

Review Paper

Midwifery Students' Learning Styles in Iran: A Review Study Based on Kolb's Learning Theory



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ABSTRACT

Background Identifying the factors that contribute to learning is one of the most important research goals. Learning style is one of these important and effective factors. The predominant learning styles of students in different universities of Iran are different.

Objective This study aimed to review the learning styles of midwifery students in Iran based on Kolb's learning theory.

Materials and Methods In this review study, a search was conducted in Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, SID, and MagIran databases on articles published during 2000-2020 by using the keywords: Learning styles, midwifery students, and Kolb's theory in Persian and English. Out of 28 eligible articles, 9 articles were finally reviewed.

Results Learning in midwifery students is usually done by using different styles, the most common of which was convergent style followed by assimilative style.

Conclusion The predominant learning styles of midwifery students in Iran are convergent and assimilative styles. While considering individual differences, educational planning and selection of teaching method should be done in a way that is appropriate for different learning styles of midwifery students and a variety of new and innovative teaching methods should be used.

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Learning is the underlying principle of all human progress in today's world [1]. It is affected by several factors [2, 3]. Identifying these effective factors is one of the important goals of scholars. One of these important factors that have a great impact on student learning is learning style [4]. Learning styles are

a set of characteristics that can be used as an indicator to understand how people learn and how to receive, process, and use information to solve problems [5, 6]. They are divided into three groups of cognitive, affective and physiological behaviors [7]. One of the models of cognitive styles is the experiential learning cycle proposed by Kolb, which consists of 4 stages including Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation [8]. Combining these four learning stages, Kolb identified four types of learning styles namely convergent,

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divergent, assimilative and accommodative styles [9]. The studies conducted in the field of Kolb's learning styles in Iran and other countries have shown the existence of various learning styles of students from different disciplines. No study was found on the learning styles of midwifery students. In this regard and due to the importance of learning styles and individual differences of learners, this study aims to review the learning styles of Iranian midwifery students based on Kolb's learning styles (convergent, divergent, assimilative and accommodative).

2. Materials and Methods

This is a narrative review study. A search was conducted on the articles published from 2000 to 2020 using the keywords: Learning style, Midwifery Students, and Kolb theory. The initial search yielded 215 articles related to the learning style of midwifery students. 42 were found in Google Scholar, 38 in PubMed and Scopus, and 26 and 93 articles were found in national databases including MagIran and SID, respectively. The rest were yielded by searching the websites of medical education journals in Persian and English using appropriate keywords. In the next step, the articles with duplicate titles were removed (n=187). Then, the full text and abstracts of the remained articles were reviewed. Finally, the decision for the selection of articles for review was made based on inclusion and exclusion criteria which were the publication year, availability of full texts, relevance to the learning styles of midwifery students, and study in one of the provinces of Iran. Articles that examined the learning styles other than Kolb's learning styles, presented at conferences, had unavailable full text, or evaluated non-midwifery students were excluded. The relevance of articles was independently examined by two researchers. The required data were extracted using a pre-prepared checklist. The articles that had the items determined in the checklist were selected. Thus, 19 articles were removed and finally 9 articles were selected and reviewed.

3. Results

The review of the articles showed that the learning in midwifery students was usually done using several styles and the most common learning styles were convergent and assimilative styles, although the change in learning styles were frequently observed in various studies. The multiplicity of learning styles in midwifery students indicates that learning may not be done using just one style or a particular style does not prevail; sometimes several styles may be used to learn a subject during a training session. There was variation among the dominant learning styles in most studies. Given that these studies have

been conducted in different universities and among students with different demographic characteristics, it may be claimed that demographic characteristics can play an important role in determining the dominant learning style of midwifery students.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The convergent learning style was the superior style of midwifery students. Convergent people have the greatest ability to work with abstract concepts and put ideas into practice. They are more likely to learn by doing tasks individually and as a teaching assistant. Traditional teaching methods such as lectures, projects and group discussions often seem boring to them. Therefore, in medical education for convergent people, new teaching methods should be used such as problem-based learning and self-learning. Although each learning model and style has its own strengths, the weak aspects of the learning cycle may remain weak if not taken into account.

Given that the midwifery discipline is fully communicative, people-centered, and scientific and considering that convergent and assimilative students are less interested in topics that require working with other people, it is necessary for university professors and lecturers to pay more attention to these issues in order to strengthen and increase the necessary capabilities for this group of learners in educational and work environments in the future by using different educational strategies.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

None of the data was manipulated to support the final result of the research and all available studies in line with the research topic are mentioned.

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Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed to preparing this article.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.