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Trends in Vocational Midwifery Competency Test Pass Rates as an Exit Exam in Indonesia: A Retrospective Study 2016 - 2023

Alifina Izza^{1,2}, Farah Sajidah³, Anisa Kurnia Ramdhini^{4,5}, Diana Rahima^{1,6,7}, Luh Sukeningsih¹, Mutiara Dien Safitri^{8,9}, Sekar Putri Kirana^{1,10,11}, Putri Arisma Dewi^{1,12}, Raihanah¹³, Kinanti¹⁴, Husnul Fadillah¹⁵, Ina Rahayu Sakti⁸

¹Midwifery Program Study, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia

²Master of Public Health, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

³Midwifery Program Study, Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia

⁴Midwifery Program Study, Universitas Jenderal Achmad Yani Cimahi, Indonesia

⁵Master of Midwifery, Medical Faculty, Universitas Padjajaran, Bandung, Indonesia

⁶Noora Health, Indonesia

⁷Thinkwell Institute, USA

⁸Faculty of Public Health, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

⁹Midwifery Study Programme, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia

¹⁰Master of Public Health, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia

¹¹Independent Midwifery Practice Hj. Titik Yuspita, S.Tr.Keb., SKM

¹²Independent Midwifery Practice Helvira Desi Mitra, S.SiT., S.H

¹³Bachelor of Applied Science in Midwifery, Health Polytechnic of the Ministry of Health Malang, Malang, Indonesia

¹⁴Indonesian Midwives Association in Health Polytechnic of the Ministry of Health Sorong, Sorong, Indonesia

¹⁵Master of Midwifery, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

Corresponding author: alifina.izza-2015@fk.unair.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Background:

The large number of midwifery schools, coupled with the suboptimal quality of midwifery education accreditation in Indonesia, underscores the need to implement midwife competency tests. This study aims to analyze the distribution of first takers and retakers in the National Midwifery Competency Examination based on the type of higher education institution before and after the implementation of the exit exam in 2020



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Methods:

Data were obtained from diploma 3 KOM participants during the 2016-2023 period, covering *akademi, institute, politeknik, poltekkes, sikes, and universitas*.

Results:

The results show that *akademi* have the highest proportion (30%) of UKOM graduates, both as first takers and retakers. The implementation of the exit exam in 2020 caused a spike in the number of first takers in 2020, followed by a decline in 2022 and 2023. There was a drastic 91% decrease in the number of first takers from 19.748 participants in 2019 to 1.762 participants in 2020, due to the adjustment period and COVID-19 disruptions. In contrast, the number surged to 28.349 in 2021, indicating institutional adaptation and improved readiness.

Conclusion:

The implementation of the exit exam has a significant effect on the number of first takers and retakers of the National Midwifery Competency Test in Indonesia. After the implementation of the exit exam policy in 2020, there was an increase in the number of first takers and a decrease in the number of retakers, indicating that better preparation from educational institutions has improved the pass rate. In addition to the exit exam policy, the decrease in retakers was also influenced by the introduction of the composite scoring policy, which mandates that graduation is determined by a combination of Grade Point Average (GPA) and competency test scores.

Keywords: *National Competency Examination, Exit-Exam, Vocational Midwife, Midwife Student Indonesia.*



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BACKGROUND

The quality of midwives plays an important role in improving maternal and child health outcomes in Indonesia. In an effort to improve national health standards, it is crucial to analyze various factors that influence the quality of midwives, including the type of educational institution they attend. These institutions, ranging from *universitas* and *akademi* to *politeknik*, each offer different varied curricula and facilities that influence the quality of education and student outcomes.

Skilled healthcare professionals are one of the requirements for addressing maternal and child health issues optimally. However, there are still obstacles related to midwifery education graduates. The quality of midwifery education graduates currently still does not meet expectations; it is known that most healthcare workers in health facilities are unable to assist in childbirth, and compliance with midwifery service standards is still lacking. The proliferation of midwifery colleges in Indonesia has become one of the causes of the declining quality of midwives in Indonesia, compounded by insufficient supervision, making it impossible to guarantee that graduates meet expectations.

The government's efforts to ensure and assess the quality of prospective midwife graduates are through the Midwife Competency Test for Diploma 3 and Professional Midwifery Programme. This competency test, initiated by the government and professional organizations, addresses various challenges in higher health education both nationally and globally. Domestically, the main challenge faced is providing high-quality healthcare services and prioritizing patient safety. Globally, the challenge is aligning with the priorities of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which requires healthcare graduates to be competitive in collaborating with healthcare professionals from other countries (BPPSDMK, 2014; Anderson et al., 2014).

The numerous midwifery schools, coupled with the suboptimal quality of midwifery education accreditation in Indonesia, underscore the need for the implementation of midwifery competency tests. These competency tests are designed to uphold and enhance the quality standards of healthcare services in the midwifery sector (HPEQ, 2015; LAMPTKes, 2018). According to the Circular Letter of the Director General of Higher Education Number 704 of 2013, the midwife competency test is carried out as an exit exam, which is carried out at the final stage of education or after completing all stages of education (Kemenristekdikti, 2013). However, in its current implementation, the National Midwifery Competency Test has not been fully implemented as an exit exam as in the Medical Competency Test and Nurse Competency Test (Kemenristekdikti, 2018). The midwife competency test in Indonesia has only started since 2013, with an average of 30% of participants not passing, while the passing score is 40.14% (Dikti, 2015). The number of midwife competency test participants has decreased from 2017 to 2018,



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namely 33,792 participants in period IX/2017, 19,957 participants in period X/2018, and 13,146 participants in period XI/2018. The average pass rate is still low, at 55%. (Ristedikti, 2018), and a very low pass rate seen in participants who retaker the exam, which was 22.89% in period VIII/2017 and 27.95% in period X/2018 (Kemenristekdikti, 2018).

Regulations regarding the exit exam are regulated in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 2 of 2020 concerning Procedures for Student Competency Tests in the Health Sector. This policy revokes the Ministry of Research Technology Higher Education Regulation No. 12 of 2016 concerning Procedures for Implementing Student Competency Tests in the Health Sector. The proportion of vocational programs according to Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 2 of 2020, Article 3, is 60 percent Grade Point Average and 40 percent Competency Test. This is a requirement for student graduation, so as long as students have not passed the competency test, it is still the duty of universities to equip these students. Based on these data and phenomena, competency tests have an important role in the quality of midwives, so preparation for the implementation of competency tests needs to be reviewed.

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the number of midwife competency test graduates from various institutions, as well as trends in the number of participants over the past eight years.

METHODS

a. Data

The data for this study came from midwifery student graduates at the vocational level (D3) collected from the official website of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology through the Secretariat of the Midwife Competency Test Committee. This study utilizes data from midwife competency test participants, both those who took the exam for the first time (first taker) and those who took the exam again (retaker) from various types of higher education institutions in Indonesia.

The data used covers a one-year record, from 2016 to 2023, with at least two exam periods each year. Data collection includes information from various types of higher education institutions, such as academies, institutes, polytechnics, polytechnics, high schools, and universities, spread across all provinces of Indonesia. This information provides a comprehensive picture of the number of midwife competency exam graduates from different institutions, as well as trends in the number of participants over the past eight years.



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b. Methods

This study is a retrospective descriptive study that uses data on midwife competency test results for the last eight years. In this study, the institutional model was divided into academies, institutes, polytechnics, polytechnics, high schools, and universities in accordance with the naming of each institution in the data of the Secretariat of the Midwife Competency Test Committee. We distinguished polytechnics and polytechnics based on affiliation with the Ministry of Health; polytechnics are institutions that are not directly affiliated with the Ministry of Health but provide midwifery majors, while polytechnics are polytechnics that are directly affiliated with the Ministry of Health and the institution is directly connected to polytechnics in other cities or districts.

This data was analyzed univariately to show trends in midwifery graduates each year, providing a comprehensive picture of the number and distribution of midwife competency exam participants from 2016 to 2023. This analysis aims to identify patterns and changes in the number of midwifery graduates, thus providing greater insight into the development of midwifery education in Indonesia both before and after the implementation of the Exit Exam.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in the form of pie charts to illustrate the proportion and distribution of midwife Competency Test (UKOM) graduates from 2016 to 2023. This pie chart provides a clear visualization of the percentage of graduates from various types of higher education institutions including academies, institutes, polytechnics, polytechnics, high schools, and universities (Figure 1, Figure 2). In addition, a distribution table was added to show the number of graduates from each type of institution per year. This table helps in understanding the trends and changes that occurred in the number of midwifery graduates during the study period (Table 1, Table 2).



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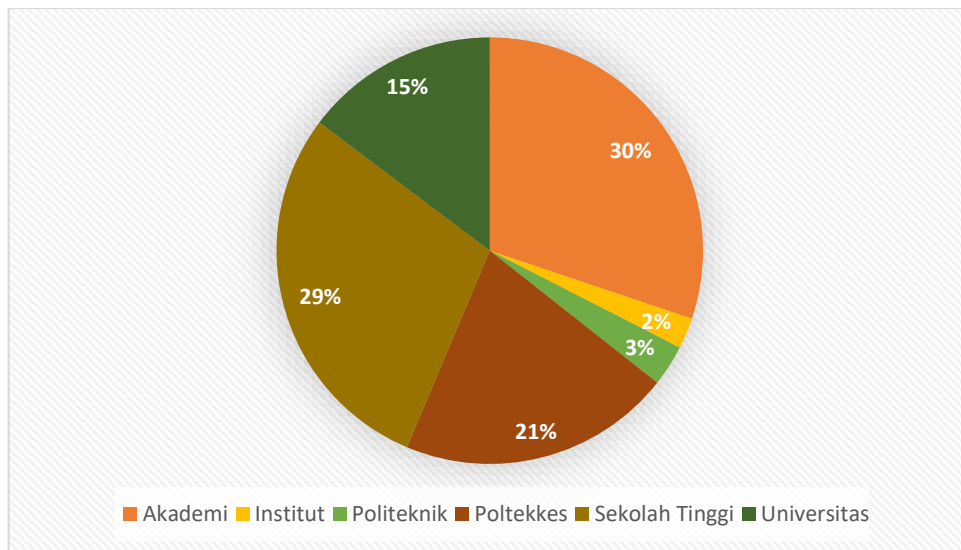


Figure 1. Distribution of UKOM passers by type of institution (2016-2023)

The diagram above shows the proportion of midwife Competency Test (UKOM) graduates from different types of higher education institutions over the period 2016 to 2023. Academies account for the largest proportion of overall graduates, followed by polytechnics and high schools. Meanwhile, polytechnics and universities also contributed significantly although in smaller proportions. Institutes have the least contribution compared to other types of institutions.

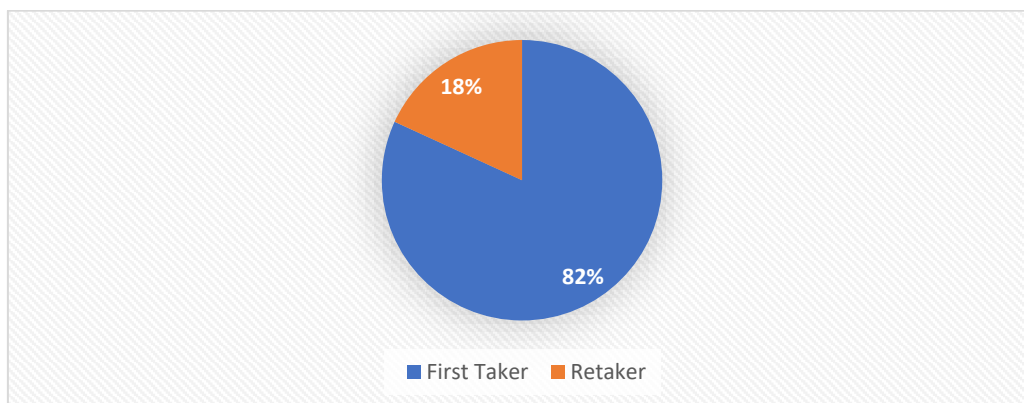


Figure 2 . Proportion of UKOM graduate types (2016-2023)



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Over the period 2016 - 2023 results show the proportion between first takers and retakers in the Competency Test (UKOM) for midwives from different types of higher education institutions. First takers, who are participants taking the test for the first time, account for more than all test takers. This proportion illustrates the dominance of first takers in the midwife competency test in the past decade. Furthermore, the data in Table 1 and Table 2 show the distribution of the number of first takers and retakers of UKOM Midwifery by type of higher education institution from 2016 to 2023.

Table 1 shows the number of first takers or participants who took UKOM for the first time from various types of higher education institutions each year during the period 2016 to 2023. This data shows that academies and colleges consistently have the largest number of first takers compared to other types of institutions. Polytechnics also have significant numbers, while polytechnics, universities and institutes have lower numbers. This trend shows that Competency Test participants are mostly dominated by academies and permanent high schools that take the UKOM.

Table 2 shows the number of retakers or participants who repeated UKOM from various types of higher education institutions each year during the period 2016 to 2023. This data shows that participants from academies and colleges also dominate the number of retakers, with significant numbers especially in certain years such as 2019 and 2021. Midwifery students from institutes and polytechnics have a much lower number of retakers compared to other institutions. This trend shows the challenges faced by retakers from different higher education institutions in achieving UKOM graduation.

Table 1 . Distribution of the number of first takers of the Midwifery Competency Test (UKOM) based on the institution model each year

Year	Type of Institution						Total
	<i>Akademi</i>	<i>Institut</i>	<i>Politeknik</i>	<i>Politeknik kesehatan</i>	<i>Sekolah Tinggi</i>	<i>Universitas</i>	
2016	12977	29	502	3944	9368	3381	30135
2017	6567	4	329	3242	4501	1768	16411
2018	4357	80	322	2671	5311	2203	14944
2019	5015	283	574	3673	4969	2258	16772
2020	594	20	8	81	660	399	1762



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2021	6013	1336	1235	6765	7890	5110	28349
2022	2003	699	557	3242	2506	2162	11169
2023	1830	606	534	3435	2515	1940	10860
Total	39356	3057	4061	27053	37720	19221	130468

Table 2 Distribution of the number of National Midwifery Competency Test (UKOM) retakers based on the institution model each year

<i>Year</i>	Type of Institution						Total
	<i>Akademi</i>	<i>Institut</i>	<i>Politeknik</i>	<i>Politeknik Kesehatan</i>	<i>Sekolah Tinggi</i>	<i>Universitas</i>	
2016	3106	0	61	363	1769	494	5793
2017	590	0	50	80	341	86	1147
2018	1333	12	45	216	970	278	2854
2019	4056	21	137	1033	3229	1012	9488
2020	764	0	16	172	376	104	1432
2021	1798	87	110	832	1767	585	5179
2022	446	147	119	385	609	291	1997
2023	235	67	41	171	352	177	1043
Total	12328	334	579	3252	9413	3027	28933

DISCUSSION

a. Distribution of successful UKOM candidates type of institution

The dominant proportion of academies and polytechnics reflects the important role these institutions play in midwifery education in Indonesia. This difference in distribution may reflect variations in the number of institutions, their enrollment capacity, as well as the focus of educational programs in each type of institution. The overall distribution



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provides a clear picture of the role of each type of institution in producing midwifery graduates over the past eight years, which is useful for evaluation and planning for future midwifery education development.

The phenomenon where academies and polytechnics have a dominant proportion of midwife Competency Test (UKOM) graduates compared to other types of higher education institutions such as high schools, polytechnics and universities may be due to several factors. First, variations in the number of institutions and student enrollment capacity in each type of higher education institution may affect the distribution of graduates. Institutions such as academies and polytechnics may have more institutions and greater admission capacity compared to other institutions, resulting in a higher proportion of graduates (McNeill et al., 2012).

In addition, the focus of education programs in each type of institution may also play an important role in the distribution of graduates. Institutions such as academies and polytechnics may have educational programs that are more directly related to midwifery, thus attracting more prospective midwives and producing more graduates in that field. While polytechnics and universities, while making a significant contribution, may have a more diverse program focus, which may affect the number of midwifery graduates produced (McNeill et al., 2012).

Thus, the distribution of midwife Competency Test (UKOM) graduates from different types of higher education institutions over the period 2016 to 2023 reflects the important role of academies and polytechnics in midwifery education in Indonesia, which is driven by differences in the number of institutions, enrollment capacity, and focus of educational programs in each type of institution (McNeill et al., 2012).

b. Distribution of Number of First Takers and Retakers in UKOM (2016-2023)

Competency test is a test held nationally to assess competency achievement based on Competency Standards. The Midwife Competency Test is considered effective for screening midwife graduates who meet the established national competency standards (Fitria et al., 2019). First Taker is a test taker who is taking the test for the first time, while retaker is a participant who returns to repeat the competency test because he/she has not passed it (Fitria & Ningsih, 2024).

The number of first takers and retakers is related to the types of midwifery institutions in Indonesia. Based on the results of data on first takers and retakers of competency exams from 2016-2023, the highest retaker participant rate was found in academies with 31%, followed by high schools with 24%, and universities with 15%. One of the factors affecting midwives' graduation in each type of institution is accreditation. Previous research states that A-accredited institutions provide better exam performance compared to graduates from B-accredited institutions. According to Kusumastuti et al (2015) that,



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The results showed that the graduation rate of A-accredited midwifery education institutions was higher at 81.3%, while B accreditation was 59.4%, and C accreditation was 42.4% (Kusumastuti et al., 2015).

The competence of midwives that is not achieved optimally is caused by several obstacles that exist in D3 Midwifery education institutions, including the implementation of a curriculum that has not been implemented optimally, high Grade Point Averag (GPA) demands, quantity and quality of lecturers, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure (Werni et al., 2019). The results of the 2017 Risdiknakes study also showed a discrepancy between GPA and the results of the midwife competency test for D3 midwifery graduates. This incident is also inseparable from educational institution factors. Lecturers who do not meet the qualifications, as well as the unbalanced ratio of lecturers to students, cause midwifery DIII graduates to not meet the competencies as expected (Weni et al., 2019).

c. Trend analysis of first taker and retaker pass rates associated with Exit - Exam regulations

Based on data analysis of the number of first takers and retakers of the Midwifery Competency Test (UKOM) from 2016 to 2023, there was a significant change after the implementation of the exit exam in 2020. Before the implementation of the exit exam, the number of first takers showed a downward trend every year, with a drastic decline in 2020. However, after the exit exam was implemented, there was a spike in the number of first takers in 2021, followed by a decline again in 2022 and 2023. In contrast, the number of retakers fluctuated before the exit exam, with a significant increase in 2019, but then decreased gradually after the exit exam was implemented. The increase in the number of first takers in 2021 suggests that the exit exam policy may have encouraged educational institutions to better prepare their students before taking the competency exam.

Exit exam itself is a test in assessing the competence of a midwife. Research Melliasany dan Perceka (2021) highlighted changes in the procedure for implementing the midwife competency test, which was originally held as an exit exam into a national competency test with various types of tests, such as knowledge-based tests and Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) (Malik et al., 2023).

In addition, factors such as self-regulation and internal motivation can be important strategies for success in exit exams (Lee, 2023). The importance of exit exams is also reflected in research highlighting that teacher education programs need to maintain high standards through the implementation of a required exit exam for all classroom teachers (Zani, 2017). Research has also found that students who fail high school exit exams tend to have an understanding that focuses on their cognitive weaknesses, without paying attention to their cognitive strengths. In this context, exit exams play a crucial role in evaluating midwives' competencies and it is important to pay attention to factors such as



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self-regulation, motivation, and effective preparation for such exams.

The decrease in the number of first takers after 2021 and the decrease in the number of retakers after the implementation of the exit exam in the context of UKOM midwifery in Indonesia may reflect the efforts of educational institutions in improving the quality of education and ensuring students are ready for the competency exam. The implementation of the exit exam may have encouraged educational institutions to better prepare their students before taking the competency exam, which in turn may increase the pass rate on the first attempt.

Research finding from Samidah (2021) showed that midwifery students in Bengkulu, Indonesia, supported the implementation of the national competency exam as one of the graduation requirements. This shows that students realize the importance of the exit exam in assessing their competence (Samidah, 2021). In addition, research by Shin et al. (2017) highlighted that the introduction of a clinical performance exam as part of the national nursing licensure exam in Korea may improve the evaluation of students' clinical and communication skills (Shin et al., 2017).

Non-academic factors such as anxiety, stress, and motivation can also affect midwifery student success (Moore et al., 2021). Additionally, research by Marsidi (2021) shows that the level of stress, anxiety, and depression of students in preparation for the exit exam competency test needs to be considered to provide early intervention (Marsidi, 2021). Thus, the decrease in the number of first takers and retakers after the implementation of the exit exam may reflect the efforts of educational institutions in improving the quality of education, preparing students better, and ultimately increasing the first-time pass rate.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the exit exam has a significant effect on the number of first takers and retakers of the Midwifery Competency Test in Indonesia. After the implementation of the exit exam in 2020, there was an increase in the number of first takers and a decrease in the number of retakers, indicating that better preparation from educational institutions has improved the pass rate.

As a follow-up, educational institutions need to improve the quality of curriculum and teaching methods, as well as provide adequate facilities for exam preparation. The government should strengthen supervision and accreditation to ensure consistent midwifery higher education standards. In addition, continuous training for lecturers and improved psychological support for students are needed to reduce exam-related stress and anxiety. Finally, collaboration with healthcare institutions for better clinical practice is highly recommended.



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LIMITATION

The possibility of one higher education institution identity being written in two or more names is due to the transfer of the type of institution, such as an academy to a high school or university, and so on. However, researchers have minimized this by updating the data.

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