

Factors Improving the Effectiveness of Mentoring In The Practical Training of the Midwifery Students

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Abstract

Mentoring in the practical training of midwifery students is closely related to their professional development and improvement. The mentor is responsible for the practical activities of the trainees, monitors their professional formation, maintains the quality of training and the health care provided. Objective: aims to identify the factors influencing the effectiveness of mentoring in the clinical practical training of students in the specialty "Midwifery".

Material and methods: Between October 2024 and January 2025, the opinions of a total of 67 practicing midwives. An anonymous questionnaire was used via Google Forms.

Conclusion and findings: Effective mentoring in the practical training of midwifery students requires well-planned training, including organization, mentoring support for students, and an appropriate level of control. The study identified the following leading factors for improving the supervision and practical training of midwifery students: the student being prepared and taking responsibility for his or her own learning; solid professional experience and skillful supportive guidance of the mentor; small number of trainees in a group; support from midwifery colleagues indirectly and informally involved in the practical training; regular communication and collaboration with responsible university lecturers. The analysis of the results obtained and our own long-term pedagogical experience allow us to differentiate the factors that strengthen mentoring in the practical training of students in the specialty "Midwifery" in four areas: cooperation with the training institution; conditions of the work environment; opportunity for professional and personal development and affirmation.

Keywords: mentoring, practical training, effectiveness, factors, affirmation

Introduction

Mentoring in the practical training of midwives is established in the pedagogical practice of universities preparing healthcare professionals, and is closely linked to their professional development and improvement. The mentor is responsible for the practical activity of the trainees, monitors their professional formation and growth, maintains the quality of training and healthcare provided. The role of "mentor" complements the vocation of midwives (Atanasova, Miteva, Milcheva, 2025).

For Stefaniak and Dmoch-Gajzlerska, mentoring in midwifery has great potential and can contribute to the development of a completely new model of education and training with more effective acquisition and retention of new knowledge and clinical skills. The traditional model of clinical teaching / training, based on strict schedules and group training, does not contribute to the effective teaching / training of a wide range of obstetric skills (2020). Mentoring enriches the traditional didactic process and is a modern and innovative form of teaching practical lessons (Stefaniak, 2019).

According to M. Bacheva, mentoring is particularly important for students studying in medical specialties. Mentors are recognized for their skills, experience and wisdom in healthcare, while expanding their leadership capabilities. Mentees benefit from shared wisdom, teamwork, new ideas for care and ways to solve professional problems. Both parties grow from the relationship (Bacheva, Velichkova-Hadzhieva, Doynovska, 2019).

Based on critically appraised research evidence, an international team of experts with extensive knowledge and experience in mentoring developed a Guideline on clinical nurse mentor's mentoring competence development. The authors recommend that strengthening quality mentoring be a priority on the policy agenda of EU Member States, together with the requirement that clinical mentors in all healthcare institutions participate in structured mentoring training. (2021).

The effectiveness of practical training is multifactorial. Our study, conducted among students and graduates of the specialty "Midwifery" at the Faculty of Medicine, Trakia University, identified the need to create conditions for the correct selection and attraction of motivated teachers (Toncheva, 2018).

The personal characteristics and motivation of clinical mentors have a great influence on the development of a successful relationship between the mentor and the student. Mentors play a key role in the integration of the students into the work environment and the professional teams. They must be familiar with mentoring practices and the resources available for their implementation (2021).

This scientific report aims to identify the factors influencing the effectiveness of mentoring in the clinical practical training of students in the specialty "Midwifery".

Material and methods

During the period October 2024 - January 2025, the opinion of a total of 67 practicing midwives in medical institutions, a training base for students in the specialty, was surveyed. An anonymous survey was used through the Google Forms application, aiming to identify the importance and role of mentoring as a factor in the effectiveness of clinical practical training. Microsoft Office Excel 2016 was used for statistical processing of the results with a significance level of significance $*P < 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

In the study, respondents were divided into four age groups. The highest proportion of midwives falls within the 36–50 age range (37.3%), followed by those aged 26–35 (26.9%). Respondents over 50 years old represent 20.9%, while those under 25 make up 14.9%. More than one-third of the respondents have over 20 years of professional experience in the field. The distribution based on this criterion is presented in Fig. 1:

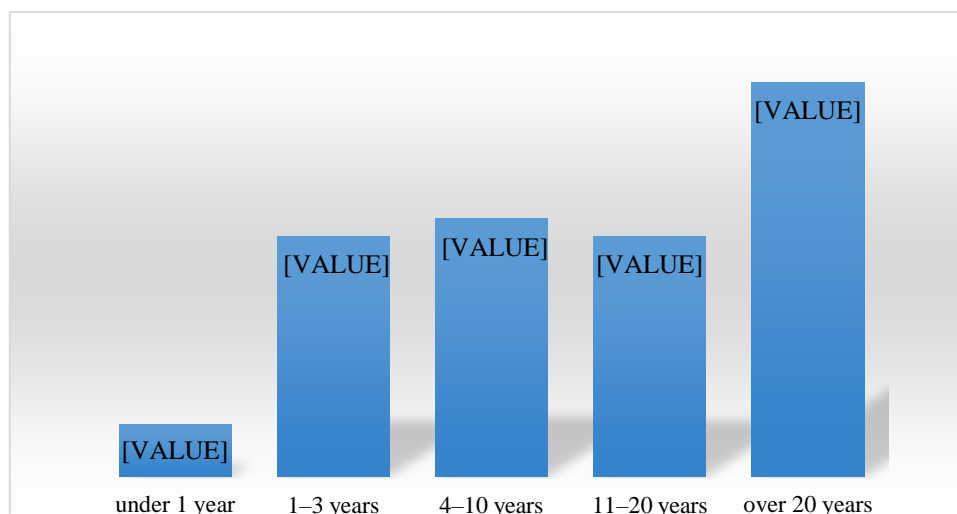


Fig.1. Distribution of the surveyed midwives by professional experience in the field

The supervision and implementation of practical training are regulated and carried out by lecturers who have graduated in the specialty "Midwife" and hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree in "Healthcare Management" from the professional field of "Public Health," with a professional qualification as "Head of Healthcare Services and Practical Training Instructor" (2016).

Effective mentorship requires well-structured training, which includes organization, mentorship support for students, and an appropriate level of supervision.

Figure 2 presents the main factors for improving the supervision and practical training of students in the "Midwife" program.

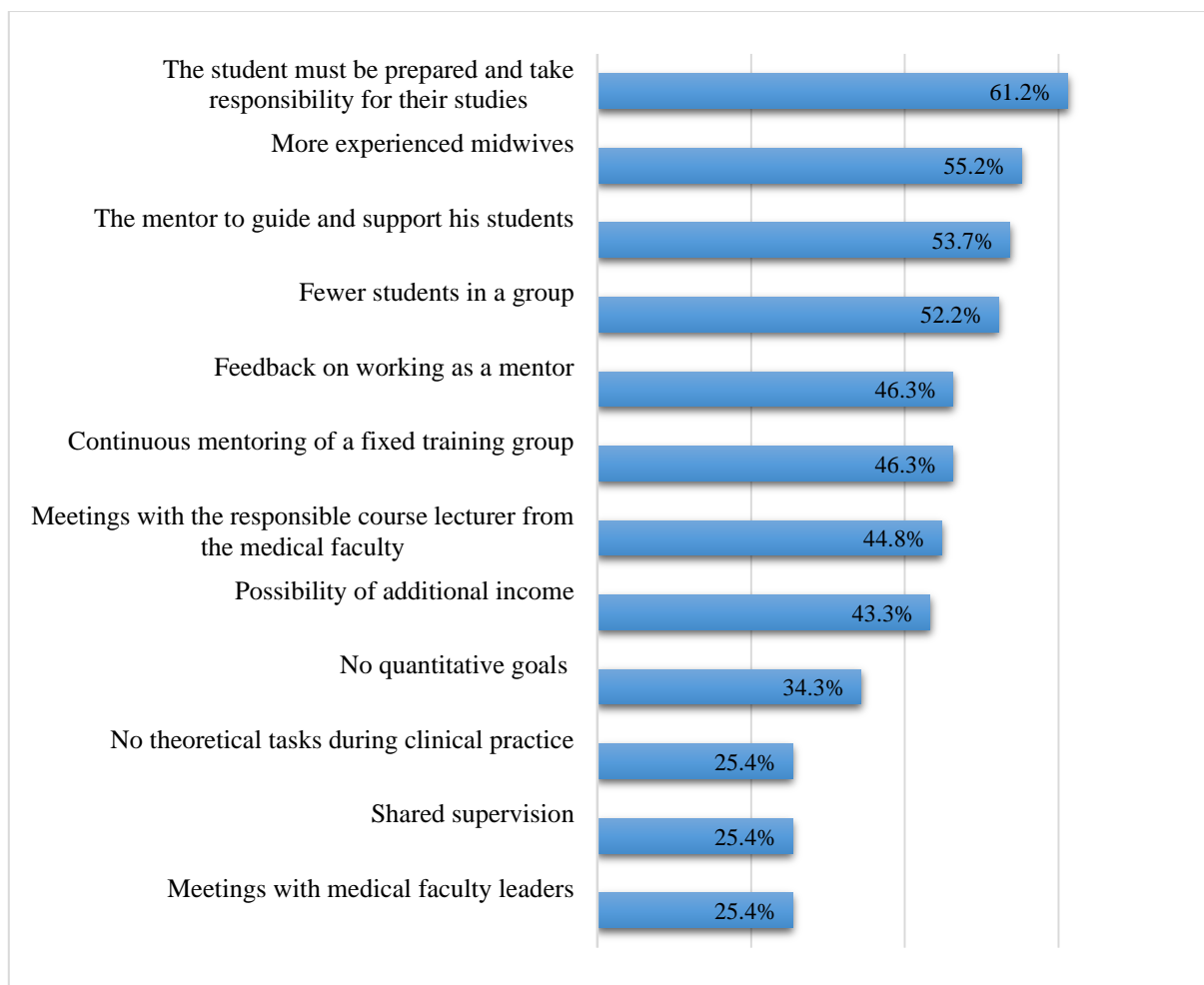


Fig.2 . Factors for improving the supervision and practical training of students in the "Midwife" program

The respondents view the students as partners in the practical training process through mentorship. For 61.2% of them, the most important factor is that the student is prepared and takes responsibility for their own learning.

The mentorship process should foster a sense of confidence and significance in students, while also providing a realistic understanding of their own capabilities. It is noteworthy that for one-quarter of the midwives (25.4%) theoretical assignments should not be given during the clinical practice period. A significant portion of respondents (34.3%) think that practical training should not have quantitative targets (such as number of births, procedures, or activities performed). However, this viewpoint contradicts Article 15 of the Ordinance on the Unified State Requirements for the "Midwife" specialty.

Our previous research found that mentoring of midwifery students is an important part of the profession. In real life, student needs an experienced midwife to guide them, answer questions, support them, and instill confidence. The results reveal that the perceived role of a mentor as part of a career and professional development does not correspond to the motivation to take on and implement this responsibility (Atanasova, Miteva, Milcheva, 2025).

“Motivation for student mentoring can be seen in: the mentor’s willingness to mentor students and their interest in getting to know them; recognition and understanding of the importance that motivation has on student’s learning; the mentor’s continuous pursuit of development as such; the mentor’s ability to identify their own level of motivation as a mentor, as well as the level of motivation of students to learn” (Guideline on clinical nurse mentor’s mentoring competence development, 2021).

The present study confirmed that the mentor’s involvement in the practical training of midwifery students is influenced by multiple factors.

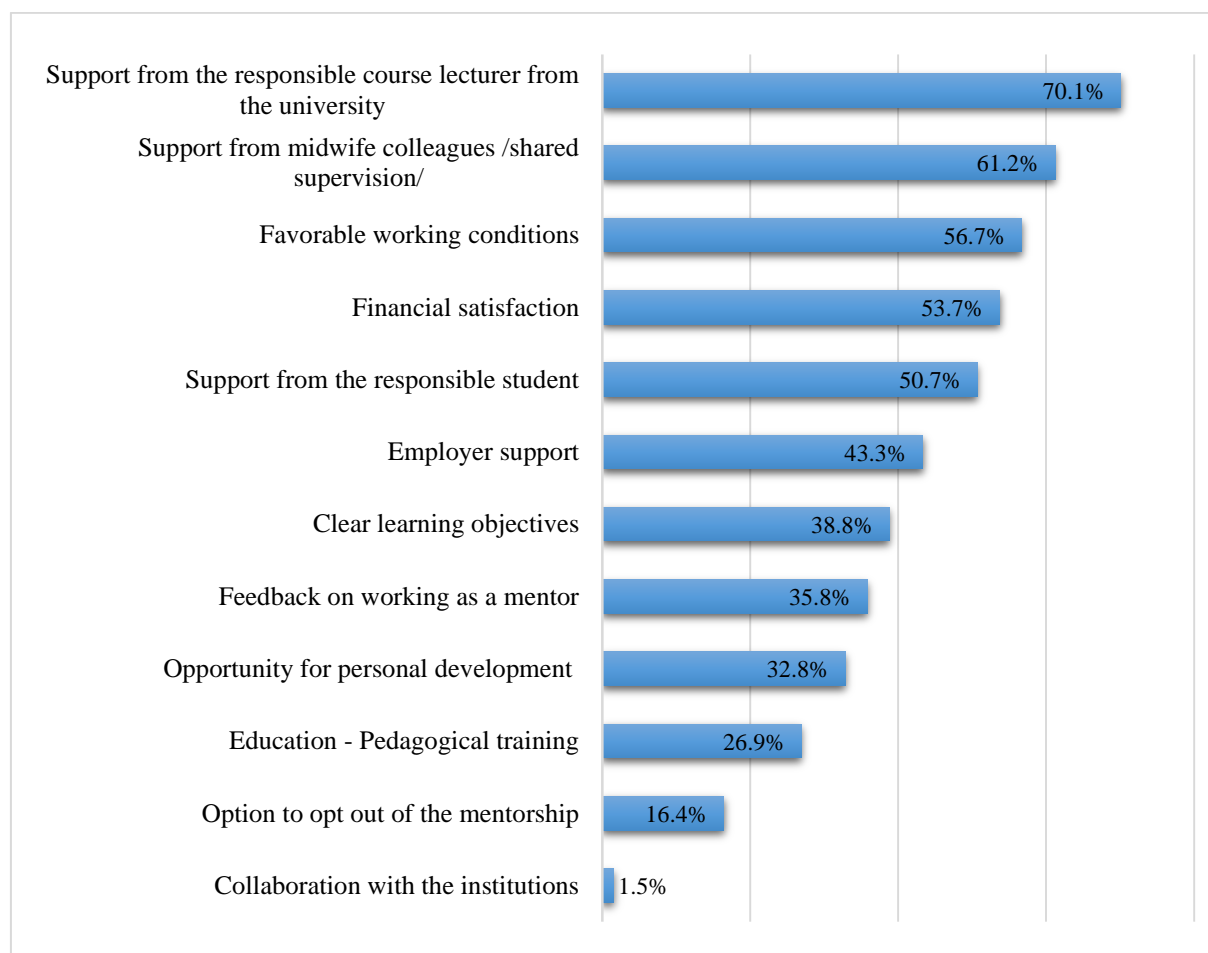


Fig. 3 Factors strengthening the role of the midwife – mentor

Factors influencing the promotion of mentors in practical training can be interpreted in several aspects: cooperation with the training institution; conditions of the work environment; opportunity for professional and personal development and promotion.

The most significant factor /70.1%/ is the support of the responsible course lecturer from the Faculty of Medicine /Fig. 3/. Practical training is carried out in conditions of collaboration and under the direct control of a mentor and a lecturer /a course supervisor/. For optimal implementation of the relationship between the mentor, the lecturer /the course supervisor / and the student, at the Faculty of Medicine at Trakia University, in the practical training of future midwives, teaching aids "Clinical Practice Diary" and "Pre-graduate Internship Diary" have been approved with clearly regulated requirements and conditions for organization, implementation and control. Regular, timely and effective communication of the lecturer with the mentor leads to higher satisfaction, motivation.

In this regard, Toncheva emphasizes that “the mentors and the teachers play a fundamental role in the success of comprehensive training. They are the two subjects in the education of students and must have common goals. Their determination must be a common cause, achieved through consensus between the partners” (2018).

Information about the level of professional competences acquired by students, their progress in training, systematic communication with the teachers from the Ministry of Health are significant factors influencing the motivation of midwives as mentors. More than 1/3 of the midwives /35.8%/ believe that feedback increases their satisfaction.

Good organization and implementation of practical training require clearly formulated learning objectives, up-to-date curricula, relevant methodology, compliance with the rules for completing training documentation and effective control. The importance of the listed factors is confirmed by 38.8% of respondents.

Each academic year Trakia University announces a competition for part-time lecturers in clinical practice, which is a prerequisite for voluntary selection for mentoring. The possibility of voluntary refusal of mentoring is a strengthening factor for 16.4% of midwives.

The working environment is among the priority factors that strengthen the role of the midwife as a mentor. A number of factors can have an impact: the microclimate in the organization, personal and professional relationships at all levels of the hierarchy in the team, material and technical provision in the workplace.

K. Wissemann et al. conducted a large-scale data extraction and synthesis of scientific articles on midwifery mentoring in clinical practice. Based on this, they identified that mentoring was not a priority for midwives or their workplaces. Operational barriers that the authors identified as hindering midwives' ability to participate in mentoring and continuing professional development programs included lack of management support, lack of appropriate mentors, toxic workplace culture, fear of judgment, shortage of workplace space, and increasing workload (2022).

The study found that a comfortable work environment is an essential factor for effective mentoring for 56.7% of respondents. Support from midwife colleagues /61.2%/ and from the employer /43.3%/ stand out as important in this category. The relatively higher share of midwives for whom the help and empathy of their midwife colleagues are significant is impressive. In real clinical practice, midwives who are indirectly and informally involved in practical training often "step into" the role of mentors. We believe that their attitude towards the students and the mentor, as well as their willingness to participate and support practical training are significant factors for its overall effectiveness.

Mentoring can be seen as an opportunity for professional development and empowerment. Zwedberg et al. found that good mentoring is directly related to midwives' perception of self-efficacy. By improving their role as mentors, they are better able to help their mentees achieve confidence and independence (2020).

The choice to take on the role of "mentor" poses challenges, new responsibilities, but also brings positives. Mentoring is a strong motivation for improving educational level, professional and pedagogical qualifications, which lead to a satisfactory status and authority in the health organization. For more than half of the midwives /53.7%/, financial satisfaction is a determining factor for choosing to be a mentor.

One of the recommendations of the international team that prepared the "Guideline on clinical nurse mentor's mentoring competence development" is that mentors should constantly reflect on their personal mentoring competence and plan strategies for their professional development, as well as their development as mentors (2021). Our study found that for about 1/3 of the respondents /32.8%/ the opportunity for personal development is a factor that strengthens the role of the midwife-mentor.

The analysis of the results obtained and our own long-term pedagogical experience allow us to differentiate the factors that strengthen mentoring in the practical training of students in the specialty "Midwifery" /Fig. 4/:

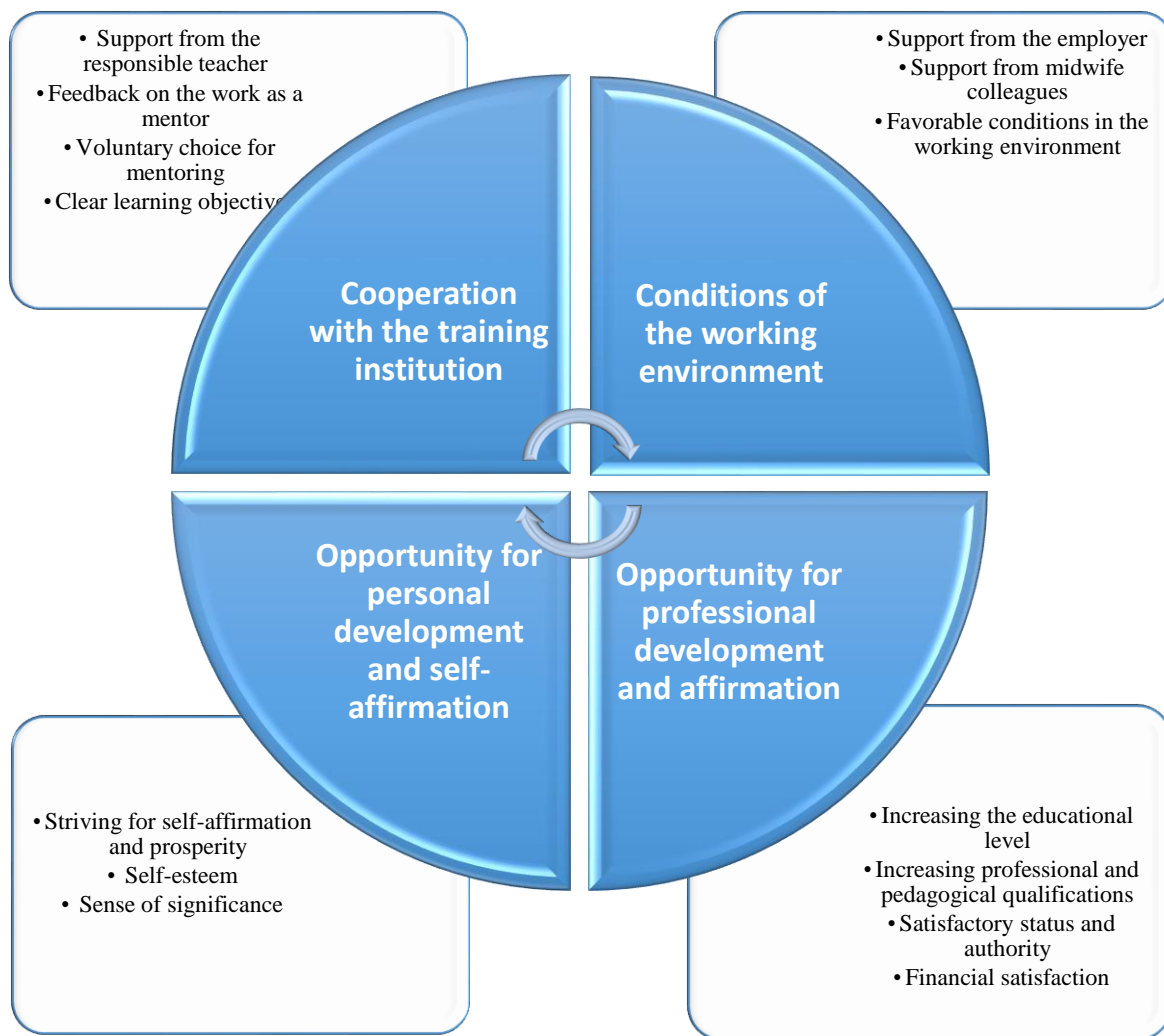


Fig. 4 Factors Influencing the Establishment of Mentors in Practical Training

Conclusion

Effective mentoring in the practical training of midwifery students requires well-planned training, including organization, mentoring support for students, as well as an appropriate level of control.

The study identifies the following leading factors for improving the supervision and practical training of students in the specialty "Midwifery": the student being prepared and taking responsibility for his/her training; solid professional experience and skillful supportive guidance of the mentor; a small number of trainees in a group; the support of colleagues-midwives indirectly and informally involved in the practical training; regular communication and cooperation with the responsible university lecturers.

The analysis of the results obtained and our own long-term pedagogical experience allow us to differentiate the factors that strengthen mentoring in the practical training of students in the specialty "Midwifery" in four areas: cooperation with the training institution; conditions of the work environment; opportunity for professional and personal development and affirmation.

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