

Original Research Article

OPINIONS OF PREGNANT WOMENS INTENDED TO MALE MIDWIVES

Abstract

Aim: The study was conducted to determine opinion of pregnant women about their gender preferences related with midwife profession.

Methods: The study was conducted in cross-sectional and descriptive type. Whereas the research universe was consisted of 2954 pregnant women, the sampling group was including 384 pregnant women. The study was conducted in three randomly-selected Family Health Centers under the jurisdiction of the Manisa Public Health Directorship. The questionnaire consisted of 42 questions, developed by the researchers was harnessed in data collection process. In analysis process of the collected data, mean, percentage and chi-square methods were utilized.

Results: It was determined that although 52.2% of pregnant women agree with the opinion that both women and men could participate in childbearing operation; 97.9% of women preferred to have service from a midwife; and 98.4% preferred to have assistance from a woman midwife. When descriptive characteristics of pregnant women and their opinions regarding gender preferences in midwifery are compared, it was determined that whereas no any statistically significant difference was determined with age, education status, marital status, longest residential place, social security and family types of pregnant women ($p > 0.05$); a statistically significant difference was determined with their employment status, one of their descriptive characteristic ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Whereas majority of pregnant women agree with the opinion that men could be midwife; when it comes to receiving service from midwife during delivery, almost all of them prefer women midwives. Therefore, if key role of midwives in enhancement of public health are taken into consideration, childbearing, pre- and post-partum care services are especially required to be provided by women midwives.

Keywords: Midwifery, Gender, Pregnant, Women

1. INTRODUCTION

Midwifery profession is one of the most ancient professions of the world and in Turkey started with history of humanity as women have helped each other in their delivery periods based on master-apprenticeship relationship [1-3]. Midwives have key role in bringing solutions to public health problems and in development of public health [4]. The essential purpose of this profession is to protect, maintain and develop maternal health and public health in general [3,5].

Although long term changes in midwifery have not been synchronized, they are similar in many countries. Although midwives have been regarded more than doctors in terms of maternity issues until 1950s, changes in gender distribution and in their roles occurred upon intervention of male obstetricians in severe or difficult delivery operations [6]. Although they are rather limited in number, there are male midwives in professional life in some countries. For example in the Great Britain, according to a study conducted in 2011, 2% of overall midwives were male [7]. On the other hand in Turkey, midwifery profession is still viewed as an occupation specific to women. But, transformation is inevitable in societies. Employment of men in midwife profession is still debated issue among educators in Turkey. For the first time, the expression of “only female students will be accepted to the program” was dismissed among the application conditions of the Midwifery Department of the Ankara University and men midwifery education was initiated in 2011 [8].

In study conducted on students from the Department of Midwifery at the Celal Bayar University, it was reported that 59% of midwifery students stated that gender is an important issue in the midwifery profession; and 55.7% stated that only women should be in this profession [9]. However, no any study investigating opinions of women who receive service from these professionals was encountered. In societies similar to Turkish community who got used to receive midwifery service from women, opinions of service users are significantly important [10]. Accordingly, the present study was conducted to determine opinions of pregnant women from the Manisa City regarding their midwife gender preference.

2. METHODS

This study was conducted in the Manisa City with population of 1,359,463 according to 2013 address-based census. Manisa is located in Western Anatolia and Aegean Region, between the Spil Mountain and the Gediz River. It is a developed city having agriculture, trade and industry. However, it also has many immigrants from Eastern Turkey [11]. Whereas 50.13% of population is male, annual population growth is 0.91%. On the basis of selected

2015 indicators published by the Turkish State Statistic Institution, general mean fertility rate of Turkey (72.4‰) and of Manisa City (64.0‰) are close to each other [12].

The study was conducted in one year period between September 2014 and 2015 in three Family Health Centers in Manisa City center under governance of the Manisa Public Health Directorate through cross-sectional and descriptive type. The study universe is composed of 2,954 pregnant women from the Manisa City center. The study sampling was estimated as 384 through the Epi Info 6 Software based on 50% unknown prevalence and 5% margin of error. 384 pregnant women who receive prenatal care from three Family Health Centers located in Manisa City's neighbourhood with urban characteristics.

The present study was conducted to determine opinions of pregnant women regarding their gender preferences in midwifery profession. A two-page questionnaire was designed by the researchers on the basis of published research. A pilot study was undertaken with 10 pregnant who had just prenatal care to check whether the questionnaire was understandable and pragmatic. The questionnaire was composed of two pages and 42 questions. Whereas 15 questions were considering socio-demographical characteristics; 5 questions were about fertility history of women; 2 questions about service provided by men midwives; and 20 expressions probing opinions of respondents regarding their gender preferences in midwifery profession. Respondents were expected to answer these 20 expressions according to the respective answer options "Agree", "Disagree" and "Not Sure". These expressions were structured by the researchers based on the relevant literature and they do not represent any scale.

Descriptive data are presented as number, percentage and mean. Selected characteristics (age, education level, marital status, social security, family type) and gender preference for their thoughts on the midwifery profession were compared using χ^2 analyses. All analysis was carried out using SPSS for Windows, release 15.0 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). A p value of <0.05 was thought to be crucial for all analyses.

3. RESULTS

When distribution of respondent pregnant women is considered according to their respective descriptive characteristics, it was determined that 29.9% were graduated from primary school; 97.7% were officially married; 51.4% spent majority of their life in a city; 81.2% were not employed and their mean age was estimated as 26.96 ± 5.13 (Table 1). It was also determined that total mean pregnancy of respondent women was 2.57 ± 2.00 ; and their total mean delivery numbers was 1.24 ± 1.00 . Moreover, 69.7% of respondent pregnant women

stated that they were not hospitalized before because of a reason other than pregnancy and delivery operation.

Whereas 43.6% of respondent pregnant women answered the question of “How would your spouse find intervention of a men midwives when you appeal to a health institution?” as “Appropriate”; 43.9% answered as “Inappropriate”. In addition, 67.4% of respondent women answered the question of “How your spouse would find provision of care service by male midwives through home-visits?” as “Inappropriate”.

When opinions of respondent pregnant women regarding men midwives are taken into consideration, it was determined that although 52.2% stated that they agree with the expression of “Midwifery is profession which could be practiced by both genders”, 69.7% stated that “I am shy towards men midwives during service”. While 54.3% of pregnant women were not disposed to receiving service from men midwives, 97.9% preferred to receive follow-up service during pregnancy, 98.4% preferred to receive delivery service and 97.9% preferred to receive post-natal care from women midwives. Additionally, whereas 84.9% of women were of the opinion that their daughters to be midwife in the future, only 19.85% want their sons to be midwife (Table2).

When opinions of pregnant women regarding gender in midwifery profession and their descriptive characteristics are compared, no any statistically significant difference was determined with age, education status, marital status, residential place (the longest period), social security and family types of respondent pregnant women ($p>0.05$). A statistically significant difference was determined between opinions of pregnant women regarding midwifery profession and their employment statuses of the descriptive characteristics ($p<0.05$) (Table 3). It was also determined that opinions of unemployed pregnant women were more negative regarding men midwives and having service from men midwives. Proportion of respondent pregnant women who wanted to receive midwifery services from women was greater.

4. DISCUSSION

Beginning of the midwifery profession could be traced back to the ancient human history in the world and in Turkey; and it has been perceived as a profession specific to women for long years; even in the countries employing men midwives, majority of members of this profession is composed of women [1,7]. Although men are quite outnumbered by women in this profession, this specialization has long been debated in the science world. According to the relevant literature review, although there are number of studies on existence

of men in nursing profession, there are only limited studies on position of men in midwifery profession [10,13-18].

In the study of Faith and Emmanuel (2015), conducted to determine expectations of mothers regarding genders of midwives in the Republic of Zimbabwe, it was reported that gender preferences of mothers regarding midwives was women. The researchers also reported that residential area and age were statistically significant determinants on this preference. It was reported that women **midwives** are preferred more while residential place moves from urban areas to rural areas; and as ages of mothers increases [13]. On the other hand, in the present study, no any statistically significant difference was determined in terms of residential places and ages of respondent pregnant women. However, unemployed women preferred receiving midwifery service more from women midwives (97.1%).

In a study conducted by Ozbasaran et al. (2002) in Manisa, it was reported that 72.8% of women and men patients were inclined to have care service from women nurses. When they were asked to display the rationale of their preference, almost half of them (47.2%) used the expression of “women nurses were more careful, skilled, friendly, devoted, easy-going, interested, sincere, passionate, talented and this profession fits them better” [14]. Tezel et al. (2007) conducted a study on patients hospitalized in internal medicine polyclinics in Erzurum; and they reported that 53.2% of women patients were preferring women nurse. When they were asked about their rationales regarding their preference of women for nursing profession, they indicated that “this profession is specific to women”, “they could be shy towards men nurse”, “women are more careful while they are implementing their duties”, “they get accustomed to womennurse” and “it more easy to establish authority on women”. The researchers assessed their findings as “having service from men nurse could result in problems which could be influent on care service” [15].

In a similar study conducted by Williams (1995) in the Great Britain, which concerns about opinions of patients hospitalized in maternal service regarding men nurses, it was emphasized that employment of men nurses at the maternity and pediatric clinic could introduce a pressure on both women nurses and on patients [16]. As a result of the study conducted by Celik et al. (2012) in Erzurum City, it was determined that 70.8% of women were reluctant to receive service from men nurses; 42% of them stated that men should not be in nursing profession at all [10]. In the study conducted by Duman (2012), it was determined that 97% of women were reluctant to receive service from men nurses during their pregnancy and in delivery period. On the other hand, the same participants preferred men physicians for their follow-up services in their pregnancy and delivery processes. This contradiction was

explained by respondents as that they do not encounter men nurses at the hospitals and they are not familiar with this opinion [17]. According to the results of the study conducted by Sahin et al. (2014) on the in patients at the department of the gynecology and obstetrics in Istanbul City, 50.0% of women stated that nursing is a profession special to women; additionally, 52.0% stated that men nurses should be employed in orthopedic clinics which require physical strength [18]. In the present study, although almost half of respondent pregnant women in the Manisa City (52.2%) were of the opinion that both women and men could participate in midwifery profession, almost all of them (97.9%) preferred to receive service from women midwife; and 98.4% wanted women midwives to manage their delivery operation. Thus, study findings display similarity with each other. Although percentage rate display difference, respondent women still want to receive midwifery service care from women midwives.

Characteristics of patient and service provider are the prominent ones among the factors effective on provision of health care services [19]. These personal characteristics are essential reason of differences occurring in health requirements as well [20]. In this regard, gender of service provider and socio-cultural characteristics of service consumer are directly correlated with each other [15,21,22]. It is not a common practice for a society whose majority is constituted by Muslims that women are supported by men midwives in their pregnancy period which could be considered as a traumatic period of their life. In the present study, more than half of respondent pregnant women (69.7%) stated that they would be shy if they are given service by men midwife as they support the aforesaid point of view. Indeed, there are contradictions in statements of respondent women. Whereas proportion of the respondents who agreed with the opinion that men midwife could manage the delivery process was 31.6%, the proportion of the ones who support women midwives in this regard was three times greater (98.4%).

According to the data reported by current studies, it was observed that respondents with higher education level and with health personnel family member were highly supporting opinions of “men could also be nurse”, “nursing is a profession which could be practiced by both women and men” [18,23]. Education is one of the significant parameters in social change. However, education still could not be accessed by women in Turkey sufficiently. In Turkey, the educational level of women is not at the required standard. According to the Population and Health Research that was conducted in Turkey in 2013, 16.1% of men and 28.2% of women are either illiterate or, although literate, have never gone to school, and 29.1% of men and 20.5% of women completed high school or higher education [24].

According to the National Research of Violence against Women, which was conducted in Turkey in 2014, 19% of men and 32% of women are either illiterate or, despite being literate, have never gone to school, and only 10.1% of men and 6.1% of women are university graduates [25]. In both studies, the rate of illiteracy or lack of attendance at school despite being literate was almost twice as large among women than men. In the present study, 9.7% of respondent pregnant women were illiterate; 33.4% were literate or graduated from primary school. When education and employment statuses of women in Turkey are taken into consideration, obtained study results could be considered as expected results.

5. CONCLUSION

It was determined that although half of the respondent pregnant women (52.2%) agreed with the opinion that both women and men could be midwives, almost all of them (97.9%) wanted to receive care service from women midwives; and (98.4%) to receive delivery service from women midwives. Study results could be interpreted as that pregnant women in Turkey are not ready to receive service from men midwives.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Necessary permissions were issued by the Ethical Board of the Celal Bayar University and by the Manisa Public Health Directorship governing the Family Health Centers where this study was conducted. Before the meetings were held, the researchers informed the participants about the purpose, duration, and practical benefits of the study and the written consent of the participant was obtained accordingly.

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Table 1. Some Descriptive Characteristics of the Pregnant Women

Characteristics	n	%
Age	17-25 age	41.5
X± SD	26-34 age	48.3
(26.96± 5.13)	35-42 age	10.2
Min:17 Max:42		
Education Status	Illiterate	9.7
	Literate	4.2
	Elementary School	29.2
	Secondary School	20.4
	High School	24.0
	College	12.5
Marital Status	Married	97.7
	Bachelor, Widow, Divorcee, Living	2.3
	Single	
The place where you lived the longest	Village	13.3
	Town	2.9
	County	32.4
	Major city	51.4
Employment Status	Working	18.8
	Unemployed	81.2
Social Assurance	Yes	93.4
	No	6.5
Family Type	Nuclear Family	75.7
	Extended Family	24.0
	Divorced Parents	0.3
TOPLAM	383	100.0

Table 2: Opinions of Pregnant Women Regarding Gender in Midwifery Profession

Opinions of Pregnant Women	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Not Sure (%)
Midwifery is a profession which be practiced by both genders.	200 (52.2)	131(34.2)	52(13.6)
I am shy towards men midwives during service.	267 (69.7)	97 (25.3)	19 (5.0)
I do not want service given by men midwives.	208 (54.3)	139(36.3)	36 (9.4)
I would prefer having midwifery service from women midwives.	367 (95.8)	7 (1.8)	9 (2.3)
I would refer having midwifery service from men midwives.	104(27.2)	224 (58.5)	55 (14.4)
Only women should provide midwifery service.	220 (57.4)	126 (32.9)	37 (9.7)
Only men should provide midwifery service.	14 (3.7)	332 (86.7)	37 (9.7)
Men should be in midwifery profession.	148 (38.6)	167 (43.6)	68 (17.8)
I would my boy to be a midwife in his career.	76 (19.8)	229 (59.8)	78 (20.4)
I would my girl to be a midwife in her career.	325 (84.9)	32 (8.4)	26 (6.8)
I would like men midwives to maintain my follow-up services during pregnancy.	150 (39.2)	197 (51.4)	36 (9.4)
I would like women midwives to maintain my follow-up services during pregnancy.	375 (97.9)	4 (1.0)	4 (1.0)
I would like men midwives to manage my delivery operation.	121 (31.6)	220 (57.4)	42 (11.0)
I would like women midwives to manage my delivery operation.	377 (98.4)	3 (0.8)	3 (0.8)
I would like men midwives to implement post-natal care.	112 (29.2)	235 (61.4)	36 (9.4)
I would like women midwives to implement post-natal care.	375 (97.9)	4 (1.0)	4 (1.0)
I would like men midwives to provide follow-up service through home visits.	78 (20.4)	286 (74.7)	19 (5.0)
I would like women midwives to provide follow-up service through home visits.	378 (98.7)	3 (0.8)	2 (0.5)
I would like men midwives to provide family planning service.	103 (26.9)	241 (62.9)	39 (10.2)
I would like women midwives to provide family planning service.	376 (98.2)	4 (1.0)	3 (0.8)

Table 3. The Relationship between Pregnant Women Working Status and Their Regarding Gender in Midwifery Profession

Working Status		Working		Unemployed		X ²	p
		n	%*	n	%*		
The Opinion of Pregnant Women Regarding Male in Midwifery Profession							
I am shy towards men midwives during service.	Agree	227	73.0	40	55.6	8.654	0.013
	Disagree	71	22.8	26	36.1		
	Not Sure	13	4.2	6	8.3		
I do not want service given by men midwives.	Agree	177	56.9	31	43.1	7.227	0.027
	Disagree	103	33.1	36	50.0		
	Not Sure	31	10.0	5	6.9		
I would refer having midwifery service from men midwives.	Agree	78	25.1	26	36.1	8.817	0.012
	Disagree	193	62.1	31	43.1		
	Not Sure	40	12.9	15	20.8		
Men should be in midwifery profession.	Agree	110	35.4	38	52.8	8.106	0.017
	Disagree	145	46.6	22	30.6		
	Not Sure	56	18.0	12	16.7		
I would my boy to be a midwife in his career.	Agree	62	19.9	14	19.4	7.698	0.021
	Disagree	194	62.4	35	48.6		
	Not Sure	55	17.7	23	31.9		
I would like men midwives to maintain my follow-up services during pregnancy.	Agree	116	37.3	34	47.2	6.085	0.048
	Disagree	169	54.3	28	18.9		
	Not Sure	26	8.4	10	13.9		
I would like men midwives to manage my delivery operation.	Agree	90	28.9	31	43.1	7.573	0.023
	Disagree	189	60.8	31	43.1		
	Not Sure	32	10.3	10	13.9		
I would like men midwives to implement post-natal care.	Agree	81	26.0	31	43.1	14.648	0.001
	Disagree	205	65.9	30	41.7		
	Not Sure	25	8.0	11	15.3		
I would like men midwives to provide follow-up service through home visits.	Agree	53	17.0	25	34.7	20.728	0.000
	Disagree	247	79.4	39	54.2		
	Not Sure	11	3.5	8	11.1		
I would like men midwives to provide family planning service.	Agree	79	25.4	24	33.3	12.311	0.002
	Disagree	207	66.6	34	47.2		
	Not Sure	25	8.0	14	19.4		
The Opinion of Pregnant Women Regarding Female in Midwifery Profession							
I would prefer having midwifery service from women midwives.	Agree	302	97.1	65	90.3	6.816	0.033
	Disagree	4	1.3	3	4.2		
	Not Sure	5	1.6	4	5.6		
Only women should provide midwifery service.	Agree	188	60.5	32	44.4	6.394	0.041
	Disagree	94	30.2	32	44.4		
	Not Sure	29	9.3	8	11.1		
I would like men midwives to maintain my follow-up services during pregnancy.	Agree	306	98.4	69	95.8	9.242	0.010
	Disagree	4	1.3	0	0.0		
	Not Sure	1	0.3	3	4.2		
I would like women midwives to provide follow-up service through home visits.	Agree	309	99.4	69	95.8	9.128	0.010
	Disagree	2	0.6	1	1.4		
	Not Sure	0	0.0	2	2.8		

*Column percentage