



## ATTITUDES FOR PROFESSIONAL REALIZATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDENTS IN THE SPECIALTY “MIDWIFE”

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### ABSTRACT:

**Background:** During their studies, obstetrics students have their own expectations and attitudes for career development. Today, this process is largely determined by the ongoing reforms in health care, the national economic and political environment, the labor market and the current epidemiological situation.

**Aim:** To study the attitudes and expectations of students majoring in “Midwife” regarding their future professional development and career development.

**Material and methods:** an anonymous survey of first to fourth year students majoring in Obstetrics at the Medical Faculty of the Thracian University - Stara Zagora. The results are processed with reliable mathematical and statistical methods and give grounds to draw the appropriate conclusions.

**Results:** It was found that students have different preferences for their future careers in a sector of the health system and obstetric care. The share of those wishing to study in master’s programs after their basic education is significant. Most of the future midwives would be realized in Bulgaria.

**Keywords:** midwives, attitude, professional realization, career development,

### INTRODUCTION:

The main goal of healthcare in all member states of the European Union /EU/ is to improve public health, prevent human diseases and eliminate threats to physical and mental health. Millions of medical specialists are engaged in the sector, with a clear tendency to increase their number.

The sustainability of the healthcare in our country, as well as the quality of the provided medical care, largely depend on the motivation and qualification of the workers in the sector/midwives, nurses and associated medical specialists / as important and valuable resource in the public health system.

The practice of the profession of midwife is carried

out by persons who have graduated from a medical school and have the appropriate professional qualification, certified by a diploma of higher education at the educational qualification degree “bachelor”, and are entered in the register of the professional organization. [1, (art. 5)]

In order to competently practice her profession in modern times, the midwife must have an appropriate qualification acquired through academic /basic and postgraduate/ education as well as lifelong learning, based on the understanding of competencies and the requirements for providing quality health care. According to Tsv. Hristova and T. Todorova, well-grounded healthcare professionals, are a responsible challenge and task that must combine conventional and traditional professional knowledge and skills with the modern achievements of training in nurses and midwives [2].

The modern midwives must identify and use opportunities for improvement and development, knowing well their own strengths and areas for improvement in order to be competitive, highly professional competent and effective in their activity.

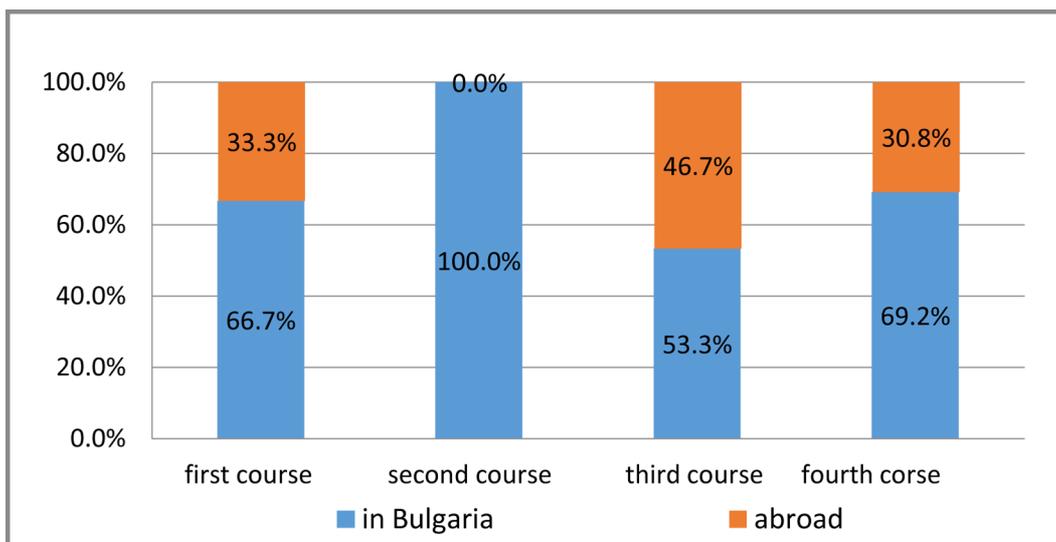
The purpose of the research is to study the attitudes and expectations of the students majoring in Midwifery at the Medical Faculty of the Thracian University - Stara Zagora regarding their future professional realization and career development.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS:

An anonymous survey of first- to fourth-year students majoring in Midwifery at the Faculty of Medicine, Thracian University - Stara Zagora in the academic year 2020/2021 was conducted. Fifty nine students were surveyed, constituting 92.2% of all students at the time of the study. The results were processed using Microsoft Office Excel.

After graduation, 71.2% of obstetrics students want to work in Bulgaria (fig. 1).

**Fig. 1.** Attitudes for future realization of students majoring in Obstetrics

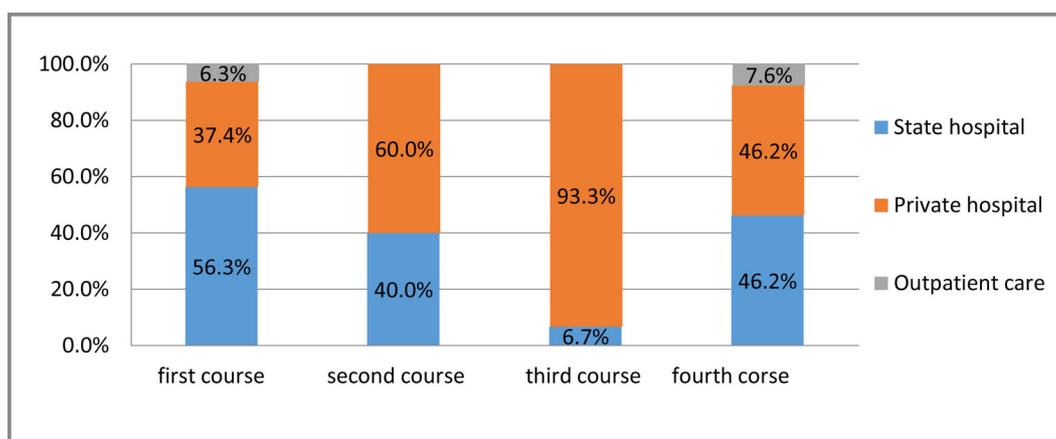


In recent years, the trend toward a shortage of medical staff has intensified not only in Bulgaria but throughout the European Union. It is worrying that by 2020 there is a shortage of qualified staff of around 2 million people in the European healthcare system. The share of emigrating health professionals in our country is significant. The average age of health workers is rising. According to data from the Bulgarian Medical Union / BMU / and the Bulgarian Association of Health Specialists /BAHS/, approximately 50% of working doctors and health professionals are aged 46-60 years, and 15% of health professionals are over 60 years old. [3]. There is a negative trend that the number of newly graduated specialists in the health care

system is insufficient to compensate emigrants abroad and the retirement rate of the aging workforce. In this aspect, we consider alarming the results, according to which almost every third midwife during her basic training has the attitude to be realized outside Bulgaria. As a reason for this, G. Petrova points out the reform and the insufficient payment in healthcare, as well as the low social prestige of the health specialists. [4, (p. 25)].

The results reveal the definite desire of the future midwives (96.6%) to be realized in the medical establishments for hospital medical care. The highest is the relative share of students wishing to start working in obstetric - gynecological hospitals with private funding - 59.3%.

**Fig. 2.** Preferred sector for student realization



The acquired volume of theoretical and practical training of the midwife gives her the right to work in the obstetric - gynecological establishments and units of the treatment-prophylactic network. According to the current Law on Medical Establishments, the midwife has the right to organize and manage individual and group practices for health care, carrying out independently all or some of the following activities: provision of medical and health care; performing manipulations; health promotion, disease pre-

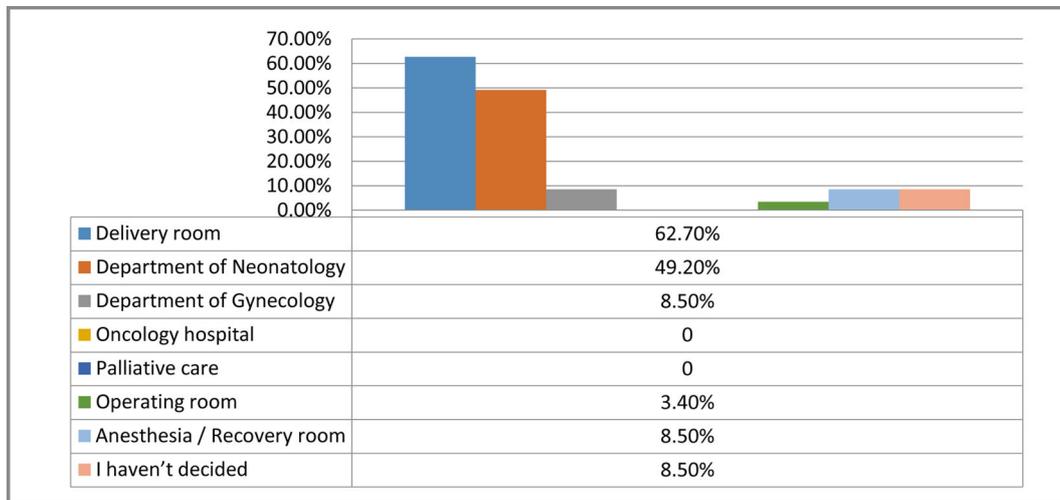
vention and prophylaxis. [5, (art. 2 and art. 18)].

The results reveal that only 3.4% of future midwives consider their realization in pre-hospital care as an opportunity. According to the National Statistical Institute for Stara Zagora district, the professional field of "Midwife" in outpatient care covers less than 50% of the need to provide 100 thousand of the population [6]. In this aspect, the analysis of the situation can be defined as worrying and with a more negative trend in perspective.

Future midwives have different preferences for the areas of health care in which they would like to be realized, indicating more than one sector. The highest share of those wishes to work in a maternity ward (62.7%). Nearly

half of future midwives want to take neonatal care. There are no students who express readiness to start working in the Complex Oncology Centers and in the field of palliative care (fig. 3).

**Fig. 3.** Preferred units for the realization of the students in the medical establishments

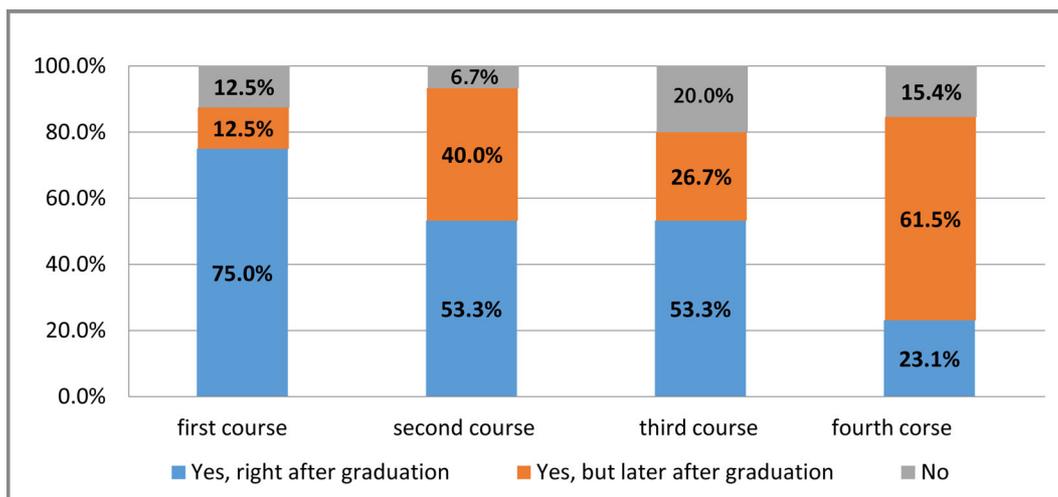


First and second year students want professional realization in the maternity ward and the wards for newborns. This affects the overall percentage distribution of preferences for realization. On the other hand, the result does not surprise us. According to the curriculum, the students of these courses have not yet studied the disciplines “Gynecology”, “Anesthesiology and Intensive Care”, “Obstetrics and Nursing Care for Women with Cancer”, etc., and have not partially or completely completed their practical training in the sectors.

The scope of midwives’ activities are not limited to

specific tasks, functions and responsibilities but includes the provision of direct care and assessment of their effect, protection of patients and their health, control and delegation, leadership, management, training, research and participation in health policy development. In this aspect, we consider the results satisfactory. Only 13.5% of students do not want to study in a master’s program after acquiring the specialty “Midwife”. The highest is the relative share (75%) of first year students who wish to continue their education in the specialty “Health Care Management” immediately after graduation.

**Fig. 4.** Desire to study in a master’s program after acquiring the specialty “Midwife”



R. Doinovska and co-authors, in their study of the motivational factors for choosing the profession of “nurse” and “midwife”, reveal that almost half of the students are willing to continue their education in the specialty in a higher educational degree [7 (p.27)].

In her research, G. Petrova found high motivation for continuing education of medical professionals studying in the specialty “Health Care Management” (“strong academic motivation” in all first year students and “moderate academic motivation” after three years of study) [8, (p.27)].

According to Bulgarian law, midwives have the right to postgraduate training, including the acquisition of a specialty in health care and continuing medical education.

The trained students in the Medical Faculty - Stara Zagora, who would like to acquire a specialty in the healthcare system, are 54.2%. Immediately after graduation, 33.9% of students would enroll in a specialization, and 20.3% expressed a desire to specialize at a later stage. It would be of interest to us in the future to study what are the most preferred specializations for midwives and what are the motives for their choice as an opportunity for career development.

### CONCLUSION:

The analysis of the results of the study allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- Even during their studies, students majoring in Midwifery have their own expectations and attitudes for career development.

- Almost every third midwife has the attitude to emigrate during her basic training. The negative tendency is revealed that the number of newly graduated specialists in the healthcare system is insufficient to compensate for the emigrants abroad and the rate of retirement of the aging workforce.

- Students majoring in Midwifery at the Thracian University have a strong preference for professional realization in hospital care. The share of respondents expecting to work in the maternity ward and the sectors for newborns is significant.

- Providing quality obstetric care requires advanced training. The share of students wishing to study in master's programs after their basic education to acquire a specialty in the healthcare system and continue their medical career development is significant.

The results reveal that future midwives are ready to take advantage of opportunities for improvement and development.

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