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Waterbirth - experiences of women, and professional experiences of the attending midwives

Submission date
09/09/2026

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
22/09/2026

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
11/09/2026

Condition category
Pregnancy and Childbirth

[X] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Waterbirth is increasingly being offered as an option for women with uncomplicated pregnancies and is associated with a more positive childbirth experience for many women. However, evidence regarding maternal and neonatal outcomes, as well as women's and midwives' experiences of waterbirth in Greece, is limited. This study aims to compare maternal and neonatal outcomes and childbirth experiences between women who gave birth in water and women who had vaginal births outside water. The study also aims to explore the experiences of midwives who support waterbirths in Greece and identify factors associated with perinatal outcomes and childbirth experiences.

Who can participate?
Women aged 18 years or older who gave birth in Greece, either in water or by vaginal birth outside water, and are able to provide informed consent can participate. Registered midwives with experience in supporting waterbirths in Greece are also eligible to participate.

What does the study involve?
Participants will be recruited through social media, professional organisations, maternity hospitals and professional networks across Greece. Women and midwives who agree to participate will take part in an online interview during which a structured questionnaire will be completed. Women will be asked about their pregnancy, labour, birth and postnatal experience, while midwives will be asked about their experience of supporting waterbirths. No medical treatment or intervention will be provided as part of this study.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There are no direct medical benefits to participants. However, the information collected may contribute to improving maternity care and the evidence base regarding waterbirth in Greece. Participation involves minimal risk. Some participants may feel emotional discomfort when recalling their birth experiences, but they may decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Where is the study run from?
The study is run from the University of Western Macedonia, Greece. Data collection will be conducted online, with participants recruited from across Greece.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
October 2026 to October 2027.

Who is funding the study?
Investigator initiated and funded

Who is the main contact?
Nikoleta Chatzipanagiotidou, BSc, MSc, PhD Candidate, Department of Midwifery, University of Western Macedonia, Greece, n.chatzipanagiotidou@gmail.com

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Study information

Scientific Title
Waterbirth in Greece: the perinatal outcomes and childbirth experiences of women and the professional experiences of the attending midwives

Acronym
WATERBIRTH

Study objectives

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 09/03/2026, Research Ethics Committee, University of Western Macedonia (University Administration Building University of Western Macedonia ZEP Campus 50100 Kozani, Greece, Kozani, 50100, Greece; +30 24610-56200; ehde@uowm.gr), ref: 372/09.03.2026

Primary study design
Observational

Secondary study design
Cross sectional study

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Waterbirth

Interventions
The study is cross-sectional observational study conducted in Greece. Women who experienced a waterbirth, women who experienced a vaginal birth outside water (comparison group), and registered midwives with professional experience in supporting waterbirths will be invited to participate. Once the participants are recruited, quantitative and qualitative data will be collected through structured questionnaires administered during online interviews. Quantitative data will be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, while qualitative data will be analysed using thematic analysis. The study aims to compare perinatal outcomes and childbirth experiences between women who gave birth in water and women who had vaginal birth outside water, as well as to explore the professional experiences of midwives supporting waterbirths.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)

1. Comparison of maternal and neonatal perinatal outcomes between women who gave birth in water and women who had a vaginal birth outside water measured using a structured questionnaire. The maternal outcomes include perineal trauma, postpartum haemorrhage, management of the third stage of labour and maternal complications. The neonatal outcomes include Apgar score, neonatal intensive care unit admission, need for resuscitation and neonatal complications, measured at a single assessment during the online interview

2. Women's childbirth experience will be compared between waterbirth and vaginal birth outside water and assessed measured using a structured questionnaire including quantitative items and qualitative responses at a single assessment during the online interview

3. Midwives' professional experience of supporting waterbirths measured using a structured questionnaire including quantitative items and qualitative responses at a single assessment during the online interview

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. identify independent predictors (risk factors) that are associated with the perinatal outcomes, the childbirth experience of women, and the professional experience of attending Midwives measured using a structured questionnaire including quantitative items and qualitative responses at a single assessment during the online interview

Completion date
01/12/2027

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Women aged ≥18 years who gave birth in water in Greece and are able to provide informed consent
2. Women aged ≥18 years who gave birth on dry land (not in the water) in Greece and are able to provide informed consent (control group)
3. Registered midwives with experience in supporting waterbirths in Greece who are able to provide informed consent
4. Participants must be able to communicate in Greek and complete the study questionnaire

Healthy volunteers allowed
Yes

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
45 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment

0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Women aged <18 years
2. Women who had a waterbirth but not in Greece
3. Registered midwives who do not support waterbirths in Greece
4. Individuals unable to provide informed consent
5. Participants unable to communicate in Greek or complete the questionnaire
6. Incomplete questionnaires

Date of first enrolment
01/10/2026

Date of final enrolment
01/10/2027

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Greece

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Western Macedonia, Department of Midwifery

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
Investigator initiated and funded

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available