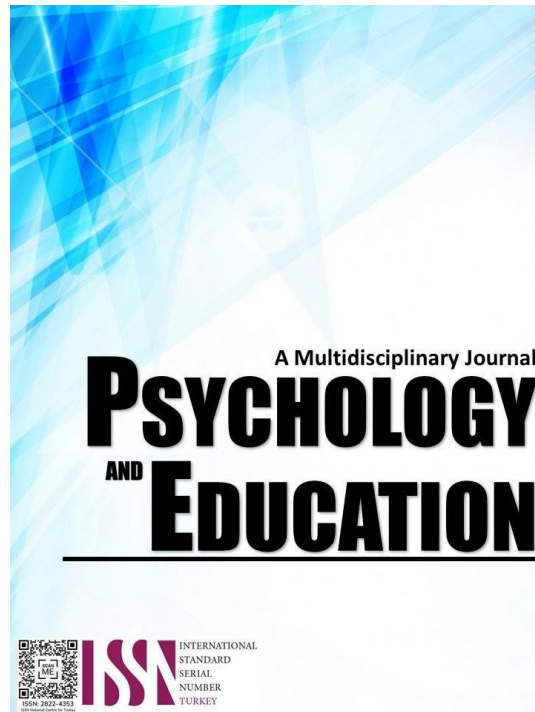


THE THRIVING LIVES OF RETIRED MIDWIVES IN THE 6TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF PANGASINAN



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The Thriving Lives of Retired Midwives in the 6th Congressional District of Pangasinan

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Abstract

Retirement is the action or fact of leaving one's job. The purpose of this local novel-type study is to examine the lives of retired midwives in the 6th Congressional District of Pangasinan. Four themes emerged in this study, which are the following: their perspectives as retired midwives, their fears, their realizations, and their opinions on recommending their previous work. The study used a qualitative research method using an unstructured interview anchored on the Role Theory and Resource-Based Dynamic Model for Retirement Adjustment. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to identify the participants. The study had 7 participants who were all retired midwives aged 60 and above. Their responses were analyzed by Inductive Analysis using the Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir. The study revealed that the participants had a fruitful retirement, although with reservations about missing their previous job. Furthermore, they are content in their situation, though they have fears in relation to having illnesses that can impact their aging journey. Even though they are retired, they still help the community in any way they can and would recommend their past job to future generations. This study recommends that further research be conducted to add to the existing literature on the lives of these retired professionals.

Keywords: *retirement, aging, fulfillment, midwives, leaving one's job*

Introduction

One factor contributing to the issue is the aging workforce of midwives; a study conducted in Australia indicates that retirements will lead to a significant decrease in the number of seasoned midwives from 2018 to 2023 (Callander et al., 2021).

The increasing rates of midwifery staff leaving the profession in Australia could have a major influence on the future of midwifery and families in the country (Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery, Australia and New Zealand, 2023). Government statistics published in 2019 indicate that nearly one-third of midwives are aged 55 or older, approaching retirement age (Midwives NHWDS Fact Sheet, 2019).

Over the next decade, the number of retirements will exceed the availability and experience of younger midwives to take their place, given that fewer than 20% of the midwifery workforce falls within the 25 to 34 age range (Midwives NHWDS Fact Sheet, 2019). There is a deficiency in data that accurately depicts current trends in the midwifery workforce, despite growing worries regarding the loss of midwifery jobs in Australia. Consequently, Australia lacks a robust predictive planning framework to address future demands for its midwifery workforce (Callander et al., 2021).

As of March 2023, there were 41,715 registered midwives in the UK, representing a 3.9% increase from April 2022, according to data from the NMC (2023). However, according to the Royal College of Midwives (2022), there is a shortage of about 2000 midwives nationwide. In addition to reaching retirement age, midwives in the UK cited stress, burnout, increasing workloads, a lack of support, and poor staffing as the main reasons for quitting the field, according to an NMC poll.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to interview retired midwives about their everyday experiences to learn more about their lives. "What are your lived experiences as a retired midwife?" was the main question to be asked.

Literature Gap

There are published studies on the aging workforce regarding nurses and midwives, but no studies have been conducted on the actual lived experiences of retired midwives at the local level. In addition, there is a scarcity of the latest related literature on retired midwives.

This local novel type of study aims to delve into the experiences of retired midwives. The lack of studies regarding the subject matter can serve as a reference for future studies, not just for midwives but also for other medical professions, in conjunction with Sustainable Development Goal Number 3, which is "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

Methodology

Research Design

Using a qualitative-descriptive research methodology, this study analyzes issues and research findings, employing Simone de Beauvoir's technique, while exploring social phenomena such as history, behavior, and kinship through a survey of the literature. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of participant narratives, the researchers can employ documentation techniques such as dialogue, images (scenes), and duration, in addition to observational data, thanks to the descriptive qualitative methodology's suitability

for in-depth analysis and flexibility in data collection (Setiawan & Anggito, 2018). Character features, speech, settings, and other components related to ideas and their applicability to existentialist feminism can all be interpreted freely with this method.

Participants

Participants in this study include 7 retired midwives in the 6th Congressional District of Pangasinan. Participants who met the following criteria were chosen through a Purposive and Snowball Sampling: (1) should have retired from work; (2) should be within a retirement age of 60 and above; (3) regardless of gender; and (4) still working or not working.

Based on the availability of both participants and researchers, data collection continued until it was determined that no further responses could be obtained. To prevent reaching saturation, employing an iterative approach for data collection serves as a proactive measure. Rather than strictly following a pre-established research plan, researchers should be willing to modify their research questions and methodologies in response to initial findings. This practice, commonly referred to as "adaptive research," allows researchers to investigate emerging patterns and themes as they emerge. For example, if initial interviews uncover unexpected consumer motivations, researchers can modify their subsequent data collection efforts to explore this area further, possibly revealing new insights. In order to ensure the protection of participant rights during interviews, informed consent was utilized. The entire month of March 2025 was designated for data collection, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Instrument

In phenomenological studies, the primary technique for collecting data involves conducting in-depth interviews with participants to uncover the flow of consciousness. The questions utilized during the interview process were open-ended and presented in an informal way. However, this approach can be enhanced by incorporating additional methods such as document analysis, participatory observation, and others. This methodology is used to analyze and illustrate social phenomena through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory. By applying this perspective, the research aims to clarify the relationship between existentialist feminist theory and societal constructs of femininity, thus allowing for a deeper exploration of issues related to prevailing gender norms in society.

Procedure

A formal invitation was sent to individuals who were accessible to the researchers. Those who consented to participate after reviewing the invitation were then scheduled for interviews, with approval from the Ethics Review Board. Participants were provided with information about the trial and given consent forms that aligned with institutional guidelines. The researchers built rapport with participants by showing them respect, listening carefully, and clarifying any unclear points.

To collect data from participants for this study, various methods such as an unstructured questionnaire, field notes, observations, and informal conversations were employed. Unstructured interviews, as noted by Minichiello et al. (1990), do not adhere to a predetermined list of questions and responses; instead, they facilitate social interaction between researchers and informants. Punch (1998) highlights that unstructured interviews can reveal intricate human behavior without limiting the scope of the research. Patton (2002) adds that unstructured interviews naturally extend participant observation, although they are commonly utilized in ongoing research since they involve asking questions that arise spontaneously during discussions.

The interviewer utilized Simone de Beauvoir's method to convey participants' narratives, intentionally setting aside personal assumptions and biases. Interviews lasted between 15 to 20 minutes, including probing questions based on participants' responses to ensure consistency and compliance with informed consent. Participants were encouraged to ask questions regarding the research objectives, types of interventions, selection criteria, protocols, risks, incentives, and confidentiality prior to consenting to the interview. To prevent saturation, the researchers conducted data collection in iterative phases, contingent on the availability of both participants and the researchers. This proactive strategy facilitates the investigation of emergent patterns and themes as they develop. Adaptive research enables researchers to modify their questions and techniques in accordance with preliminary findings.

With participants' consent, the interview was recorded, allowing interviewers to focus on the conversation rather than note-taking. The recorded interview was logged, and the researchers listened to the audio multiple times before transcribing and coding it to accurately reflect the shared information. The study was executed through in-person interviews at various sites, taking careful measures for participant comfort to ensure privacy and prevent eavesdropping.

Data Analysis

Inductive analysis methods were employed to evaluate the data. The inductive approach refers to a data analysis method that begins with specific observations and draws broader conclusions based on these observations. This analytical method is more commonly associated with qualitative research methodologies. To ensure a thorough investigation and alignment with research goals, data is gathered and then meticulously analyzed using descriptive analytic methods.

The initial stage of research is data reduction, which encompasses selecting, organizing, and abstracting the collected material. This process is executed through the coherence method, which aims to preserve crucial processes and statements within the research data. Data abstraction is utilized to construct core records from data mining outcomes, confirming that the gathered data fits within the

study's scope. This step is essential when dealing with evidence that is complex and inconsistent with the research theme. Data reduction plays a vital role in maintaining the relevance of data by streamlining and eliminating unnecessary information.

The subsequent step is to present the data. Selected and reduced data can be articulated coherently, resulting in organized information from which conclusions can be derived. The outcomes of the data analysis in this study were conveyed in a descriptive narrative format. Since qualitative research data is typically more dominant in narrative form, it requires simplification while preserving the essential content.

The final stage involves formulating conclusions and validating the data. Once the prior steps are completed, the research data is ready for examination and validation through a process of revisiting and questioning it to achieve a more precise understanding. The verification of provisional findings can be reiterated by retracing all completed research steps. Drawing conclusions is defined as reviewing the collected data, making reductions based on research notes, and formulating preliminary results.

Ethical Considerations

The research employed a phenomenological method to collect narratives from participants regarding their experiences. Ethical considerations were made, ensuring participants were informed about the elements and techniques of the study. Consent was obtained through chat, allowing participants the flexibility to rearrange interview times without any pressure. Before participating, the research objectives were outlined to the participants.

The researchers prioritized beneficence, justice, and autonomy, which influenced the selection of volunteers and helped build trust in the study. By setting aside pre-existing beliefs, the researchers aimed to focus on the participants' responses and reassured them of the study's support, acknowledging their vulnerability.

Confidentiality was upheld during the data collection process, as participants' names were substituted with numbers to safeguard their identities. Results were meticulously transcribed to prevent misrepresentation of information. The researchers honored agreements, treated participants with honesty, and provided meals following the interviews.

Data will be retained for five years before being deleted, and participants were informed that there were no associated risks; however, nine potential participants chose to withdraw. The study followed measures to prevent bias by conducting interviews solely with individuals and ensuring their financial and personal interests remained confidential, in line with ethical principles.

Results and Discussion

From the analyses of the data gathered from the verbalizations of the experience of the participants, there were four themes that emerged: (1) perspectives as retired midwives, (2) the fears in retirement, (3) realizations after retirement, and (4) recommending their previous work to younger generations.

Retired midwives are still thriving despite their old age. These professionals have contributed so much to the lives of others and deserve a peaceful life after retirement. Others might also be working part-time to alleviate their boredom. This study explores the lives of midwives after retirement and reaching the fruitful age of 60 or beyond.

Theme 1: Perspectives as a Retired Midwife

This is the first theme to emerge from this study, and it presents the perspectives or point of view of the participants towards their retirement.

Subtheme 1: Happiness After Retirement

Most participants expressed that they are happy with their retirement and are able to resume their focus on participating in family activities, enjoying their relaxing time without the usual pressure from work.

Participant 3 Shared:

“Bilang isang retired midwife masaya dahil hindi na naabala lalo na sa gabi dahil sa pagpapanak. Tinanggap ko ng maluwa sa kalooban ko dahil naabot na sa edad ko ang taong magretiro at para makapahinga na ako. Ang pinagkakaabalahan ko ay ang pag aalaga ng mga apo ko at masaya ako sa araw araw na kasama ko sila.”

As a retired midwife, I'm happy because I am no longer disturbed, especially at night, due to childbirth. I accepted it with an open heart because I have reached the age to retire and finally rest. What keeps me busy is taking care of my grandchildren, and I am happy every day that I am with them.

Participant 1 Shared:

“Bilang isang retired midwife na wala na sa trabaho sa umpisa ay medyo boring kasi namimis ko yung daily routine ko but the most of it is so relaxing in the sense that di mo na iisipin na bumangon ng maaga para mag work. Bilang isang retired midwife busy ako sa pag aalaga sa apo ko at sa paghahalaman.”

As a retired midwife who is no longer working, it was a bit boring at first because I missed my daily routine, but most of it is so relaxing in the sense that you don't have to think about waking up early to go to work. As a retired midwife, I am busy taking care of my grandchild and gardening.

Retirement gives couples more time to live together and be close, which fosters marriage and family happiness as well as shared life pleasures. The absence of children, which allows for unfettered communication as well as shared hobbies and housework, may be the cause of this intimacy. This enables the two to spend leisurely moments together (Franca et al., 2012; Zanelli, 2012).

Subtheme 2: Lack of Income After Retirement and Adjustment

Lack of income is one of the perspectives of the participants. After retirement, employment income ceases, and thereafter, the pension is the primary source of income for participants. Either way, a lack of income is common among the participants. Additionally, the transition from working to a non-working situation also had an impact on daily life.

Participant 5 Shared:

“Sa unang buwan nung nakapag retired na ako ay medyo mahirap kasi wala na yung buwanang sahod na hinihintay.”

In the first month after I retired, it was a bit difficult because there was no longer a monthly salary to look forward to.

Participant 6 Shared:

“Medyo mahirap dahil wala na akong hinihintay na sweldo at kailangan na alagaan ko din ang sarili ko.”

It's a bit difficult because I no longer have a salary to look forward to, and I also need to take care of myself.

According to current forecasts, the income replacement rates for aging baby boomers will vary from 60% to 80% (Brady, 2010; Dalirazar, 2010). As a result, new retirees may expect a 30% loss in income. This decrease in income may alter seniors' social status, resulting in a decrease in their sense of well-being and relative deprivation due to negative comparisons to their previous salary (Diener, 1984; Easterlin, 1974). As previously stated, study findings on the impact of retirement-related income loss on retiree well-being are not entirely consistent.

Subtheme 3: Working as Part-Time Employees

Some of the participants are currently working as part-time employees after retirement, indicating that there is still strength in them to continue working despite their age. This suggests that it might be to augment a source of income or maybe to alleviate their boredom.

Participant 4 Shared:

“Ito ako ngayon, isang caregiver dito sa ibang bansa.”

Here I am now, a caregiver here in another country.

Participant 2 Shared:

“Sa ngayon nagtratrabaho ako muli bilang isang Clinical instructor ng Caregiver North Gate na related din sa dating serbisyo sa mga tao, bagkos ang pagkakaiba ay ang pagpapanak ay hindi na kasali.”

Right now, I am working again as a Clinical Instructor at Caregiver North Gate, which is also related to my previous service to people, but the difference is that childbirth is no longer included.

Part-time work is viewed as a social policy measure to keep older workers in the workforce (Hess et al., 2018). Older workers are encouraged to work longer and retire later by having the option to work part-time. Furthermore, part-time work is regarded as having the potential to protect senior adults' health while simultaneously prolonging their working lives (Eurofound, 2016).

Theme 2: Fears After Retirement

This is the second theme to emerge from the study, highlighting the fears participants face after retirement.

Common among the participants is the fear of deteriorating health or going into a sedentary lifestyle. For them, after retirement, it might lead them to a sedentary lifestyle because of the absence of routine work from their previous job. Another is sickness that can affect them due to their depleting immune system, which makes them prone to diseases.

Participant 4 Shared:

“Ang fears ko ay sana huwag magkasakit para patuloy na maenjoy ko ang buhay ng isang retired midwife at makasama pa ng matagal ang aking mga kapatid at ang nanay.”

My fears are that I hope I don't get sick so I can continue to enjoy the life of a retired midwife and be with my siblings and mother for a long time.

Participant 3 Shared:

“Fear ko bilang isang retired na midwife ay ang magkaroon ng sakit na malubha dahil ayaw kung pumanaw ng maaga at gusto ko pang makasama ng matagal at mapalaki ang aking mga apo.”

My fear as a retired midwife is getting a serious illness because I don't want to pass away early, and I want to be around for a long time to see my grandchildren grow up.

Participant 2 Shared:

“Fears ko pag wala ka ng trabaho na pinagkakaabalahan syempre andyan yong panay tulog kain panonood ng tv at pasyal dyan na lalabas ang mga sakit sa katawan.”

My fear is that when you no longer have a job to keep you busy, you'll just end up sleeping, eating, watching TV, and going out, and that's when the body aches will start to show.

Several empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of retirement on one's health later in life; nevertheless, the findings have been mixed, and the mechanisms at work are complicated and variable. According to fundamental labor supply theory, retirement improves the health of older individuals by reducing the disutility of employment, increasing free time, and relieving them of work-related responsibilities. This leads to gains in well-being, mental health, and subjective health (Rose, 2020; Eibich, 2015; Kesavayuth et al., 2018; Shai, 2018; Gorrry et al., 2018).

Increased post-retirement physical activity time significantly improves elderly health, as demonstrated by Grossman's health capital model (Grossman, 1972), which states that an increase in leisure time after retirement indicates a decrease in the opportunity cost of health investment activities. Healthy lifestyle choices, such as getting more and better sleep (Eibich, 2015; Gorrry et al., 2018), quitting smoking (Zhu, 2016; Gorrry et al., 2018), participating in outdoor activities (Tran and Zikos, 2019), and using healthcare more frequently (Frimmel and Pruckner, 2020), can also help people stay healthier after retirement.

Theme 3: Realizations after Retirement

This is the third theme to emerge in this study and shows the participants' views on retirement.

Subtheme 1: Importance of Maintaining Health

Some participants realized that maintaining optimal health is essential after retirement. With old age on the line, it is important that having good health means a fruitful aging process.

Participant 5 Shared:

“Ang na realize ko bilang isang retired na midwife patuloy na palakasin natin ang ating pisikal na pangangatawan at para patuloy parin na tumulong sa kapwa at sa mahal sa buhay.”

What I realized as a retired midwife is that we should continue to strengthen our physical bodies so we can keep helping others and our loved ones.

Participant 1 Shared:

“Dapat malakas ang katawan ko para ma enjoy ko naman ang retirement ko kasi for how many years rin naman ako nagtrabaho.”

My body should be strong so I can enjoy my retirement because I've worked for so many years.

Retirement is widely recognized as a watershed moment in people's physical activity practices as they age. As a result, retirement may provide a considerable "window" for targeting treatments to increase or maintain levels of physical activity (Lang et al., 2007; Allender et al., 2008; Rice et al., 2010).

Subtheme 2: Altruism

Altruism is the notion or practice of caring about the well-being of others without regard for one's own interests. Some midwives have discovered that they can still make a positive impact and benefit the community after retirement, and they will continue to contribute in whatever way they can, regardless of their age.

Participant 4 Shared:

“Na realize ko na need natin na patuloy na maging matapang at lumaban sa hamon ng buhay para makatulong pa sa kapwa natin at sa mga mahal sa buhay.”

I realized that we need to continue being brave and fighting the challenges of life so we can help our fellow beings and our loved ones.

Participant 7 Shared:

“Ang realization ko ay kahit matanda na ako, yung knowledge and skills ko ay pwede ko pa rin ipasa sa mga willing na matuto. At the same time, pwede pa rin ako tumulong hanggang kaya ko.”

My realization is that even though I am old, I can still pass on my knowledge and skills to those who are willing to learn. At the same time, I can still help as long as I can.

A growing body of research utilizing self-report, behavioral, and neurological measures suggests that older people are more altruistic than younger adults (Freund & Blanchard-Fields, 2014; Hubbard et al., 2016; Midlarsky & Hannah, 1989). However, the mechanisms behind this relationship remain unknown.

While the specifics of these theoretical positions differ, they nonetheless make the same assumption: that elderly people's increased compassion stems from shifts in their core priorities, beliefs, and goals. These changes are interpreted as either a response to a shrinking future time horizon (Carstensen et al., 1999) or as a result of life experiences that promote growth (Erikson, 1982; Roberts et al., 2006).

Subtheme 3: Missing the Old Job

Adjustment and acceptance are parts of retirement. Working for many years and providing great service is a basis for job satisfaction, even after retirement, implying that the person has had a fruitful retirement. However, there are instances where, after retirement, a person misses the routine of work or the pleasure of working before retirement.

Participant 3 Shared:

“Bilang isang retired midwife na realize ko noong unang buwan ay halos umiiyak sa gabi naalala ko ang trabaho ng isang midwife kasi 30 years ako na naging public servant at hinahanap ko pa rin ung dati kong ginagawa gaya ng magbarangay, magbakuna at mag checkup ng buntis at magpaanak.”

As a retired midwife, I realized during the first month that I was almost crying at night, reminiscing about the work of a midwife because I spent 30 years as a public servant and I still miss what I used to do, like visiting barangays, administering vaccinations, checking on pregnant women, and delivering babies.

Participant 1 Shared

“Na realize ko bilang isang retired na midwife na kontento ako at very proud sa pagpili ng kursong eto kasi sa experience ko ng more than 30 years ay sobrang dami kong natulungan na nanay sa pagluwal ng mga babies nila at sa mga barangays na nahawakan ko rin maraming klase ng tao ang nakasalamuha ko at marami din akong natulungan. Pero, nakakamiss lang ang dating trabaho ko.”

I realized as a retired midwife that I am content and very proud of choosing this profession because with my experience of more than 30 years, I have helped so many mothers give birth to their babies. In the barangays I have worked in, I have also encountered many kinds of people and have helped many of them. But I really miss my old job.

Although missing work has been studied as a predictor of post-retirement morale (e.g., Martin Matthews & Brown, 1987), retirement satisfaction (McGoldrick & Cooper, 1994), and intentions to unretire (Schlosser, Zinni, & Armstrong-Stassen, 2012), little is known about the factors that predict this developmental aspect of the post-retirement process itself.

Theme 4: Recommending the Previous Work to Younger Generations

This is the fourth and last theme to emerge in this study, and it discusses the opinions of the

Participants in recommending their past jobs to younger generations. For them, the profession had been a fruitful part of their lives and their insights about being a midwife are relevant.

Participant 1 Shared:

“Sa mga kabataan, oo, maererekomenda ko ang pagiging midwife dahil very challenging ang profession na eto bukod sa okay ang financial earnings magiging famous ka rin lalo na kung magaling at mabait kang magpaanak at pati sa community services. I am very proud retired midwife enjoying my life as of now to the fullest.”

To the youth, yes, I would recommend becoming a midwife because this profession is very challenging. Aside from good financial earnings, you will also become famous, especially if you are skilled and kind in delivering babies and in community services. I am a very proud retired midwife, enjoying my life to the fullest as of now.

Participant 3 Shared:

“Para sa mga kabataan, ang para sa akin mahirap ang trabaho ng isang midwife dahil hawak ko ang dalawang buhay sa ina at sa baby pero maganda at masaya ang maging isang midwife.”

In my opinion, being a midwife is a challenging job, as I hold two lives in my hands: the mother and the baby. However, being a midwife is also beautiful and fulfilling.

Participant 4 Shared:

“Oo, marerekomenda ko kasi mahalaga ang isang midwife mahirap man ito nakakapagod pero masarap sa pakiramdam ang matulungan mo ang isang ina para mailuwal niya ang kanyang anak at the same time sa mga kapwa natin na nangangailangan ng tulong patungkol sa medical.”

Yes, I would recommend it because a midwife is important. Even though it is difficult and tiring, it feels great to help a mother give birth to her child and at the same time, assist our fellow beings who need medical help.

According to Dolan et al. (2008), the "Domains-of-life Approach" to subjective well-being emphasizes the significance of work quality in social inquiry and well-being studies. There is not enough information available to draw firm conclusions on the relationship between work type and well-being, according to a 2007 study. A new assessment is necessary, nevertheless, emphasizing the significance of future studies and policy attention on the relationship between employment quality and well-being in light of the advent of specialized working conditions surveys, further data generation, and heightened policy focus.

According to Budd and Spencer (2015), meeting the needs of employees involves more than just completing tasks and making money. It also means providing them with a safe and healthy workplace, a safe future, a sense of self, and social interaction. Incomes, employment opportunities, working time quality, skills and discretion, work intensity, physical environment, and social environment are the seven components of job quality that the European Parliament and the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions have identified in order to protect workers' well-being. The European Parliament uses these themes—which vary depending on the data—to assess the caliber of vocations. (European Parliament 2016; Eurofound 2012).

Conclusions

According to the study's findings, the participants are content and at ease in their roles as retired midwives, and they continue to have a charitable inclination to help others. They often miss their former occupations, notwithstanding the length of time they have worked in their careers and the routine they were used to. However, they often fear illness, which may hinder their ability to age well. However, because of their positive attitude towards their past occupation and their fruitful retirement, they would recommend that younger generations pursue a career in midwifery.

The study does, however, make the following recommendations: (1) preserve the value of these professionals' knowledge and skills; (2) connect them to appropriate social work activities and health maintenance programs to monitor and ensure their well-being; (3) always treat these senior citizens with dignity and courtesy; (4) empower these retirees in their post-career lives and tap them as resource person to be beacons in promoting to younger generations the importance of midwifery in the healthcare setting; and (5) conduct additional local research to gather more information to add to the existing body of knowledge as well as to contribute to key stakeholders.

This study could serve as a baseline for future research on the welfare of retired medical professionals. The study's findings are also influencing measures to improve the well-being of retired midwives, and others interested in expanding the knowledge on this topic may utilize it as a starting point. This work is clearly significant.

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