were less. These conclusions show that the development of scientific research and knowledge accumulation in the midwifery profession in Turkey is needed.

The present study furthermore found that there were fewer published articles in English, and these had largely been published in international journals. Similar results were reported in another study that reviewed research articles in nursing journals published in Turkey (Şen et al., 2014). This outcome may be related to the fact that most of the journals published in Turkey are presented in Turkish. This status might have a negative effect on the international sharing of midwifery knowledge produced in Turkish.

It was observed in the study that the majority of the articles had been published in the last 5 years. This may be associated with the increase in midwifery research in recent years, the raising of basic midwifery education to undergraduate university level, and the increase in the number of graduate programs.

It was determined in the study that most of the research covered was observational, and there were fewer experimental and systematic reviews based on a high level of evidence. Şen et al. (2014) reported similar findings in their study of research published in periodicals judged by peer reviewers. Observational studies might contribute to defining and solving many problems that arise in the field of midwifery. However, based on the results, it might be stated that there is a need for more experimental studies that will reinforce evidence-based care.

It is important to note that most of the studies were nonthesis works, an indication that researchers are endeavoring to engage in research outside of their academic requirements. At the same time, the presence of doctorate theses in the group of graduate theses is important in that, as this is an indication of the progress achieved in midwifery graduate education.

It was seen in this study that the research conducted in the fundamental fields of midwifery such as family planning, prenatal, pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum care, reproductive health, neonate, and children's health is insufficient. This may be a result of the inadequate number of midwife researchers (20.8%). Furthermore, the greater number of studies in such areas as the professional development of midwifery on knowledge, opinions, roles, ethics, and malpractice may stem from the fact that most of the studies had been carried out with student midwives and midwives.

It was observed in the study that there were a lesser number of research articles dealing with healthy or ill adults and child cohorts to whom services were being provided. The limited number of studies on individuals to whom services were being provided may have a negative effect on improving the quality of health-care services.

This study showed that midwives authors were less in the articles published in the field of midwifery (20.8%). Furthermore, it was determined that a significant portion of the research on midwifery was produced by educators, practitioners, and student nurses, as well as doctors and other health-care professionals in different fields. This outcome might be related to the presence of other professional groups working in schools of midwifery in Turkey.

CONCLUSION

This study performed to determine the status of studies in the field of midwifery in Turkey showed that less of the articles were published in midwifery journals, conducted by midwives, student midwives, and academic midwives and related to the field of midwifery defined by ICM. Also, few studies were made with sampling groups of midwives, student midwives, and academics in the field of midwifery education and on the subject matter of professional development, knowledge, opinions, roles, ethics, and malpractice. These conclusions show that the development of scientific research and knowledge accumulation in the midwifery profession in Turkey is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these results, the recommendations might be to (a) ensure that working midwives participate in research, that research be increased on community-based issues encountered in the field, on the presentation of services and the improvement of the quality of care; (b) increase the number of studies that academics and clinical midwives engage in together; (c) see to it that midwifery educators engage in counseling, and curriculums are revised so that midwifery educators can help to enhance scientific research skills and experience in their regular and widespread training schedules; (d) promote that health managers support to midwives in publishing and joining to scientific studies; and (e) perform studies compared with the results of this study in other non-English-speaking countries.

REFERENCES

- Apay, S. E. (2014). Midwifery from past to present: A historical review. *Lokman Hekim Journal*, 4(2), 13–20.
- Arslan, H., Karahan, N., & Çam, C. (2008). The nature of midwifery and its effect on mode of childbirth. *Maltepe University Nursing Science and Art Journal*, 1(2), 55–58.
- Halldorsdottir, S., & Karlsdottir, S. I. (2011). The primacy of the good midwife in midwifery services: An evolving theory of professionalism in midwifery. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 25(4), 806–817. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6712.2011.00886.x>
- International Confederation of Midwives. (2014). *Role of the midwife in research*. Prague, CZ: Author.
- International Confederation of Midwives Council. (2017). ICM international definition of the midwife. Retrieved from http://internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/CoreDocuments/ENG%20Definition_of_the_Midwife%202017.pdf
- Karaçam, Z. (2015). Writing discussion and limitations sections in scientific research articles. *Ege University Nursing Faculty Journal*, 31(2), 86–97.
- Khorshid, L., Akın-Korhan, E., Hakverdioğlu, G., & Demiray, A. (2012). Examination of a nursing journal. *Ege University Nursing Faculty Journal*, 28(1), 47–55.
- Ministry of Health. (2014). Regulations on the job descriptions and duties of healthcare professionals and other professional groups working in healthcare. Retrieved from <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/05/20140522-14.htm>
- Nicholls, L., & Webb, C. (2006). What makes a good midwife? An integrative review of methodologically-diverse research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 56(4), 414–429. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2006.04026.x>
- Şen, E., Karaçam, Z., Çalışır, H., & Sarıkaya Budak, S. (2014). Some characteristics of research over the period 2007–2012 published in peer-reviewed nursing journals in Turkey: A situation determination. *Florence Nightingale Nursing Journal*, 22(3), 129–136.
- Ünsal, A., & Sökmen, S. (2011). The Journal of Atatürk University School of Nursing regarding the characteristics of the article and author. *Journal of Anatolia Nursing and Health Sciences*, 14(4), 14–16.
- World Health Organization. (2016). Midwifery. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/topics/midwifery/en/>

Correspondence regarding this article should be directed to Gizem Güneş Öztürk, MD, Adnan Menderes University, Faculty of Health Science, Division of Midwifery, 09100 Aydın, Turkey. E-mail: gzmgunes91@hotmail.com

Gizem Güneş Öztürk, MD, Research Assistant, Adnan Menderes University, Faculty of Health Science, Division of Midwifery, Aydın, Turkey.

Deniz Batman, MD, Lecturer, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, School of Health, Division of Midwifery, Kahramanmaraş, Turkey.

Zekiye Karaçam, PhD, Professor Dr, Adnan Menderes University, Faculty of Health Science, Division of Midwifery, Aydın, Turkey.