



Factors Influencing Midwifery Students' Decision to Choose the Midwifery Education Program in Albania

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Abstract

Edited by: Igor Spiroski

Citation: Kraja J, Marku M, Belisha S, Pjetri E, Rached CDA, Podgorica N. Factors Influencing Midwifery Students' Decision to Choose the Midwifery Education Program in Albania. Open Access Maced J Med Sci. 2022 Apr 23; 10(G):461-466.
<https://doi.org/10.3889/oamjms.2022.9547>

Keywords: Midwifery student; Quantitative research; Motivation; Extrinsic factors; Intrinsic factors; Career

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Received: 25-Mar-2022

Revised: 12-Apr-2022

Accepted: 13-Apr-2022

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Funding: This research did not receive any financial support

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist

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BACKGROUND: Midwives, as an essential part of the health-care professionals, make a necessary contribution to the health-care system. They are in demand in developed countries and developing countries like Albania.

AIM: This study was carried out to identify the main factors that influence the students' decisions about choosing midwifery as their career.

METHODS: A quantitative descriptive research design was used to identify the motivating reasons for attending midwifery. This quantitative explorative study was born at the University of Shkodra, Albania, with the midwifery students in February–March 2022. One hundred seventeen voluntary students were included in the study. The data were collected online through a questionnaire prepared by the authors and analyzed with the SPSS software, using exploratory factor analysis with the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test.

RESULTS: It was found that five main domain factors influence students on choosing midwifery as a future career. "Extrinsic rewards of midwifery" and "Employment security over midwifery life" were considered more critical domains. The dominant issues included were about: security, economic welfare, career opportunities, transferring to nursing studies, and more possibilities to work as a midwife in other countries.

CONCLUSIONS: The findings of this study provided valuable information regarding motivating factors that attract the new generation to join midwifery in Albania. Understanding why people choose to study midwifery may help managers and educators develop student focused and enticing midwifery programs.

Introduction

Midwifery has been practiced for centuries and has features and characteristics that have evolved differently according to local or regional cultural and social traditions and knowledge worldwide. According to the International Code of Ethics for Midwives (ICM) definition of the midwife: "A midwife is a person who has completed a midwifery education program that is duly recognized in the country where it is located, and that is based on the ICM Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice and the framework of the ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education; who has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practice midwifery and use the title "midwife;" and who demonstrates competency in the practice of midwifery [1], [2].

While literature reports that nursing as a career is viewed favorably by society as it offers job security, mobility, and a future career [3], for midwifery, the literature does not yet report the same thing.

Midwifery education in Albania

As in many countries in Albania, the bachelor's study program in midwifery is a new program, starting after the 2000s. This program attracts students with defined ideas about the midwife profession [4]. The Nurse–Midwife study program started for the first time at the University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi" in the academic year 2007–2008, with the decision of the Council of Ministers no. 3955, dated June 01, 2007, as a full-time system. Although the study program is called Nurse–Midwife, students who complete their studies are provided with a bachelor's degree in midwifery. This study program was opened according to the directives of the Bologna Charter; it is a 3-year program and consists of 180 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. The number of students in this program has always been constant, 80 students per year, but during the past 3 years, the number has decreased by increasing the number of students in the nursing study program. For the academic year 2021–2022, 11 midwifery students transferred to the nursing study program and continue to do this transformation.

Choosing a profession is a significant decision that shapes a person's life. In some developed countries, choosing to study midwifery has been influenced by personal and extrinsic factors, including the willingness to help others and altruism [5], [6], [7], [8]. Unlike developed countries, in low-income countries, factors such as professional and extrinsic, such as job security and salary, career opportunities, and working in developed countries, have motivated students to study midwifery [5], [7], [9], [10].

There is a lack of information about the factors influencing the midwifery students' choices for studying midwifery. Furthermore, literature reports a global shortage of nurses and midwives, causing Albania to face health-care crises [3], [7]. Due to the lack of midwives working in Albania, this study may help create strategies to attract more students to choose midwifery as their future career in Albania.

Aim and objectives

The objectis to attract more students into midwifery, there is a need to identify the factors influencing their decision. Therefore, this study aims to identify the main factors according to their perceptions that influence the midwifery students' decisions to choose midwifery as their career.

Methods

Study design, setting, and sample

A quantitative descriptive research design was used to identify the motivating reasons for attending midwifery. The survey was conducted in the midwifery department between February and March 2022 at "Luigj Gurakuqi" University of Shkoder, Albania. As a sampling method, convenience sampling was used. Midwifery students were invited to participate in the study. After giving their non-verbal consent, students from semesters 1 to 6 ($n = 117$) who were enrolled in the 3-year Bachelor in Midwifery program constituted the population of this study.

Ethical consideration

All participants received information about the study and provided verbal consent before the commencement of the data collection. They participated on a volunteer base and were free to withdraw from the survey at every moment without any consequences. Data protection procedures were followed, and confidentiality was provided. The ethical board of the principal researcher's institution approved the study.

Measurement and instrument

The data were collected based on an 18-item self-explanatory questionnaire, which consisted of a two-section form.

Section I: demographic survey comprises four questions related to the participant's age, gender, year of the study, residency, and economic status.

Section II was composed of two parts: Students' thoughts and decisions in career choice motivation; were comprised of 9 items, and the respondents assessed each item on a five-point Likert scale to indicate the level of importance for each item. Responses ranged from 1 (not important) to 5 (always important).

Reasons influencing the decision to choose midwifery as a career; comprised 8 items where 6 items required the participants to answer "yes" or "no" to the questions, and 2-item consisted of open-ended answers.

The questionnaire was created considering the "Motivating Reasons in the Decision to Enter Nursing" developed by Rebecca McCabe, Margaret Nowak, and Scott Mullen in 2005 [11].

Data analysis

The collected data were entered into SPSS version 23 [12]. Descriptive statistics of demographics related to frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation were conducted and tabulated (Table 1). Descriptive statistics related to the frequency of responses to all other items are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1: Sociodemographic data of the sample

Sociodemographic data	Level	n ^a (%)	95% CI (lo ^b -hi ^c)
Age	18–20	103 (88.03)	80.79–92.86
	21–24	13 (11.11)	6.48–18.21
	29+	1 (0.85)	0.00–5.16
Gender	Female	113 (96.58)	91.25–98.95
	Male	4 (3.42)	1.05–8.75
Study year	First year	54 (46.15)	37.39–55.17
	Second year	29 (24.79)	17.81–33.37
	Third year	34 (29.06)	21.58–37.87
Residency	Rural	63 (53.85)	44.83–62.61
	Urban	54 (46.15)	37.39–55.17
Economic status	Low	16 (13.68)	8.49–21.17
	Moderate	92 (78.63)	70.30–85.14
	High	9 (7.69)	3.93–14.15

^an: Number of students, ^blo: Lower limit of CI, ^chi: Upper limit of CI. CI: Confidence interval.

Then, a factor analysis was applied to determine the correlation between the items regarding major choice motivation [13].

Factor analysis tested all items for suitability before exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value was >0.6 , and the communal value for all items was >0.4 [13]. Varimax rotation of the factors was used to obtain a clearer picture of the pattern of factor loading. Kaiser and Rice (1974) recommend that a factor should have at least three items in the final

Table 2: Students' thoughts and perceptions in career choice motivation

Students' perceptions in career choice	Degree	n ^a (%)	95%CI (lo ^b -hi ^c)
Q-1. Is it easy to get a job as a midwifery?	None	11 (9.48)	5.23-16.33
	A little	40 (34.48)	26.44-43.52
	Average	57 (49.14)	40.21-58.12
	Often	8 (6.04)	3.34-13.21
	Missing	1 (0.85)	
Q-2. Is it possible to have a career in the midwifery profession?	None	10 (8.55)	4.55-15.18
	A little	33 (28.21)	20.82-36.98
	Average	37 (31.62)	23.88-40.54
	Often	21 (17.95)	11.98-25.96
	Always	16 (13.68)	8.49-21.17
Q-3. Is economic welfare ensured with the profession of midwifery?	None	8 (6.84)	3.32-13.10
	A little	23 (19.66)	13.41-27.84
	Average	60 (51.28)	42.33-60.15
	Often	18 (15.38)	9.87-23.10
	Always	8 (6.84)	3.32-13.10
Q-4. Is a good social status ensured with the profession of midwifery?	None	6 (5.13)	2.14-10.97
	A little	27 (23.08)	16.33-31.54
	Average	42 (35.90)	27.77-44.92
	Often	23 (19.66)	13.41-27.84
	Always	19 (16.24)	10.57-24.06
Q-5. This profession is recommended by others and is not your own decision?	None	58 (49.57)	40.67-58.50
	A little	22 (18.80)	12.69-26.90
	Average	22 (18.80)	12.69-26.90
	Often	12 (10.26)	5.83-17.21
	Always	3 (2.56)	0.55-7.60
Q-6. Would you recommend this profession to others?	None	6 (5.13)	2.14-10.97
	A little	28 (23.93)	17.06-32.46
	Average	32 (27.35)	20.06-36.08
	Often	22 (18.80)	12.69-26.90
	Always	29 (24.79)	17.81-33.37
Q-7. Would you have swapped the midwifery profession for that of nursing?	None	21 (17.95)	11.98-25.96
	A little	13 (11.11)	6.48-18.21
	Average	17 (14.53)	9.18-22.14
	Often	14 (11.97)	7.14-19.21
	Always	52 (44.44)	35.76-53.48
Q-8. Would you have swapped this profession for any other job?	None	62 (52.99)	44.00-61.80
	A little	19 (16.24)	10.57-24.06
	Average	10 (8.55)	4.55-15.18
	Often	13 (11.11)	6.48-18.21
	Always	13 (11.11)	6.48-18.21
Q-9. Is it worth to be a midwife in Albania?	None	31 (26.50)	19.31-35.18
	A little	35 (29.91)	22.34-38.77
	Average	35 (29.91)	22.34-38.77
	Often	10 (8.55)	4.55-15.18
	Always	6 (5.13)	2.14-10.97

^an: Number of students, ^blo: Lower limit of confidence interval, ^chi: Upper limit of confidence interval. CI: Confidence interval.

solution, with at least two having a loading of 0.7. In this analysis, we chose a factor loading of 0.6 or greater for items to be retained.

Results

Demographic characteristics

The sample consisted of 117 participants, who were midwifery bachelor students. The mean age of the participants was 19.48 ± 2.591 years, and 88,03% were between 18 and 20 years of age, 96,58% were female, and 46,15% were studying at the 1st year of the bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 53, 85% of the students came from rural areas, and 78, 63% were from families belonging to moderate economic status. Other demographic data are shown in Table 1.

Items responses

Students' thoughts and decisions in career choice motivation

Further descriptive statistics about the students'

thoughts and perceptions of career are given in Table 2.

Reasons influencing the decision to choose midwifery as a career

Descriptive statistics about the reasons influencing the decision to choose midwifery as a career are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Reasons influencing the decision to choose midwifery as a career

Reasons to choose midwifery	Degree	n ^a (%)	95%CI (lo ^b -hi ^c)
Q-10. Did you choose to study midwifery because it is easy to get a job?	Yes	68 (58.12)	49.06-66.67
	No	49 (41.88)	33.33-50.94
Q-11. Did you choose to study midwifery to make a career in the future?	Yes	90 (76.92)	68.46-83.68
	No	27 (23.08)	16.33-31.54
Q-12. Did you choose to study midwifery to ensure socio-economic well-being?	Yes	94 (80.34)	72.16-86.59
	No	23 (19.66)	13.41-27.84
Q-13. Did you choose to study midwifery because it is a family tradition (any family member is a midwife)?	Yes	64 (54.70)	45.67-63.43
	No	53 (45.30)	36.57-54.33
Q-14. Did you choose to study midwifery because you have the possibilities to transfer into the nursing studies (in the second year)?	Yes	88 (75.21)	66.63-82.19
	No	29 (24.79)	17.81-33.37
Q-15. Did you choose to study midwifery because you have more possibilities to work as a midwife in other countries?	Yes	88 (75.21)	66.63-82.19
	No	29 (24.79)	17.81-33.37
Q-16. Did you choose to study midwifery because you have more possibilities to work as a nurse in other countries?	Yes	87 (74.36)	65.72-81.45
	No	30 (25.64)	18.55-34.28
Q-17. In which country would you like to work?	Albania	26 (22.22)	15.59-30.62
	EU	63 (53.85)	44.83-62.61
	Switzerland	6 (5.13)	2.14-10.97
	UK	17 (14.53)	9.18-22.14
	Amerika	4 (3.42)	1.05-8.75
	Canada	1 (0.85)	0.00-5.16
Q-18. Any other reason	N/A	89 (76.07)	67.54-82.94
	Financial reasons	4 (3.42)	1.05-8.75
	You have the guarantee to get a job in Albania or other countries	7 (5.98)	2.72-12.04
	To leave Albania	4 (3.42)	1.05-8.75
	I like this profession because it is a human one	6 (5.13)	2.14-10.97
	To transfer to nursing studies	1 (0.85)	0.00-5.16
	to serve my country	3 (2.56)	0.55-7.60
	To get the chance to work both as a midwife and a nurse	3 (2.56)	0.55-7.60

^an: Number of students, ^blo: Lower limit of confidence interval, ^chi: Upper limit of confidence interval. CI: Confidence interval, N/A: Not available.

Factor analysis of motivating factors for choosing midwifery

A factor analysis following the Principle Component Method was performed to explore and highlight the grouping of responses by all participants. Items with a factor weight of <0.6 were left out. The rest of the items underwent a Varimax rotation to increase their factor weight at the expense of the removed items. The observed variable could be better assessed using a minimum number of leading factors.

Our analysis showed that students' motivation to study midwifery depends on five factors. These factors are interconnected and have been grouped

in the following way: F1- Employment security over life of midwifery, F2 - Extrinsic rewards of midwifery, F3 - Influence of others in choosing midwifery, F4 - Other motivations, and F5 - Emigration reasons (Table 4).

Table 4: Estimated value for factor loadings

Value factor	Estimate ^a	SE ^b	Z ^c	p (> Z) ^d	CI (lower ^e -upper ^f)
F1 = ~					
Q-1	-0.596	0.075	-7.902	< 0.001	-0.743--0.448
Q-2	-0.710	0.056	-12.610	< 0.001	-0.821--0.600
Q-10	-0.745	0.072	-10.303	< 0.001	-0.887--0.603
Q-11	-0.768	0.084	-9.122	< 0.001	-0.934--0.603
F2 = ~					
Q-3	0.620	0.063	9.926	< 0.001	0.498-0.743
Q-4	0.656	0.068	9.592	< 0.001	0.522-0.790
Q-14	0.862	0.064	13.536	< 0.001	0.737-0.987
F3 = ~					
Q-5	0.324	0.093	3.504	< 0.001	0.143-0.506
Q-6	-0.592	0.086	-6.896	< 0.001	-0.760--0.424
Q-13	0.593	0.097	6.137	< 0.001	0.404-0.783
F4 = ~					
Q-7	0.515	0.084	6.138	< 0.001	0.351-0.680
Q-8	0.501	0.096	5.208	< 0.001	0.312-0.690
Q-9	-0.458	0.090	-5.080	< 0.001	-0.635--0.281
F5 = ~					
Q-15	1.278	0.102	12.492	< 0.001	1.078-1.479
Q-16	0.591	0.098	6.043	< 0.001	0.399-0.783

^aEstimate value for factor loadings, ^bSE of this factor loading, ^cZ-value: Test statistic defined as estimate/EP, ^dp (>|Z|): P value against the assumption that the factor loading is zero; it is important that it is small for all loads; ^elo: Lower limit of CI, ^fhi: Upper limit of CI. SE: Standard error, CI: Confidence interval.

The EFA was performed following the KMO test to highlight the main motivating factors. KMO acceptable is 0.601 (i.e., > 0.5) (Kaiser and Rice, 1974) and estimated by robust weighted probabilities.

Analyzing the results, question 15 showed a factor loading estimate of 1.278, KMO of 0.5, and p < 0.001, suggesting the exclusion of these components (Table 4).

Table 5 presents the EFA with extraction by principal axes and oblique rotation. The parallel analysis suggested a number of factors to extract. The extracted factors are separated by dark and light bands; under the columns, PA is the factor loadings ordered from highest to lowest within each factor. An orthogonal manipulation method applied a Varimax rotation, minimizing the number of variables that present themselves with high loads in each factor.

Table 5: Exploratory factor analysis with extraction by principal axes and oblique rotation

Exp factor	PA1 ^a	PA2 ^a	PA3 ^a	h2 ^b	u2 ^c	com ^d
Q-4	0.759			0.547	0.453	1.04
Q-3	0.648			0.426	0.574	1.00
Q-12	0.638			0.512	0.488	1.42
Q-6	0.606			0.403	0.597	1.08
Q-11	0.522			0.352	0.648	1.45
Q-2	0.514			0.392	0.608	1.39
Q-9	0.505			0.375	0.625	1.99
Q-1	0.455			0.329	0.671	1.68
Q-8	-0.378			0.228	0.772	1.49
Q-14		0.957		0.925	0.076	1.01
Q-15		0.957		0.925	0.076	1.01
Q-16		0.586		0.357	0.643	1.16
Q-10		0.464		0.394	0.606	2.09
Q-7			0.791	0.633	0.367	1.02
Q-13			0.685	0.506	0.494	1.03
Q-5			0.677	0.112	0.888	2.16

^aPA: Ordered factor loadings, ^bh2 is the commonality, the amount of item information retained by this factorization, ^cu2 is the uniqueness, amount of unique item information not reproduced by the model, ^dcom é complexity, indicating how much or item reflects a construct.

Table 6 shows the amount of information each factor reproduces and how much each factor is responsible for the total information retained.

Table 6: Eigenvalues of each factor

Values of each factor	PA1 (%)	PA2 (%)	PA3 (%)
SS loadings	3.196	2.698	1.521
Proportion Var	20.0	16.9	9.5
Cumulative Var	20.0	36.8	46.3
Proportion explained	43.1	36.4	20.5
Cumulative proportion	43.1	79.5	100.0

Table 7: Types of motivating factors

Motivating factors	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Q-11. Did you choose to study midwifery to make a career in the future?	0.522				
Q-2. Is it possible to have a career in the midwifery profession?	0.514				
Q-10. Did you choose to study midwifery because It is easy to get a job?	0.464				
Q-1. Is it easy to get a job as a midwife?	0.455				
Q-14. Did you choose to study midwifery because you have possibilities to transfer into the nursing studies (in the second year)?		0.957			
Q-4. Is a good social status ensured with the profession of midwifery?		0.759			
Q-3. Is economic welfare ensured with the profession of midwifery?		0.648			
Q-13. Did you choose to study midwifery because it is a family tradition (any family member is a midwife)?			0.791		
Q-6. Would you recommend this profession to others?			0.685		
Q-5. This profession is recommended by others and is not your own decision?			0.677		
Q-7. Would you have swapped the midwifery profession for that of nursing?				0.759	
Q-9. Is it worth being a midwife in Albania?				0.505	
Q-8. Would you have swapped this profession for any other job?				-0.378	
Q-12. Did you choose to study midwifery to ensure socio-economic well-being?					0.638
Q-16. Did you choose to study midwifery because you have more possibilities to work as a nurse in other countries?					0.586
Percentage of variance after rotation:	20.0	16.9	9.5	16.5	10.9
Varimax with Kaiser normalization					

The results show that the students' motivations to attend the program correspond to the domains extrinsic rewards of midwifery, but all domains are interconnected.

Questions 10, 01, and 08 present a lower KMO (<0.5), suggesting that they are unsuitable for factoring and should be interpreted as individual items. It is noteworthy that question 8, "Would you have swapped this profession for any other profession?," 52.99% put it as none, and 58,2% said "yes" to the question: "Did you choose to study midwifery because It is easy to get a job?" (Table 7).

Discussion

Based on the survey data, the motivational area for those choosing to study midwifery in Albania is social and economic factors (n = 80.34%). This is directly related to the extrinsic rewards of midwifery, such as social status and economic welfare ensured (KMO 0.648). Lim and Muhtar (2016), in a similar study, evaluate the factor "future earning potential," and

Stoyanova (2021) describes the same as “which will guarantee me employment in the future” had the highest mean among the items under an extrinsic domain, revealing that the salary correlates with the choice of the nursing profession (51.28% appoint average/KMO 0.593). Moheemmed and El-Sayed (2013) highlight that the respondents considered a good salary the best reason for entering the school of nursing. Other studies about nursing courses appear that social status is an essential motivation for the choice [3], [14], [15], [16]. Shrestha and Sapkota describe the students in Nepal who also felt that nursing was noble.

The influence of third parties in midwifery was firmly pointed out in the factor analysis (KMO 0.677). When we analyzed the individual question, “This profession is recommended by others and is not your decision?” 49.57% of the students said none. This result is different when analyzing the studies of admissions to nursing courses that point to a strong influence from other people, such as parents [3], [14], [17].

About 70.21% considered the possibility of transferring into the nursing studies in the second year, and 44.44% of the students agreed that they would change midwifery to nursing; its results could infer that many midwifery students think about joining the nursing course in the future. Some students use midwifery as a steppingstone to another career such as nursing. Duffield, *et al.* (2004) commented that nursing gives graduates many skills that could be used across other professions. Another interesting result was that 76.92% agreed about choosing to study midwifery to make a career in the future. The perception that midwifery was a career, not just a job, was dominant [18]. The opportunity to broaden career and achieve long-term aims were noted; a challenging career and opportunities to upgrade the qualification. Different studies show future career potential in nursing with autonomy in work, job satisfaction, higher professional recognition, and better salary [8], [14], [15], [19].

Midwifery is lucrative, enjoyable, popular, and easy to find a job anywhere. Nursing students in Australia and New Zealand believe that after the course, they have work opportunities anywhere overseas is a benefit that few professions provide [15], [20]. Patidar *et al.* (2011) reported in their study for Indian nurses that there are bright job prospects in foreign countries such as the USA, Australia, Canada, and the UK, where they can enjoy a relatively good professional status. Furthermore, this study considered an essential item in professional choice to have more possibilities to work as a midwife in other countries ($n = 75.21\%$) or more possibilities to work as a nurse in other countries ($n = 74.36\%$).

Midwifery’s lifetime job security was one of the relevant factors among the interviews, suggesting that getting a job is one of the main motivating factors and choosing the profession. If analyzed the question, one of the people’s choices for midwife was because it is

easy to get a job ($n = 49.14\%$) considered this average reason. The fact that convenience in finding a job has been the top reason for selecting the nursing profession could reflect the unemployment rates among the younger population; the population in this study was between 18–20 years old (88.03%).

The midwifery profession is generally not chosen willingly, and it tends to be selected to secure a job more manageable. The result in Nepal shows that 87.5% (294) students believed that job security is a principal motivation for choosing the course [21], and Turquia [14] the same. Other studies conducted in Cyprus, Belgium, Jordan, Turkey and Greece describe that the motivation to choose to study in nursing and midwifery is that students can be easily employed after graduation [17], [22], [23]. These findings suggest that the primary factor in choosing the midwifery profession is a concern for the future in terms of financial resources and social status. These results require attention as they can be interpreted as a negative situation, in the sense of distancing midwifery professionals from the profession’s core values, such as care, loving human beings, helping others, and being altruistic. In this sense, students’ potential for success during the training period can be harmful if they do not consider the care and well-being of others as the essence of the profession.

Conclusion

The findings of this study pointed to the motivating factors that attract the current generation to join midwifery. Extrinsic rewards of midwifery and Employment security over midwifery life were the more critical domains with students considered. This inferred that the more dominant issues for career aspirations were geared to security, economic welfare, and more possibilities to work as a midwife in other countries. The ability to enter tertiary education is an excellent point to highlight.

Understanding why people choose to study midwifery may help managers and educators develop student-focused and enticing midwifery programs.

Limitations

The findings of this study may not be generalizable because it used data gathered from only one nursing school and one specific country. Thus, this may not represent student nurses from other institutions or governments.

An EFA was performed for questions by simple statistics and some analysis suspicions. A KMO, in fact,

<0.5, concludes that these questions should not be interpreted by their factors.

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